L-Università ta' Malta

HRS4R UNIVERSITY OF MALTA ACTION PLAN

Case number: 2020MT491694

Name Organisation under review: University of Malta (UM)

Organisation's contact details: Tal-Qroqq, Msida

SUBMISSION DATE: 4th May 2021

1. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION: Key figures of the UM

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research	925.83
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)	127.51
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation)	5
Of whom are women	344.54
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor.	528.72
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level	213.39
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level	158.99
Total number of students (if relevant)	11,497
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)	1924.95
RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organisational budget	44,263,936
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	1,820,000
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	37,894,083
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	4,569,853

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE
The University of Malta (UM) is the highest teaching institution in Malta, with its structures being in line with the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education area. UM has a 400-year history and there are over 11,500 students including 1000 foreign students from 92 countries. UM has campuses in Msida, Valletta, Marsaxlokk and Gozo and employs a total of 2,848 employees. The UM is involved as coordinator and partner in EU-funded projects under Horizon 2020 (70 projects), Erasmus+ (114 projects), INTERREG EU-MED-ITALIA MALTA (44 projects), FP7 (47 projects), Lifelong Learning Programme (76 projects) and other international and national programmes.

2. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CURRENT PRACTICES:

Overview of the UM in terms of the current strengths and weaknesses of the current practices under the four thematic headings of the Charter and Code.

Thematic heading of the Charter and Code	STRENGTHS and WEAKNESSES
Ethical and Professional Aspects	Researchers at the University of Malta (UM) are treated as professionals in a non-discriminatory way and they enjoy the freedom of thought and expression, and are offered guidance by a number of offices during their research activities (Aspects 1 and 10).
	A major strength of the ethical and professional aspects of the UM is that several policies and practices are in place to enhance the research experience of all researchers (Aspect 3). The Project Support Office (PSO), the Research Support Services Directorate (RSSD) and the Knowledge Transfer Office (KTO) offer guidance on the funding mechanisms, budgetary details, operational details, intellectual property protection, and other limitations to carry out the research (Aspect 4). They apply an internal system of reviewing research projects at the proposal stage and award stage, as well as support on the financial management and auditing of the research projects. In addition, the UM provides guiding principles and standards of good practice, including data protection in research through the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and its Research Code of Practice (Aspect 2). The Research Ethics Review procedure of UREC reviews the Research Ethics and the Data Protection Self-Assessment Form that are submitted by the researchers prior to commencing their research.
	Another strength concerns the accountability and professionalism at UM. The system of Ad Hoc Contracts, the Collective Agreement, and the contracts of employment bind all the researchers to be accountable towards the research projects they participate in (Aspects 5 and 6). It is standard practice at UM that all academics sign an ad hoc contract stipulating the financial terms, the commencement and completion dates of a project, the reference to the UM IP Policy, grant agreement, and confidentiality terms. On the other hand, the Research Support Officers have clauses included in their contract of employment indicating who to contact in case of defaults in the research project they work on, the working conditions, the delivery of results, and the national regulations. All academics at the University of Malta can refer to the Manual of Conduct and Procedures of the University of Malta regarding plagiarism and when required, the process is carried out on a case by case basis as an academic misconduct. Information sessions held by the Data Protection Officer are ongoing and are presently being held for all researchers across various Faculties.
	Health and Safety matters are also a strength within the UM's ethical and professional aspects (Aspect 7). A Health and Safety Committee and a Health and Safety Policy are in place to oversee the health and safety matters across the UM. In addition, procedures, guidelines and assessment checklists are available online for all researchers. The Health and Safety Committee provides training as and when required in conjunction with the Office for Human Resources Management and Development (OHRM&D) and RSSD. Furthermore, standard operating procedures are being issued and continuously updated.

| | Researchers at the UM are encouraged to disseminate their research activities throughout various means within the UM, which is considered a strength (Aspect 8). An Open Science department is available at the UM Library, which caters for open access, open data, open educational resources, and open peer reviewing. The Library has an Open Access Policy in place and is available to all researchers, and it also provides information and training on how researchers can publish their research work online, especially on the open access depository. In addition, the Marketing, Communications & Alumni Office promotes the research that is undertaken within the UM through the web portal Newspoint, as well as through the THINK magazine (Aspect 9). For the general public, a European Researchers' Night funded by the EU is held annually and includes activities related to science and research.

In addition, the practice for commercialisation and exploitation of research results is in place and managed by the KTO, of which information is available online to all researchers.

Albeit the above strengths, the UM lacks a proper evaluation and appraisal system for its employees (Aspect 11). Presently, for the academics, the appraisal is contained in the guidelines of the collective agreement and is carried out in two methods: (a) There is the Quality Assurance Committee to maintain and improve academic standards at the UM, which evaluates the lecturing services; and (b) There is the appraisal for promotions of the academics staff, which includes an international evaluation of publication and research output as indicated in the collective agreement. There is presently no form of appraisal for the Research Support Officers working within the UM. |
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| Recruitment and Selection | The University of Malta (UM) has a section within the Office for Human Resources Management and Development (OHRM&D) that is dedicated to the recruitment and selection of employees. The section includes staff that are wholly dedicated to the recruitment and selection process in view of the heavy workload surrounding the area.

One major strength of the recruitment and selection aspects at the UM is that the process is carried out in an open and transparent manner, and the eligibility criteria, as well as the selection process, are both always included on the calls for application (Aspects 12 and 15). In addition, the University of Malta is an equal opportunity employer and thus accepts applications from persons from outside Malta and also from outside the European Union. This is facilitated by the fact that calls for application are advertised on various web portals to reach out the best potential applicants, namely Euraxess, academicjobseu.com, jobs.ac.uk, LinkedIn, Facebook, and others.

Another strength is present in the thorough selection process, which involves three steps: (a) scrutiny of qualifications and experience claimed and supported by testimonials and/or certificates (copies are included with the application); (b) shortlisting, which is carried out by the department requiring the employee; and (c) an interview and/or an extended interview. The selection board members are enrolled in accordance with their area of expertise in order to be able to assess the candidates adequately (Aspects 14 and 16). They are provided with guidelines of which aim is to provide the members with guidance to be able to assess and evaluate the academic and professional qualifications of the candidates in relation to the advertised call for applications (Aspects 17, 18, 19 and 20). As such, at the end of the |

	interviews, a scoring sheet and a selection board report are duly filled and signed by the parties involved. Since the University of Malta is a publicly funded entity, a member of Council not employed with the University has to form part of the selection board members. This is especially required for the posts of academic staff. For employees required to work on a definite contract, such as that of a Research Support Officer, the Pro-Rector for Research and Knowledge Transfer has to act as the Chairman of the selection board for each call for applications. This may translate into a weakness and often poses a hindrance to the process in view that the Pro-Rector has to be present on all selection boards and the date of when the interview is held depends on his availability (Aspect 13). In recent years, the University of Malta has been very successful in winning EU funded and other externally funded projects. The increase in projects increased the requirement of researchers to carry out research activities, hence the increase in the workload of the recruitment and selection process. The human resources attached to the recruitment and selection section within the Office for Human Resources Management and development have remained at the same level for the past eight years. This lack of human resources may be slowing down the process in view that the work is split between just three persons (Aspect 13). In addition, recruitment can be made more efficient through the use of an online system, to which both HR personnel and the responsible academics should have access. Also, presently there is no formal procedure for the recruitment of postdocs (Aspect 21).
Working Conditions	The University of Malta (UM) recognizes all academics and Research Support Officers as professionals and it makes sure that the research within the institution is stimulating (Aspect 22). In fact, over the past ten years, the UM has been involved as coordinator and partner in numerous EU-funded projects under various Programmes, which is in itself a strength, including Horizon 2020, Erasmus+, Interreg EU-MED-Italia Malta, FP7, Lifelong Learning Programme and various other international and national programmes and initiatives. Furthermore, the UM has a team in place (Aspects 23, 31 and 32) which offers a lot of support to the researchers through the following departments: (i) Research Support Services Directorate (RSSD); (ii) Project Support Office (PSO); (iii) Knowledge Transfer Office (KTO); (iv) Marketing, Communications & Alumni Office; (v) Centre for Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation (CEBI); (vi) Legal Office; (vii) IT services; and (viii) Office for Human Resources Management and Development (OHRM&D). The UM has other strengths in terms of the employees' working conditions, one of them is concerned with the family and work balance, wherein the UM offers flexibility as and when required. For researchers with disabilities, working conditions are adopted on a case by case basis, in order for the employee to be able to be successful in his/her research performance (Aspect 24). Gender equality is also a strong feature within the institution (Aspect 27), which is supported by the Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity Committee. The Committee was originally set up in 1991 in order to act as a focal point on gender issues on the recommendations of the Women in Society Secretariat. According to its terms of reference, the Committee advises the University Council on issues of gender equality as and when required.

	The UM ensures that the contracts of employment of its employees are in line with the EU Directives (Aspect 25). It offers attractive and reasonable salaries with social security provisions in line with the Maltese legislation (Aspect 26). The UM recognizes the value of the various types of mobilities of a researcher's career, and considers teaching as a valuable career path, and offers career advice as and when required (Aspects 28, 29 and 30). The provisions for both teaching and research are catered for in the collective agreement for academic staff, whilst the Research Support Officers engage in teaching duties on a casual basis (Aspect 33).
	Any complaints and appeals are administered by the OHRM&D as and when the need arises, and all employees are represented in the decision making processes of the UM (Aspects 34 and 35).
	In the last few years, the UM has seen an increase in the number of human resources involved in research and development and this has created an issue in terms of space, which presently is considered a weakness (Aspect 24). There is an issue across the board with the provision of office and other work space, which at the moment is very limited. Researchers have to resort to hot desking, working remotely, or use temporary spaces such as porta cabins. In addition, research groups from the same department are at times dispersed on different locations across campus, making physical meetings almost impossible.
	Another matter, which may be considered a weakness, concerns the work of the Research Support Officers, which is presently on a definite basis, since the work depends on the number of projects that are awarded (Aspects 24 and 25). Having a contract on a definite basis may sometimes create an issue for the employee in terms of applying for a bank loan wherein jobs on an indefinite basis are looked at more favourably. Where in other countries there is more than one University, researchers can move around without having to leave the home country or city as many cities have more than one university as well. As this is not afforded to the Maltese researchers, many give up research due to financial instability and lack of permanent positions.
Training and Development	One major strength in connection with the training and development aspects at University of Malta UM) is that the Office for Human Resources Management and Development (OHRM&D) has a successful training and development section with dedicated staff. In the last few years, the UM enhanced the training and development of its researchers through various new practices and through the set up of entities such as the Doctoral School and the Office for Professional Academic Development (OPAD) (Aspect 39). As soon as researchers start their career at the UM, they are offered an induction training to familiarize themselves with the systems, procedures and practices relevant to their tasks. The academics are also referred to the collective agreement in terms of their career progression (Aspects 38 and 39).
	The OHRM&D provides training in core competences and specialised fields. These courses are specifically designed to meet the needs of the UM and the employees. Certain short courses are especially designed to cater for the specific needs of individual departments and employee streams. Training is also delivered in conjunction with UM academic entities, Administrative Directorates and Units and in collaboration with several governmental and non-governmental organisations.

	The Doctoral School within the UM offers guidance for both the academics as well as the Research Support Officers, regarding the relationship between the PhD candidates and their supervisors, and a number of committees have been set up in this regard (Aspects 26, 37 and 40). Moreover, with the recent setup of OPAD, the UM is providing training courses to academic staff at all stages of their career.
	On the other hand, the Scholarships and Bursaries Committee of the UM provides the opportunity for UM staff to apply for a scholarship (Aspect 39). In addition, academics are also provided with the Academic Resources Fund for attending conferences and research activities locally and abroad, that are relevant to their area of expertise (Aspect 38).
	Regarding the Research Support Officers, since these are employed on a definite basis according to the number of projects awarded to the UM, there is no automatic career progression in place (Aspect 38). This fact may be considered as a weakness. If a Research Support Officer wishes to be employed in a higher category, s/he will be required to apply for the position through a call for applications, depending on the requirements and funding of a research project. In addition, no funding is made available to them for attending conferences and research activities related to their tasks, unless the funding is available from the project budget they are working on (Aspect 38).

3. ACTIONS

<u>Web link to the UM's HR Strategy dedicated webpage(s): https://www.um.edu.mt/research/hrs4r</u>

Individual actions to be undertaken by the UM's HRS4R to address the weaknesses or strengths identified in the Gap analysis:

Proposed ACTIONS	*GAP ANALYSIS ASPECTS*	*Timing by year's quarter*	*Responsible Unit*	*Indicator(s) / Target(s)*
Action 1 The Rectorate will instruct the Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs) to organise online or face-to-face information sessions on the guidelines and standards of ethics.	Aspect 2 – Ethical principles	Quarter 4 of Year 2021	Rectorate/ FRECs	Increase the knowledge and make academics and Research Support Officers aware of the guidelines and standards of ethics.
Action 2 The UM will set up a Research Integrity Office (RIO).	Aspect 3 – Professional responsibility	Quarter 3 of Year 2023	Rectorate	Strengthen the UM's codes and practices.
Action 3 a. RSSD will continue providing information regarding the funding for research. The Project Support Office will also continue providing information on the services that they offer. b. The UM will study the creation of a formal appeals board mechanism to resolve conflicts.	Aspect 4 – Professional attitude	a. Ongoing b. Quarter 3 of Year 2023	a. RSSD/PSO b. Rectorate	a. Increase information on the various types of funding for research. b. Enhance the resolutions of conflicts between heads and academics and non-academic researchers in their department.
Action 4 OPAD will introduce elements of the working conditions and legal obligations during the series of short courses related to Continuing Professional Development. Furthermore, the HR will circulate more information on the rights and obligations to the existing Research Support Officers via a Handbook.	Aspect 5 – Contractual and legal obligations	Quarter 3 of Year 2021	HR/OPAD	Researchers at the UM will be made more aware of their rights and obligations whilst being employed at the UM.

Action 5 The Knowledge Transfer Office (KTO) will continue organising information sessions to academics and Research Support Officers to provide information on the commercialisation and exploitation of results. The relevant procedures will be made available online.	Aspect 8 – Dissemination, exploitation of results	Quarter 2 of Year 2021	KTO	Increase the awareness of the commercialisation and exploitation of research results.
Action 6 The UM will consider the implementation of an evaluation/performance appraisal system that will also consider research performance.	Aspect 11 – Evaluation/ appraisal systems	Quarter 3 of Year 2023	Rectorate	Start the process to implement a research performance appraisal system for UM employees.
Action 7 a. The Research Support Services Directorate (RSSD) will keep on creating and continuously updating and improving the standard operating procedures for the use of equipment and facilities. b. In addition, the UM will continue making an ongoing petition to the government to commit more money for research resources.	Aspect 23 – Research Environment	a. Ongoing b. Quarter 3 of Year 2023	a. RSSD b. Rectorate	a. Make employees aware of the procedures to follow in terms of equipment and facilities b. Making more resources available for research.
Action 8 The HR Director in liaison with the Access Disability Support Unit has started to make information available on the services that are offered to employees with disability through training sessions. Through these sessions, the accessibility areas are also being communicated to all UM employees (e.g. wheelchair access).	Aspect 24 – Working conditions	Quarter 1 of Year 2021	HR/Pro-Rector for Student and Staff Affairs Outreach	Increase information about the working conditions for employees with disability.
Action 9 The UM will discuss the issue of a pension scheme for Research Support Officers with the Social Security Authorities.	Aspect 26 – Funding and salaries	Quarter 3 of Year 2023	HR/Rector	Ensure that RSOs years of employment count towards social pension schemes.

Action 10 The UM will be continuously vigilant to ensure committees and groups are gender balanced. A Gender Equality Diversification and Inclusion Plan is underway, which will be approved by Senate and Council. The Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity Committee will make available gender balance statistics on the UM website and will circulate the details to all UM employees.	Aspect 27 – Gender balance	Quarter 4 of Year 2021	Chair, Gender Equality & Sexual Diversity Committee	Emphasise the importance of gender balance across the board.
Action 11 The Professional Development Committee within the Doctoral School will offer the training programmes to all Research Support Officers who are not reading for a PhD.	Aspect 28 – Career development	Quarter 1 of Year 2021	Pro-Rector for Research & Knowledge Transfer/ Doctoral School/OPAD	The Research Support Officers will have the opportunity to attend training programmes to further develop their career.
Action 12 Calls for application for researchers shall start including a statement regarding the consideration of the mobility experience.	Aspect 18 – Recognition of mobility experience (code) and Aspect 29 – Value of Mobility	Quarter 1 of Year 2021	HR	The researchers will be made aware that the UM values the mobility experience.
Action 13 The Doctoral School and the Office for Professional Academic Development (OPAD) will market their career support services. A mailshot in liaison with HR shall be sent to all researchers twice a year. In addition, a special tab will be created on the UM website and the orientation programme shall be updated accordingly. Career information will also be provided in the handbook that will be created by HR.	Aspect 30 – Access to career advice	Quarter 3 of Year 2021	Doctoral School/OPAD/HR	Researchers will be made aware of the career support available at the UM.
Action 14 The Knowledge Transfer Office (KTO) will enhance the organisation of outreach events to raise awareness on IP matters.	Aspect 31 – Intellectual property	Quarter 2 of Year 2021	KTO	Researchers will continue to be made aware of the services offered in connection with IP.

Action	Aspect	Timeframe	Responsible	Outcome
Action 15 The Knowledge Transfer Office (KTO) and the Doctoral School will jointly instruct the Faculties to distribute information regarding co-authorship at the UM. A document shall be formulated which will possibly be transformed into a set of FAQs. Discussions on the method of how to make the researchers aware of the document/FAQs will take place.	Aspect 32 – Co-authorship	Quarter 1 of Year 2021	KTO/Doctoral School	Researchers will be made aware of the services provided in connection with the co-authorship of research.
Action 16 HR will include information regarding the teaching duties of the Research Support Officers (RSOs), which are currently assigned on an ad hoc basis, in the handbook that will be created by HR.	Aspect 33 – Teaching	Quarter 3 of Year 2021	HR	The Research Support Officers will be guided on how to take on teaching tasks as additional duties.
Action 17 HR in liaison with UMASA shall organise information sessions specific to Research Support Officers and academics, regarding complaints and appeals.	Aspect 34 – Complaints/ Appeals	Quarter 2 of Year 2022	HR/UMASA	Researchers will be made aware of the procedures to follow in the case of a complaint or appeal.
Action 18 The UM will continue giving out information to all employees as and when required, regarding their participation in decision-making activities.	Aspect 35 – Participation in decision-making bodies	Ongoing	HR/Rectorate	Researchers will continue to be informed of their representation in decision-making activities.
Action 19 HR in liaison with the Doctoral School and the Office for Professional Academic Development (OPAD) have developed courses related to mentoring, supervision, and leadership which will be offered twice a year. An email in liaison with HR is already being sent to all researchers twice a year.	Aspect 36 – Relation with supervisors, Aspect 37 – Supervision and managerial duties, Aspect 40 – Supervision	Quarter 1 of Year 2021	HR/Doctoral School/OPAD	Supervisors, Heads of Department, and Deans will improve their leadership skills.

Action 20 The HR members of staff responsible for the recruitment of Research Support Officers will start including the Head of Department in their email sent to the Principal Investigator regarding the advertising of a call for applications. In addition, a revision of the Standard Operating Procedures regarding the employment of Research Support Officers will be carried out accordingly.	Aspect 12 – Recruitment	Quarter 1 of Year 2021	HR	Increase the openness of the recruitment procedures, especially by informing the Heads of Department of the recruitment of Research Support Officers.
Action 21 Discussions will take place between HR, Finance, AIMS, and IT Services regarding a possible introduction of an online recruitment system. In the meantime, the current technologies are being used to improve the process.	Aspect 13 – Recruitment (code)	Quarter 3 of Year 2023	HR	Increase the efficiency of the recruitment process.
Action 22 There have been recent changes wherein the Principal Investigator of a research project is always present during the selection process. The standard operating procedures are being revised accordingly.	Aspect 14 – Selection (code)	Quarter 1 of Year 2021	HR	Improve the expertise of the selection board members.
Action 23 The UM will start discussions regarding the creation of a structure to employ post-docs fixed term contracts.	Aspect 21 – Postdoctoral appointments	Quarter 3 of Year 2023	Rectorate	To create an official structure for the recruitment of post-docs and enhance its awareness among researchers.
Action 24 The UM will publish and disseminate its Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) Policy.	Aspect 12 - Recruitment	Quarter 4 of Year 2022	HR	The UM will have a formal recruitment policy in line with the Charter & Code.

The establishment of an Open Recruitment Policy is a key element in the HRS4R strategy - How the UM will use the Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Toolkit and how the UM intends to implement/is implementing the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment:

The University of Malta has a whole section within the Office for Human Resources Management and Development (OHRM&D) that is responsible for the recruitment process. Guidelines for selection board members are in place and available online for all members of staff. These guidelines serve to guide the selection board members in the process of selection and encircle part of the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment. Other information on the recruitment process is available in the collective agreement and the Manual of Conduct and Procedures.

Areas that need improvement have been identified from the review of the OTM-R checklist as follows: (i) Items 1 and 9 - First and foremost, a formal policy will need to be drafted by Quarter 4 of the Year 2022. This will be made available online and will be distributed to all members of staff of the University of Malta and will include information on the working conditions; (ii) Regarding Item 4, discussions to implement a web-based tool for all stages of the recruitment process will take place during the Year 2023 as also indicated in the Action Plan (Action 22) - this will improve the efficiency of the recruitment process; (iii) Items 6, 7 and 8 - Even though an official OTM-R policy is not yet in place, the present guidelines and practices at the UM appear to encourage external candidates to apply for research posts, and the positions advertised attract researchers from abroad including those from underrepresented groups.   The UM will however need to look into the relevant data to make better assessments of the trends and issue a report accordingly. This will be the responsibility of the OHRM&D. Regarding Item 8, the UM is also presently working on a Gender Equality and Diversity Inclusion action plan and the OTM-R policy will include information on equal opportunities; (iv) Regarding Item 10, there is no mechanism in place to monitor whether the most suitable researchers apply, though the UM assesses the type of persons that apply for specific posts. The OHRM&D will start analysing the quality of the candidates that apply and will issue a report accordingly; (v) For Item 12, though the necessary details and references are included on the advert, there is no mention of the OTM-R policy since it is not yet in place. The OHRM&D will start including the information once the policy is in place; (vi) Regarding Item 18, the UM is thriving to have all committees as gender balanced as possible and the Gender Equality and Diversity Inclusion plan that the UM is presently working on will tackle the gender balance in the recruitment process; (vii) Regarding Item 21, the UM provides feedback to the interviewees if these ask for it. The OHRM&D will start considering the sending of more information to candidates on the outcome of the interview; (viii) Item 23 - The UM has an integral quality control system in place, which is carried out at each stage of the recruitment process. This is done by the central HR staff as well as by UM internal auditors. The OHRM&D will include clear objectives in this regard on the OTM-R policy.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

General overview of the expected implementation process:

The University of Malta's application for the implementation of the HRS4R took the form of a project, of which work started in January 2018. Following the submission of the application, the format of the project will be updated in order to meet the requirements of the HRS4R implementation, as indicated below.

As soon as the approval by the HRS4R review team is received by the UM, a dedicated person from the Office for Human Resources Management and Development will be appointed to coordinate the HRS4R process. The person will form part of the HRS4R working group and will be responsible for the planning, administration, and follow-up activities of the implementation process.

The actions that are laid out in the action plan will be organised by the responsible entities and will be overseen by the HRS4R working group. The work will also be overseen by the HRS4R committee that was set up during the HRS4R application phase. During the implementation phase, the HRS4R committee will take on the role of an implementation committee. The members include the Pro-Rector for Research and Knowledge Transfer as Chairperson, the Director for Human Resources Management and Development, the Deputy Director for Human Resources Management and Development, the Director of Finance, the Director for Research Support Services, the Director for Corporate Research and Knowledge Transfer, the HR Manager for Externally Funded Projects, and researchers ranging from R1 to R4. The implementation committee will keep the University of Malta's community abreast of developments in the areas of research and human resources management and development that will take place during the implementation process. The implementation committee will also keep the Rectorate, updated of the various HRS4R activities taking place. The annual report issued by the Marketing, Communications and Alumni Office, as well as other reports issued by the departments, faculties, and the Doctoral School may include information on the activities taking place.

Other researchers ranging from R1 to R4 represented on faculty boards and other committees may be involved to facilitate the dissemination of decisions taken regarding the HRS4R implementation. The committees that are of particular relevance to the HRS4R process may include the Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity Committee, the Safety Committee, the Staff Scholarship and Bursaries Committee, the Staff Affairs Committee, the ACCESS Disability Support Committee, the Committee for Safeguarding the Code of Professional Academic Conduct, the Research Fund Committee, the Professional Development Committee, and the Doctoral Academic Committee. Surveys will be conducted in order to measure and monitor the implementation progress as and when required.

Implementation Checklist:

Question	Detailed description and justification
How will the implementation committee and/or steering group regularly oversee progress?	The dedicated person from the Office for Human Resources Management and Development appointed as part of the HRS4R working group to plan and administer the activities during the implementation process will have a Gantt chart in place for guidance, and will proactively follow-up to ensure that the actions are introduced. Every three months, the HRS4R working group will then submit a report of the progress to the HRS4R implementation committee. The HRS4R implementation committee will hold meetings as and when required (at least three times a year) to discuss the progress.
How do you intend to involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?	The research community at the University of Malta will be involved in various ways. The HRS4R implementation committee, as well as the Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity Committee, the Safety Committee, the Staff Scholarship and Bursaries Committee, the Staff Affairs Committee, the ACCESS Disability Support Committee, the Committee for Safeguarding the Code of Professional Academic Conduct, the Research Fund Committee, and the Doctoral School, all include researchers ranging from R1 to R4. Working in tandem with the HRS4R working group, these may enhance the dissemination of the implementation progress by presenting the information to the University of Malta research community at Faculty level. Important information will be made available online and mail shots may be sent to all researchers as and when required by the HRS4R implementation committee.
How do you proceed with the alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R? Make sure the HRS4R is recognized in the organisation's research strategy, as the overarching HR policy.	Several practices, policies and procedures are already in line with the HRS4R. Any changes that will occur following the revision and inclusion of new practices, policies and procedures will be communicated to the University of Malta's community. The HRS4R implementation committee will be responsible for communicating the revisions and updates related to HRS4R to the Rector. Moreover, the Charter and Code will be included in the University of Malta strategy. The Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) principles will be used in information and training activities for staff working at the Office for Human Resources Management and Development as well as in training programmes for other relevant members of staff.
How will you ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?	The HRS4R action plan of the University of Malta will be approved by the Rector and will be communicated to the University of Malta community via the web page dedicated to the HRS4R. The action plan will also be

	part of the strategy of the University of Malta. Depending on the type of action, present and future activities included in the action plan will be part of the planning and reporting series at the top management, faculty or department level. Any extensive initiatives will be conducted through a specific plan with milestones, objectives, and roles.
How will you monitor progress (timeline)?	The monitoring of the progress will be linked to the targets and indicators stipulated in the HRS4R action plan. The timeline progress will be monitored by the HRS4R working group, more specifically by the dedicated person from the Office for Human Resources Management and Development appointed to coordinate the HRS4R process. The reports of the progress that are sent to the HRS4R implementation committee by the HRS4R working group will highlight the completed actions, matching the timeline with the Gantt chart. Follow up of activities may also take place at faculty or departmental level, depending on the type of action. Analysis on the timings of the activities will take place by the HRS4R working group and surveys regarding the timing of an action/actions may be conducted for all researchers as and when required.
How will you measure progress (indicators) in view of the next assessment?	The indicators stipulated in the HRS4R action plan and in the OTM-R checklist will be used as guidance to measure the implementation progress. Statistics will be issued by the HRS4R working group on behalf of the Office for Human Resources Management and Development in connection with specific indicators that involve the number of researchers for specific activities. These may be included in the annual reports issued by the various departments, faculties and other relevant entities.
	Progress will also be monitored through online surveys sent out to all researchers of the University of Malta. A survey may take the form of an employee satisfaction survey, to assess the quality and understanding of a new practice, policy or procedure. The annual report issued by the Marketing, Communications and Alumni Office, as well as other reports issued by the departments, faculties, and the Doctoral School may include accounts of the activities conducted in line with the relevant targets and indicators. The reports usually include statistics on the research activities taking place at the University of Malta.

Additional remarks/comments about the proposed implementation process:

Below is an overview of the governance structure https://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/346753/UMgovernancestructure.pdf.pdf and the organisational structure https://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/346754/UMorganogram.pdf of the University of Malta. The aim is to provide a deeper understanding of the institution embarking on the HRS4R implementation process.

The University of Malta (UM) is the sole public and highest teaching institution in Malta, with its structures being in line with the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education area. UM has a 400-year history and there are over 11,000 students including 1000 foreign/exchange students from nearly 92 different countries, following full-time or part-time degree and diploma courses. Around 3,500 students graduate each year. UM is comprised of 14 Faculties and several interdisciplinary Institutes and Centres. Each faculty, institute or centre is headed by a dean or director, who is also the chairperson for the respective faculty board. Besides the main campus, situated at Msida, there are three other campuses: at Valletta, Marsaxlokk and Gozo. As of 2020, the UM employs a total of 3,057 employees including academics, administrative, technical and industrial staff (1,903 on a full-time basis and 1,154 on a part-time basis).

As the supreme governing body of the University of Malta, the Council https://www.um.edu.mt/about/governance/council is responsible for the general administration of the University and for appointing new staff members, both local and foreign, to the various academic and administrative posts. The Senate https://www.um.edu.mt/about/governance/senate is largely responsible for the academic matters, primarily regulating studies, research, documentation and examinations at the University. Entry regulations at the University of Malta are also established by Senate. The Faculty Board directs the academic tasks of the Faculty and presents plans and proposals to the Senate and the Council. This Board determines the studies, teaching and research within the Faculty. Institutes, Centres and Schools are also governed by Boards which perform the same functions. The administrative set-up of the University of Malta involves a number of academic, administrative and technical staff members who are appointed or elected to the governing bodies of the University. Presently, the University Chancellor is Professor David J. Attard, and Professor Alfred J. Vella is Rector.

Over the past ten years, the UM has been involved as coordinator and partner in numerous EU-funded projects under various Programmes including Horizon 2020 (70 projects), Erasmus+ (114 projects), INTERREG EU-MED-ITALIA MALTA (44 projects), FP7 (47 projects), Lifelong Learning Programme (76 projects) and various other international and national programmes and initiatives. The UM is also represented in a number of European and International University networks and groups. Furthermore, the UM team is supported by a number of directorates and offices, namely (i) Research Support Services Directorate; (ii) Project Support Office; (iii) Knowledge Transfer Office; (iv) Marketing, Communications and Alumni Office; (v) Centre for Entrepreneurship and Business Incubation; (vi) Legal office; (vii) IT services; and (viii) Office for Human Resources Management and Development.

UM/4th May 2021