

University of South-Eastern Norway (USN)

HRS4R status – implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

In the 2019 GAP analysis, USN was considered to fulfil most principles through compliance with national legislation, institutional regulations and practices. The analysis also identifier several areas og improvement. Of the 40 principles, 25 were considered fully, 12 largely and 3 partly implemented; no principle was rated as not implemented.

GAP analysis 2019			
Pillar	Fully implemented	Largely implemented	Partly implemented
1. Ethical and Professional Aspects	7: research freedom, professional responsibility and attitude, contractual/legal obligations, accountability, good practice, dissemination	4: ethical principles, public engagement, non-discrimination, evaluation/appraisal systems	
2. Recruitment and Selection	6: entry standards, judging merit, CV variations, qualifications, seniority, postdoctoral appointments	4: recruitment, selection, transparency, mobility experience	
3. Working Conditions and Social Security	8: recognition of the profession, employment stability, funding and salaries, gender balance, intellectual property rights (IPR), co-authorship, complaints/appeals, decision-making participation	3: research environment, working conditions, teaching time,	3: career development, value of mobility, career advice
4. Training and Development	4: relation with supervisors, supervision and managerial duties, continuing professional development, supervision	1: access to research training and continuous development	

1. Ethical and Professional Aspects

GAP analysis 2019:

Four principles were considered largely implemented (+-): *Ethical principles (P2)*, *Public engagement (P9)*, *Non-discrimination (P10)* and *Evaluation/appraisal systems (P11)*.

Measures taken:

Ethical principles (P2)

- 2020–2021: Research-ethics e-learning module for researchers
- 2022–2025: Research-ethics webinar within the Research Leadership Programme
- 2025–2028: Organisational development project on compliance with research-ethics standards. A status report on research ethics was presented to the Research and Innovation Committee in September 2025; the Committee endorsed mandatory ethics training for staff and the establishment of a local Research Ethics Committee.

Public engagement (P9)

2020–2021: Strengthening USN’s public visibility and internal training opportunities in research dissemination, the latter further supported through the EDUC Alliance

Non-discrimination (P10)

2020–2021: Online information translated into English and Norwegian language courses made available

2022–2025: Revision of the USN Language Policy

Evaluation/appraisal systems (P11)

2020–2021: Development and piloting of new templates for employee appraisal interviews tailored to researchers at different career stages

2022–2025: Implementation of new templates for employee appraisal interviews

Remaining gap 2026:

USN is considered to mostly fulfil the principles under this pillar through compliance with national legislation, institutional regulations and practices.

As promoting awareness of research ethics and preventing discrimination in all its forms is an ongoing responsibility, no major additional measures are deemed necessary under this pillar. USN has a well-established framework for research ethics, including a Research Integrity Committee, an active Committee for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion with responsibility for action planning, and an Open Science Policy. A comprehensive e-learning programme was assessed in 2024–25 but not adopted.

Further efforts related to ethics training and the local Research Ethics Committee are addressed through the 2025–2028 Action Plan.

2. Recruitment and Selection

GAP analysis 2019:

Four principles were considered largely implemented (+-): *Recruitment (P13)*, *Selection (P14)*, *Transparency (P15)* and *Recognition of mobility experience (P18)*.

Measures taken:

Recruitment (P13)

2019: Adoption of the Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment (OTMR) policy, highlighting the objectives already embedded in the Personnel Policy Guidelines and national legislation

2020–2021: Revision of templates for job announcements and interview guidelines

2022–2025: Strengthening of strategic recruitment of researchers and clarification of research-group affiliation in job announcements

2025–2028: Implementation of the USN Competence Assessment Matrix (USN-CAM), aligned with the national [NOR-CAM](#) criteria and the European CoARA reform of research assessment. Consideration of how to use the EURAXESS portal more efficiently. Implementation of new recruitment guidelines for PhD and postdoctoral positions.

Selection (P14)

2020–2021: Strengthening of training for appointing bodies

Transparency (P15)

2020–2021: Improvement of the English webpage explaining the recruitment and selection process. Improvement of communication with, and information flow to, applicants during the recruitment process.

Recognition of mobility experience (P18)

2020–2021: More explicit recognition of mobility experience, including international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary mobility, in recruitment, appraisal and career development processes

Remaining gap 2026:

USN is considered to mostly fulfil the principles under this pillar through compliance with national legislation, institutional regulations and practices. The remaining gaps are considered minor.

HR Advisers offer dedicated planning, recruitment and selection support to dept. managers and project managers. USN has developed comprehensive webpages providing international applicants with information about the recruitment and selection process, as well as practical guidance on relocating to Norway. The USN-CAM, which ensures a broad qualitative assessment of researchers' qualifications, has been developed and is implemented.

The automatic publication of vacancies on EURAXESS remains to be explored, while the recognition of mobility experience as a merit is still largely based on informal practice.

3. Working Conditions and Social Security

GAP analysis 2019:

Three principles were considered largely implemented (+-): *Research environment (P23)*, *Working conditions (P24)* and *Teaching (P33)*, while *Career development (P28)*, *Value of mobility (P29)* and *Access to career advice (P30)* were only partly implemented (-+).

Measures taken:

Research environment (P23)

2020–2021: Strengthening of administrative support for research projects

Working conditions (P24)

2020–2021: Revision of the Personnel Policy Guidelines to include measures on sabbatical leave (prolonged)

2022–2025: Strengthening of onboarding. Establishment of the Stipendiary and Postdoctoral Organisation (USN SPO), with annual gatherings. Follow-up of working environment surveys in the Working Environment Committee. Development of an introductory course in Norwegian culture and working life for international researchers.

2025–2028: Exploration of how USN may establish arrangements for sabbatical leave. Strengthening of psychosocial working conditions for international PhD Research Fellows. Further improvement of onboarding for PhD Research Fellows.

Teaching time (P33)

2020–2021: Revision of the Guidelines for Work Planning, clarifying research-time allocations per job category and the teaching/research balance

Career development (P28)

2020–2021: Development of a USN career policy for researchers, including mobility opportunities and arrangements for sabbatical leave and dual careers (prolonged). Development of templates for individual career plans. Exploration of IT tools for career progression (Vitae). Establishment of intranet webpages with career information. Internal assessment survey of working conditions for early-stage researchers. Development of an early-stage career programme for talented researchers (prolonged).

2022–2025: Development of guidelines for research groups and research centres

Value of mobility (P29)

2020–2021: Establishment of a uniform practice for financing research mobility (implemented only for PhD Research Fellows). Increased use of the EURAXESS portal.

2022–2025: Establishment of the USN Mobility team (supporting incoming and outgoing researchers) and informative webpages about mobility

Access to career advice (P30)

2020–2021: Establishment of a career portal on the intranet, assessment of the career advice needs of early-stage researchers and provision of counselling

2022–2025: Establishment of career counselling (prolonged)

2025–2028: Organisational development project to strengthen career services for PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers. Piloting of career days and career planning webinars.

Remaining gap 2026:

Overall, USN has a solid framework for ensuring good working conditions and is considered to mostly fulfil the principles under this pillar through compliance with national legislation, institutional regulations and practices.

Since 2019, administrative support for research has been strengthened, especially post-award administrative support, while the Guidelines for Work Planning have made the allocation of research time fair and predictable.

Over recent years, USN has significantly strengthened its Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) system, enhancing both reporting procedures and training activities in close cooperation with the occupational health and safety representatives. Working environment surveys are conducted every three years across the university and annually among doctoral candidates. However, in line with national survey findings, early-stage researchers at USN report a more challenging psychosocial work environment than permanently employed researchers. This area will therefore remain a priority and will be addressed in cooperation with the Stipendiary and Postdoctoral Organisation (SPO).

The original plan to develop a separate USN career policy has been discontinued. Instead, career and competence development will be integrated into USN's new strategic planning process and supported

through various career development programmes, such as INRESCOS, the mentoring programme for early-stage researchers, Research Project Management course, the Doctoral Supervision Training Programme and the Research Leadership Programme.

Career guidance services are thoroughly assessed and in process of being implemented, although not yet fully institutionalised, while regulations governing sabbatical leave are awaiting formal adoption.

4. Training and Development

GAP analysis 2019:

One principle was considered largely implemented (+-): *Access to research training and continuous development (P39)*.

Measures taken:

Access to research training and continuous development (P39)

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| 2020–2021: | Development of a comprehensive e-learning programme for researchers covering ethics, IPR, open access and publication (first prolonged, then put on hold following assessment; only the research-ethics module was realised). |
| 2022–2025: | Development Research Leadership Programme |
| 2025–2028: | Annual Research Project Management course
Establishment of a Mentoring Programme for Early-Stage Researchers |

Remaining gap 2026:

USN now offers a range of professional development programmes for researchers. Doctoral candidates have access to several national research schools, and USN leads the Industrial Research School in Complex Systems (INRESCOS), which strengthens links between early-stage researchers and industry through internship opportunities. In addition, USN has established a Mentoring Programme for Early-Stage Researchers, a Research Project Management course for project managers, and a Research Leadership Programme for leaders of research groups, research centres and innovation centres.

Going forward, the focus will be on integrating these initiatives into a more coherent and systematic framework to maximise synergies and further strengthen the programmes in collaboration with national and international partner institutions.

The comprehensive e-learning programme was reviewed in 2025 and subsequently put on hold, as the anticipated benefits were not considered proportionate to the required investment of resources and effort. A more pragmatic, needs-based approach, centred on targeted modules embedded within existing development programmes, has been identified as the preferred way forward.

Overall picture and where to focus next

While many of the principles were considered largely fulfilled through compliance with national legislation, institutional regulations and established practices in 2019, the GAP analysis also identified several areas for improvement. Since then, the Action Plans have addressed weaknesses related to recruitment, onboarding, working conditions, research support, access to training and development, and career guidance.

USN has established a well-functioning recruitment and assessment system (USN-CAM), expanded its portfolio of training and development opportunities for researchers at all career stages and introduced a range of measures aimed at improving working conditions, many of which are now becoming institutionalised. Tailored templates for performance and development reviews, as well as individual career development plans, have been developed and are being implemented across the institution.

Career guidance services, career development courses and career days for early-stage researchers have also been introduced. In parallel, research support services have been strengthened considerably, particularly in the post-award phase.

Furthermore, USN has established a dedicated organisation, the Stipendiary and Postdoctoral Organisation (SPO), representing PhD candidates, postdoctoral researchers and other early-stage researchers. This organisation serves as an important voice for the target group and has become a valued dialogue partner in a range of institutional processes, including the HRS4R process.

Some initiatives have proven more challenging to realise than originally anticipated. These include the development of a comprehensive e-learning programme for staff training, the establishment of a holistic institutional career policy, and the introduction of institutional schemes for mobility funding.

In addition, current financial constraints mean that new programmes, services and initiatives supporting research and researchers often need to be developed within existing budget frameworks.

Despite considerable engagement and a wide range of academic and social initiatives within the PhD programmes, reaching early-stage researchers across campuses remains challenging. Participation in institution-wide activities is often limited, reflecting a broader challenge also observed in staff training and development initiatives more generally.

Key priorities for the coming period include:

- Further strengthening onboarding and training opportunities for newly recruited researchers, including replacing the previously shelved e-learning programme with targeted and cost-effective learning modules integrated into existing courses and training activities.
- Following up the comprehensive plan already developed for the establishment and further development of career services for researchers.
- Embedding career and competence development within the implementation of USN's new institutional strategy for 2027–2035.
- Establishing more comprehensive institutional arrangements for mobility funding and sabbatical leave.
- Ensuring that all researchers are offered regular performance and development reviews and individual career development plans.
- Following up the findings from assessments and implementing actions aimed at further improving the psychosocial work environment for early-stage researchers.
- Further develop career enhancing development programs both internationally and digitally