

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

# HR Excellence in Research Award

Human Resources Strategy for Researchers



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# Introduction to the HRS4R

The European Charter and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers are frequently recommended practice guidelines for the employment and development of researchers. In order to facilitate the implementation of the above mentioned documents, the European Commission grants the 'HR Excellence in Research Award'. This logo is awarded to research institutions and funding agencies making significant progress in implementing the Charter and Code.

Fostering favourable working conditions as well as high-quality research and education, Board of Rectors of NCU decided to begin the implementation process of the Charter and Code's principles, so that NCU would strive towards removing barriers on researchers' mobility and foster international collaboration within the European Research Area.

The implementation process which leads to the Award consists of five steps and though it is in full development it will take couple of years more.



# Five steps of implementation process

**1**

NCU conducted an internal *GAP analysis* of how the University is performing against four areas outlined in the Charter and Code (standard template):

- Ethical and Professional Aspects
- Recruitment
- Working Conditions and Social Security
- Training

**2**

NCU publishes its 'Human Resources Strategy for Researchers' as well as clear information about it on its website, in a publicly accessible place, both in Polish and English language, and provides the link to the European Commission for posting on the EURAXESS website. Presented documents summarise the main results of the internal gap analysis. The action plan includes clearly assigned responsibilities for the different actions with a set timeline for their implementation.

**3**

in this step European Commission 'acknowledges' that NCU has adopted Human Resources Strategy for Researchers. This acknowledgement gives the University the right to use the 'HR Excellence in Research' award.

**4**

NCU implements its HR strategy and conducts a self-assessment within the framework of its existing internal quality assurance mechanisms. This self-assessment will be undertaken every second year after the HR award.

**5**

NCU drafts a short report, showing the progress made towards the objectives of its HR Strategy for Researchers and its compliance with the principles of the Charter & Code. The University will undergo an external evaluation by peer reviewers, either on site or remotely. External evaluation will be conducted at least every four years after the HR award.

# Implementation process timeline



# About Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (NCU) is one of the biggest universities in Poland, currently comprising 17 faculties (including 3 medical faculties at Collegium Medicum UMK in Bydgoszcz). Its diverse community consists of almost 30000 students on graduate and postgraduate studies and 4300 of staff on both campuses. The University was established in 1945 and can proud itself on 200 000 of alumni.

Nicolaus Copernicus University, as the best university in the Kuyavian and Pomeranian Voivodeship, is one of the five best universities in Poland. NCU participates in the staff exchange both on national and international level.







NCU has state-of-the-art research infrastructure including the National Laboratory of Atomic, Molecular and Optical Physics (FAMO), the Center for Quantum Optics and the Interdisciplinary Center for Modern Technologies to name but a few, as well as modern teaching facilities comprising, among others, Collegium Humanisticum and the brand new University Sports Centre. The Centre for Astronomy in Piwnice near Toruń houses a unique 32-meter radio telescope. Spitsbergen (in the Arctic Sea) is home to NCU Polar Station. The University has also organized the Polish Historical Mission at the University of Würzburg. NCU researchers can boast a number of spectacular successes which include, among others, the design and construction of an Optical Coherence Tomography instrument, an ultra-modern device for medical eye examinations.



# Approach

In accordance with *Strategy of development and internationalisation of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń*, the Board of Rectors decided to apply for the HR Excellence in Human Resources Logo in 2015. NCU believes that adopting the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Charter & Code) will help to create a friendly research environment at the NCU. An environment in which researchers can exercise their rights and obligations to fully integrate with the European Research Area. As the confirmation of our full support for the Charter & Code NCU has signed the Declaration of Commitment to adopt the European Charter and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The process prior to application for HR Excellence in Human Resources Logo required coordinated work performed by many representatives of the University environment. At the commencement of the process, the NCU management has created a Working Group which consisted of staff members, representing management and administration. The main objective of this Working Group was to create a strategy to enhance full compliance of the internal NCU regulations with the Charter & Code. Creating of the strategy took place in full cooperation with the representatives of the academic Staff.

The Working Group conducted an internal analysis based on template *Example of a standard template for the internal analysis* and consultation during the procedure, however the original order and division used in the template has been changed as it will be shown further as the four key development areas. The methodology of the assignment required preparation of national and institutional rules regarding recruitment, employment, working conditions and training of researchers. Legal and functional analysis of the existing rules was based on the guidelines provided by the Charter & Code and their compliance with the overall strategy of the institution.

The Working Group performed a thorough GAP Analysis. It has been found that the national and institutional rules were generally in line with the principles of the Charter & Code. Especially on the ground of the responsibilities of the institution. However, few gaps were found and an appropriate approach was discussed. All of the findings and suggestions of improvements were presented and discussed with the NCU management and researchers' representatives.



# Procedure of creating the Gap Analysis and Action Plan

In Polish legal reality University is an independent and self-governed institution. Independent within the legal frames created for the public entities. Self-governed by the scientists and PhD students, who are the members of the collective body of the University Senate, and who elect the Board of Rectors among themselves. Also self-governments of students and PhD students play significant role in everyday academic life. And effective administration is necessary to exercise that power.

Board of Rectors of NCU decided to begin the implementation process of the Charter and Code's principles, so that NCU would strive towards removing barriers on researchers' mobility and foster international collaboration within the European Research Area. Working Group, consisting of: Rector Magnificus, Rector's Advisor for Research and International Affairs, Vice-Chancellor, Head of International Research Office, as well as experienced and young researchers from different faculties appointed by heads of faculties, was constituted. The International Research Projects Office was made responsible for the organization process and administrative support of the Working Group.

For the first meeting of the Working Group and the stakeholders, which took place on March 10th 2015, the Rector's Advisor for Research and International Affairs invited representatives of the faculties, scientists and PhD students' representatives, but also representatives of the HR Office, International Research Project Office, Vice-Chancellor. Before that meeting administrative support has filled the standard template for the internal analysis with the legal data. Invited stakeholders were to consult the legal rules and their actual functioning in everyday academic life. All of their opinions were recognised in line of creating conclusions from the Gap Analysis.

In the first step a standard template for the internal analysis was presented with most legal regulations filled in. It was handed to the gathered and an introduction on the HRS4R was presented. The first discussion on the subject took place the same day. In the following months a series of over 150 consultations with scientists and self-government of PhD students and administration were conducted. Mostly in personal conversations with Working Group members, but also by emails. Most of the remarks made by the stakeholders were made on the functioning of the legal regulations in reality. Several recommendations on the action plan were made.

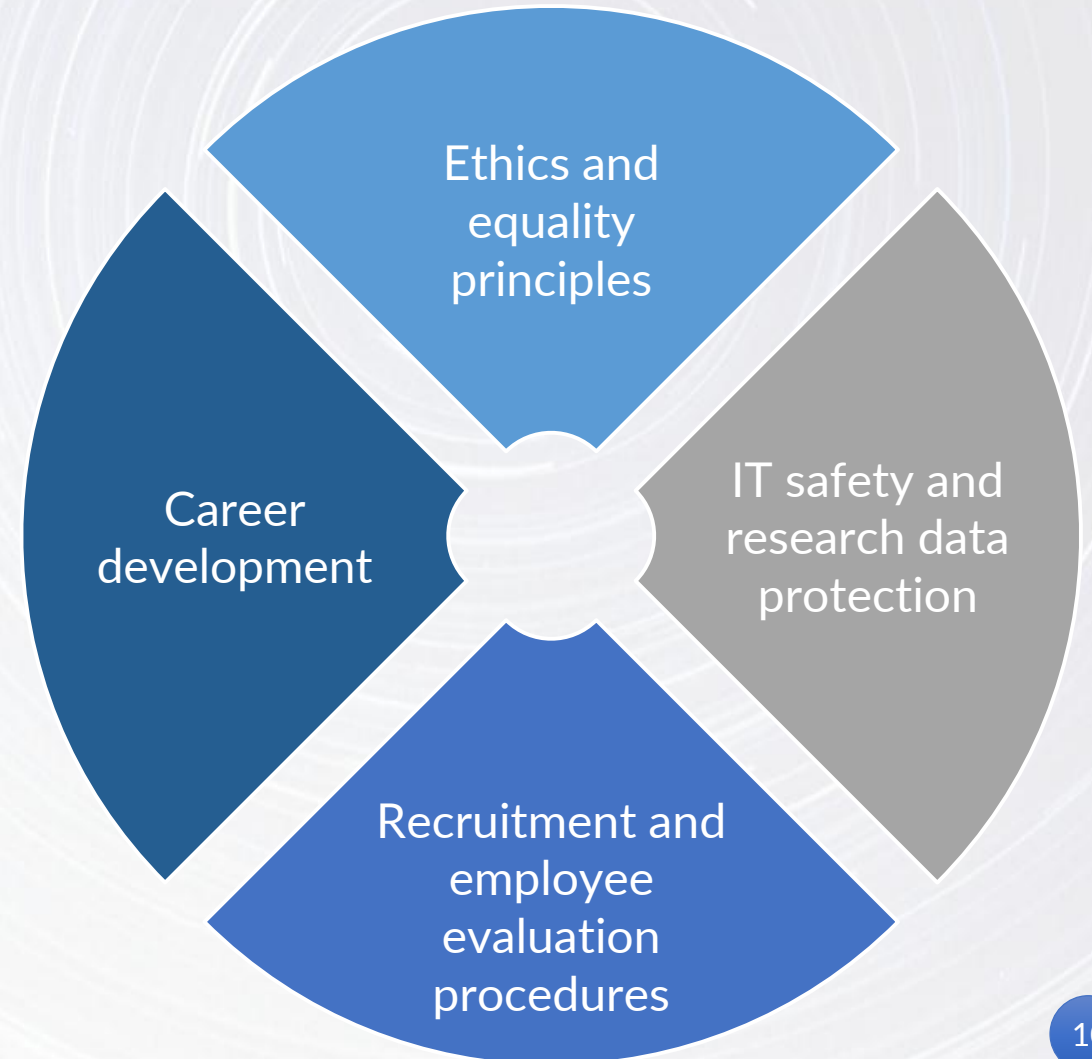
After a thorough legal and organisational analysis of compliance with Charter & Code, gaps were identified in four key areas and proposition of the action plan was made. People responsible for the actions assisted in completion of the time schedule and work plan.

In July 2015 a declaration of support for the Charter and Code was published and the work on creating an action plan was entering the final stage.

In August 2015 a final version of the HRS4R was presented to the stakeholders. All of the propositions were accepted.

# Main Areas of Development

Based on the internal analysis, the NCU management and the Working Group have recognised that the gaps - points requiring further regulations, concentrate within four key development areas. The key development areas of improvement are as presented below:





KEY DEVELOPMENT AREA	ACTIONS REQUIRED	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Ethics and equality principles	Ethics and good practice Code of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.	I quarter of 2017	Code of Ethics Commission
2. IT safety and research data protection	Creating of the Protection of the NCU web policy. Requires additional funding.	I quarter of 2017	University IT Center (UCI)
3. Recruitment and employee evaluation procedures	3a. Modification of the employee evaluation procedure, unification of the assessment questionnaire – It will recognize diverse qualifications and experience of researchers, including mobility, non-formal qualifications and cross-sector experience.  This action is a part of a bigger project, which is already in preparation.	III quarter of 2016	University Coordinator on Quality of Teaching
	3b. Introducing amendments to the NCU Resolution on human resources policy and academic staff recruitment (Resolution no 9 made on 22/01/2013) – Recruitment procedures will recognize diverse qualifications and experience of researchers, including mobility, non-formal qualifications and cross-sector experience	IV quarter of 2016	NCU Human Resources Office
4. Career development	Developing a strategy for specific career development for researchers at all stages of their career.	II quarter of 2017	NCU Career Office and Human Resources Office

# 1. Ethical and equality principles

**Ethical and equality principles** – this is the area which the *Example of a standard template for the internal analysis* describes in six different points:

- Ethical principles (2),
- Professional responsibility (3)
- Professional attitude (4),
- Accountability (6),
- Good practice in research (7),
- Non-discrimination (10),
- Gender balance (27).

The area concerns ethical and professional practices as well as fundamental ethical standards of conducting research, such as avoiding plagiarism of any kind or conform the principle of intellectual property. We agree with the idea that researchers need to be aware that they are accountable towards their employers, funders or other related public or private institutions and towards society as a whole. Part of that responsibility is an obligation to adopt safe working practices including taking the necessary precautions for health and safety.

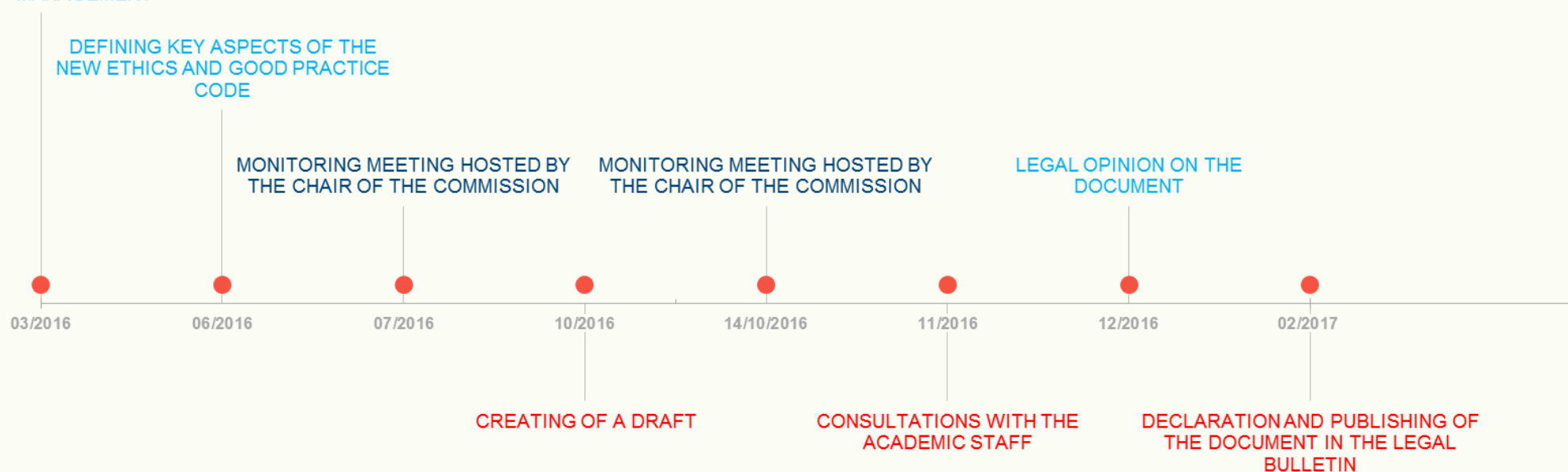
We have also agreed that the recruitment and worker evaluation procedures are mostly conducted by the fellow researchers. As the national and internal regulations are very precise about non-discrimination principles, it is highly important for fellow researchers not to discriminate against researchers in any way based on gender, age, ethnic, national or social origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, disability, political opinion, social or economic condition.

All the above rules and statements relate to the obligations of researchers, which are generally declared in national acts, although their fulfilment depends mostly on the researchers and their self-government. Therefore, it was decided that these principles can be regulated by a single internal act established by the Senate of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, which is a collective body of representatives of researchers and administration. The regulation to be introduced is the Ethics and good practice Code of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. It will be announced in the first quarter of 2017.



ESTABLISHING CODE OF ETHICS  
COMMISSION CHAIRED BY THE  
VICE-RECTOR FOR STUDENT  
AFFAIRS AND STAFF  
MANAGEMENT

## Action 1. Ethics and good practice code of NCU



It is in the best interest of scientist themselves to follow rules regarding professional responsibility and professional attitude. However polish law and NCU's internal rules, do not obligate researchers to be familiar with and follow the rules regarding professional responsibility and attitude.

We do not possess any institutional regulations or code of good practice regarding non-discrimination or gender balance in recruitment among researchers and management, both at faculty and central level. The Board of Rectors proposed creating of the code of ethics for the researchers of the NCU. The responsible body is Code of Ethics Commission, chaired by the Vice-Rector for Student Affairs and Staff Management. Publication of the document is scheduled for the first quarter of 2017.

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\*\*MONITORING ACTIONS MARKED NAVY BLUE

## 2. IT safety and research data protection

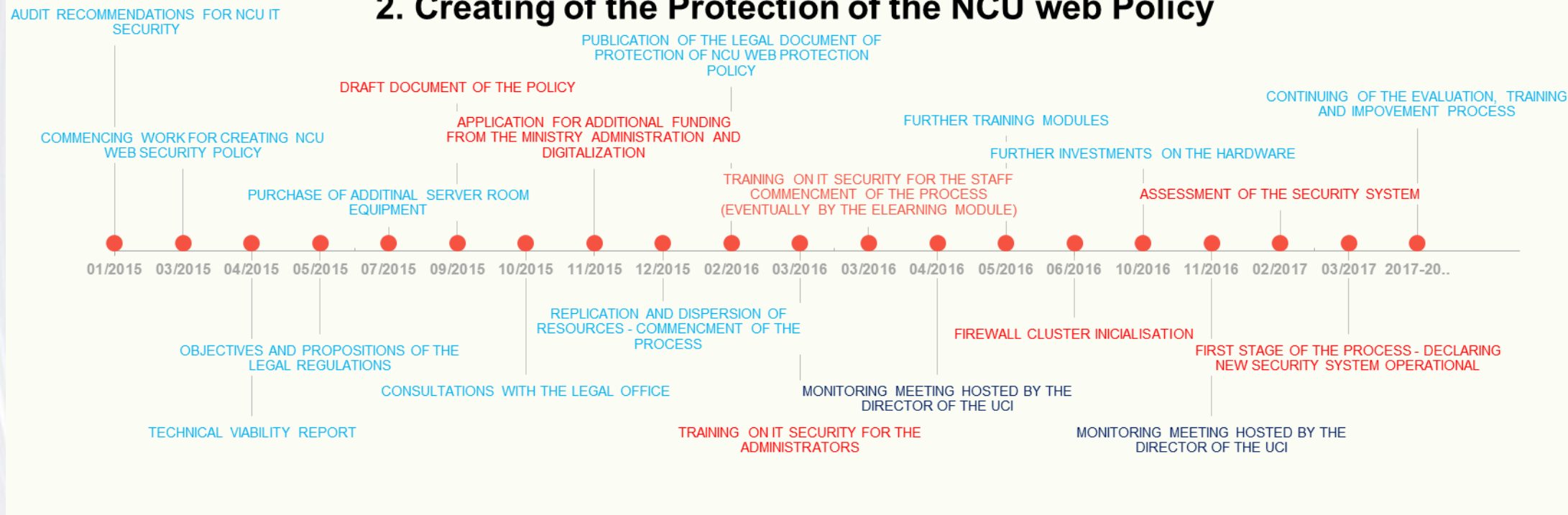
IT safety and research data protection - the *Example of a standard template for the internal analysis* in point 7, describes an obligation of researchers, who should adopt safe working practices, including taking precautions for recovery from information technology disasters, e.g. by preparing proper back-up strategies. Researchers should be familiar with the current national legal requirements regarding data protection and confidentiality protection requirements, and undertake all necessary steps to fulfil them at all times.

The Working Group identified this as an area requiring development. In the face of rapid evolvement of information technologies our national and institutional regulations and strategies are insufficient to provide proper protection.

Therefore, it was decided to support the creation of a *Protection of NCU web policy* within the *HRS4R*. This document is already in preparation, but the fulfilment of the data protection policy requires certain investments in hardware and software. Significant financial cost is the main obstacle to make the policy fully operational. At the moment NCU is applying for external funds to cover these costs. The responsible unit is the University IT Center (UCI) and the implementation of the system described by the policy is scheduled for the first quarter of 2017.



## 2. Creating of the Protection of the NCU web Policy



As the result of the audit of IT infrastructure security, administered by the Ministry of Treasury, recommendations were made. One of those recommendations was creating the policy of NCU web security. This action defines: creation of protective legal procedures, purchase of necessary equipment, staff training, continuous supervision of the system. The most crucial aspect is proper training, not only for the web administrators, but also for the academic staff. The scheme above shows only initial phase, since monitoring and improvement is a continuous process. We would like to point that this action was launched and scheduled independently from the HRS4R, but stays in line with the principles of the latter. The unit conducting the action is University IT Centre, the responsible person is the Director of the UCI.

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## 3. Recruitment and evaluation procedures

Recruitment and evaluation procedures - this is the area which the *Example of a standard template for the internal analysis* describes in five different points;

- Judging merit (16),
- Variation in the chronological order of CVs (17),
- Recognition of mobility experience (18),
- Recognition of qualifications (19),
- Value of mobility (29).

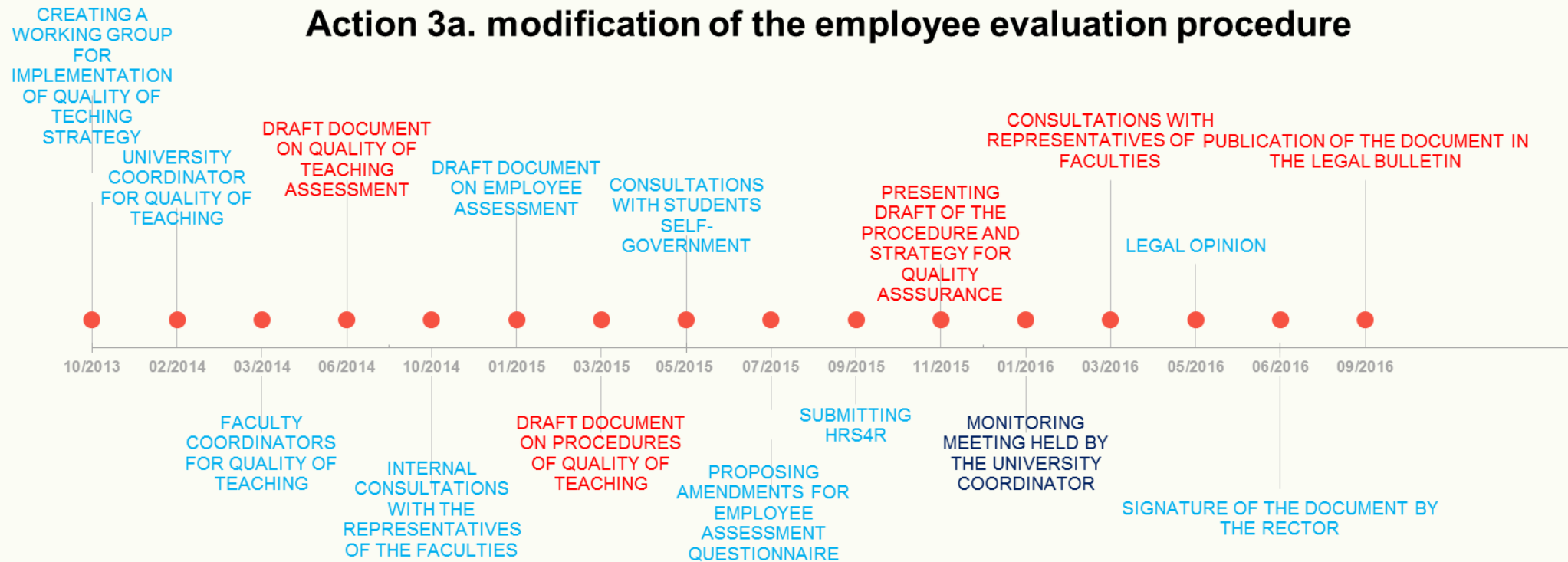
The Working Group has identified that the recruitment as well as the employee assessment process at NCU does not recognise the whole range of experience of researchers. It was agreed that during recruitment and **employee** assessment the importance of bibliometric indices should be properly balanced within a wider range of evaluation criteria, such as teaching, supervision, teamwork, knowledge transfer, management of research, innovation and public awareness activities. International and cross-sector mobility should also be recognised and appreciated as well as non-formal qualifications. Chronological breaks and variations in CVs will not be considered a flaw.

It was decided that this area will be regulated in two manners:

- a) employee evaluation procedure will be modified, assessment questionnaire will be expanded and will take all the above criteria into account. It will recognize diverse qualifications and experience of researchers, including mobility and cross-sector experience. A single questionnaire will be prepared and a new rating will be settled for all of the 17 faculties of NCU. Creating of a new assessment tool is a part of a bigger project on ensuring quality, implemented by the NCU Coordinator on Quality of Teaching. Introduction of this tool is planned for the third quarter of 2016;
- b) these principles will be also recognized and appreciated in recruitment criteria. Appropriate amendments will be introduced to the *NCU Resolution on human resources policy and academic staff recruitment* (Resolution no. 9 made on 22/01/2013). The responsible unit is the Human Resource Department and the scheduled amendment will be announced in the fourth quarter of 2016.



## Action 3a. modification of the employee evaluation procedure

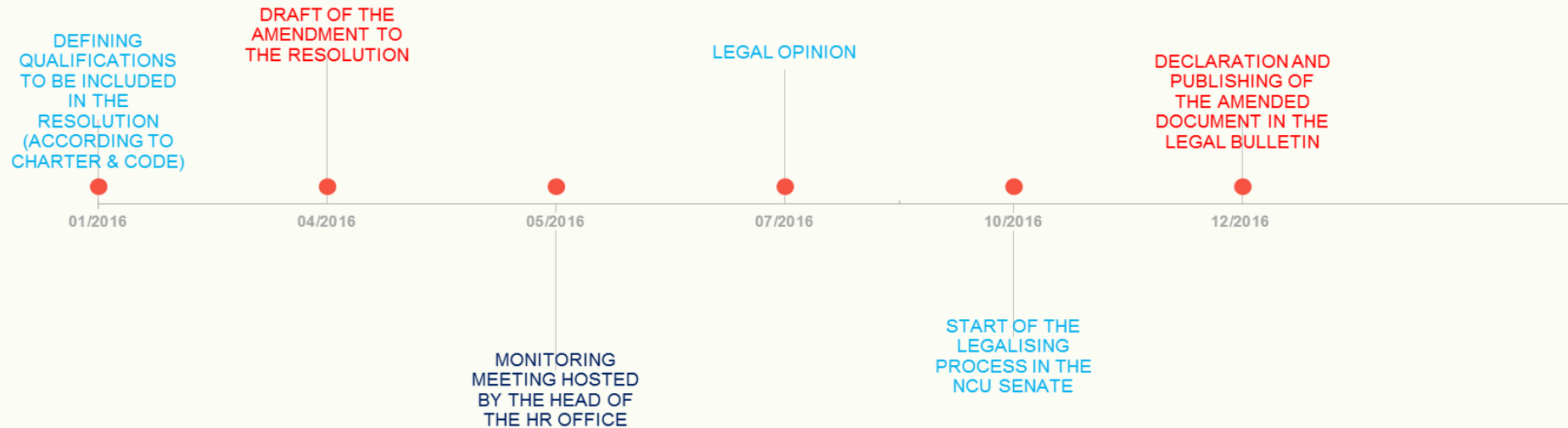


Preparation of uniform employee evaluation card (across all faculties and scientific fields), which would include and award activity in many different fields of academia and industry, social, international and inter-sectoral mobility. The University Coordinator on Quality of Teaching is a person in charge of Improving Quality of Teaching Standards project. Action proposed by the Working Group, which introduces modifications to the employee evaluation procedures, stays within the project run by the University Coordinator on Quality of Teaching. This action was launched and scheduled independently from the HRS4R, but stays in line with the principles of the latter.

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### Action 3b. Introducing amendments to the NCU Resolution on HR policy



Current employees evaluation and recruitment systems are inconsistent and diversified. They do not recognize and reward skills and competences obtained outside academia, during international and inter-sectoral mobility. They do not value achievements other than academic. Importance of bibliometric indicators should be appropriately balanced with broader scope of criteria, e.g. teaching, scientific supervision, team work, knowledge transfer, research management, innovations, dissemination of scientific awareness in society. These values should be taken into consideration during recruitment procedure. In case of candidates with background in industry it is recommended to pay special attention to their input in patents, evaluations and inventions.

In this action appropriate amendments will be introduced to the *NCU Resolution on human resources policy and academic staff recruitment* (Resolution no. 9 made on 22/01/2013). The responsible unit is the Human Resource Department and the scheduled amendment will be announced in the fourth quarter of 2016.

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## 4. Career development

**Career development** - this is the area which the *Example of a standard template for the internal analysis* describes in two points:

- Career development (28),
- Access to career advice (30).

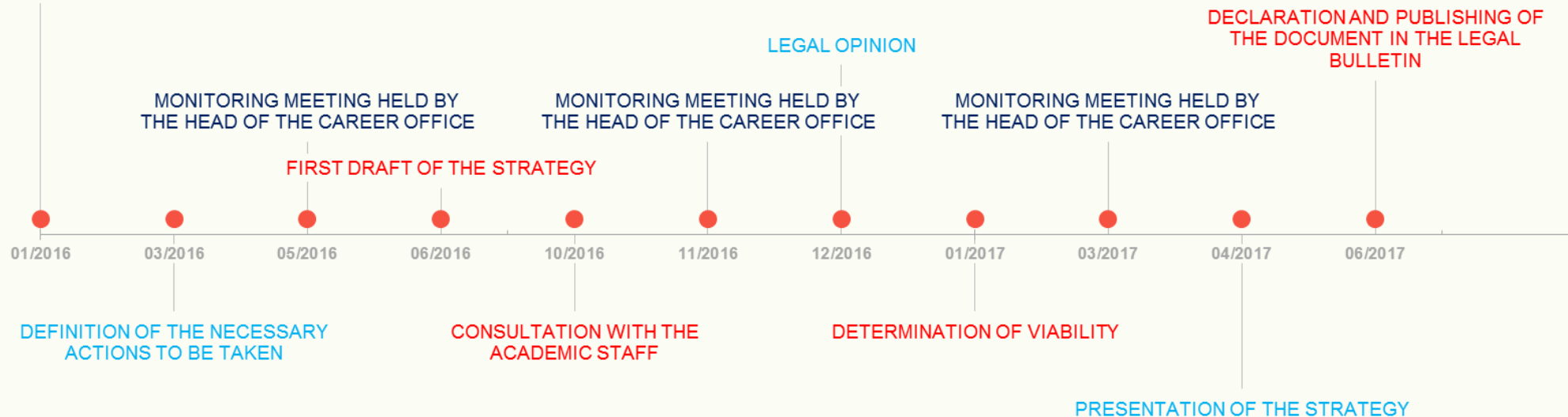
The working group agreed with the objectives that employers should prepare a career development strategy for researchers at all stages of their career, regardless of their contractual situation. Furthermore, career advice and job placement assistance, either in the institutions concerned, or through collaboration with other structures, should be offered to researchers. Till now, only students, graduates and PhD students of NCU were offered career advice, training and internships. We have recognised the need of developing such services also for employed researchers.

Therefore, it was decided to support the creation of a strategy for specific career development for researchers at all stages of their career. The crucial point will be developing a new training and career advise offer for academic staff. This process will be expensive and requires additional funding. Responsible units: NCU Career Service and Human Resources Department – introduction of this strategy is scheduled for the second quarter of 2017.



## Action 4. creating strategy for career development

ANALYSIS OF THE NEEDS/  
 DEFINING OBJECTIVES OF THE  
 STRATEGY



According to The Charter and Code, employer should ensure access to career advice and job search assistance for researchers on every step of their scientific career, independently on type of their employment. Currently NCU does not offer such services.

The Rector's Advisor for Research and International Affairs proposed expanding services of Career Office to training, advice and mentoring of researchers, preferably in cooperation with HR Department. Objective of the action is creating a strategy for specific career development for researchers at all stages of their career. People in charge of the action are Head of the Career Office and Head of the HR Office, supervised by the Rector's Advisor for Research and International Affairs. Publishing of the strategy is scheduled for second quarter 2017.

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# Gantt chart

Key development areas	2015				2016												2017												
	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1. Ethics and equality principles								█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█									
2. IT safety and research data protection	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█									
3. Recruitment and employee evaluation procedures																													
3a. Modification of the employee evaluation procedure	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█															
3b. Amendments to the NCU Resolution on human resources policy and academic staff recruitment					█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█													
4. Career development					█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█							

# Monitoring of the actions

Time line of the actions was thoroughly discussed with the responsible persons, who have confirmed their project routine and provided more information about milestones and indicators of success. Actions are planned with all precautions, work plan provides milestones, controlling measures and risk management procedures.

Monitoring procedure includes:

- Monitoring meetings hosted by the people in charge of the actions, at least once every six months. Working Group members will take part and assess the progress. In time schedules marked navy blue.
- Yearly report on activity of the unit, which is a normal practice at the NCU and provides information also on extracurricular projects, like actions listed in the Action Plan. As part of the normal institutional controlling routine is not shown in the schedule.
- On January 2018 an internal audit will be held by the internal auditor of the NCU, supported by the Working Group members and supervised by the Vice-Rector for Student Affairs and Staff Management. Audit report will cover completion of the Action Plan and will be published on the web site.
- Beginning 2020, an external auditor will be invited to evaluate on progress made towards the objectives of NCU HR Strategy for Researchers and its compliance with the principles of the Charter & Code. This procedure will be repeated every four years. Report will be published on the web site.