1. Summary of HR Excellence in Research Strategy and Action Plan

With this application, the UMCG hopes to acquire the HR logo. To this end, we have compared the fundamental principles of the Charter with the current practices of the UMCG and examined to what extent these match with the ideas of the researchers we interviewed. We have formulated an action plan based on these interviews, combined with our assessment of the extent to which these principles, the relevant legislation and regulations and our own policy documents apply to the UMCG.

In short, the UMCG focuses on actions related to researchers and the UMCG as employer. The UMCG's HR Excellence in Research Action Plan focuses on the following areas:

Actions focused on researchers are based on the following principles:

- Improving communication to researchers

- Making legal requirements explicit

- Emphasizing the researcher's accountability

- Broader publication and dissemination of results

Actions focused on the UMCG as employer:

- Actions in the field of recruitment and mobility of professional career development, including teaching

- Stimulating supervision

2. Context of HR Excellence in Research

In 2005, the European Commission published *The European Charter for Researchers* and *The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*.[1] The Charter and the Code contain 40 principles that define the responsibilities, rights and obligations of employers, funding bodies, and researchers themselves. The Charter and Code comprise the following sections:

- **Ethical and professional aspects** such as academic freedom, accountability, data management, and intellectual property rights
- **Recruitment**: transparency of the process, recognizing the value of mobility
- **Working conditions and social security**: research environment, gender balance, stability/permanence of employment, and participation in decision-making bodies
- **Training**

It is the EC's intention that all European research institutions and universities align their HR policy and practice with the 40 principles, with a view to ensuring that Europe remains an attractive work environment for researchers from all over the world. Important elements in this include open

---

[1] http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/brochure_rights/eur_21620_en-nl.pdf

recruitment, an attractive work environment, the portability of research grants, and career opportunities.

The European Commission has introduced the HR Excellence in Research logo, which it awards to institutions that demonstrate that they endorse the principles and pay continuous attention to improving and implementing them.

In view of the international context of the University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG) we wish to implement these principles in close collaboration with the University of Groningen. The University has therefore initiated the application procedure for the HR Excellence in Research logo. In order to qualify for the logo, the UMCG must show that it is working to align its policy with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (hereafter 'the Charter and Code'). Applying for the logo is a voluntary process that also brings a number of benefits, for example:

a) An improvement in HR strategy for researchers, and
b) A simplified procedure for individual researchers applying for European research funding.

There are five steps in the application procedure for the HR Excellence in Research logo:

1. The institution conducts an internal analysis of its policy and practices, including consultations with a random sample of researchers and managers.
2. The institution draws up and publishes an HR strategy for researchers (i.e. HR objectives and a related action plan), based on the conclusions of the internal analysis.
3. The EC acknowledges that the institution fulfils the requirements and grants permission for the use of the HR Excellence in Research logo.
4. After two years, the institution carries out a self-assessment of its implementation of the action plan.
5. External evaluation four years after the logo has been awarded by the EC.

When considering an application, the EC does not assess the details of the proposed HR strategy or the current situation; instead, it assesses the process and the approach to the process. Formally, the two organizations submit separate applications. However, in areas where the UMCG and the University of Groningen are clearly inter-related, the two institutions will as much as possible be using the same text.

3.   UMCG work method for application

Although the University of Groningen and the University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG) submit separate applications to the European Commission for the HR Excellence in Research logo, they prepared the application together.

For this purpose, the Board of the University of Groningen and the Board of Management of the UMCG set up a steering group in July 2013. Led by the University's HR Director, the group comprised the Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, the Deputy Dean of Research at the UMCG, and the Managing Director of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences.

The University's HR Director then set up a University/UMCG working group to prepare the internal analysis and development of the HR strategy for researchers. The group comprised an HR policy advisor (Chair), a research policy advisor, a policy advisor on administrative and legal affairs, the secretary to the Board of the University and two HR policy advisors from the UMCG.

The HR logo working group drafted a project plan with a general step-by-step plan and time path for preparing the application to the European Commission. This project plan was established in early July 2013 by the Deputy Dean of Research of the UMCG and the Board of the University.

Analysis on paper
The first step in the project plan was to conduct an analysis, on paper, of the current situation regarding the 40 principles. In this context a national inventory was previously made of Dutch legislation and regulations, and of the precepts anchored in the Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch Universities, in relation to all 40 principles. The UMCG and the University of Groningen both used the inventory as a basis for the analysis, together with the local regulations.

The general view of the steering group was that the 40 principles are properly safeguarded within the UMCG and the University of Groningen (see appendix). The steering group selected 21 principles to be used in the consultation phase. This selection was based on the overview of national legislation and regulations, and of all local regulations and policy documents. The considerations were as follows:
- Close alignment with HR processes: recruitment, promotion, mobility, evaluation and appraisal, supervision, training and development, all of which are important for existing and prospective UMCG researchers
- Link to recent policy discussions: academic freedom, academic integrity, accountability, intellectual property rights, data management and gender issues
- The other principles are properly safeguarded and less essential to the strategy of the institution.

Consultation phase
The second step in the plan involved consulting some of the researchers.

To this end, a number of group meetings were organized with academic staff and content experts. The academic staff was organized into three focus groups (PhD student/postdoc, Assistant Professor/Tenure Track Assistant Professor, and Associate Professor/Professor; hereafter referred to as junior researchers, senior researchers and professors) and asked to answer questions based on the principles selected.
The principles and results of these exchanges were later discussed in a meeting with the focus groups. This meeting served to identify necessary and/or desirable actions.

HR Excellence in Research logo application and plan of action
On the basis of the information thus obtained and in coordination with the application process within the University of Groningen, the UMCG policy officers formulated an application and action plan and submitted it to the Deputy Dean of Research.

Appendix 1 contains an overview of the members of the joint UMCG/University steering group, the members of the working group and the composition of the focus groups.

4. Brief introduction to the UMCG and the University of Groningen

The University of Groningen has a rich academic tradition dating back to 1614. This tradition brought forth the first female university graduate and the first female lector in the Netherlands, as well as the first Dutch astronaut and the first president of the European Central Bank.

The University of Groningen Faculty of Medicine forms part of the UMCG. Faculty of Medicine staff are formally employed by the UMCG and all UMCG academic staff have a formal relation to the University of Groningen. This formal relation is usually expressed as a second, unremunerated appointment at the University of Groningen.

UMCG, combining teaching, research and patient care

Within the UMCG, teaching is both broad and closely linked to clinical and non-clinical research at the highest level. Teaching and training at Research Master's and PhD level is organized into Graduate Schools. The Graduate School of Medical Sciences centres on two leading principles: training the top researchers of tomorrow and performing excellent research. This makes it essential to integrate research and teaching (both Master's and PhD) within the Graduate School.

Within the UMCG, research is organized by the Graduate School of Medical Sciences, and managed by the five institutes:

GUIDE: Groningen University Institute for Drug Exploration
W.J. Kolff Institute: Biomaterials
BCN-BRAIN: Research Institute for Neurosciences and Healthy Ageing
SHARE: Science in Healthy Ageing & Healthcare

CRCG: Cancer Research Center Groningen

Within the Graduate School of Medical Sciences, the Master's, Research Master's and PhD degree programmes are subsumed under the UMCG. This also holds for the Junior Scientific Master Class (JSM). JSM is a special training programme for medical students who wish to conduct research (PhD or other) during their studies.

One of the UMCG's spearheads is Healthy Ageing, which we hope in the coming years to embed in our thirty-three interdisciplinary research programmes. Our researchers work extensively with partners from the academic world, the corporate sector, and social and governmental organizations. The UMCG and the University of Groningen also promote the current debate on scientific, social and cultural issues, and contribute compelling perspectives and refreshing ideas based on the latest scientific advances.

In 2014, the UMCG was the first university medical centre that acquired the **ISO 9001:2008 certificate Healthcare**. In 2015, The UMCG strived for attaining the certificates for the other spearheads: research, education and training. This has resulted in a full-scale ISO 9001:2008 certificate for Healthcare, Research, Education and Training. It means that all UMCG management systems are worthy of the ISO quality mark.

International player
The University of Groningen/UMCG has an international orientation, in its teaching as well as its research. Students and researchers from all parts of the world can come to Groningen to develop their knowledge and skills, and prepare for an international career. The University of Groningen/UMCG has a strong international reputation and is well placed in international ranking lists. All publications by UMCG researchers are done under the name of the University of Groningen.
- 30,041 Bachelor's and Master's students, of whom 3020 are affiliated with the UMCG (1 September 2014)
- 2,229 FTE (University) and 1,015 FTE (UMCG) academic staff (end 2014)
- 265 FTE (University) and 83 FTE (UMCG) professors (end 2013) UMCG: 206 professors
- 1,950 active PhD students with and without appointment, of whom approximately 1,000 affiliated with the UMCG (as of 31-12-2014).
- 1,665 FTE (University) and 557 FTE (UMCG) support staff (end 2014)
- 45 Bachelor's degree programmes, 118 Master's degree programmes, including UMCG programmes
- 15 Research Master's degree programmes

- 9 Graduate Schools
- € 640 M turnover (2013),including €200 M UMCG

Key figures - Teaching
- 3,975 Bachelor's degrees awarded (2012-2013), 424 at the UMCG (2014)
- 3,796 Master's degrees awarded (2012-2013), 390 at the UMCG (2014)

Key figures - Research
- 443 PhD theses, of which 197 at the UMCG (2014)
- 7,250 academic publications (2013) of which 2,520 peer reviewed UMCG publications (2014)
- € 167.5 M from contract research of which € 64 M UMCG 2014 (excluding contract teaching)

4.   Gap analysis and proposed action

The principles selected from the Charter and Code are explained in further detail below. The main points arising from the consultations are given, and the current situation described. This is followed by a description of the gap and related aims and actions envisaged for each point.

General points for attention

For the UMCG and the University of Groningen, two general points for attention relate to geographic location and information.
1) Geographically speaking, the UMCG is in a relatively isolated position in the north of the Netherlands. This means that the UMCG must offer particularly attractive conditions of employment in order to compete with other universities in the Netherlands.
2) The UMCG is a large and complex organization. In addition to this, the UMCG works closely in its teaching and research with another complex organization, namely the University of Groningen. This presents a challenge in terms of ensuring that everyone has access to complete and current information. It emerged from the discussions that this is not always successful, and that communication/information is an important area for improvement.

Specific points for attention: For each principle or set of principles, we list below the responses from the consultation phase, further divided into responses from young researchers, senior researchers and professors.

Academic freedom, ethical principles, professional responsibility and attitude
Academic freedom, ethical principles, professional responsibility and attitude (1, 2, 3, 4)   *Researchers should be granted freedom in their research, but must recognize the limitations to this freedom (e.g. particular circumstances, budgetary considerations, intellectual property protection). Researchers must adhere to the relevant Codes of Ethics. They must ensure that research is relevant, avoid plagiarism, only delegate work to those who are competent to carry it out, and keep their employer informed about the progress/funding of research projects.*   Since the above points are interrelated, they will be dealt with together.

Consultation

Young researchers

Collaboration with external companies leads to a different type of interaction and presentation of data, as well as limitations in terms of freedom. This also applies to international collaboration. Individual investigators have more freedom. Current regulations stimulate collaboration with the corporate sector.

Recommendation: Guard against too much external control/politics. Explicitly safeguard this in the contracts.

External funding places pressure on research: the research has to be completed within the set time frame and available budget; this leaves no room for setbacks.

It is not always clear how the financial administration is organized and who one can turn to for help.

Recommendation: More transparency in the financial process and transparency with respect to decision-making in applying for funding.

Senior researchers

This group does not experience any limitations. They do point out that a shift has occurred in the PhD tracks, which are increasingly expected to be completed faster and more effectively. This leaves PhD candidates with little room for personal development. The availability of laboratory facilities and the use of equipment is limited.

Freedom of research can be created by writing research grant applications, so that funding can be obtained to realize one's ideas.

The ethical codes are logical: a good researcher should act in accordance with the rules for conducting sound research.

The current focus on academic integrity seems to reveal a lack of trust. Too many things are set in protocols.

Professors

This group does not experience any problems regarding freedom of research. They recognize the pressure coming from the corporate sector, but feel that the responsibility for handling this pressure rests with the supervisors.

The risk of fraud is real, but it is to a large extent mitigated by the following:
- The use of Hora Finita
- Every PhD candidate being assigned two supervisors
- Lab journals being saved digitally
- The UMCG organizing regular meetings to discuss academic integrity

Regulations with respect to ethics are experienced as complex. Too many rules, on too many levels: European, national and UMCG level. In addition, the procedures are time-consuming.

Recommendation: Make the process more efficient by simplifying regulations

Recommendation: a single general format, also for historical patient materials
The pressure of teaching is high, and continues to increase.

Current situation
The following, *inter alia*, provide a clear framework for the principles referred to: the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Academic Practice (VSNU), the University of Groningen Regulations for the Protection of Academic Integrity, the UMCG Research Code, and the UMCG Regulations on Additional Activities and Additional Interests. The regulations for whistleblowers (*Klokkenluidersregeling*) also form part of this framework. The academic staff has received information on all these documents, which are also available on a website.
The UMCG has three confidential advisors: a 'general' confidential advisor for PhD students and two retired professors who are specifically responsible for issues relating to academic integrity. In addition to a central confidential advisor responsible for advising and supporting students and staff in cases of undesirable behaviour/discriminatory treatment/reporting cases of malpractice within the organization and helping staff members resolve labour disputes, the University of Groningen also has five confidential advisors responsible for all issues relating to academic integrity. Academic integrity is an important aspect in the supervision of PhD students, as well as for other researchers.

Gap
We must ensure that academic integrity remains discussable at every stage in a researcher's career, and provide the relevant instruments for this.

Aims
To comply with the rules for academic integrity, and enable researchers to do the same.

Action

	What?	*Who?*
1.	**Communication** Drawing attention to the ethical principles and academic integrity by facilitating discussions at department level, an internet dossier with examples relating to top academics/scientists, a concise Code of Conduct. In addition, focused attention for this topic on the first introductory day.	Head of Communication Office Heads of departments, UMCG staff, Graduate Schools
2.	**Communication** Ensure that additional interests and additional positions are properly reported on the profile pages of staff members.	Managers during annual appraisal reviews UMCG and University of Groningen staff

Contractual and legal obligations
Contractual and legal obligations (5) *Researchers must be familiar with regulations governing training and working conditions, regulations governing intellectual property rights, and requirements/conditions relating to funding.*

Consultation

Young researchers
This group is unclear on how to deal with this aspect. The UMCG staff does not possess the required knowledge.
Recommendation: Researchers should be given a mandate regarding all matters relating to their own research.

Senior researchers
This aspect is gaining in importance, but within the UMCG, it is unclear who is responsible for what. There should be a single helpdesk for this. The procedures are far too lengthy. There is often tension between the corporate sector and the UMCG. Financial support is provided on a departmental basis.

Professors
There is a lot of collaboration with external companies. It is easy enough to secure IP, but the preparatory steps within the UMCG can sometimes be too lengthy and it is not always clear who one can approach for what.
Recommendation
- Shorter time frame in which agreements can be made on the part of legal experts
- Sufficient consultation with researchers
- Not being required to go into too much detail (bureaucracy), but instead focusing on the interests of the project, and not so much on the interests of the UMCG
- Within the UMCG, improving visibility regarding procedures and persons responsible

Current situation

A range of documentation is available dealing with the rights and obligations of researchers: the Collective Labour Agreement for University Medical Centres, the PhD Regulations, the University/UMCG Patent Policy and the UMCG Research Code. Communication with respect to these documents takes place through the website, by e-mail, through publicity and by investing in contact persons in the workplace.

Gap
Information on contractual and legal obligations is not sufficiently 'findable' for researchers.

Aims
Ensure that information on contractual and legal obligations actually reaches the researchers.

Action

	What?	*Who?*
1.	**Communication** Improve information provision and knowledge-sharing regarding contractual and legal obligations by Appointing contact persons in the workplace (operations managers) who can further refer people to experts, such as the External Project Funding Office.	O&O Finances Office Research Office R&V Communication

	• Organizing University-wide knowledge-sharing and coordination with faculty contact persons (e.g. through meetings of the funding officers). • Bringing together all the information on a specific subject in one place on the website in the clinical research office toolbox (N.B. This applies to several principles).	Office

Accountability
Accountability (6)   *Proper and transparent management, for finance as well as data storage.*

Consultation

Young researchers
Data storage is effective, but too many people work with their own databases. This seems to be insufficiently regulated at central level.
Recommendation: Better organization, introduce quality checks.

Senior researchers
As a rule, each researcher decides what to do with his or her data. This could be done more efficiently. What happens when a researcher leaves? Where does the data go? How long does it remain available? There is some talk of creating digital lab journals. The question is whether every department should have a standard data storage unit, or whether everything should go into a central storage unit. And will this not lead to more red tape?

Professors
The Board of Management has appointed a committee responsible for examining the situation regarding the storage and recognition of data. This is still in a preparatory phase.
Storage currently takes place at research group/lab level, with clear SOPs.
Supervisors receive regular financial overviews. These overviews are unclear. It is difficult to monitor the budget. It is great that PhD students are involved in the process, but the final responsibility rests with the supervisor and the department.
Recommendation: Make the financial overviews clearer and more user-friendly.

Current situation
The Netherlands Code of Conduct for Academic Practice provides the main input for designing a framework for information management. The formulation and implementation of policy on data storage is currently a top priority for all universities in the Netherlands, including the University of Groningen. A University-wide reorganization of financial/economic positions is currently under way. This is expected to result in better support for management and individual staff with regard to financial management.

Gap
1. Policymaking for responsible data storage and data handling and the provision of related information requires further development.
2. Researchers are not sufficiently familiar with the financial aspects of projects or with the University's financial regulations. This is partly due to the fact that support staff have a limited knowledge of English.

Aims
1. Communicate the existing policy on data storage, and refine the policy where necessary.

2. Provide more effective support for academic staff with regard to the financial management of projects.

Action

	What?	*Who?*
1.	**Communication** Communicate and further develop UMCG/University policy on data storage and management, while ensuring that this does not result in increased bureaucratization.	Deputy Dean of Research Head of BDB Head of R&V
2.	**Support** • Clearly communicate financial regulations, frameworks and reports through financial departments and operations managers. • Further professionalize staff by offering English-language courses.	Head of CCOO Office Director of the Graduate School Through managers

Dissemination/exploitation of results, Intellectual property rights
Dissemination/exploitation of result and Intellectual property rights (7, 8) *Researchers should ensure, in accordance with contractual arrangements, that their research results are disseminated.* *Employers must ensure that researchers can reap the benefits from the valorization of their research.* Since the above points are interrelated, they will be dealt with together.

Consultation

Young researchers
Sharing data at conferences is not always allowed by supervisors. In collaborations with external companies, publications are sometimes held back. In some cases, researchers are not even allowed to discuss their results in their own internal work meetings.
Recommendation: Include clear agreements about this aspect in contracts, based on the Charter.

Senior researchers
The UMCG itself often holds back publication by applying the top 25% rule performance fee. This hinders output and slows down the publication process. It also acts as a disincentive.
The performance fee clashes with the shorter PhD tracks. It takes at least four years to train someone to become a good researcher. Publications in 'lower' journals now lead to demerits - this is a worrisome development.

Professors
Generally depends on the supervisor and varies per department. With respect to accessibility to the general public, the UMCG is a bit behind compared to other universities in the Netherlands (PR researchers in the media).
On the other hand, the UMCG has booked great success with its Public Medical Academy.

Current situation
The UMCG and the University of Groningen have a joint Patent Policy that is widely publicized through the website, in leaflets and in lectures by the Research & Valorization department, ABJZ and the Business Generator Groningen (SBGG). In addition, researchers can obtain further advice and support regarding research valorization from the Research & Valorization department, SBGG and the Consortium for Valorization and Entrepreneurship (CVO). The following also apply to intellectual property rights: the Patent Act (*Octrooiwet*) and the Copyright Act (*Auteurswet*).

Gap
Researchers are still not sufficiently informed about their rights and obligations with regard to their research findings and the ways in which they can reap the benefits of these.

Aims
Proper dissemination and exploitation of research results through improved communication about the existing structures and possibilities within the UMCG and the RUG.

Action

	What?	*Who?*
1.	**Communication** Provide more information on existing structures (SBGG, Research Office, UB/CMB) to which researchers can address their questions about the dissemination and exploitation (e.g. commercial) of research results via: - The website - Involving support staff who work in positions closer to the researchers (e.g. funding officers) - Newsletters and providing information in small-scale contexts (e.g. departmental work meetings) - Open access data articles - Stimulating publication in popular science magazines	Head of Research Office Programme Director of the Centre for Development and Innovation

Evaluation/appraisal system
Evaluation/appraisal system (9) *Evaluations/appraisals of the performance of researchers should be conducted by an independent committee. The evaluation/appraisal should take due account of all duties/activities relating to an academic position at a university.*

Consultation

Young researchers
Although regular progress interviews are held regarding research projects, these interviews do not always cover personal development and annual appraisal reviews.

Recommendation: Regular, structural evaluations, including personal development/annual appraisal reviews.

Senior researchers
There are almost too many types of assessments (such as peer reviews, evaluations, external reviews, annual appraisal reviews, etc.), except for Tenure Trackers.
There is no balance between research and teaching. Teaching is time-consuming, but one's value is determined by research alone.

Professors
Researchers are assessed on the basis of citations and publications. In addition, within the organization, they are assessed on their ability to successfully apply for grants and patents.
Teaching is very time-consuming (sometimes too time-consuming) and should be given due credit in the assessments.
Recommendation: Integral assessment including UTQ, management tasks and number of review projects. Include a code for teaching and securing grants.

Current situation
The UMCG's evaluation and appraisal system consists of three elements: (a) the annual appraisal reviews for all staff, (b) the Go/No-Go interviews for PhD students, and (c) the promotion interviews for Tenure Trackers.
In principle, the structure of the interviews, the related forms to be filled in, and the assessment committees ensure that all duties relating to the position are dealt with in these interviews. The aim is always to ensure a transparent and objective judgement, partly by involving an HR staff member or other independent person in the Go/No-Go interviews. HR advisors are also invited to take part in appointment committees for promotion assessment.

Gap
The aim and implementation of the evaluation system is not always clear and the relation between the various assessments might be made more explicit so as to create more cohesion.

Aims
To fully implement the evaluation and appraisal system of the UMCG, and enhance its transparency and objectivity where necessary

Action

	What	*Who?*
1.	**Appraisal (general)** • The introductory programme for new staff members should explicitly address the work culture (expectations and obligations); for PhD students, the introduction can be streamlined to match the University of Groningen introduction. • Focus on monitoring both the quality and the number of annual appraisal reviews.	HR Director Graduate School Director of Graduate School of Medical Sciences
2.	**Appraisal of Tenure Track staff** • Pay extra attention to the composition and training of promotion committees. • Structural presence of HR advisor in BACs.	Deputy Dean of Research HR Director

	• Ensure more transparent communication about the outcome and how the appraisal result is reached. • The time required for the appraisal procedure should be communicated more clearly and/or shortened.	
3.	**PhD student appraisal** • Ensure that an independent person is present at all Go/No-Go interviews with PhD students. • Train PhD students to give feedback on the functioning of thesis supervisors. • Record clear agreements in the annual appraisal review with regard to expectations for the coming year in terms of research/teaching/career preparation. • Ensure transparency by using Hora Finita system, link to University of Groningen.	Director of Graduate School of Medical Sciences

Recruitment
Recruitment (10, 11) *All positions must have clearly formulated requirements and admission standards. In this context, recruitment must be based on a clear policy that facilitates access for disadvantaged groups and people returning to a research career.* *The recruitment procedure must be open and efficient. There must be transparent and internationally comparable procedures/advertisements that set out the conditions of employment, career development and the scheduling of the application procedure.* Since the above points are interrelated, they will be dealt with together.

Consultation

Young researchers
There is little insight into the vacancy-filling process. Available PhD positions are not always advertised as vacancies. In many cases there is already a favoured candidate who fits in with the team and the primary supervisor. PhD positions are also reserved for students graduating from the Master's degree programmes.

Senior researchers
The Human Resources department is well organized and provides the required support. The website provides adequate information.
The UMCG could, however, improve its visibility on the international scene and make itself more attractive to international researchers.

Senior researchers and professors are satisfied with the recruitment process. Young researchers indicate that they have too little insight into the vacancy-filling process. Foreign PhD students in particular signalled a need for better guidance and more information during the appointment process. At the time of writing this document, the UMCG is conducting an investigation into the key factors that contribute to the well-being of international staff members.
The Associate Professors/Professors group is of the opinion that the recruiting process should be more closely aligned to the international labour market/international agenda in terms of time and approach. Attention should also be paid to a number of matters during the recruitment process:
• All relevant documents during the selection and appointment processes must be made available in English
• Policy for attracting candidates from various disadvantaged groups
• Flexibility in the conditions of appointment
• The time required for concluding contracts

The UMCG agrees with the first of these points.

Professors
The procedure is clear, but sometimes very time-consuming: mobility requirement – internal – external. There are at present no HR advisors attending job interviews; this is necessary in some cases. Sometimes, a preferred candidate emerges, for example in the context of career policy, in which case the vacancy is not published.

Current situation

In principle, recruitment for academic positions is an open process, unless the position is part of the career path leading to a professorship. The UMCG makes extensive use of Academic Transfer. However, the UMCG and the University of Groningen do have a policy for appointing more women to senior positions, for example by specifically seeking to recruit women from all over the world in the context of the Rosalind Franklin Programme. In the case of professorial appointments, the Appointment Advisory Committee must explicitly give account of the process and its decision, by means of the checklist of gender-neutral appointment and appraisal criteria.

Gap

More insight into the recruitment procedure for young researchers

Aims

Adjust communication regarding recruitment procedure

Action

	What	*Who?*
1.	**Recruitment (general)** • Plan the deadlines for recruitment and selection for vacancies before the vacancy is advertised, and communicate the information clearly to prospective candidates. • Ensure that all important internal and external documents are available in English.	HR Operations managers and Communication department managers HR/operations managers/UMCG staff
2.	**Recruitment of international staff** • Assign existing staff (including international staff) the role of ambassador and provide support in the form of publicity material.	HR, labour market communication staff

Recognition of mobility experience and the value of mobility
Recognition of mobility experience and the value of mobility (12, 13) *Any mobility experience (e.g. time spent in another country or another research setting) should be considered as a valuable contribution to the professional development of a researcher.* *Mobility (geographical, sectoral, interdisciplinary, private-public) must be seen as a means of enhancing knowledge and research.*

Since the above points are interrelated, they will be dealt with together.

Consultation

Young researchers
It is possible for a limited period of time to conduct research at a guest institute abroad. This option depends on the availability of funding, contacts with researchers abroad, and the prospect of learning new skills.

Senior researchers
Many grant applications require experience with working abroad.

Professors
The UMCG has no CAO-based sabbatical scheme; agreements regarding temporary placements elsewhere are made on an individual basis.
There is no budget for time spent working abroad. These research periods must be funded from each staff member's Personal Budget.
Recommendation
- Separate budget for all UMCG researchers
- Include this in the CAO

Current situation

The UMCG and the University of Groningen attach great value to mobility experience when considering candidates for academic positions, particularly experience gained through time spent at an academic institution abroad.
Within the University itself, attending conferences is seen as a very valuable form of mobility for PhD students and tenured academic staff. The various Graduate Schools provide PhD students with opportunities and funding to help them gain mobility experience. The possibilities vary from school to school.

Gap
For professors, mobility is limited by budgetary restrictions.

Aims
Greater recognition of the value of mobility, and greater mobility for current and new academic staff

Action

	What	*Who?*
1.	**Mobility opportunities** • Facilitate time spent abroad by optimizing fiscal opportunities. • Applying sabbaticals in the context of individual agreements with professors.	• HR • Board of Management and heads of departments

Postdoctoral appointments
Postdoctoral appointments (code) (14)
There are clear rules (duration + objective) for the appointment of postdoctoral researchers, and these rules take into consideration that the postdoctoral status should be transitional.

Consultation

Young researchers
Following their thesis defence, PhD students often remain appointed at PhD candidate level.

Senior researchers
Highly undervalued category of staff. As a rule temporary externally funded contracts, with the consequence that all acquired expertise is quickly lost to the department. No prospects for the future. Postdocs tend to produce the best articles. There should be structural funding available for this category of staff.

Professors
The UMCG is focused on the Tenure Track. This programme only targets the best 5 to 10%. Postdocs, young researchers, and assistant professors are all in the middle layer – they play a key role in the research group.
Recommendation: Create sound future career prospects for this category of staff.

Current situation

The policy for postdoctoral appointments at the UMCG and the University of Groningen is fairly dated. This policy offers too little clarity regarding career opportunities.

Gap
Career opportunities are not formulated in enough detail.

Aims
1. More attractive career policy
2. Improved career preparation for postdocs

Action

	What?	*Who?*
1.	Update the postdoc policy where necessary.	HR and Deputy Dean of Research
2.	Inform postdocs before and during the appointment procedure about the expectations for the postdoc period and about the next step after the postdoc period.	Heads of department, supervisors
3.	Join the University of Groningen's Postdoc Career Initiative, which actively prepares postdocs for their future career through courses and mentoring.	HR and heads of department

Gender balance
Gender balance (15)

> *The institution should aim for a representative gender balance at all staff levels and in the composition of selection and evaluation committees.*

Consultation

Young researchers
Reasonable gender balance among PhD students, but Tenure Trackers, Associate Professors (UHD) and professors are predominantly male. Since the latter tend to be from an older generation, it looks as if the new generation might bring a better gender balance.

Professors
OK.

Senior researchers
Among the senior staff, the gender balance is currently off. One positive development is the Rosalind Franklin programme.

Current situation
Since the end of the 1980s, the UMCG has implemented an active policy and instruments with a view to achieving a representative gender balance. The Rosalind Franklin Fellowships (since 2005) are a good example of this. The gender balance is gradually improving, but the improvement is not rapid enough in senior academic positions. The UMCG has a mentoring programme and formulates its targets in accordance with the 'Talent to the Top' monitor. This allows the UMCG to monitor the medical, scientific and management career of its female employees.

Gap
The current policy is not yet adequate enough to achieve a sufficiently rapid improvement in the gender balance at senior academic level.

Aims
Amend policy and measures in order to improve the gender balance more quickly.

Action

	What	*Who?*
1.	Further investigate obstacles in the career step from Assistant Professor (UD) to Associate Professor (UHD) or Tenure Track Professor, and formulate new policy.	HR Director
2.	Tailor Tenure Track programme to personal circumstances such as pregnancy.	Deputy Dean of Research

---

Career development
Career development (16)
As an employer, the UMCG should draw up a career development strategy for researchers at all stages of their careers, regardless of their contract situation (fixed term or indefinite term), and provide support in the form of mentoring/guidance.

Consultation

Young researchers
This aspect is not always sufficiently highlighted in research. Everything depends on one's immediate superior and the efforts of the Graduate School and the trainer.

Professors
See remarks about postdoc appointments.
The new course for supervisors is mentioned.
Recommendation: Put more effort into career guidance.

Senior researchers
The full programmes and high work pressure leave little room for focusing on personal development. There is a serious gap between Tenure Trackers and the rest of the staff. It is unclear how staff members are supposed to work on career development.

Current situation
The UMCG considers the role of the immediate superior to be crucial in career development. In principle, the development and desired career perspectives of staff members are discussed in the annual appraisal reviews with their immediate superior. The UMCG also offers individual advice and career courses via HR in close collaboration with the University of Groningen. A grant mentoring programme is also available. This programme is open to permanent staff as well as temporary academic staff pursuing a career elsewhere.
The UMCG has a full Tenure Track policy geared to the selection and development of talented academics.

Gap
The existing career development strategy is not adequate. There is a need for alternatives and variations on the existing possibilities.

Aims
Strengthen the focus on career development as a point for attention

Action

	What	*Who?*
1.	**Career development in general** • Ensure that career development is discussed in annual appraisal reviews, and train managers in this respect. • Set up a UMCG and University-wide system of differentiated career paths for academic staff. • M&O career courses for PhD students offered by the University of Groningen.	HR Director HR Department, Research Office
2.	• Further extend mentoring to all researchers.	Deputy Dean of Research

Access to professional development and to measures for continuing development
Access to professional development and to measures for continuing development (17, 18) *Researchers at all stages should seek to regularly update and expand their skills and competences. As an employer, the UMCG should ensure that all researchers, at any stage of their career and regardless of their contractual situation, are given the opportunity for the professional development*

of their skills and competences.	
Since the above points are interrelated, they will be dealt with together.	

Consultation

Young researchers
No comments

Senior researchers
Room for development depends on the department.
As a rule, this falls under the staff member's personal budget.

Professors
There are enough courses and opportunities on offer.

Current situation
The University of Groningen offers its staff a wide range of courses in computer skills/IT, didactics/teaching, language skills, personal effectiveness and leadership. The Graduate Schools offer a training programme for PhD students. The University also provides its staff with a range of opportunities for expanding their competences. Through collaboration all of these resources are also available to the UMCG.

Gap
There are enough instruments available, but more needs to be done to promote continuing development.

Aims
Greater attention for the continuing professional development of academic staff.
Action:
Stimulate targeted budgeting (from personal or other budget) – include this as a standard agenda item in annual appraisal reviews.

	What	*Who*
1.	**Stimulate targeted budgeting (from personal or other budget) – include this as a standard agenda item in annual appraisal reviews.**	Managers

Teaching
Teaching (19)
Teaching should be seen as a worthwhile option in the career path of researchers, but must not be excessive.

Consultation

Young researchers
Little attention is paid to this topic. There is a need for more teaching and more supervision of students.
When researchers do supervise students or placements, they are unlikely to receive any feedback unless they specifically ask for it.

Senior researchers
A few isolated staff members experience teaching as causing too much work pressure. In addition, senior researchers point out that teaching is becoming increasingly labour-intensive (smaller groups, sometimes on individual basis).

Professors
Teaching is seen as valuable but too time-consuming. Researchers are only assessed on their research.
Recommendation: Teaching should be included in the total assessment.

Current situation

The University of Groningen and the UMCG have an integrated approach to teaching and research. The University's vision for teaching is that it is carried out by staff members who actively conduct research of their own and can integrate this in their teaching. In principle, therefore, all permanent academic positions involve a combination of teaching and research, in varying proportions.
In order to ensure lecturer quality, researchers who have teaching duties must gain the University Teaching Qualification (UTQ). A Senior Teaching Qualification (STQ) was also introduced recently.

Gap

1. The balance between teaching duties and research duties requires attention in the case of permanent academic staff, particularly with regard to the weighting of teaching duties.
2. All young researchers should gain teaching experience.

Aims

Recognize the value of teaching as an essential part of a researcher's work.

Action

	What	*Who?*
1.	Emphasize the importance of teaching in career tracks.	Board of Management, Deputy Dean of Education
2.	UMCG-wide principles and best practices for exchanging teacher deployment models.	Deputy Dean of Education
3.	Include teaching and student supervision in the training courses for PhD students.	Depuy Dean of Education and Graduate School of Medical Sciences (GSMS)

Supervision

> **Supervision (20, 21)**
> *Researchers in their training phase should establish a structured and regular relationship with their supervisor(s).*
> *In their role as experienced researchers, supervisors should perform this task to the highest possible professional standard.*
>
> Since the above points are interrelated, they will be dealt with together.

Consultation

Young researchers
Generally positive. Depends a little on how much time the supervisor has
Remark: Contact with supervisor(s) tends to be more challenging in the case of international PhD students. As opposed to Dutch researchers, international researchers do not as a rule seek an open relation and discussion with their supervisor.
Recommendation: The relationship with international researchers should be looked into.

Senior researchers
Well organized and properly monitored. It is important for student and supervisor to be on the same wavelength.

Professors
Depends to a large extent on the person. This group recognizes that cultural differences may arise with international PhD students.
Recommendation: Improve intercultural insight.

A lot is already done in this respect, but researchers have too little opportunity to meet the relevant requirements. Teaching, research and management form the three core tasks.
Recommendation: Create more time and space for supervision.

Current situation
In principle, the nature of the supervision for PhD students in the training phase is properly set out in the Training and Supervision Plan (TSP). PhD students and supervisors can follow training courses on dealing with supervisors or supervising PhD students. Furthermore, the University of Groningen and the UMCG pay specific attention to the development of leadership skills among academics.

Gap
Not all supervisors and PhD students have the skills required to establish a good working relationship.

Aims
Raise awareness of the fact that both student and supervisor are responsible for establishing a good working relationship, and enhance the skills of students and supervisors in this respect.

	What	*Who?*
1.	**Action geared to PhD candidates** Introduce compulsory programme elements (project management) in the	Director of Graduate School of

	first year as a further stimulus for empowerment, self-direction and self-management.	Medical Sciences (GSMS)
2.	**Action geared to Graduate School**s Clarification of roles and professionalization of GS coordinators and research-assistant coordinators in the research institutes, in order to support PhD students.	Director of GSMS and Deputy Dean of Research
3.	**Action geared to supervisors** Strongly recommend that new Tenure Track staff and supervisors who are not performing well should take the course on supervising PhD students.	Heads of department and Principal Investigators (PI)
4.	**Sharing best practices** Organize meetings for professors/supervisors on how to conduct discussions and on peer-to-peer coaching in difficult supervision situations, possibly on an individual basis.	HR and Deputy Dean of Research

Appendix 1 Members of the steering group, working group, and expert group, and consultation round participants

Members of the HR Excellence in Research steering group
Prof. J. Knoester, Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences
Dr R.J. Landeweerd, Managing Director of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences
At first Prof. L. de Leij, then Prof. Dr. H.W.G.M. Boddeke both Deputy Dean of Research, University Medical Center Groningen
M.T.J. Stolp, Director of HR, chair of steering group
Prof. Dr G.C. Wakker, Dean of the Faculty of Arts

Members of the HR Excellence in Research working group (University of Groningen/UMCG)
J. Bouwers, HR, UMCG
H.E. ten Dolle, HR sector F, UMCG
S.R van Dijk, ABJZ, University of Groningen
Dr K.J. Ganzeveld, Research & Valorization, University of Groningen
G. van der Meer, HR, University of Groningen, chair of working group
T.H. Vugteveen, Secretary to the Board of the University of Groningen.

Consultation round participants
In accordance with the agreement, the participants in the consultation rounds are not named in the report. Both sexes were well represented among the participants.

Focus group	Number	Faculty	UMCG
PhD students/postdocs	13	FMNS 3, Arts 2, FEB 1, SS 1, Law 1, Philosophy 1	4
Assistant Professors/Tenure Track Assistant Professors	14	FMNS 1, KCI-CART 1, FEB 1, SS 1, Law 1, Philosophy 1, BSS 1	6
Associate Professors/Tenure Track Associate Professors/Professors	23	FMNS 9, Arts 2, FEB 2, SS 1, Law 2, BSS 3,	4
Total	50		14

Appendix 2 HR Excellence in Research Logo – overview of action points for 2015-2019

In preparing the application for the HR Excellence in Research logo for submission to the European Commission, the UMCG and the University of Groningen selected 21 of the 40 principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers as the basis for the University of Groningen strategy and action plan for researchers. The UMCG and the University wish to provide an attractive work environment for researchers, including the open recruitment and selection of the best candidates for vacancies, career opportunities for outstanding academics and a work climate in which there is continued attention for the implementation and improvement of the principles in practice. The points for action listed below were formulated on the basis of a policy analysis and consultations with researchers regarding the situation in practice. The planning is geared to a self-assessment and modification of the strategy and action plan in the summer of 2017. In 2019, an external committee will visit the University to offer advice on the use of the HR Excellence in Research logo.

The action points are listed below. For each point, the department, board or committee with primary responsibility is specified. The deadline for each action point is also given. A number of the action points apply throughout the period of the plan. In addition, a number of the action points are expected to be completed when the self-assessment is carried out in the spring of 2018.

A special committee has been installed to oversee the execution of the action plan and to give necessary support to all those who are responsible for the different actions that are mentioned. This committee has a broad composition and covers the different disciplines involved. A professional project manager will be appointed as dedicated chairman for this committee. Next the following UMCG officials will take a seat in this committee: the director of Operations Education and Research, the Dean of Research, the head of the Communication Department, the head of the HR concern staff department and a senior HR official.

Action	Who	Responsible	Short term < 1 yr	Medium term 1-2 years	Long term > 2 yrs
Academic freedom, ethical principles, professional responsibility and attitude (1, 2, 3, 4)					
Communication Drawing attention to the ethical principles and academic integrity by facilitating discussions at department level, an internet dossier with examples relating to top academics/scientists, a concise Code of Conduct. In addition, focused attention for this topic on first introductory day.	Communication Office Heads of department UMCG-staff Graduate Schools	Dean of Research	X		
Communication Ensure that additional interests and additional positions are properly reported on the profile pages of staff members.	Managers during annual appraisal review UMCG staff together with University of Groningen		X		
Contractual and legal obligations (5)					
Communication Improve information provision and knowledge-sharing regarding contractual and legal obligations by: • Appointing contact persons in the workplace (operations managers) who can further refer people to experts, such as the External Project Funding Office • Organizing University-wide knowledge-sharing and coordination with faculty contact persons (e.g. through meetings of the funding officers) • Bringing together all the information on a specific subject in one place on the	O&O Finances Office Research Office R&V Communication Office	HR-department	X	X X	

website (N.B. This applies to several principles).					
Accountability (6)					
Communication Communicate and in part further develop UMCG/University of Groningen policy on data storage and management, while ensuring that this does not result in increased bureaucratization. **Support:** • Clearly communicate financial regulations, frameworks and reports through financial departments and operations managers Further professionalize staff by offering English-language courses.	Deputy Dean of Research Head of BDB Head of R&V Head of Communication Office Head of O&O Finances Office Head of Research Office Through managers	Dean of research	X	X	
Dissemination/exploitation of result and Intellectual property rights (7, 8)					
Communication Provide more information on existing structures (SBGG, Research Office, UB/CMB) to which researchers can address their questions about the dissemination and exploitation (e.g. commercial) of research results via: - The website - Involving support staff who work in positions closer to the researchers (e.g. funding officers) Newsletters and providing information in small-scale contexts (e.g. departmental work meetings).	Head of Research Office Head of Communication Office	Head of Research Office		X	
Evaluation/appraisal system (9)					
Appraisal (general) • The introductory programme for new staff members should explicitly address the work culture (expectations and obligations); for PhD students, the introduction can be streamlined to match the University of Groningen introduction • Focus on monitoring both the quality and the number of annual appraisal reviews **Appraisal of Tenure Track staff** • Pay extra attention to the composition and training of promotion committees • Structural presence of HR advisor in BACs • Ensure more transparent communication about the outcome and how the appraisal result is reached The time required for the appraisal procedure should be communicated more clearly and/or shortened. **PhD student appraisal** • Ensure that an independent person is	Graduate School Director of Graduate School of Medical Sciences Sector F Management Office Director of Graduate School of Medical Sciences Director of Graduate School of Medical Sciences	HR-Department	X X X X X	X X	X

present at all Go/No-Go interviews with PhD students • Train PhD students to give feedback on the functioning of thesis supervisors • Record clear agreements in the annual appraisal review with regard to expectations for the coming year in terms of research/teaching/career preparation *Guarantee transparency by using Hora Finita system in collaboration with University of Groningen.			X		
Recruitment (10, 11)					
Recruitment (general) • Plan the deadlines for recruitment and selection for vacancies before the vacancy is advertised, and communicate the information clearly to prospective candidates • Ensure that all important internal and external documents are available **Recruitment of international staff** • Assign existing staff (including international staff) the role of ambassador for the University, and provide support in the form of publicity material, also in English.	HR HR/operations managers/UMCG staff HR, labour market communication staff	HR-department	X	X	
Recognition of mobility experience and the value of mobility (12, 13)					
Mobility opportunities • Facilitate time spent abroad by optimizing fiscal opportunities • Apply sabbaticals in the context of individual agreements with professors	HR Board of Management	HR-department	X X		
Postdoctoral appointments (code) (14)					
Update the postdoc policy where necessary. Inform postdocs before and during appointment procedure about expectations for the postdoc period and the next step after the postdoc period. Join the University of Groningen's Postdoc Career Initiative, which actively prepares postdocs for their future career through courses and mentoring.	HR and Deputy Dean of Research heads of department, supervisors Graduate School of Medical Sciences and HR	Dean of Research		X X X	
Gender balance (15)					
Further investigate obstacles in the career step from Assistant Professor (UD) to Associate Professor (UHD) or Tenure Track Professor, and	HR Director	HR-Department			X

formulate new policy. Tailor Tenure Track programme to personal circumstances such as pregnancy.	Deputy Dean of Research		X		
Career development (16)					
Career development in general • Ensure that career development is discussed in annual appraisal reviews, and train managers in this respect • Set up a UMCG and University-wide system of differentiated career paths for academic staff • M&O career courses for PhD students offered by the University of Groningen	HR Director HRM Department, Research Office	HR-department	X		X
Access to professional development and to measures for continuing development (17, 18)					
Stimulate targeted budgeting (from personal or other budget) – include this as a standard agenda item in annual appraisal reviews.	Managers	HR-department	X		
Teaching (19)					
Emphasize importance of teaching within career tracks. UMCG-wide principles and best practices for exchanging teacher deployment models. Include teaching and student supervision in the training courses for PhD students.	Board of Management and Deans Dean of Education	Dean of Education		X	X
Supervision (20, 21)					
Actions geared to PhD candidates Introduce compulsory programme elements (project management) in the first year as a further stimulus for empowerment, self-direction and self-management **Actions geared to Graduate School**s Clarify roles and professionalize GS coordinators and research-assistant coordinators of research institutes in order to support PhD students. **Action geared to supervisors** Stimulate new Tenure Track staff and supervisors who are not performing well to take the course on supervising PhD students. **Share best practices** Organize meetings for professors/supervisors on how to conduct discussions and on peer-to-peer coaching in difficult supervision	Graduate School of Medical Sciences, R&V, HR Graduate School of Medical Sciences, R&V, HR HR and heads of department Graduate School of Medical Sciences and HR	Dean of Research HR-Department	X	X X X X	

situations, possibly on an individual basis.	Deputy Dean of Education				