HR Excellence in Research

SDU Action Plan

The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

SDU
University of
Southern Denmark

Colophon

The University of Southern Denmark supports researchers in the further development of their academic careers, by pursuing the best possible HR policy.

Therefore, SDU is currently in phase 1 to obtaining the European Commission's recognition of SDU's commitment to fostering good working conditions and career development for researchers by complying with The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers.

The award will also acknowledge SDU's commitment to fair and transparent recruitment and appraisal procedures and to their continuous development.

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University of Southern Denmark

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Content

1. Organisational profile

The University of Southern Denmark (SDU) was established to create value for and with society. Whether our contributions come in the form of excellent research, innovative solutions, education or learning, we must make a positive difference to society and contribute to a sustainable future. We do this by cultivating talents and creating the best environments for research and learning. It is therefore crucial that SDU retains, develops and recruits talent. Simultaneously, we need to ensure consistently high quality in all our activities – and we can only do that with the right people. People are the foundation of our success.

2. Strenghts and weaknesses of the current practice

2.1 Ethical and professional aspects

Develop a Research Integrity and Ethics (RIE) policy

Research funding organisations increasingly require or expect universities to have clear policies and transparent procedures that ensure research integrity and ethics. Therefore, an overall Research Integrity and Ethics (RIE) policy and transparent procedures will be an asset for SDU researchers when seeking research grants from, e.g., Horizon Europe or large private foundations. It will also promote the fact that SDU is an attractive workplace for researchers (recognition of SDU externally and easier for researchers to gather and account for RIE).

SDU has high standards in research integrity and ethics (RIE), but does not have a unified and specific RIE policy. It would be an asset for SDU to establish a RIE policy documenting that the University follows international standards and meets RIE-related requirements and expectations of leading research funding organisations (RFOs). The RIE policy is intended to express SDU's general attitude and values in relation to research integrity and research ethics. The policy should be supported by a unified, easily accessible and research-oriented presentation of SDU's specific RIE-related sub-policies, practices and services already in place at SDU.

SDU has many RIE-related procedures and practices in place, though some of them have yet to be documented or described in specific policies. The University meets to a very high degree existing relevant international RIE standards, such as the European Standard Operating Procedures for Research Integrity (SOPS4RI).[1] However, procedures and practices are not currently included in an overall RIE policy, as is required or expected by major RFOs. This should be corrected to avoid formal RIE policy hurdles for SDU researchers. The policy should express SDU's general RIE approach, ambitions and standards, including support for both the Danish and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

The proposal for an RIE policy is based on an overview of international guidelines and recommendations and on an assessment of SDU's current RIE compliance status. The form and content of an SDU RIE policy should be in line with and support SDU's strategy for external research funding. The policy should mainly be based on and document policies and practices already established at SDU. SDU may also wish to invest further in the development of some policy areas in order to eventually have an RIE policy that supports the University's research funding strategy even better.

Establish a Research Integrity and Ethics (RIE) web universe

Given the increasing complexity of the research environment and the emerging international RIE standards and requirements of public and private RFOs, the University should provide a logical and coherent overview of its RIE procedures, guidelines and available support, both for internal use and for external funders and stakeholders.

This overview is not currently available at SDU but can be established at SDU's Research Support Hub and disseminated by SDU's research support at faculties and in RIO in collaboration with SDU's Research Ethics Committee, SDU's Committee on Practice as well as SDU Library and SDU HR, whose offerings include RCR courses.

[1] Especially European RIE standards. For US funding, SDU has a number of essential requirements in place, but the assessment of SDU's compliance with US-specific RIE requirements requires additional analysis and/or risk assessments. Compliance requirements of US-based funding agencies can be very specific, comprehensive, and closely related to US law.

Development of framework for and implementation of "Named Person"

SDU has a Committee for Responsible Conduct of Research, a whistleblower scheme, union representatives and personnel managers. But there is currently no advisory body at SDU where you can receive confidential counselling and guidance on potential cases that fall within the grey areas of research integrity.

The Practice Committee and the whistleblower scheme are more targeted towards cases of breaches of good scientific practice and serious legal violations, respectively, as well as other serious matters. Union representatives assist with employment issues, not with advice on research practices. In the grey areas of research integrity, the personnel manager may be involved (e.g. supervisor, manager, senior manager). One way to maintain objectivity and thus strengthen possible trust in the advisory function is to attach neutral advisors across the University, and/or to authorise faculty-specific advisers to operate across faculties.

Experiences at, e.g., the University of Copenhagen show a high number of inquiries to these advisers. This could indicate that an advisory function can help resolve potential conflicts/problems amicably.

Teaching (update existing RCR courses), training and supervision in research integrity

For the past 10 years, the University Library of Southern Denmark has been teaching Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) at SDU. The RCR courses are mandatory for PhD students across all faculties. Instructors receive inquiries about responsible research practices, especially concerning the many grey areas of research integrity and interpretation within different research fields.

2.2 Recruitment and selection

Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment of talented researchers

Successful recruitment of talented researchers and the development of excellent research environments is essential for SDU. Research talents at international top level are crucial for SDU to raise the level of research, ensure the breadth of research, develop world-leading research environments and deliver research-based education. We strive to attract and engage talented employees from a broad talent pool and to ensure that SDU remains an attractive workplace. Successful recruitment and development of talents is a key prerequisite for the University to create value for and with society through high quality and innovation.

Recruitment processes in academia are – most often – complex processes. They involve a variety of stakeholders – both internal and external. They can also involve different sources of funding. Overall, they can be hard to operationalise. By ensuring that the best candidate for the position is recruited, open, transparent and merit-based recruitment of researchers (OTM-R) improves the quality of the University's research, increases gender equality and promotes collaboration across disciplines and borders – as well as the production and circulation of scientific knowledge. SDU should therefore work on qualifying recruitment from strategic planning to onboarding and attachment.

SDU focuses on attracting a diverse talent pool and conducting professional, transparent, bias-aware and digitally supported recruitment processes across the University, and the efforts towards open, transparent and merit-based recruitments are already a key focus point. SDU has worked intensively on qualifying the recruitment process as part of SDU's Gender Equality Plan. In 2020-2021, an in-depth mapping of SDU's associate professor and professor employment in the period 2016-2020 was conducted. This mapping and a series of closer analyses have served as basis for a close revision and qualification of SDU's HR procedures in relation to recruitment, assessment and employment, as well as for the development of SDU's Recruitment Portal (web resource), which offers general information about recruitment at SDU and presents SDU's tools, services and information, including GE-related perspectives.

The Recruitment Portal was launched in 2023 and provides answers to questions such as:
1. How can we make an attractive job advertisement that attracts diverse and qualified candidates?
2. How do we conduct a bias-aware screening of applicants?
3. What framework do we have for putting together committees?
4. What framework do we have for shortlisting and rating scientific staff?
5. How do we provide good onboarding and set the framework for a career path that can retain skilled talent?
6. What IT systems do we use for what and how?
7. Where can help be found if we would like to qualify our recruitment processes?

The integration of GE perspectives in recruitment processes and HR-related procedures is ongoing on several organisational levels and contexts.

Ongoing initiatives include:

- Development of principles for recruitment at university level, including templates for job postings, assessments and expert opinions.
- The administrative process: Continuous improvement of process, system and data improvements.
- A 'Job universe' on sdu.dk: Including a thorough update of SDU's Jobsite, focusing on SDU as an attractive workplace as well as good guidance of applicants and a transparent recruitment process.
- Development of a framework/criteria for recognising merit at university level (until now merit criteria has been developed at faculty and/or department level).

Based on the GAP analysis and OTM-R Checklist in relation to HR Excellence in Research SDU can complement ongoing initiatives in the following ways:

- **Update SDU's recruitment policy**. SDU's recruitment policy forms part of SDU's Personnel Policy Guidelines. SDU's recruitment policy can be improved by an updated focus on OTM-R, including internationalisation, ongoing strategic networking to ensure a broad talent pool/pool of applicants, continued skills development in terms of preparing open and attractive job postings, use of search committees for specific recruitments, etc. based on existing effective practices at SDU and referencing EU frameworks (HR Excellence in Research, CoARA, GEP).

- **Establish principles for recruitment of academic staff at SDU** (in pipeline).

- **SDU's Recruitment Portal** can be updated with reference to the OTM-R Toolkit, SDU's GEP and SDU's (upcoming) CoARA action plan; as well as needs and wishes for support in SDU's academic environments and of the administrative process.

- **Continued focus on qualifying and optimising the recruitment process** with an OTM-R focus as well as a focus on streamlining the administrative process, including process, system and data improvements and reducing administrative tasks for managers, committee members and applicants.

- **Systematic skills development** for (new) managers, heads of research, committee members and HR staff to ensure knowledge of SDU's recruitment policy and principles for recruitment of academic staff as well as best practices in relation to open, transparent and merit-based recruitment. A possible format could be a 'skills package' for (new) managers and committee members based on 'just-in-time' principles and briefing sessions between SDU HR and faculties.

2.3 Working conditions

Transparent career paths and career guidance

Career development for researchers takes place in research environments and must be anchored there but is supported at university level with a broad focus on both the academic career path and career paths in other sectors. SDU develops talents for both the university sector and the public and private sectors – and for both the regional, national and international labour markets. An important element of having excellent environments and being an attractive workplace is to make career paths visible to researchers and offer career guidance.

SDU's existing career guidance offerings primarily focus on the academic career path. SDU does not offer career guidance with a broad perspective and at university level. Early-career researchers call for increased transparency and help in navigating different career paths for researchers: Research, research management, spinouts and start-ups, other sectors/companies and organisations.

Ongoing initiatives include:
- Based on inquiries from early-career researchers and dialogues with departments, SDU HR, in collaboration with SDU RIO and with the involvement of early-career researchers, has developed a small-scale career guidance programme with a broad career perspective, which can complement career guidance in research environments/at faculties. A pilot programme has been completed in 2024 in cooperation between SDU HR, SDU RIO and two departments and in dialogue with the PhD Coordination Committee and the Committee on Career and Skills Development of Academic Staff.
- In 2024 – with the assistance of researchers and heads of departments – SDU HR developed a concept for career conversations with early-career researchers as an 'add-on' to SDU's annual performance and development review.
- In 2024, SDU HR developed a career portal (webpage) focusing on career paths, career planning and development as part of SDU HR's service page. The page will focus on career development and career guidance. Across SDU's faculties various initiatives are underway, e.g. mentoring programmes, career conversations at departments, systematic review processes, etc.
- Furthermore, SDU is currently developing a university framework for merit criteria.

The recommendation based on the GAP analysis in relation to HR Excellence in Research is to:
- **upscale and implement a career guidance programme with a broad career perspective** consisting of: Briefing of PhDs and postdocs on how to work with their own career development and available resources at SDU, workshops/courses/sessions on transferable skills, strategic network, life@work/wellbeing and cover letter and CV.

- **ensure knowledge of SDU's new 'career portal' and concept for career conversations** which early-career researchers (and senior researchers) can use independently to reflect on and work with their own career planning and development.

- **ensure knowledge of career paths and opportunities for career guidance at department, faculty and university level,** e.g. among supervisors and research leaders.

2.4 Training and development

Competence development for researchers

SDU ensures employees' access to and engagement in competency development that qualifies them to carry out the University's tasks and ensures personal and professional development so that the individual's potential is unleashed and creates the basis for a career with progression and meaning.

The University's researchers, lecturers, students, managers and technical/administrative employees are the decisive prerequisite for SDU to deliver high quality.

The action plan for career and competence development unfolds the University's ambition of:
- a high level of competence among scientific and technical/administrative managers and employees
- excellent environments where managers and employees develop their knowledge, skills and ability to solve the University's tasks individually and together
- open and transparent career paths where managers and employees have careers that follow a progression, and access to feedback and guidance about their career opportunities at and outside the University.

The opportunity for and prioritisation of career and competence development is crucial for SDU to be able to attract, develop and retrain talents and create excellent environments.

To succeed with career and competence development at SDU, we need targeted and coherent efforts so that the entire organisation develops and adapts when the University's direction and conditions in our surrounding world change. The targeted and coherent focus requires clarity about the division of responsibilities.

At SDU, there are many activities both at the faculties and within the Central Administration which aim to help researchers find their bearings, acquire skills, obtain funding and develop their competences as well as their careers. However, dialogues with researchers have shown that it can be difficult to find, get an overview of and navigate offers and opportunities for the individual researcher (and for supervisors, research leaders and heads of departments).

In 2023-24 SDU has developed a 'Research Academy' for assistant and (new) associate professors as a new strategic focus on systematic research training for researchers on their way to research leadership. SDU's Research Academy must now transition from development to operation and continuous qualification.

In Q3-Q4 2024 and Q1 2025, SDU developed a new Action Plan for Career and Competence Development for Academic and Technical/Administrative Staff based on involvement of researchers, technical/administrative employees, employee representatives, heads of departments and administration and the Central Liaison Committee.

SDU's new action plan for career and competence development focuses on prioritised areas of competence development in relation to research in 2025-2026:

- **Pre-award support for researchers** – better visibility of what support is available in relation to the pre-award phase, including in relation to getting finances in place (research project budgeting) and competence development regarding getting research funded.

- **Post-award support for researchers** – competence development in project management of research projects, including financial management in research projects and research leadership.

- **Onboarding** – improved pre- and onboarding especially regarding international researchers coming to Denmark/SDU (e.g. knowledge of the Danish funding system and research system, occupational health and safety in Denmark, the Danish framework for handling risks related to international research collaboration etc). Easy access to information for international researchers and competence development of managers and research leaders in relation to onboarding researchers.

- **Cooperation** – the University of Southern Denmark aims to strengthen collaboration with businesses and enterprises related to research and education following reforms of the education system in Denmark. The University also aims to strengthen international cooperation on research. This must be reflected in SDU's competence development offers.

The recommendation based on the GAP analysis is therefore to prioritise:
- Implementation of the new action plan for career and competence development for academic and technical/administrative staff.

- Further develop SDU's Research Academy for assistant professors and promote participation and ensure that the Research Academy is integrated into SDU's portfolio of competence development offers for researchers based on the researchers' desire for a pre- and post-award focus.

- Ensure knowledge and access to the University's competence development offers by ensuring that they are displayed in an easy navigable way with one anchor point at SDU's Staff Courses.

3. Actions

Link to SDU's HR Excellence webpage: https://www.sdu.dk/en/om-sdu/job-sdu/hrexcellence

Overview of the 15 actions

Ethical and Professional Aspects

1. Develop a Research Integrity and Ethics (RIE) policy
2. Establish a Research Integrity and Ethics (RIE) web resource
3. Development of framework for and implementation of 'Named Person' at SDU
4. Communication, learning and development related to research integrity.

Recruitment and Selection

5. Update SDU's Recruitment Policy
6. Establish principles for recruitment of academic staff at SDU (ongoing)
7. Update SDU's Recruitment Portal
8. Qualifying and optimising the recruitment process
9. Action 9. Systematic skills development.

Working Conditions

10. Development of framework for merit criteria at university level
11. Transparent career paths, career guidance and mentorship
12. Development, implementation and evaluation of occupational health and safety action plans in continuation of the workplace assessment and wellbeing survey in 2024.

Training and Development

13. Implementation of renewed action plan for career and competence development for academic and technical/administrative staff
14. Development of Research Academy
15. Improve communication and awareness of opportunities and access.

3.1   Ethical and professional aspects (Action 1-4)

Action 1: Develop a Research Integrity and Ethics (RIE) policy

Following the method in the Standard Operating Procedures for Research Integrity (SOPS4RI), SDU will develop a unified and specific Research Integrity and Ethics (RIE) Policy.

1.1   The policy will address SDU's general RIE approach, ambitions and standards, incl. support for both the Danish and European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, including alignment with the new Danish code of conduct (expected Q1 2025).

1.2   The policy will support SDU's strategy for external funding.

1.3   Procedures will guide the practical work on addressing ethics and integrity.

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
2. Ethical principles 3. Professional responsibility 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results 32. Co-authorship	Q2 - Q4 2025	SDU's Research Ethics Committee SDU's Committee on Practice. **Supported by** Research support units at SDU's Research and Innovation Organisation (RIO) Faculties.	**1A) Policy** A Research Integrity and Ethics (RIE) Policy (including procedures) is developed.

Action 2: Establish a Research Integrity and Ethics (RIE) web resource

SDU will establish a Research Integrity and Ethics (RIE) web universe.

The initiative includes an analysis of missing or outdated policies and procedures that should be addressed and aligned with the new Danish code of conduct for research integrity (expected Q1 2025).

2.1   The web universe will be part of SDU's unified Research Support Hub.

2.2   The web universe will provide an easily accessible overview of relevant sub-policies, guidelines, checklists, persons responsible/contacts, support etc.

2.3   Knowledge and use of the new resource will be ensured through communication, training and support (see Action 4).

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
2. Ethical principles 3. Professional responsibility 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results	Q2 - Q4 2025	SDU RIO. **With contributions from** Faculty research support units SDU's Research Ethics Committee SDU's Committee on Practice SDU Library. **Supported by** The HR Excellence project group.	**2A) Resource** A Research Integrity and Ethics (RIE) web resource is developed and integrated as part of SDU's Research Support Hub (web). **2B) Dissemination** The RIE Policy (Action 1) is available on the RIE web resource. Indicators related to communication, learning and development are placed under Action 4.

Action 3: Development of framework for and implementation of 'Named Person' at SDU

Following the recommendations in the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, SDU will develop and implement a framework for 'Named Person'.

3.1   The concept of 'Named Person' will be developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including researchers.

3.2   Named Person will function as a resource for researchers at SDU who seek advice regarding responsible conduct of research and academic freedom.

3.3   The advisory function will be made known through communication, training and support (see Action 4).

3.4   The process of evaluating the function will be initiated, with a focus on its value for researchers.

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
2. Ethical principles 3. Professional responsibility 5. Contractual and legal obligations 32. Co-authorship 34. Complains/ appeals	Q2 - Q4 2025: Development of framework. Q1 - Q4 2026: Implementation.	SDU Library. **Supported by** The HR Excellence project group. **With the involvement of** SDU's Committee of Practice.	**3A) Framework** A concept for the role and responsibility / guideline for Named Person at SDU is developed. **3B) Implementation** Named Person has been appointed and equipped to fulfil the role. Indicators related to communication, learning and development are placed under Action 4. **3C) Evaluation** The initial experiences with the 'Named Person' are evaluated and can be used for further development of 'Named Person' at SDU.

Action 4: Communication, learning and development related to research integrity

This action concerns communication, learning and development related to Actions 1-3.

To integrate initiatives (Actions 1-3) into practice and support a learning culture, SDU will continue to update and further develop information/communication, teaching (including existing RCR courses), learning and development related to RIE.

4.1   SDU's courses on Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) will be updated with the new RIE policy (Action 2) and 'Named Person' (Action 3), to support researchers in meeting their obligations.

4.2   Briefing sessions will be held with heads of departments and research leaders to ensure knowledge of the new RIE policy, web resources for researchers and managers and of Named Person.

4.3   Policy, web resources regarding RIE and 'Named Person' will be communicated to researchers at SDU to ensure knowledge and use.

4.4   Workshops will be held with all research support units to ensure knowledge and competence to support researchers in using RIE policy, web resources and Named Person (as well as existing resources).

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
2. Ethical principles 3. Professional responsibility 4. Professional attitude 5. Contractual and legal obligations	Q3 2025 - Q4 2026	SDU Library and SDU HR (RCR-courses). SDU's Committee of Practice. Faculties (training and supervision in research integrity). Named Person when appointed.	**4A) Learning and development** SDU's RCR courses are updated to include content on the new RIE policy, web resources and Named Person. **4B) Dissemination** Researchers has been made aware of the new RIE-policy, web resources and Named Person through: • RCR courses (mandatory for PhDs) • briefing sessions held at faculties • SDU's research support units.

3.2 Recruitment and Selection (Action 5-9)

Action 5: Update SDU's Recruitment Policy

SDU's recruitment policy is part of SDU's Personnel Policy Guidelines. To reflect SDU's ambition in Strategy 2030 and to further incorporate the OTM-R Toolkit and principles, SDU will revise its Recruitment Policy.

5.1   The policy will include updates related to SDU's focus on attracting a diverse talent pool and conducting professional, transparent, bias-aware and digitally supported recruitment processes across the University, including a focus on creating coherent career paths and reduce uncertainty. The efforts towards open, transparent and merit-based recruitments is a key focus point. The updates will be based on existing practices at SDU and aligned with EU frameworks.

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
1. Research freedom 12. Recruitment 13. Recruitment (Code) 25. Stability and permanence of employment	Q1 - Q4 2025: Update the OTM-R Policy.	SDU HR. **In collaboration with** • A dialogue forum of academic employee representatives • Heads of departments • Research leaders. SDU's Personnel Policy Guidelines is anchored in SDU's Central Liaison Committee.	**5A) Policy** SDU's Recruitment Policy is updated. **5B) Dissemination** Managers, research leaders, members of assessment and appointment committees and HR specialists in the administration are aware of the updated Recruitment Policy.

Action 6: Establish principles for recruitment of academic staff at SDU (ongoing).

Principles for recruiting academic staff at SDU translate SDU's recruitment policy into concrete guidelines for the recruitment process.

6.1 The principles describe SDU's framework for preparation, advertising and candidate searching, job application, shortlisting, academic assessment, interview and selection and recruitment.

6.2 The principles apply to all academic positions at SDU from PhD to professor.

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
12. Recruitment 13. Recruitment (Code) 14. Selection (Code)	Q1 2024 - Q3 2025	SDU HR Faculties (management and HR specialists) SDU's Central Liaison Committee University Counsil Academic Councils at faculties. (approval of principles).	**6A) Framework** SDU's Principles for recruitment of academic staff at university level (including templates for job postings, assessments, and expert opinions) are developed and implemented at SDU's faculties.

Action 7: Update SDU's Recruitment Portal

To ensure all relevant information is easily accessible, SDU will update its Recruitment Portal (web).

7.1   The portal will be reviewed and updated with reference to the OTM-R Toolkit, SDU's GEP, and to SDU's (upcoming) CoARA action plan; as well as needs and wishes for support in SDU's academic environments and of the administrative process.

7.2   The internal awareness and use of the platform will be ensured through communication and support (see also Action 10).

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
12. Recruitment 13. Recruitment (Code) 14. Selection (Code)	Q1 - Q4 2025	SDU HR and GET (SDU's Gender Equality Team).	**7A) Framework** SDU's Recruitment Portal has been updated and includes, for example, SDU's updated Recruitment Policy (Action 5) and Principles for Recruitment of Academic Staff (Action 6). **7B) Dissemination** The announcement about SDU's updated Recruitment Portal has been communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

Action 8: Qualifying and optimising the recruitment process

The prioritisation of initiatives in this action plan is based on where researchers, heads of departments, deans and SDU HR currently see the greatest need for further improvement of the recruitment process. Current priorities are:

8.1   'Attracting talent'
- qualifying job advertisements
- promote and supporting strategic networking to attract a broad pool of talented applicant for research positions
- systematic use of search committees to attract a broad pool of talented applicant for research positions, including ensure OTM-R perspective and bias awareness in search committees via online resources on SDU's Recruitment Portal and workshops
- systematic use of EURAXESS and of SDU's LinkedIn profile(s) in SDU's procedures for where to post job advertisements
- improved information for applicants.

8.2   'Salary negotiations and contracts'
- improved information on, support of and process for salary negotiation
- improved information on, support of and process for employment certificates/contracts.

Internationalisation and gender balance are integrated perspectives.

Action 8 continued:

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
15. Transparency (Code) 26. Funding and salaries 27. Gender balance	Q2 2025 - Q4 2026	Faculties (managers, research leaders, members of committees, administrative HR-specialists), SDU HR, SDU's Gender Equality Team, SDU Communications.	**8A) Dissemination** SDU's new 'Job Universe' is launched at sdu.dk with improved information for applicants regarding SDU as an attractive workplace for researchers, career and competence development opportunities and improved information on the recruitment process. **8B) Framework** SDU has an agreed and known common approach to systematically posting open positions LinkedIn and EURAXESS. **8C) Framework** Faculties have an agreed and known framework for the systematic use of search committees. **8D) Evaluation** Applicants experience the recruitment process as professional, transparent, well supported and easy to navigate. Qualitative interviews will be conducted by SDU HR with a number of newly employed researchers. **8E) Evaluation (coincides with 9D)** Faculties experience the recruitment process as professional, transparent, well supported and easy to navigate (focus on 'attracting talent' and 'salary negotiation and contracts). Evaluative dialogues will be held by SDU HR with managers, research leaders and members of assessment and appointment committees at all faculties. **8F) Evaluation (coincides with 9E)** Use of existing statistical data to evaluate the impact on SDU's ability to attract and hire qualified applicant from a broad talent pool. SDU is currently improving gender statistics. How to further improve statistics on the recruitment of researchers and make data available to faculties must be clarified in more detail in dialogue with faculties.

Action 9: Systematic skills development

Support OTM-R practice (systematic skills development) via online resources on SDU's Recruitment Portal, briefing sessions, workshops etc.

9.1   Create web resources (based on 'nano modules' and 'just-in-time' principles) to support learning and development.

9.2   Briefing sessions between SDU HR and faculties.

9.3   A possible format could be a 'skills package' for (new) managers and committee members based on 'nano modules' and 'just-in-time' learning modules for (new) managers and committee members involved in a specific recruitment – containing an easily accessible presentation of important legal frameworks for recruitment of academic staff in Denmark, SDU's policy and principles for recruitment of academic staff, inspiration for OTM recruitment processes.

9.4   Workshops in collaboration between faculties, SDU's Gender Equality Team and SDU HR (existing effort to be continued). Workshops are offered 'on demand' to departments/groups who which to qualify their local recruitment process.

Action 9 continued:

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
4. Professional attitude 14. Selection (Code) 15. Transparency (Code) 26. Funding and salaries 27. Gender balance	Q3 2025 - Q4 2026	Faculties (managers, research leaders, members of committees, administrative HR specialists), SDU HR, SDU's Gender Equality Team.	**9A) Learning and development** SDU has developed and launched competence development opportunities regarding 'recruitment' – form and content must be clarified in more detail in dialogue with faculties, departments and research groups at SDU. **9B) Learning and development** Briefing sessions have been held with all faculties to further good practice in relation to open, transparent and merit-based recruitment. **9C) Learning and development** Workshops are continuously held with departments/research groups on improving OTM-R. **9D) Evaluation (coincides with 8E)** Faculties experience the recruitment process as professional, transparent, well supported and easy to navigate (focus on 'attracting talent' and 'salary negotiation and contracts). Evaluative dialogues will be held by SDU HR with managers, research leaders and members of assessment and appointment committees at all faculties. **9E) Evaluation (coincides with 8F)** Use of existing statistical data to evaluate the impact on SDU's ability to attract and hire qualified applicant from a broad talent pool. SDU is currently improving gender statistics. How to further improve statistics on the recruitment of researchers and make data available to faculties must be clarified in more detail in dialogue with faculties.

3.3   Working Conditions (Action 10-12)

Action 10: Development of framework for merit criteria at university level

10.1   Development of merit guidelines at university level; alignment with local guidelines and implementation at all faculties (ongoing initiative which will contribute to SDU as HR excellent in research).

10.2   SDU's work with developing merit criteria and implementing CoARA aims at creating transparent and explicit requirements and guidelines, especially for early-career researchers.

10.3   Our expectation is to be able to identify further actions for SDU's revised action plan in 2027 based on progress in the implementation of the framework for merit criteria by the end of 2026.

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
11. Evaluation/appraisal systems 12. Recruitment 14. Selection 16. Judging merit (Code) 21. Postdoctoral appointments 30. Access to career advice	Q2 2024 - Q2 2025: In progress, development. Q3 2025 - Q4 2026: Implementation, including aligning merit criteria on faculty and department level to SDU's overall framework.	Cross-cutting working group lead by the Head of DIAS (Danish Institute for Advanced Studies)	**10A) Policy** SDU's overall guidelines for merit have been established and implemented.

Action 11: Transparent career paths, career guidance and mentorship

Transparent career paths, career guidance and mentorship:

- Provide resources to support early-career researchers career development: Career portal/online resources (web), framework for career consultations, workshops, briefing sessions to promote use of resources and train supervisors and research leaders on career guidance.
- Mentoring schemes in research environments.

11.1 Upscale and implement a career guidance programme with a broad career perspective consisting of: Briefing of PhDs and postdocs on how to work with their own career development and available resources at SDU, workshops/courses/sessions on transferable skills, strategic network, life@work/wellbeing and cover letter and CV.

11.2 Ensure knowledge of SDU's new 'career portal' and concept for career conversations which early-career researchers (and senior researchers) can use independently to reflect on and work with their own career planning and development.

11.3 Ensure knowledge of career paths and opportunities for career guidance at department, faculty and university level e.g. among supervisors and research leaders.

11.4 Mentoring schemes.

Action 11 continued:

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code) 20. Seniority (Code) 29. Value of mobility 30. Access to career advice 33. Teaching 36. Relation with supervisors 37. Supervision and managerial duties 40. Supervision	Q1 - Q2 2025: Focus on development of career portal (web resource) and framework for career consultations and of workshops for early-career researchers. Q3 - Q4 2025: Focus on creating knowledge of resources via briefing sessions. Q1 - Q4 2026: Focus on improving career portal (web resource) and workshops. Q1 - Q4 2025: Focus on implementing mentoring scheme at Faculty of Health and DIAS - Danish Institute of Advanced Studies. Q1 - Q2 2026: Focus on evaluating existing mentoring schemes. Q3 - Q4 2026: Focus on spreading good practice in mentoring.	SDU HR, SDU's Gender Equality Team, Faculties.	**11A) Framework** SDU's Career Portal and concept for career conversations has been launched. **11B) Learning and Development** Form and content in workshops for early-career researchers has been developed and workshops form part of SDU Staff Courses and are available for early-career researchers. **11C) Learning and development** Briefing sessions have been held with all faculties to ensure knowledge of career portal and concept for career conversations as well as workshops for early-career researchers. **11D) Learning and development** Career guidance is implemented as a theme in SDU's existing seminars for PhD supervisors. **11E) Evaluation** Experiences with existing initiatives has been evaluated and can form basis for improving mentoring based on existing good practice in SDU's revised action plan in 2027.

Action 12: Development, implementation and evaluation of occupational health and safety action plans in continuation of the workplace assessment and wellbeing survey in 2024

Our expectation is to be able to identify actions for SDU's revised action plan in 2027 based on progress in the implementation of the health and safety plans developed in 2025.

This action point has a long-term perspective and is to be seen as a preparatory effort for the transition to the new charter and further focus on diversity, equality and inclusion as well as work-life balance. We expect the development, implementation and evaluation of health and safety plans to shape actions in SDU's HR revised HR Excellence action plan in 2027.

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
10. Nondiscrimination 34. Complaints/ appeals	Q2 - Q4 2025: Focus on strategy development. Q1 - Q4 2026: Focus on implementation.	SDU's Occupational Health and Safety Organisation and SDU's Central Health and Safety Committee supported by SDU HR.	**12A) Framework** New health and safety action plans are developed and implemented.

3.4 Training and Development (Action 13-15)

Action 13: Implementation of renewed action plan for career and competence development for academic and technical/administrative staff

In the action plan for career and competence development, the following prioritised focus points have been identified regarding research and research-based educations for the period of 2025-2026:

- **Pre-award support for researchers** – better visibility of what support is available in relation to the pre-award phase, including in relation to getting finances in place (research project budgeting) and competence development regarding getting research funded.

- **Post-award support for researchers** – competence development in project management of research projects including financial management in research projects and research leadership.

- **Onboarding** – improved pre- and onboarding especially regarding international researchers coming to Denmark/SDU (e.g. knowledge of the Danish funding system and research system, occupational health and safety in Denmark, the Danish framework for handling risks related to international research collaboration etc). Easy access to information for international researchers and competence development of managers and research leaders in relation to onboarding researchers.

- **Cooperation** – the University of Southern Denmark aims to strengthen collaboration with business and enterprises related to research and related to education following reforms of the education system in Denmark. The University also aims to strengthen international cooperation on research. This must be reflected in SDU's competence development offers.

- **Teaching**: Learning and development is largely decided in the individual group or unit and could be further systematised with, e.g., compulsory courses. Also, the work with teaching portfolios could be further improved and, e.g., integrated more systematically in the yearly performance and development reviews between researcher and manager/research leader.

Action 13 continued:

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
28.Career development 33.Teaching	Q3 2024 - Q1 2025: Development of action plan for career and competence development. Q2 2025 - Q4 2026: Implementation.	Committee for career and competence development for academic staff and Committee for career and competence development for technical/administrative staff supported by SDU HR and SDU Centre for Teaching and Learning.	**13A) Implementation** Form and content in competence development opportunities related to the prioritised focus points has been developed and form part of SDU Staff Courses and support for researchers at faculties. Participants evaluate competence development offers positively (SDU's staff courses are systematically evaluated by participants and feedback is used for improvements). **13B) Implementation** In 2025-2026 meetings has been held between SDU HR, SDU Centre for Teaching and Learning and all of SDU's departments (head of department, research leaders and study leaders at the department) discussing career and competence development for researchers, priorities and initiatives at the department.

Action 14: Development of Research Academy

SDU has developed a 'Research Academy' for assistant professors. SDU's Research Academy is – at the beginning of 2025 – ready to form part of the overall course offerings for researchers who are entering a research/research leader career. This action will further develop SDU's Research Academy, promote participation and ensure that the Research Academy is integrated into SDU's portfolio of competence development offers for researchers.

14.1 Transition from development and pilot phase to permanent part of SDU's research education with a focus on continued quality development and dissemination.

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
19. Recognition of qualifications (Code) 37. Supervision and managerial duties	Q1 2025 - Q4 2026	SDU HR	**14A) Dissemination** Faculties (researchers, research leaders and heads of departments) has knowledge of and can make qualified decisions about when to participate in the Research Academy and how the Research Academy is placed in SDU's overall research education programme. **14B) Evaluation** Participants evaluate Research Academy development offers positively (SDU's staff courses are systematically evaluated by participants and feedback is used for improvements).

Action 15: Improve communication and awareness of opportunities and access

15.1 Update web resources and communication on Staff Courses and other competence development opportunities at University level.

15.2 Briefing sessions with departments.

HRS4R Principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
28. Career development	Q1 2025 - Q4 2026	SDU HR	**15A) Dissemination** Researchers have a clear picture of and easy access to and make use of SDU's competence development offerings to develop their competencies and careers. Indicators are participant evaluations, participation numbers, and feedback from Career and Competence Development Committees, Liaison Committees and department management.

3.5   Open Recruitment Policy

Link to SDU's recruitment policy: https://sdunet.dk/en/servicesider/hr/ansaettelsesforhold/personalepolitik

The link between the Open Transparent and Merit-Based (OTM-R) Checklist, the GAP analysis and the HR Excellence in Research Action Plan

Recruitment is a core focus in SDU's strategy 2030, which states: '*The main ambition in our 2030 vision is the prioritisation of high quality, excellent environments and talented people.'* The objective is to '*ensure excellent organisational and physical frameworks that attract, develop and release talent'*.

As explained above, SDU has worked intensively with the recruitment process prior to engaging in the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) e.g., the integration of GE perspectives in recruitment processes and HR-related procedures is ongoing at several organisational levels and in several organisational contexts.

The OTM-R Checklist and the GAP analysis have been made with both EU's OTM-R perspective and SDU's vision as guiding points for the dialogue with researchers, managers and HR staff. The OTM-R Checklist and the GAP analysis (recruitment and selection) show where SDU can improve the recruitment of researchers, and SDU's HR Excellence Action Plan is thus informed by both the OTMR Checklist and the GAP analysis – and by the SDU's Strategy 2030 and the Executive Boards whish to prioritise recruitment in SDU's HR Excellence in Research efforts.

The prioritisation of initiatives in the action plan is based on where researchers at all levels and faculties, heads of departments, deans and SDU HR currently see the greatest need for further improvement of the recruitment process: Current priorities are (1) 'attracting talent' (qualifying job advertisements, strategic networking, systematic use of search committees, systematic use of EURAXESS and of SDU's LinkedIn profile(s) in SDU's procedures for where to post job advertisements) and (2) 'salary negotiations and contracts' (improved information on, support of and process for salary negotiation, improved information on, support of and process for preparing employment certificates/contracts).

Use of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) Toolkit and implementation of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) principles

The review and update of SDU's recruitment policy will be conducted in close collaboration with a dialogue forum of employee representatives and dialogues with the different stakeholders in recruitment processes at SDU. Existing knowledge and experience from previous and current initiatives regarding recruitment as well as the OTM-R Toolkit will be used in the review and update process. Additionally, the OTM-R principles, including the OTM-R Checklist, will be used as a baseline for our current position and steps forward.

The toolkit will also inspire the review and update of SDU's Recruitment Portal (web) to ensure internal awareness and utilisation of available recruitment resources.

4. Implementation

4.1 Implementation process

Three guiding questions behind the action plan have been discussed with councils, committees, groups of researchers and the Rectorate and Executive Board as well as with our HR Excellence in Research project group

1. Research Integrity and Ethics Policies
   - Discussion Point: How can SDU ensure that its research integrity and ethics policies are not only accessible but also actively integrated into daily research practices?

   - Potential Question: What additional *resources or formats* (e.g. workshops, case studies, easy-to-use tools) would help researchers integrate ethical guidelines more seamlessly into their research practices?

2. Recruitment Practices
   - Discussion Point: In enhancing open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment, what aspects of the process (e.g. job advertisements, interview procedures, onboarding) should be prioritised for improvement to attract and retain talent?

   - Potential Question: Are there specific *challenges or experiences* regarding recruitment which need to be addressed to make SDU more appealing to academic candidates?

3. Competence Building and Career Development
   - Discussion Point: How can SDU's career development initiatives be designed to meet the diverse needs of researchers at various stages of their careers?

   - Potential Question: What specific *tools, programmes, or mentorship opportunities* can support researchers long-term career goals within or beyond academia?

The organization of the implementation of the action plan is based on the input gathered from discussions of the above questions with stakeholders.

Important learnings from the application phase

The organisation of the implementation is also based on the positive experiences we have gained with the way we have chosen to organize the work in the application phase. Important choices were, for example:

The Executive Board chose to be the steering group for the HR Excellence in Research application process which points to SDU's engagement in HRS4R.

There has been extensive involvement of and dialogue with councils and committees at SDU - both cross-university councils and committees and faculty councils and committees.

Relevant administrative units have been represented in the project group - which, for example, led to the recognition of the value of and the need to coordinate SDU's work into various EU frameworks (HR Excellence, CoARA, GEP/GDiR and SOPs4RI).

Organisation

The implementation of SDU's action plan for HR Excellence in Research will be organised as a series of targeted subprojects, each addressing specific focus areas identified in the GAP analysis and OTM-R Checklist (priority gaps). This project-based approach ensures a both structured and flexible work-form, with the right resources and expertise directed toward the most pressing needs, involvement of relevant stakeholders in relation to the specific subproject and the anchoring of HR Excellence initiatives/outcomes by placing responsibility within the University's existing organisation. At the same time, progress is ensured by SDU HR being responsible for driving the overall implementation of the action plan in cooperation with the project group.

The implementation process will in many ways be a continuation of the way we at SDU have worked with our HR Excellence in Research application. For example, SDU's top management will continue to be steering group for HR Excellence in Research at SDU, and relevant stakeholders (e.g. councils and committees) have already offered to take responsibility for and contribute to the specific subprojects in the action plan through in continuation with their involvement in the GAP analysis, OTM-R Checklist and development of the action plan.

For several of the subprojects in the action plan, implementation is already underway and does not await the processing of SDU's application in the EU, as the initiatives in our action plan arise from identified opportunities to elevate SDU as an attractive workplace for researchers.

Overall project structure

The action plan is divided into subprojects that operate in parallel and are centrally coordinated in SDU HR. Each subproject will include:

- Clearly defined goals and tasks.
- Involvement of main stakeholders to ensure ownership.
- Cooperation between faculties/research environments and administrative/supporting units.
- Defined milestones and success indicators. In this first action plan, milestones and indicators are mostly related to finished products (e.g. policies, frameworks etc.) and completed activities (e.g. briefing sessions, pilots, experience gathering), not least considering the relatively short project period of two years (2025-2026) before SDU must revise the action plan and transition to the new charter. In the updated action plan under the new charter, we expect to be able to establish and evaluate more long-term indicators in the form of changed practices and experienced value among researchers and managers.

Examples of key subprojects in SDU's action plan

Examples of subprojects in SDU's action plan illustrate our structure of actions under the various themes:

a. **Ethics and Professionalism**
   - **Goal:** Develop and implement a Research Integrity and Ethics (RIE) policy and establish a digital RIE universe.

   - **Process:**
       o Phase 1: Analysis and policy development.
       o Phase 2: Creation of the digital universe in collaboration with research support units.
       o Phase 3: Roll-out and training.

b. **Recruitment and Selection**
   - **Goal:** Ensure open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment processes (OTM-R).

   - **Process:**
       o Updating the recruitment policy.
       o Developing principles which sets a frameworks for how the recruitment process is carried out at SDU
       o Improving SDU's recruitment portal.
       o Providing continuous easily accessible and tailormade training and support for those involved in recruitment processes.

c. Working Conditions and Career Opportunities

- **Goal:** Enhance transparency in career paths and strengthen support for early-career researchers.

- **Process:**
    - Phase 1: Development of career portal (web resource).
    - Phase 2: Pilot projects om mentoring schemes.
    - Phase 3: Evaluation.

d. Training and Competence Development

- **Goal:** Establish a qualified framework for researcher development through courses for researchers with clear progression.

- **Process:**
    - Engaging researchers and department leaders in course design.
    - Rolling out workshops and online learning modules.
    - Collecting feedback and continuously improving programmes.

Conclusion

The subproject approach ensures a targeted and focused implementation, with each initiative tailored to the specific needs and resources within its focus area. The result is an action plan that effectively supports SDU's ambitions to achieve and maintain HR Excellence in Research.

4.2   Implementation set-up (governance)

The implementation of the action plan is organized in the following general manner

- **Steering Group:** The Rectorate will be the steering group and involve the Executive Board when relevant, e.g. to ensure progress in subprojects (see below).

- **Implementation Committee:** The Subcommittee for Career and Competency Development of Academic Staff under the Main Liaison Committee will continue to regularly oversee the progress.

- **Project Group:** The project group (SDU HR, GET, SDUB, RIO and Faculty Research Support) will continue to (a) qualifying the implementation of the HR Excellence action plan and (b) ensuring synergy with other EU frameworks (GEP/GDiR, CoARA, and SOPs4RI).

- **Main stakeholders:** Annual dialogue rounds in relevant council and committees will contribute to ongoing evaluation and qualification of the implementation process. The dialogue round in 2026 will form the basis for revising the action plan and SDU's internal review, which will be submitted to EU.

2025-2027: Ongoing initiatives and existing efforts will be monitored, and new initiative areas will be launched to ensure the progress of all action plan initiatives. The process is coordinated by SDU HR.

4.2.02   The Steering group and the Implementation Committee

Steering group (ensure strategic anchoring and alignment and signal clear management involvement)

The rectorate will be the steering group for SDU HR Excellence. The Rectorate will involve the Executive Board when relevant. This will ensure and signal a clear strategic anchoring and top management involvement, meet requirements for management involvement for all units responsible for HR and ensure alignment of SDU HR Excellence with SDU's strategy and relevant cross-cutting initiatives.

Implementation Committee (oversee the implementation process and ensure researcher involvement)

SDU HR Excellence is anchored in the Committee for Career and Competence Development of Academic Staff. This will ensure a qualified view of SDU HR Excellence from leaders of researchers (department heads/dean) and VIP employee representatives/researchers across SDU, involvement of stakeholders, organisational anchoring, alignment with faculty initiatives of relevance to SDU HR Excellence, and signal broad involvement of different organisational levels as well as leaders and researchers from across SDU.

SDU HR Excellence is a fixed point at the committee's meetings. The Committee for Career and Competence Development of Academic Staff is a subcommittee under the Central Liaison Committee. The Central Liaison Committee is continuously informed about the process, which also contributes to the above focus points.

Involvement of the research community/main stakeholders

SDU ensures the involvement of the research community/main stakeholders in the implementation process through a collaborative and inclusive approach. Researchers, research leaders and committees are engaged as active participants in the design and execution of subprojects, ensuring alignment with their needs and perspectives.

Stakeholder involvement is facilitated through structured feedback mechanisms, such as briefing sessions, workshops and consultations, as well as through participation in councils and project-specific working groups. This ensures that the initiatives are relevant, widely supported and integrated into daily research practices.

In addition to researchers represented in the Committee for Career and Competence Development of Academic Staff, the involvement of researchers at all levels and broadly at SDU is ensured via the continuous involvement of the same councils, committees and groups of researchers in the implementation phase: Annual dialogue rounds in relevant councils and committees will contribute to ongoing evaluation and qualification of the implementation process. The dialogue round in 2026 will form the basis for revising the action plan and SDU's internal review, which will be submitted to the EU.

The research community/main stakeholders:

- University Council
- Academic Councils of the faculties
- Central Liaison Committee (HSU)
- General Occupational Health and Safety Committee (HoAMU)
- Gender Equality Committee (CLiU)
- Research Ethics Committee (REC)
- Committee on Practice
- PhD Coordination Committee (Ph.d.-K)
- DIAS Chairs and DIAS Society of Fellows (SOF)
- Dialogue forum of Academic union representatives
- Heads of Departments
- Research Support Coordination (FS-K).

- **Steering group:** The Executive Board
- **Committee:** The Subcommittee on Skills Development of Academic Staff
- **Project group:** Representatives from SDU HR, RIO/FAK Research Support, Library, GET.

By fostering ongoing dialogue and collaboration, SDU ensures that the research community has ownership of the process and plays a central role in achieving the goals of the HR Excellence Action Plan.

4.3 The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) as guiding framework

Commitment to HR Excellence has been a key focus point in the development phase we have completed, where support for the action plan has been ensured through the dialogue rounds and the involvement of councils and committees, as well as the Executive Board as steering group.

The HRS4R framework will serve as a source of inspiration and guidance in shaping our policies and practices. Rather than focusing solely on alignment, we use HRS4R's principles and guiding questions as a framework to critically evaluate and enhance key areas such as research ethics, recruitment, and career development.

Our approach involves:

- **Informed Decision-Making:** Using HRS4R principles as guiding questions in discussions with councils, committees, and researchers to identify opportunities for improvement and innovation.

- **Policy Development:** Drawing on HRS4R to inspire new initiatives and frameworks, such as the Research Ethics and Integrity policy and the enhancement of open and transparent recruitment practices.

- **Continuous Reflection:** Treating the HRS4R framework as a dynamic tool to engage stakeholders in shaping an attractive and supportive research environment.

The process involves continuous dialogue with SDU's top management, councils, committees and stakeholders to integrate HRS4R perspectives into existing policies and practices. By integrating HRS4R's guiding principles into our organizational processes, SDU ensures that its research strategy and HR policies remain forward-looking and aligned with the needs of the research community.

4.4   Follow up on implementation

To ensure the successful implementation of the proposed actions, SDU has structured the HR Excellence Action Plan into a series of targeted subprojects, each with clearly defined goals, milestones and responsible committees as well as research and administrative units. SDU HR will oversee the overall coordination of the action plan in collaboration with the HR Excellence project group, ensuring alignment across faculties and administrative units.

Each subproject will engage relevant stakeholders, including research leaders, committees and administrative staff, to ensure local ownership and practical integration into daily operations. Progress will be monitored through indicators, regular reporting to SDU's steering group and Implementation Committee.

The combination of strong central coordination, stakeholder involvement and iterative feedback will ensure that the proposed actions are effectively implemented and contribute to SDU's long-term vision for HR Excellence.

4.5 Monitoring of progress in the HR Excellence Action Plan

Introduction

To ensure the successful implementation of SDU's HR Excellence Action Plan, progress will be systematically monitored through a structured framework. This approach combines central coordination with local ownership, ensuring that milestones are achieved, stakeholders remain engaged, and results align with the overarching goals of the plan.

4.5.01 Core Principles for Monitoring Progress

a. Stakeholder Engagement and Responsibility

- Subproject will involve key stakeholders, including faculty representatives, research leaders, administrative units and committees to ensure ownership and alignment with existing practices.
- SDU HR will oversee the overall coordination and act as the main driver of progress, supported by the HR Excellence project group. The project group will continue to (a) qualifying the HR Excellence action plan and (b) ensuring synergy with other EU frameworks (GEP/GDiR, CoARA and SOPs4RI).

b. Defined Milestones and Success Indicators

- Clear milestones will be established for each subproject, focusing initially on deliverables such as policies, frameworks, or pilot initiatives.
- Success indicators will track the completion of activities (e.g. number of workshops conducted, policies finalised) and participation levels (e.g. stakeholders engaged, feedback collected).

c. Adaptive Implementation

- As projects progress, feedback loops will allow for adjustments to timelines, methods and objectives to ensure relevance and feasibility.
- The two-year timeline (2025–2026) will emphasise iterative learning to refine practices in preparation for the transition to the new charter and long-term evaluation metrics.

4.5.02 Monitoring Method

a. **Central Coordination and Reporting**
- SDU HR will maintain a project management system to track milestones, responsibilities and deadlines for each subproject.
- Regular progress updates will be submitted to the HR Excellence steering group and to the implementation committee.

b. **Feedback Mechanisms**
- Feedback from researchers, research leaders, and administrative staff will be collected to assess the relevance and effectiveness of initiatives via e.g. workshops, focus groups and interviews.

4.5.03 Communication of Progress

a. **Transparency and Awareness**
- Regular communication will highlight key achievements, ensuring visibility for all stakeholders.

b. **Annual Reporting**
- An annual report summarising progress, challenges and adjustments will be prepared for SDU's Executive Board and shared with relevant councils and committees in the yearly dialogue round.
- The report will serve as a foundation for the upcoming action plan under the new charter.

4.5.04 Transition to Long-Term Indicators

While the current action plan emphasises short-term milestones, future updates will focus on long-term metrics, such as changes in recruitment practices and improved career satisfaction among researchers. This transition will build on the lessons learned and data collected during the 2025–2026 implementation period.

4.5.05 Conclusion

The structured monitoring framework ensures that progress remains on track, challenges are addressed and stakeholders are actively involved throughout the implementation process. By combining defined milestones, robust feedback mechanisms and transparent reporting, SDU is well-positioned to achieve its HR Excellence goals and maintain its status as an attractive and supportive workplace for researchers.

4.6   Measuring of progress in the HR Excellence Action Plan

Progress will be measured using a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators aligned with the objectives of the HR Excellence Action Plan.

Key indicators include:

- Completion of deliverables, such as new policies, frameworks and tools (e.g., RIE policy, Recruitment Portal updates).

- Participation rates in initiatives such as training sessions, workshops and pilot programmes.

- Feedback from researchers and stakeholders gathered through workshops, focus groups, and evaluations.

- Monitoring of recruitment and career development metrics, such as diversity in applicant pools and career satisfaction among researchers.

Regular progress reports will be shared with the HR Excellence steering group, and findings will inform SDU's updated action plan for the next assessment cycle.