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HR in Research – Renewal of the status “HR Excellence in Research»

Reference to background documents

- [The European Charter for Researchers](#)
- [Matter for the Board 12/24, HR in Research – Renewal of the status «HR Excellence in Research](#)
- [Matter for the Board 137/21, HR in Research \(HREiR\) - Interim Assessment /Revised Action Plan](#)
- [Matter for the Board 46/19, HR for researchers - Affiliation to the EU principles in Charter & Code](#)
- [Matter for the Board 39/17, HR for Researchers – Endorsement of the EU's principles in the Charter & Code \(in Norwegian\)](#)

The case concerns:

The matter concerns the follow-up of the [HR Excellence in Research \(HREiR\)](#) status, which UiB was awarded in 2019 by the EU Commission. The basis for the award was an application in which UiB assessed its own practices against the principles in [the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers](#). To retain the HREiR status, the EU Commission requires recertification every three years. By the deadline of April 7, 2025, UiB must, among other things, submit an updated Action Plan for following up on the 20 principles in *the new European Charter for Researchers*.

The awarding of the HREiR status highlights that UiB adheres to the principles in *the European Charter for Researchers* and is committed to continuous improvement in the quality of HR in research. Such a status is significant for UiB's ability to compete for the best researchers, facilitate researcher mobility, and work on project applications to the EU's framework program.

Recertification process:

The EU Commission places great emphasis on ensuring that the work on a new Action Plan has a solid knowledge base, is anchored in the target group (the academic staff) and the university community, including through links to the overall strategy and relevant action plans. In 2024, a new Steering Group,

Project Group, and four Working Groups for [HR in research](#) were appointed. The Working Groups included representatives from all four career levels for researchers as well as administrative staff, and they have developed proposals for new actions. The Project Group has followed up on the work and prioritized the proposals, and the Steering Group has reviewed the proposals.

Each Working Group was responsible for one Pillar in [the European Charter for Researchers](#):

- Pillar 1: Ethics, integrity, gender and open science
- Pillar 2: Researchers assessment, recruitment and progression
- Pillar 3: Working conditions and practices
- Pillar 4: Research careers and talent development

A total of 32 action proposals were submitted from the Working Groups to the Project Group. The Project Group reviewed and prioritized the action proposals that were presented to the Steering Group. Some of the actions were also combined. The Steering Group ultimately recommended 9 Actions, which are briefly summarized below.

Suggested actions:

Action 1 – The recruitment policy for academic positions follows the EU Commission's mandatory checklist for open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment processes (OTM-R). UiB meets most of the points from the [checklist](#) and is working on following up on some elements that are only partially fulfilled. The Action involves establishing and further developing a recruitment policy for academic positions (OTM-R policy), where we clarify important principles and goals for good recruitment processes at UiB. [UiB's strategy 2023-2030](#) points out that *We have a strong recruitment base and work to ensure a practice of recruitment characterized by quality, long-term perspectives, equality and diversity.* OTM-R is an important element in the work of further developing the quality of our recruitment practice.

Action 2 – Ph.D. supervisor competence builds on measures from the previous Action Plan, which aimed to establish an arena for developing the supervisor role. Today, all faculties have their own forums where supervisors can discuss challenges and share experiences. These vary in structure and frequency. The new Action involves all faculties offering training for new Ph.D. supervisors and updates for experienced supervisors on relevant rules and guidelines. The training must be tailored to the needs of each faculty. It is recommended that such training becomes mandatory for Ph.D. supervisors. The Action supports the ambition in [UiB's strategy](#) that *We will strengthen research training and the recruitment of future researchers.* It is also part of [UiB's Action plan for research education](#): *Ph.D. supervisors shall have sufficient and up-to-date knowledge of current regulations and ethics within the Ph.D. education.*

Action 3 – Diversity. The Action involves following up on remaining activities in [UiB's Action Plan for Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal opportunity for 2023-2025](#), and developing a new action plan for the period 2026-2028. In the fall of 2024, a survey and focus group interviews were conducted among employees, providing an important knowledge base for the continued work. The Action is anchored in [UiB's strategy](#), which points out that *We will further develop an inclusive working environment and an organisational culture that promotes equality, diversity, collaboration and participation.* To achieve these ambitions, UiB

will *Target recruitment in order to reach the most qualified and highly motivated applicants from a broad and diverse pool.*

Action 4 – Career development. The Action includes two main elements: career days and career plans. In the fall of 2023, a pilot for career days for young researchers was conducted. The career days provide an opportunity to highlight various dimensions of a research career and contribute to increased focus on career development, while also serving as a networking arena for young researchers. Good coordination between central and local events can increase the relevance to disciplines and academic environments. Career days will be established as a permanent offering at UiB, every other year.

In the [matter of the Board 4/2 \(in Norwegian\)](#), UiB adopted a Career Policy for Young/Early stage Researchers. It includes requirements for career plans for postdocs. The new Universities and University Colleges Act from 2024 require that career plans be in place for both postdocs and PhD candidates. The Action involves establishing a framework for the development and follow-up of career plans for PhD candidates. This includes a description of routines, responsibilities, follow-up through employee dialogues, and a basis for faculty-specific templates for career plans. The framework for career plans for postdocs will be reviewed and updated at the same time. There is a need for training of staff who will contribute to the establishment and follow-up of career plans.

The action is anchored in [UiB's strategy](#); *We will offer career and competence development for all and develop leadership competence that emphasises trust and openness.* To achieve UiB's ambitions, UiB will *Ensure competence and career development on behalf of the staff by offering courses and arenas for exchange of experience and learning and Ensure good conditions for younger academic staff through systematic follow-up and career advice.*

Action 5 – Open recruitment. An open recruitment process is practiced by UiB in accordance with [national regulations \(in Norwegian\)](#) and [internal guidelines](#). However, there is potential for closer follow-up of applicants for academic positions during the recruitment process. The Action involves a review to assess when feedback should be given to applicants during the hiring process, as well as improving templates for such messages in Norwegian and English in Jobbnorge. Information on UiB's website about the application process for academic positions (including access and appeal opportunities) will be reviewed at the same time to ensure good and comprehensive information for applicants. The Action supports [UiB's strategy](#), which points out that *We have a strong recruitment base and work to ensure a practice of recruitment characterised by quality, long-term perspectives, equality and diversity.*

Action 6 – Basic educational expertise has been a requirement set out in national regulations since 2019 for appointments to associate professor positions and for appointments to, and promotions to, professor positions. New national regulations now also require educational competence for positions where the main work area is teaching and supervision (teaching professors, associate teaching professors and university lecturers). The content of the requirements and guidelines for how they should be documented is up to the institutions themselves to establish, preferably in collaboration with others in the sector. The national regulations allow for the competence requirements to be met within two years after an appointment. The Action involves establishing routines and systems for follow-up, especially in cases where two years are given after an appointment to meet the competence requirements. The Action is anchored in [UiB's strategy](#), which states that *We will be an attractive place of study that provides high-quality research-based*

education for both Norwegian and international students. Requirements for basic educational expertise and facilitation for employees to acquire such competence contribute to ensuring good educational quality.

Action 7 – Ethics. Research ethics is a fundamental part of the research process. UiB was early in establishing its own Research Ethics Committee to handle cases of possible breaches of recognized research ethical standards, and has created a dedicated [website](#) with information related to research ethics, developed an e-learning course, and holds an annual conference: [Research Ethics Day](#). In 2022, a competence plan ([matter for the board 11/23, in Norwegian](#)) was established to strengthen the work on ethics training and ensure that employees working with research receive adequate training. Several faculties also need local support structures that can provide advice and guidance on research ethics. The Action involves developing a module on ethics in [UiB's competence development program for research leaders \(in Norwegian\)](#), to include research ethics in Ph.D. supervisor courses at the faculties, and establishing local research ethics committees (at the faculty level) as needed. The Action is anchored in the competence plan for ethics training and in [UiB's strategy](#), which states that *We will promote the understanding of research ethics and the importance of research integrity.*

Action 8 – Revised policy for open science. [UiB's policy for open science](#) was adopted by the board in 2020 and last amended in 2022. Open science is a scientific practice where processes and results are openly accessible under conditions that promote sharing, utilization, collaboration, and social responsibility. The field is rapidly evolving, and it is important that the policy is updated and reflects the everyday life and challenges of researchers and the organisation. The Action therefore involves a revision of UiB's policy for open science. UiB follows developments nationally and in Europe within open science. The work is anchored in the ambition in [UiB's strategy](#), which states that *We will strengthen the framework for open science, responsible data sharing, and individual rights.*

Action 9 – Sustainability. Research of high international quality and research-based education are UiB's most important contributions to sustainability efforts. UiB has extensive academic activities that are either indirectly or directly related to sustainability ([matter for the Board 76/24, in Norwegian](#)). Targeted [sustainability work](#) is also carried out for UiB as an organisation and workplace, coordinated by the Estate and Facilities Management Division. UiB has also established an Action Plan for Climate Work 2023-2026. [Matter for the Board 90/24 \(in Norwegian\)](#) with updated ambitions for climate work towards 2030 was adopted in November 2024.

The Action involves, among other things, revising the Action plan for climate work and continuing work on communication, culture, and good meeting places. Leadership training, further development of the annual [SDG conference](#), and collaboration with relevant partners are measures that will improve UiB's ability to leverage our own scientific knowledge base in sustainability work, build organizational culture, and good practices, as described in the new Charter for Researchers (Pillar 1, point 8). The Action supports [UiB's strategy](#), which states that *We will be a sustainable organisation, operating in a responsible manner environmentally, socially and financially, and that UiB will Work for a climate-neutral property portfolio with local, renewable energy production.*

Comments from the University Director

Following up on the principles and requirements in *the European Charter for Researchers* involves continuous improvement work that will help strengthen research quality, promote researchers' careers, and support UiB's research environments in being competitive. The *HR Excellence in Research Award* is also important in the work on project applications to the EU's framework program.

The Working Groups and Project Group have consisted of researchers from all four career levels, which has contributed to the action proposals meeting the needs of the target group effectively. The proposed actions support [UiB's strategy 2023-2030](#) and associated action plans. The Actions provide a solid foundation for further work to improve the conditions for researchers at UiB.

Decision proposal:

The University Board takes note of the matter.

Tore Tungodden
University Director

04/03/2025 Heidi Annette Espedal/Kathrine Brosvik Thorsen (HR director)