

## **HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF A CORUÑA (UDC) ACTION PLAN 2025-2028**

HR Excellence in Research Award Renewal Phase

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## 1 Contact Details

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**Name of the Institution:**

Universidade da Coruña (UDC) / University of A Coruña

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## 2 Organisational Information

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### 2.1 Organisational profile

The University of A Coruña (UDC) is a public institution of higher education and research located in the Autonomous Community of Galicia, in the Northwest of Spain. Established in 1989, the University operates through two main campuses, situated in the cities of A Coruña and Ferrol.

The institution is committed to academic excellence, scientific innovation, and the transfer of knowledge to society. Its mission is to contribute to the cultural, social, and economic development of its environment through the provision of high-quality education, the promotion of research and innovation, and active collaboration with public and private entities at both national and international levels.

The University comprises a wide range of faculties and schools that offer undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programmes across diverse fields of knowledge, including:

- Engineering, Architecture, and Applied Sciences
- Health Sciences
- Social and Legal Sciences
- Humanities and Education

Research is a cornerstone of the University's mission. The UDC hosts numerous research groups, institutes, and centres that are recognised for their contributions to scientific progress and technological innovation. The University actively promotes international cooperation, participating in European programmes such as Erasmus+, and maintaining a broad network of partnerships and mobility agreements with higher education institutions worldwide.

## 2.2 Key figures for the organization

The following table shows the main indicators regarding Human Resources and main research funding sources.

Table 1 Key Figures

Staff & Students	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research	2657
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)	83
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organization is host organization)	17
Of whom are women	847
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor.	923
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organizations corresponding with postdoctoral level	520
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organizations corresponding with doctoral level	1214
Total number of students (if relevant)	17481
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)	3666
Research Funding (figures for most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organizational budget	184.394.158,26€
Annual organizational direct government funding (designated for research)	13.403.830€
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organizations – including EU funding)	11.828.260€
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	9.138.928€

## Actions

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### 2.3 Action Plan 2025-2028

**The members of the Steering Committee responsible for leading and monitoring the whole process are:**

- Ricardo Cao Abad (Rector)
- María Jesús Grela Barreiro (General Manager)
- Marta García Pérez (General Secretariat)
- Teresa López Fernández (Vice-Rector for Teaching Staff)
- María Cristina Naya Riveiro (Vice-Rector for Dissemination, Culture and Sports)
- Jerónimo Puertas Agudo Vice-Rector for Research and Transference)
- Moisés Canle López (Vice-Rector for Degrees and Internationalization)
- Cristina López Villar (Vice-Rector for Equality and Diversity)
- Ana Isabel Ares Pernas (Vice-Rector for the Ferrol Campus and Social Responsibility)

**There is a Working Group responsible for developing and implementing actions:**

- María Amalia Jácome Pumar (Deputy to the Vice-rector for Research and Transference)
- Faustino Infante Roura (Strategic Director of REDCIDI)
- Yolanda Calaza Parajes (Vice-Manager of Research)
- Fidel Cacheda Seijo (Former WG member and researcher)
- Marcos Míguez González (Director of the Industrial Campus of Ferrol and researcher)
- Fernando de Llano (Co-ordinator of the UDC Strategic Plan and researcher)
- Cristina Fernández Bessa (researcher)
- Silvia Lage Rivera (researcher)
- Sonia Carné Padilla (Co-ordinator of the HRS4R Strategy)

**There are also four Focus Groups for specific advisory roles:**

#### Gender Equality:

- Ana María Neira Pena (Director of the Gender Equality Office and researcher)
- María José Abad López (Deputy Director of the Gender Equality Office and researcher)
- María Obdulia Luis Gamallo (researcher)
- Cristina Prado Acebo (researcher)

### OTM-R Selection and Hiring Processes:

- María Amalia Jácome Pumar (Deputy to the Vice-Rector for Research and Transference)
- Roberto Rodríguez Martínez (Director of the Researchers Hiring Office)
- Almudena Filgueria Vizoso (researcher)
- Laura Castro Santos (researcher)
- Carmen Gago Cortés (researcher)
- Ariadna Monje Amor (researcher)

### Career Development:

- Faustino Infante Roura (Strategic Director of REDCIDI)
- María Isabel Rial Hermida (researcher)
- José María Losada López (researcher)
- Eva Sánchez Amboage (researcher)
- Verónica Crespo Pereira (researcher)
- Mónica López Golán (researcher)
- Cristina Prado Acebo (researcher)

### Bio-Psychosocial Well-Being:

- Sergio Eduardo Santos del Riego (Director of UDC Saudable and researcher)
- Ana Isabel Ares Pernas (Vice-Rector for the Ferrol Campus and Social Responsibility)
- Miguel Angel Talavera Valverde (researcher and member of the Ethics Committee)
- Ana Isabel Souto Gómez (researcher and member of the Ethics Committee)
- María Jesús Movilla Fernández (former Vice-Rector for Ferrol Campus and Social Responsibility and researcher)
- Valentín Escudero Carranza (Director of Afrontemos Programme and researcher)

## **ACTION 27. Practical guide for candidates applying to calls funded through projects and agreements**

**Principles:** 2, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 21&34

**Deadline for completing the action:** Q2 2026

**Responsible units and departments:** EURAXESS Contact Point and the Research Personnel Office (OPCTI)

### **Indicators and targets:**

1. Elaboration of the guide
2. Number of guides sent to national and international candidates
3. Results of the Satisfaction survey

### **Description of the action:**

In response to the growing number of inquiries received regarding participation in the University's recruitment and selection processes—particularly from applicants residing outside Spain, the majority of whom are international candidates—the University has undertaken the development of a Practical Guide for Applicants. This guide aims to promote equal access and participation in recruitment procedures, ensuring that international applicants are able to apply under the same conditions as national candidates.

To date, a specific section has been incorporated into the calls for applications published on EURAXESS, detailing the documentation required to pass the administrative eligibility screening stage. This includes the submission of a valid passport or identification card, curriculum vitae, academic transcript, and a signed declaration confirming the accuracy of the information and merits stated in the CV.

This section also guides candidates residing outside Spain on how to apply to the respective calls, directing them to contact the EURAXESS Contact Point at the University of A Coruña for further assistance.

Once the Practical Guide for Applicants is fully implemented, all interested individuals will have access to comprehensive information on how the selection process operates, as well as practical recommendations to help them participate more effectively and successfully.

International candidates are expected to be the group that benefits most from this initiative, as they often face language barriers and administrative challenges when engaging with local recruitment processes.

Finally, this action will be accompanied by the distribution of a satisfaction survey to all candidates who make use of the guide. The feedback collected will help assess the usefulness of the initiative and identify potential areas for improvement in the University's application and selection procedures.

### **ACTION 28. Improvement of working conditions for research staff (researchers and research administration and management personnel) with temporary contracts**

**Principles:** 2, 5, 10, 15, 16, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 34&35

**Deadline for completing the action:** Q3 2026

**Responsible units and departments:** Vice- Rectorate for Research and Transference and the General Management.

#### **Indicators and targets:**

1. Development of a New Regulation Applicable to Research Staff Hired Under Agreements, Programs, and Projects (Temporary Staff).
2. Assessment of Staff Satisfaction with the New Regulation.

#### **Description of the action:**

Although significant progress has already been made in this regard, further efforts are still required to ensure the full alignment of working conditions for all staff employed in support of research activities.

Given the strongly collaborative and consensus-driven approach of the current University Executive Team, and in particular of the Vice-Rectorate for Research and Transference, new guidelines and regulations will be developed over the coming months. These measures are expected to contribute to the continuous improvement of the working conditions of staff employed through projects, programmes, and agreements.

In the short term, the establishment of a staff committee representing personnel under this type of contractual category, as well as the formal inclusion of their trade union representation, is also foreseen. This will enable the collective to exercise greater decision-making influence in the development of future regulations and policies affecting this group of employees.

In the short term, a significant increase in the minimum salary levels across all professional categories is anticipated, following the implementation of the new staff classification system recently approved by the University's Governing Council. This measure reflects the University's commitment to promoting fair, transparent, and competitive working conditions for all personnel engaged in research and administrative support.

Notably, for certain positions—such as the newly established Project Manager profile—the revision may result in a salary increase of up to 71% in gross remuneration, depending on the qualifications and experience of the employee. The updated classification system introduces minimum salary thresholds directly linked to academic and professional qualifications, thereby aligning compensation with responsibility and expertise.

For example, a Research Manager who currently earns approximately €2050 gross per month will, as of January 2026, receive €3500 gross per month under the new structure.

This reform is expected to have a positive impact on staff motivation, retention, and institutional competitiveness, reinforcing the University's position as an attractive employer within both the national and international research landscapes. Moreover, it contributes to the University's broader strategic objectives of enhancing talent management and fostering excellence in research and innovation.

## **ACTION 29. Creation of a comprehensive Research Human Resources Office (OPCTI)**

**Principles:** 12, 13, 14, 15, 24 34&35

**Deadline for completing the action:** Q2 2026

**Responsible units and departments:** Vice-Rectorate for Research and Transference and the General Management.

**Indicators and targets:**

1. Establishment of a Unified Human Resources Department
2. Improvement of Recruitment and Selection Processes
3. Enhancement of Internal Communication

**Description of the action:**

The creation of a centralised Human Resources Department represents a strategic step towards optimising institutional efficiency and ensuring a coherent and transparent approach to staff management. This initiative aims to streamline administrative procedures, enhance interdepartmental coordination, and guarantee the consistent application of policies across all categories of University personnel.

In parallel, the University is implementing a series of measures to improve the efficiency, transparency, and agility of recruitment and selection processes. These actions are fully aligned with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, reinforcing the principles of equal opportunity, fairness, and merit-based evaluation.

Moreover, the University is working to strengthen internal communication mechanisms between the Human Resources Department and other institutional units. This improvement is expected to increase responsiveness, information flow, and coordination, contributing to a more supportive and effective administrative environment.

Currently, responsibilities related to the recruitment and management of research staff—particularly those employed under temporary contracts funded through projects, programmes, and agreements—are distributed among several offices. This fragmentation of functions has, at times, led to procedural inconsistencies and difficulties in coordination.

From the researchers' perspective, this dispersion can be confusing, as they may be uncertain about which unit is responsible for managing their contract or addressing specific administrative matters.

To address these challenges, the University plans to unify all existing units involved in research staff management into a single, integrated Human Resources service. This restructuring will not only enhance efficiency and procedural clarity but also promote a shared institutional vision, foster greater satisfaction among researchers and administrative staff, and ensure compliance with the HRS4R principles related to Working Conditions and Social Security as well as Recruitment and Selection.

### **ACTION 30. Intensification of participation in European alliances and programs**

**Principles:** 7, 9, 23, 26, 28, 35, 37, 38&39

**Deadline for completing the action:** Q1 2027

**Responsible units and departments:** Vice-Rectorate for Research and Transference, Vice-Rectorate for Degrees and Internationalisation and the International Projects Office (OPI)

#### **Indicators and targets:**

1. Number of new participations in programs, consortia and alliances, both at national and international level.

**Description of the action:**

In the last months, the UDC has been involved in more international projects and consortia, giving the institution more visibility abroad and offering our research community more interesting projects to take part in, new ways of funding and impelling their research career at an international level. The idea is to keep the same way, strengthening this action and showing the UDC as a reference university in Spain for its participation in important alliances and projects.

**ACTION 31. Promote the social integration of international research staff**

**Principles:** 12, 13, 23, 25&29

**Deadline for completing the action:** Q3 2026

**Responsible units and departments:** EURAXESS Contact Point

**Indicators and targets:**

1. Number of users attended
2. Number of events conducted

**Description of the action:**

Organisation of events and networking activities for the international research community and their families.

The objective is to foster a community of researchers and their families coming from outside Spain who share similar concerns and circumstances. Establishing an informal and supportive environment where these matters can be addressed and where participants can benefit from the experience and advice of others who have faced comparable situations contributes significantly to their emotional well-being.

Furthermore, for staff who may experience difficulties in social integration due to language barriers, such activities serve as an effective means of promoting a sense of belonging and facilitating their integration, not only within the university but also in the wider local community.

Finally, this initiative also represents an opportunity to promote new employment prospects for researchers' partners and to support families with children, enabling them to build relationships with peers from similar backgrounds and fostering smoother communication and mutual understanding.

## **ACTION 32. Provide guidance on academic and non-academic careers**

**Principles:** 2, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 34, 36, 38&39

**Deadline for completing the action:** Q4 2027

**Responsible units and departments:** Vice-Rectorate for Research and Transference

### **Indicators and targets:**

1. Number of researchers attended
2. Results of the satisfaction survey
3. Elaboration of updated guides on the research path in the UDC, in Spain and at the international level

### **Description of the action:**

This action represents one of the most ambitious initiatives within the present Action Plan, as the university currently lacks a dedicated unit or team specifically focused on career guidance and development. To date, such support has been provided on an ad hoc basis through the EURAXESS Contact Point/Welcome Service/HRS4R responsible.

However, the establishment of a specialised unit composed of qualified professionals is essential to provide comprehensive, personalised, and expert career support to researchers seeking guidance both within academia and in non-academic sectors (REBECA).

While this objective is particularly ambitious given the current institutional resources, the university is firmly committed to making it a reality within the forthcoming three-year period.

## Timeline for Actions - HRS4R at the UDC Action Plan 2025-2028

ACTION NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	2025	2026				2027					2028		
		Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
ACTION 27	Practical guide for candidates applying to calls funded through projects and agreements													
ACTION 28	Improvement of working conditions for research staff (researchers and research administration and management personnel) with temporary contracts.													
ACTION 29	Creation of a comprehensive Research Human Resources Office (OPCTI)													
ACTION 30	Intensification of participation in European alliances and programs.													
ACTION 31	Promote the social integration of international research staff													
ACTION 32	Provide guidance on academic and non-academic careers													

\* The Mentioned deadline is for completing the action, but most of the actions will continue in the time

## 2.4 Implementation of Open, Transparent, Merit-Based Recruitment principles

Since 2021, the university has undertaken substantial efforts to align its Human Resources Policies with the guidelines set forth by the European Commission through the HRS4R Strategy and the Charter and Code. These efforts have primarily focused on revising and enhancing recruitment and selection processes to ensure they are fully open, transparent, and merit-based (OTM-R).

Beyond these procedural adjustments, the university has committed to fostering a culture of continuous improvement in Human Resources Management, aiming to create equitable opportunities for researchers at all career stages. This includes promoting transparency in decision-making, ensuring fairness in appointments, and establishing mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented policies. These measures reflect the institution's ongoing dedication to meeting the principles of the HRS4R framework and to strengthening its overall research environment.

In practice, this spirit of continuous improvement has been reflected in the development of a new regulation governing the recruitment and selection processes for research staff, which was drafted and implemented in 2022 and underwent a comprehensive revision in 2024.

For this latest update, the Rectoral Team, led by the Vice-Rector for Research and Transference and the General Manager, established a Working Group that included, among others, the UDC HRS4R Manager. The purpose of this group was to ensure that the new regulation fully complied with the European Commission's guidelines regarding open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R).

Following the drafting of the initial version, a consultation period was opened for the entire research community—including researchers as well as staff employed in research administration and management—during which they could submit directly to the Vice-Rector for Research and Transference their suggestions for improvement, comments, and concerns.

After a thorough review of all contributions received, a final draft of the regulation was prepared, and a document was sent to the entire university community addressing each question, concern, suggestion, and idea submitted by the community for which the new regulation is intended. This made the process collaborative, fostering a sense of participation among the community and enhancing direct, two-way communication between staff and the university's governing team.

The development of the Guide to Good Practices for Selection Processes, included in the 2022–2025 Action Plan, as well as the forthcoming Guide for Candidates to Internal UDC Calls (included in the Action Plan 2025-2028), will mark a new stage in this regard. This stage is characterised by a greater level of participation and is more focused on the internal client, bringing recruitment units and the relevant governing bodies closer to the staff they serve.

### 3 Implementation Process

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The implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) at the University of A Coruña (UDC) has been carried out through a structured, participatory, and transparent process, ensuring alignment with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. Since the initial award was obtained, the UDC has demonstrated a strong institutional commitment to continuous improvement in the working conditions, career development, and professional environment of its research community.

The HRS4R Action Plan is coordinated by the HRS4R at the UDC Manager, belonging to the Vice-Rectorate for Research and Transference, which has ensured strategic alignment between HRS4R objectives and UDC's overall institutional priorities. A dedicated Steering Committee was established to oversee the implementation process. This committee includes representatives from the Vice-Rectorates involved in Research and Transference, Internationalisation, Equality and Diversity, Teaching and Degrees, Social Responsibility and Communication.

The Working Group has representatives of researchers at different career stages and meets periodically to review progress, validate completed actions, and address any obstacles that arise during implementation. It also ensures that the principles of openness, transparency, merit, and fairness guide all decision-making processes related to the HR Strategy for Researchers.

Each action in the Action Plan has been assigned to a responsible unit or department, with defined objectives, measurable indicators, and expected outcomes. A monitoring system was developed to track the degree of progress and effectiveness of implementation.

Quantitative indicators are complemented by qualitative evaluations gathered through consultations, feedback sessions, and surveys conducted among researchers and administrative staff. These combined data sources have allowed UDC to identify successful initiatives as well as areas that require additional effort or adaptation.

A key aspect of the implementation process has been maintaining clear and open communication with the research community. Regular updates on the progress of the HRS4R Strategy are published on UDC's website, ensuring transparency and visibility both internally and externally. In addition, institutional newsletters and open meetings have been used to inform and engage researchers about new initiatives, opportunities, and policy developments related to the HR Strategy.

Researchers have been actively involved in providing feedback on the implementation of specific actions, particularly those related to recruitment procedures (OTM-R), training opportunities, and working conditions. Their input has been essential to ensure that the strategy remains relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of the research community.

The HRS4R process has been integrated into UDC's broader policy framework. The principles and objectives of the Action Plan are reflected in the university's Strategic Plan, the [Equality Plan](#), and the institutional policies for recruitment, research ethics, and professional development. The implementation of the Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) Policy has been a particularly significant milestone, ensuring that recruitment processes are aligned with European standards and best practices.

The alignment with the Charter and Code has also contributed to reinforcing UDC's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. Specific actions have been developed to promote gender equality, improve work-life balance, and enhance the visibility of researchers' achievements.

The implementation phase has led to tangible improvements in several key areas:

- Increased transparency and standardisation of recruitment procedures through the adoption of the OTM-R principles.
- Development of structured training programmes to support researchers' professional and transferable skills.
- Enhancement of communication channels between researchers and administrative units.
- Strengthening of institutional support for research ethics, data management, and open science practices.
- Improved awareness of the HRS4R principles across all levels of the institution.

One of the key lessons learned throughout the implementation process has been the importance of maintaining continuous dialogue between administrative staff and researchers. This interaction has facilitated the identification of real needs and the prioritisation of actions that have a direct impact on the daily work of the research community.

The sustainability of the HRS4R Strategy is ensured through its full institutional integration. The Action Plan is now embedded in the operational planning of the Vice-Rectorates and services responsible for its implementation. Regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms will continue to operate beyond the renewal phase, guaranteeing that progress remains ongoing and measurable.

For the next period, UDC aims to further strengthen the professional development framework for researchers, enhance internationalisation and mobility opportunities, and continue promoting open science and ethical research practices. Particular attention will be given to consolidating gender equality measures and mentoring programmes for early-stage researchers.

The implementation of the HRS4R Action Plan has been an inclusive, evidence-based, and iterative process that has progressively integrated the European Charter and Code principles into UDC's institutional culture. The university has developed robust mechanisms for monitoring, communication, and evaluation, which will ensure the sustainability of achievements and the ongoing alignment with European best practices in Human Resources Management for Researchers.

Through this process, the University of A Coruña reaffirms its long-term commitment to providing a stimulating, fair, and supportive environment for researchers, in line with the objectives of the HRS4R initiative and the European Research Area (ERA).