

The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers at IDIBAPS (IDIBAPS HRS4R)

IDIBAPS is a public consortium which main activity is the translational biomedical research. IDIBAPS research community is composed by 850 members, researchers and other kind of profiles. They are grouped into 58 top-level research teams. Within these teams, composing the IDIBAPS research community, there are also members contracted by other institutions such as the HCB, the UB, the CSIC and the FCRB.

In 2011 IDIBAPS signed a commitment to the principles of "The European Charter for Researchers" and "The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers":

- The European Charter for Researchers: This document compiles ethical and professional responsibilities for the researcher, career and professional development, promotion and value of the mobility and evaluation/appraisal systems.
- The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers: This handbook gathers recruitment and contract practices, selection committees and merit judging.

Related to this commitment, there is the European initiative Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R). It is an action interesting for the research institutions and funding organisations aiming to implement the Charter and Code in their policies and practices. The concrete implementation of the Charter and Code by research institutions will render them more attractive to researchers looking for a new employer or for a host for their research project. Therefore, the acknowledgement of these institutions with the logo "HR Excellence in Research" identifies them as providers and supporters of a stimulating and favourable working environment.

The HRS4R strategy has 5 steps to be followed:

- Step 1. Internal gap analysis by the institution/organisation
- Step 2: Institutional Human Resources Strategy for Researchers/Action Plan
- Step 3: Acknowledgement by the European Commission - HR Excellence in Research.
- Step 4: Implementation phase and Self-assessment
- Step 5: External assessment and renewal of acknowledgement

After signing the commitment to the Charter and Code, IDIBAPS got involved in the Third Cohort of the "Institutional Human Resources Strategy Group". This group of institutions was interested in being aligned and implementing the principles of the Charter and Code. The members of the cohort have attended several meetings to share practices and be further prepared to implement their own HRS4R.

IDIBAPS decides to start implementing its HRS4R in 2014. An internal Working Group (WG) is designated in order to follow steps 1 and 2. Thanks to this initiative, the institute wants to reach the goal of being more recognised internationally both by its excellence and good practices in Human Resources.

Step 1 - Internal gap analysis

IDIBAPS has formed the HRS4R WG with the objective to design and perform an internal analysis according to the Charter and Code principles. The HRS4R WG is representative of the IDIBAPS research community. Its members work in different positions and research areas at the institute. They are contracted by different organisations and have diverse profiles as it can be seen below:

	Members	Position	Institution*
1	Guadalupe Mengod	Group Leader (R4)	CSIC
2	Rafael Oliva	Group Leader (R4)	HCB – UB
3	Antoni Torres	Group Leader (R4)	HCB
4	Josep Valls	Group Leader (R4)	HCB
5	Ignacio Revuelta	Junior Group Leader (R3B)	HCB
6	Montserrat Batlle	Associate Researcher (R3A)	IDIBAPS
7	Joan Marc Servitja	Associate Researcher (R3A)	IDIBAPS
8	Mario Ezquerro	Junior Researcher (R2B)	IDIBAPS
9	Georgina Espígol	Post-doctoral researcher (R2A)	HCB
10	Arnau Montraveta	Pre-doctoral researcher (R1)	FCRB
11	Anna Bosch	Core Facilities	IDIBAPS
12	Marta Fernández	Management – Human Resources Unit	FCRB – IDIBAPS
13	Gemma Llaverias	Management – Research Career Unit	IDIBAPS
14	Gemma Pascual	Management – International Unit	IDIBAPS

*Spanish Research Council (CSIC); Hospital Clinic of Barcelona (HCB); University of Barcelona (UB); August Pi i Sunyer Biomedical Research Institute (IDIBAPS); Clinic Foundation for the Biomedical Research (FCRB)

From these members, Guadalupe Mengod is the HRS4R WG's chair and Gemma Pascual the HRS4R manager.

The WG met four times with the following objectives:

10/04/2014	Kick-off meeting: Present the HRS4R at IDIBAPS to the members of the WG
05/05/2014	Reach a consensus about the survey to be launched to the IDIBAPS research community
01/07/2014	Review the results of the survey and reach a consensus about the priorities to be included in the Strategy and Action Plan
17/09/2014	Agree on the definitive document to be sent to the European Commission

- **Survey**

The HRS4R WG prepared a proposal based on the template of the European Commission that includes 40 principles. As a result, the survey included 23 statements. The HRS4R WG decided to select only the issues that could be improved by IDIBAPS.

The final survey was answered anonymous. It was written in English. However, two more versions, one in Catalan and another in Spanish were available too. The collection of the answers was made by internet through the Google Drive tool.

The survey included (Annex II. HRS4R survey at IDIBAPS):

- A brief general introduction in order to explain to the IDIBAPS research community the objective of the HRS4R action.
- 10 questions to obtain a profile of the person who was answering it.
- 23 statements based on the principles of the Charter and Code split into the 4 following sections: I. Ethical and professional aspects; II. Recruitment; III. Working conditions and social security; and, IV. Training (Figure 1).

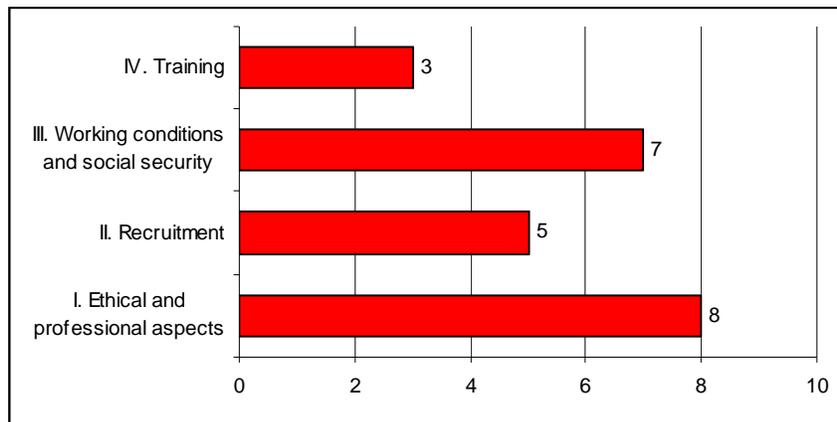


Figure 1. Number of principles included in the survey per section of the Charter and Code.

Each person had to score from 1 (lower degree) to 6 (higher degree) each statement or choose the option non-applicable concerning the:

- Level of agreement: The person had to quantify the degree of agreement concerning the statement.
- Level of importance: The person had to show if a particular issue is few or very important.

Taking into account these two values, a Priority Index (Pri) was calculated as follows:

$$\text{Pri} = \frac{\text{Level of importance}}{\text{Level of agreement}}$$

The Pri was used to prioritize an issue in front of another. Because of the Action Plan (step 2) had to be realistic, only the most prioritized principles could be included in it.

The spread of the survey was made by:

- General mailing: It was sent to 850 professionals that integrate the IDIBAPS research community.
- Letter: It was delivered personally to the IDIBAPS Group and Team leaders. They were asked to disseminate the action to the members of their groups or teams.

During a month, the IDIBAPS research community could answer the survey. Moreover, one reminder message was sent by mail when the survey was still available.

- **Results of the survey**

The survey was answered by 257 persons out of 850. The rate of participation was 30,24%. Thus, the participation of the HRS4R at IDIBAPS was good, even higher than expected.

The analysis of the results was made taking into account the whole sample and also each professional category. The distribution of answers per professional category was the following one (Figure 2):

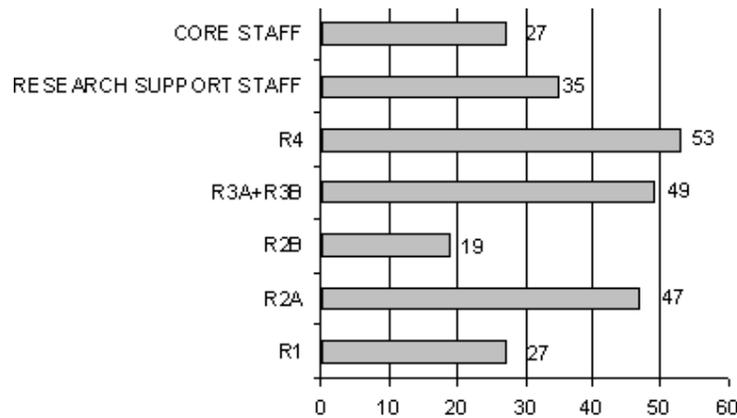


Figure 2. Professional category. Researchers (from R1 to R4), other profiles within a research group (Research support staff) and staff working at institutional level (Core Staff)

The weights of each professional category were different (Figure 3):

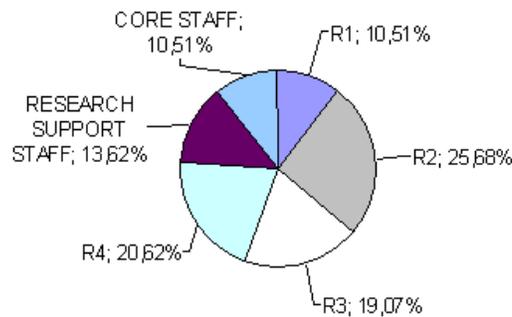


Figure 3. Percentages of participation per professional category

The main intention of the survey was obtaining a prioritisation of the principles according to its Pri:

- An average of Pri was calculated per principle (without considering the ones who chose non-applicable).
- The level of importance (LI) and the level of agreement (LA) could be between 1 and 6. Thus, the Pri could be between 0,17 and 6 (1/6 and 6/1).

- When the percentage of non-applicables was over 25% in a particular principle, it was necessary to evaluate which was the reason and decide if it had to be considered or not.
- The value resulting from the average of Pris' statements was established as the threshold. For the whole sample it was 1,80. Over this value, the topic was considered as a priority in a first stage.

The results ordered from higher Pri to lower Pri obtained from the analysis of the whole sample's results were:

Threshold = Average Pris = 1,80

	Priority index (Pri)	Level of importance (LI)	Level of agreement (LA)	Number of professional categories having it as a priority
	0,17 – 6	1-6	1-6	R1,R2, R3, R4, RESEARCH SUPPORT STAFF (RSS), CORE STAFF (CS)
Complains/appeals	2,30	5,26	3,19	R1, R3, R4, RSS, CS
Career development	2,19	5,30	3,32	R1, R3, R4, RSS, CS
Researcher independence	2,15	5,18	3,25	R1, R3, RSS
Transparency	2,08	5,28	3,52	R1, R3, R4, RSS, CS
Periodical evaluation/appraisal system	2,06	5,29	3,54	R1, R3, R4, CS
Postdoctoral appointment	2,02	5,28	3,56	R1, R2, R3, R4, RSS
Supervision	1,92	5,23	3,53	R1, R3, R4, RSS
Relationship with supervisors	1,92	5,12	3,43	R1, R4, RSS,CS
Judging merits	1,91	5,39	3,76	R1, R3, R4, RSS
Participation in decision-making bodies	1,90	5,27	3,60	R3, R4
Recruitment	1,86	5,40	3,77	R1, R2, R3, R4, RSS
Working conditions	1,83	5,30	3,77	R4, RSS, CS
Access to continuing professional development and research training	1,80	5,26	3,62	RSS, CS
Professional attitude	1,80	5,29	3,46	R1, R2, R4, RSS, CS
Selection	1,69	5,29	3,91	R2, R3, R4
Ethical principles	1,66	5,06	3,88	R2, CS
Contractual and legal obligations	1,66	4,98	3,77	R2, RSS
Good practices in research	1,58	5,28	4,16	R1, R2
Public engagement	1,49	4,99	3,93	R2
Research environment	1,49	5,34	4,17	
Dissemination, exploitation of results	1,48	5,09	4,04	R2
Gender balance	1,46	4,99	4,40	
Non-discrimination	1,13	5,65	5,35	R2

The priorities had Pris over 1,80. These boxes are shaded in the table: Complains/appeals; Career development; Researcher independence; Transparency; Periodical evaluation/appraisal system; Postdoctoral appointment; Supervision; Relationship with supervisors; Judging merits; Participation in decision-making bodies; Recruitment; Working conditions; Access to continuing professional development and research training; Professional attitude.

In the table there is also the level of agreement and importance per statement. As well as the number of professional categories that had as a priority one specific principle.

The HRS4R WG evaluated the results together with the possible actions to be implemented. 10 out of the 14 principles over the threshold were chosen to be included in the Action Plan. These are:

1. Professional attitude
2. Periodical evaluation/appraisal system
3-5 Recruitment (together with Transparency, Judging merits and Selection)
6. Career development
7. Complains/appeals
8. Participation in decision-making bodies
9. Supervision
10. Access to continuing professional development and research training

In summary, the survey allowed to detect some starting points for improvement. This helped to design the Strategy and Action Plan to be implemented.

- **Annex**

HRS4R survey

Human Resources Strategy for Researchers' Survey

The "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers" supports research institutions such as IDIBAPS in the implementation of "The European Charter for Researchers" and "The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers" in their policies and practices. The implementation of the Charter and Code by research institutions will render them more attractive to researchers looking for a position.

IDIBAPS launches this survey with the objective to perform an internal analysis for identifying areas of improvement according to the principles of the Charter and Code. Analyzing the results of the survey, the institution will be able to establish a strategy and an action plan to improve the current practices. The European Commission will evaluate this work and acknowledge IDIBAPS with the logo "HR Excellence in Research" if the result of the evaluation is positive.

The survey is anonymous, for this reason it is necessary to define your profile. After this, please score each of the twenty-three statements from 1 to 6 in terms of agreement and importance. In case one of these declarations does not refer to you, please choose non-applicable (N/A).

All these issues are split into 4 sections:

- I. Ethical and professional aspects
- II. Recruitment
- III. Working conditions and social security
- IV. Training

It is estimated that this poll can be answered in 15 minutes approximately.

Do not hesitate to contact us if you have doubts: gemma.pascual@idibaps.org.

Thanks for your participation.



IDIBAPS is a biomedical research institute funded as a public consortium in 1996 by the Catalan Government, an University Hospital (Hospital Clinic of Barcelona), the University of Barcelona and the Biomedical Research Institute from the Spanish Research Council (CSIC). This institutional combination is ideal for creating powerful synergies and ensuring that the IDIBAPS research is efficiently transferred to the patient and included in the training of new health professionals. Our fundamental mission is to integrate state-of-the-art basic research and high-quality clinical research in order to acquire and transfer knowledge concerning the main health problems present in our society, with the final purpose of improving their prevention and treatment.

The IDIBAPS scientific community is composed by staff from the constituent institutions of the consortium mentioned above, its managing institution called the Clinic Foundation and other external institutions.

0. Profile

Personal information

1. **1. Gender**

Mark only one oval.

- Man
 Woman

2. **2. Age**

Mark only one oval.

- <25
 26-30
 31-35
 36-40
 41-45
 46-50
 51-55
 56-60
 >61

3. **3. Continent of your nationality**

Check all that apply.

- Europe (Spanish)
 Europe (non Spanish)
 America
 Asia
 Africa
 Oceania

Professional information

4. Professional category

Please check the document "Research Career at IDIBAPS" in order to help you answer your professional category: <http://www.idibaps.org/idibaps-research-career.pdf>. If you have doubts at classifying it, select the "Others option" and write your position in the box.

Mark only one oval.

- Team or group leader (R4 researcher)
- Junior group leader (R3B researcher)
- Researcher (R3A researcher)
- Junior researcher (R2B researcher)
- Postdoctoral researcher (R2A researcher)
- Predoctoral researcher (R1 researcher)
- Lab technician, nurse and/or others within a research group
- Administrative or management staff within a research group
- Core facilities staff, lab managers and managers (support staff at institutional level)
- Other:

5. Area of research

Mark only one oval.

- Area 1 (Biological aggression and response mechanisms)
- Area 2 (Respiratory, cardiovascular and renal pathology and bioengineering)
- Area 3 (Liver, digestive system and metabolism)
- Area 4 (Clinical and experimental neuroscience)
- Area 5 (Oncology and haematology)
- Transversal research groups
- Core facilities
- N/A

6. Employer institution

Check all that apply.

- IDIBAPS (Institut d'Investigacions Biomèdiques August Pi i Sunyer)
- HCB (Hospital Clínic de Barcelona)
- UB (Universitat de Barcelona)
- CSIC (Consell Superior d'Investigacions Científiques)
- ICREA (Institució Catalana de Recerca i Estudis Avançats)
- FCRB (Fundació Clínic per a la Recerca Biomèdica)
- Other:

30. **7. Participation in decision-making bodies: IDIBAPS allows researchers to be legitimately represented in the relevant information, consultation and decision-making bodies of the institution, to protect and promote their individual and collective interests as professionals and to actively contribute to the workings of the institution.**

Mark only one oval per row.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	N/A
Level of agreement	<input type="radio"/>						
Level of importance	<input type="radio"/>						

IV. Training

Score from 1 to 6 (1: less agreement or importance; 6: full agreement or importance) or select N/A (non-applicable)

31. **1. Access to continuing professional development and research training: IDIBAPS ensures that all researchers at any stage of their career, regardless their contractual situation, are given the opportunity for professional development and for improving their employability through formal training, workshops, mobility, conferences, e-learning and others.**

Mark only one oval per row.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	N/A
Level of agreement	<input type="radio"/>						
Level of importance	<input type="radio"/>						

32. **2. Supervision: IDIBAPS ensures that early-stage researchers may refer to a clearly designated person to seek any information needed and help with their professional duties. The supervisor should provide appropriate support for the necessary progress and review procedures, as well as the necessary feedback mechanisms.**

Mark only one oval per row.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	N/A
Level of agreement	<input type="radio"/>						
Level of importance	<input type="radio"/>						

33. **3. Relationship with supervisors: IDIBAPS is promoting and evaluating good practices between the supervisors and the researchers in their training phase so as to take advantage of their relationship (ensuring structured/regular follow-up, records keeping of the work progress and research findings, feedback by means of reports or seminars, work in accordance with agreed schedule, milestones, deliverables and/or research outputs).**

Mark only one oval per row.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	N/A
Level of agreement	<input type="radio"/>						
Level of importance	<input type="radio"/>						

V. Other comments

34. **General comments could be included in this section.**

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