Promoting a sustainable and attractive environment for research and art

HRS4R Strategy and Action Plan for 2019-2021
Aalto University was founded in 2010 as a merger of three universities. It is a unique combination of science, art, design, technology and business.

Our research and education emphasizes excellence, a multidisciplinary game-changing attitude, innovations, and an entrepreneurial mind-set.

We have improved markedly in international university rankings, especially in field-specific rankings as well as in those comparing young universities.

Aalto hosts high-level facilities for research, teaching and innovation, including unique nationally significant research infrastructures. Aalto is committed to balance and wellbeing of its employees. We believe that great results can only come from healthy and happy employees.

For more information, visit our web site (http://www.aalto.fi/).
The European Commission’s *Human Resources Strategy for Researches (HRS4R)* aims at better employment and working conditions for researchers throughout Europe.

The main tools in achieving this goal is the implementation of the *European Charter for Researchers* and *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*.

For more information on HRS4R, visit here: [https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/hrs4r](https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/hrs4r).

Since committed to complying with HRS4R-policies in 2012, Aalto University has gone through the different steps of the HRS4R-process:

2. Interim assessment in 2015.
3. Award renewal in 2019.

Aalto is the first university in Finland awarded the "*HR Excellence in Research"*-award.
Commitment to HRS4R-policies supports Aalto University in implementing its *people strategy* and achieving the goals set.

Aalto University aims to offer its employees an *inspiring working environment, challenging tasks, good working conditions* and *encouraging career systems*.

Aalto University implements effective people processes that support academic leadership and enable high-quality research and education.

As an employer, Aalto University invest into *staff well-being, competence development*, and the *creation of a well-functioning, multicultural community*.

For more information, visit here: [https://www.aalto.fi/en/node/123236](https://www.aalto.fi/en/node/123236).
Strengths and weaknesses of our current practices
The principles and bodies guiding ethical and professional aspects are well-established, and these issues are brought up in the orientation of the researchers:

- Aalto University is committed to follow the guidelines for ethical principles of research in the humanities and social and behavioural sciences as well as the guidelines for responsible conduct of research, both given by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity.
- Within Aalto University, Research Ethics Committee handles issues concerning research ethics.
- Research Services organises regularly training events and information sessions in research ethics. These trainings cover, for example, research related ethics legislation and instructions, ethically good scientific practices and procedures, research data management, open access publishing, legal issues regarding contracts, commercialization of research results and patenting.

- In addition, Research Services evaluate, develop and transfer research project results and inventions to commercial use in close co-operation with researchers. This service covers for example protecting intellectual property rights and negotiating the license agreements.
- The Aalto Code of Conduct summarizes the principles of fair play and integrity that govern our activities and sets out guidelines for the kind of behavior that we expect of each other. The Code of Conduct applies to every single person at Aalto University: students, employees, members of the Board and companies in which Aalto University has a majority shareholding. All Aalto employees must complete an online course on Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct was welcomed when it was introduced and it is well received among the researchers.
- Furthermore, Aalto has clear shared principles and processes for handling harassment or inappropriate conduct including harassment contact persons (one male and one female).
• Aalto community is still too hesitant to take action or ask for help when experiencing harassment or inappropriate conduct, although this culture has started changing.

• Researchers' different backgrounds sometimes pose challenges in receiving and understanding a message or, for example, the code of conduct. In general, deeper discussion and explaining our research traditions helps.

• Analytics is not very widely exploited from this point of view.
Strengths of recruitment and selection

• We have established recruitment and advancement policies and procedures for professors’ tenure track, lecturers’ career and other academic positions. Our policies and procedures in researchers’ recruitments are aligned with the Commission’s Code of Conduct for the Recruitments of Researchers. Our procedures covers also the Charter and Code policies on Recruitment, Selection, Transparency, Judging merit, Variations in the chronological order of CVs, Recognition of mobility experience, Recognition of qualifications and Seniority.

• We develop our academic career systems according to the principles of continuous development (PDCA cycle, Plan-Do-Check-Act). Development of our academic careers are embedded in the Aalto University quality policy and management. For the past few years, we have focused on the further development and fine-tuning of our tenure track policies and procedures.

• In addition to continuous development, the University management annually selects a few larger development themes related to our academic careers. Current development themes are: 1) Improve the attractiveness of Aalto for foreign and female faculty (incl. reducing unconscious biases in recruiting and promotion) and 2) Support the career development of young faculty, with special attention to foreign and female faculty. More information on these development themes in the “Actions”-section.

• We develop and introduce new and innovative HR-policies, procedures and tools. For example, our internal headhunting concept, Aalto Talent Search, works great in identifying, engaging and attracting the best possible candidates. Talent search is also an excellent way to find much-desired qualified female candidates for technical fields. However, Talent Search is never the only recruitment method used, and it does not displace open calls.

• Furthermore, we also develop high-end digital tools that make HR services more visible and easily accessible: currently we are piloting HR-Chat and HR-Bot.
Weaknesses of recruitment and selection

- Although the policies and procedures of professors’ recruitment and advancement (tenure track) is now well-established and in the stage of continuous development, there are still room for further development of our other academic careers. Especially the post doctoral appointments are in need of clear policies and guidelines that are aligned between schools.
- Female scientists are under-represented especially in technical fields. Increasing diversity among our research personnel is one of our key strategic HR-goals.
- In recent RAI-report, our tenure track system was broadly applauded. However, it was suggested to speed up the professor appointment process to be competitive internationally for the best talent.
- Based on the survey for associate professors, advancement criteria are not entirely clear to all professors on the track. There is clearly need for increasing awareness of the criteria.
- Furthermore, according to RAI-report, communication of the decisions concerning tenure track recruitments and advancements are not clear in all departments.
**Strengths of working conditions**

Our aim is to be an employer that offers its staff members an inspiring working environment, challenging tasks, good working conditions and encouraging career systems. In particular, we invest into staff well-being, competence development, and the creation of a well-functioning, multicultural community. In Finland, employee rights are regulated comprehensively by national legislation, but we also apply a number of our own policies and practices to ensure a good working environment and conditions for our researchers:

- **Our Code of Conduct** (see the link above) summarises the principles of fair play and integrity that govern our activities and sets out guidelines for the kind of behaviour that we expect of each other.

- **We have established principles for mobile work and flexible working hours** as we believe they promote employee welfare.

- **As regards health and safety in research,** we comply with national legislation, i.e. the Act on Occupational Safety and Health Enforcement and Cooperation on Occupational Safety and Health at Workplaces (No 44/2006), the Occupational Safety and Health Act (No 738/2002) and the Agreement on Cooperation on Occupational Safety and Health (1.10.2012). Occupational safety involves continuous monitoring and development of the work environment. Its aim is to support the personnel’s working ability, physical, psychological and social well-being, and eliminate hazards associated with the working conditions. Occupational safety, human resources, and occupational health care work together to monitor and develop Aalto’s common operating methods and guidelines, which subsequently make it possible to increase well-being at work among work communities and employees.
**Strengths of working conditions**

- All our researchers in different career stages are covered by one of our commonly agreed pay system, which are aligned with existing national legislation as well as national or local collective bargaining agreement.

- Aalto University recognizes, and in some cases even demands, the value of mobility as an important means of enhancing scientific knowledge and professional development. For example, professors to be tenured are required to work outside Aalto preferably at least 6-12 months. However, the principles may somewhat vary between schools, and therefore the guidelines will be refined during the autumn 2019.

- We offer a wide variety of training and development solutions for personal and professional growth at each stage of researcher’s career. These include, for example, language and multicultural training, pedagogical, leadership, safety and communications training as well as training for IT and digital tools in research. In addition, we offer training for self-support and career planning, including mentoring and coaching. All researchers are also offered support for career planning.

- Our Research and Innovation Services support researchers at all career stages throughout the whole research project, including legal protection on R&D as well as intellectual property rights. We have clear instructions on what rights belong to researchers and/or their employers or other parties.

- Researchers are widely represented in the relevant information, consultation and decision-making bodies. Participation in different kind of committees and administrative bodies is a prerequisite for academic career advancement.
Weaknesses of working conditions

• Although we strive to improve the stability of employment conditions for our researchers as far as possible, it is still a common fact that the majority of the early stage researchers works under a fixed-term contract. This is due the fact that they are pursuing a university career, and their task is to acquire the qualifications required for transfer to the next phase of the career within a prescribed time. Although this is a common practice in universities, fixed-term contracts may cause uncertainty.

• Foreign faculty and their spouses need more support to adapt to Finnish society.

• Even though we already offer mentoring to all our research staff, there is more demand for it. Mentoring possibilities especially for PhD students, post docs, untenured professors and international staff should be increased.

• Supervisors (especially department heads) should provide more coaching and mid-term evaluation for untenured Tenure Track faculty (assistant professors).
Strengths of training and development

• We strongly believe that highly competent and motivated people who are committed to the university’s objectives form the foundation of our success. Thus, we actively support the career and competence development of our staff by offering different solutions for personal and professional growth at each stage of researcher’s career. Few examples of our training solutions are mentioned above.

• The competence development at Aalto is based on the 70/20/10 model: 70% of learning takes place on the job, in other words learning through experience and self-reflection, for instance, gaining more responsibility, handling projects or job rotation; 20% is learning from others, for example through feedback, mentoring, coaching and team and pair work; and 10% is learning in formal settings, such as on courses, seminars or using self-study materials.

• We offer to all our new supervisors the “New Leaders’ Onboarding Journey” as well as further training for the advanced supervisors: 1) Providing direction and leading operations, 2) Leading and engaging people, and 3) Collaboration towards excellence.

• We provide an “Aalto Academic Leader Programme” to Assistant and Associate professors. The Programme aims at 1) supporting the academic leaders in growing as thought-leaders across the university’s borders, 2) vision together the future for universities, research and teaching, 3) strengthen participants’ skills in leadership and university management, 4) strengthen participants' self-awareness and increase the understanding of their own leadership and influencing style, and 5) providing time and space for reflection and sharing and thus create a strong network among the participants.

• Furthermore, we provide also training for Doctoral Dissertation Supervisors.
Weaknesses of training and development

• Although we offer a wide range of training and development solutions, there seems to be some difficulty in visibility of the available solutions. Despite extensive advertising and marketing, not all researchers are aware of the existing training and development possibilities.
Action plan for 2019-2021
<p>| Remarks | Planned discussion forums, workshops and networking events established as part of academic year and activities. This theme is in development, and the existing forums are renewed and new ones launched when necessary. | Principles and criteria are well-established for tenured track professors, but the development work is still ongoing for lectures career system and other academic careers. |
| Current Status | COMPLETED | EXTENDED |
| Targets | Continuation of introduced discussion forums, workshops and networking events. Emphasis on orientation processes and Faculty Club | Emphasis on the communication of transparent recruitment criteria and recruitment processes |
| Actions | Dissemination of good research practices  Development of research community and working environment that supports co-operation | Clarification of the principles and criteria for academic recruitments |</p>
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<th>Actions</th>
<th>GAP Principle(s)</th>
<th>Targets</th>
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<td>Improvement of the solutions and support for well-being at work</td>
<td>1. Research freedom</td>
<td>Development of supporting tools for all areas of well-being: Work and leadership, motivation, competences, health</td>
<td>During academic years 2012-2013 2013-2014 2014-2015 2015-2016</td>
<td>COMPLETED</td>
<td>In a state of continuous development based on our quality work.</td>
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<td>Support for the academic faculty in career planning</td>
<td>Systematic career coaching services available, continuous development of services</td>
<td>COMPLETED</td>
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<td>28. Career Development</td>
<td>During academic years 2012-2013 2014-2015</td>
<td>COMPLETED</td>
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<td></td>
<td>37. Supervision and managerial duties</td>
<td>Clarification of decision making bodies and processes</td>
<td>COMPLETED</td>
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<td>38. Continuing Professional Development</td>
<td>Development of doctoral programmes (e.g. curriculum, supervision)</td>
<td>COMPLETED</td>
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Remarks: In a state of continuous development based on our quality work.
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<td>Support the career development of young faculty, with special attention to foreign and female faculty</td>
<td>10. Non discrimination 27. Gender balance 28. Career development 30. Access to career advice 38. Continuing Professional Development 39. Access to research training and continuous development</td>
<td>PhD student onboarding model (LES) and competence development package (HRS, RIS, LES). PhD career coaching and mentoring. Professor onboarding model (HRS) and competence development package (HRS, RIS, LES); onboarding mentoring for professors. Female faculty mentoring. Group mentoring for assistant professors to support their career development.</td>
<td>4/2020</td>
<td>NEW</td>
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Development of our HR Processes
Development of the academic career systems

- Development of the academic career systems is part of the Aalto University quality system. The annual clock for academic career development is linked to the Aalto University’s annual clock. The development work is based on annual reviews and the view of Management on the required development measures. Furthermore, the view of the Academic Careers Working Group has an important role in the making of decisions on development actions.

- Development of the academic career systems is prepared and implemented by the Provost and the Chief Human Resources Officer. The President of the University decides on the development measures to be taken. When implementing development measures, the various parties are consulted and feedback is actively collected. The deans make decisions on matters involving the academic career systems that are specific to the individual schools.

- Feedback is systematically collected in many different ways. For example:
  - statistical information
  - development workshops
  - regular meetings with the Academic Careers Working Group
  - interviews and discussions with the key tenure track actors
  - feedback from applicants and those advancing on their career paths
  - feedback from other stakeholders of key importance for the career system

- Statistical information and feedback are used to align the implementation of the academic career systems in the Aalto University schools. Further, information is collected to make it possible to compare the Aalto academic career system with national and international practices. Different actors are brought into the development processes through seminars, visits, and workshops.

- Information on the development processes of the career system is communicated in accordance with roles and responsibilities so that all actors are aware of the direction and measures of development. If necessary, seminars and workshops will be arranged for passing on information - for example by holding HR workshops to ensure the spread of best practices.
Further readings
Important Links

University management
• University strategy: https://www.aalto.fi/node/6036
• Annual clock for university management: https://www.aalto.fi/node/8041
• Assessment and development: https://www.aalto.fi/node/8061

Operating principles
• Code of Conduct: https://www.aalto.fi/node/5926
• Quality: https://www.aalto.fi/node/8066
• Equality and equal opportunity: https://www.aalto.fi/node/6881

Academic Career Systems
• Tenure Track: https://www.aalto.fi/en/node/6236
• Lecturers’ Track: https://www.aalto.fi/en/node/30471
• Other academic positions: https://www.aalto.fi/en/node/4711

Competence Development
• Objective discussions: https://www.aalto.fi/node/4326
• Competence and career plan: https://www.aalto.fi/node/4776
• Coaching and guidance of work: https://www.aalto.fi/node/4356
• Staff mentoring programme: https://www.aalto.fi/node/4366
• Training possibilities: https://www.aalto.fi/en/node/11481

Other useful links:
• Aalto University Research Ethics Committee: https://www.aalto.fi/en/node/11326