nibrt
National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training

HRS4R Action Plan

Case number: **2018IE319766**

Name Organisation under review: **NIBRT**



1. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice:

Please provide an overview of the organisation in terms of the current strengths and weaknesses of the current practice under the four thematic headings of the Charter and Code at your organization.

Note: Click on the name of each of the four thematic headings of the Charter and Code to open the editor and provide your answer.

Ethical and professional aspects*

STRENGTHS and WEAKNESSES

Summary of Principle Scores:

Rating	+ +	+/ -	- /+	- -
Number of Principles	6	2	3	0

Overall, NIBRT perform positively in this area. Due to the very nature of NIBRT's origin, which was established to support the biopharma sector and industry in Ireland, funding, which is primarily public or industry funded, strategy and governance (NIBRT is governed by a Board of Directors that represent all public and private interests in NIIBRT), the consistent focus on ethical and professional management and oversight of all of NIBRT's affairs is evident in all the principles outlined in this area.

More specifically, it is a key aspect of NIBRT's work and reason to disseminate and publicise our results. NIBRT are subject to several different audits from various stakeholders annually and therefore transparent and efficient financial management is essential to our continued funding. As our research is funded by external bodies, the process of approving ethically appropriate and societally beneficial research is ingrained in our ways of working. This also contributes to our strong culture of accountability to various stakeholders. NIBRT is and strives to maintain our world class reputation and therefore our focus on health and safety, disaster recovery and emergency response, confidentiality and data protection standards continues to improve year on year with more investment in all of these areas in 2018.

NIBRT are a small organisation successfully competing on a global scale for research employees and students. To do this, NIBRT prioritise regular, clear and transparent communication with all levels of the organisation ensuring that all employees understand the strategic aims of NIBRT and those of our research partners. While NIBRT are subject to several annual audits, employees and students engage in an annual performance review process. NIBRT are fully compliant with all Irish equality legislation and have a clean track record regarding non-discrimination at any level.

The challenges for NIBRT in this area could be summarised using the word 'formality' of our practices. Ethical principles are applied consistently but not documented or discussed formally. Intellectual Property is documented formally but awareness and understanding amongst researchers should be periodically refreshed and could benefit from being included more formally in our Induction process.

Contractual arrangements for unpaid students are documented informally, and these arrangements could be recorded more formally. Our Annual Performance Review process is formally documented but does not document all items listed in the relevant principle in this area. Finally, while our public engagement strategy is formalised annually, it currently focuses on communicating with our key stakeholders which doesn't necessarily include the general public. For transparency purposes, that is not currently the purpose for which NIBRT operates.

However, it could be beneficial to reconsider this engagement strategy going forward.

Update at Interim Assessment 2022

We have put on a more formalised footing, by publishing in our Research Handbook, our practices in relation to Ethics and Professional aspects, since the Initial Phase. For example, while we adhered to recognised ethical practices and fundamental ethical principles appropriate to our disciplines, we have now documented through our Research Handbook our Policy and procedures in this area. This is introduced to all Researcher at Induction/onboarding when they commence employment.

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As required by many of our external research funding bodies and in keeping with best practice, Irish HEIs operate a research ethics approval system. Research projects with human or animal participants are required to be approved through these procedures. In NIBRT, our Researchers are obliged to liaise with their supervisor(s) to confirm any requirements in this regard at the outset of a project. NIBRT Research Office will provide guidance on the procedures for Research Ethics where appropriate for a project.

Since the Initial Phase - we have introduced our Research Handbook. NIBRT's Intellectual Property & Procedures Policy is in place and available through our shared Policy Repository, and in the Research Handbook, for all Researchers. It is referenced at Induction/onboarding by the Research Office who formally present the Research Handbook to new employees (and students) on commencement of employment. Further we have recently introduced a sign-off sheet, to capture in writing, the Researcher's commitment to adhere to the terms of the NIBRT Research Handbook.

Periodically at Research Town Hall meetings, relevant Policies are referenced and (re)explained to staff, thereby refreshing awareness and understanding.

Contractual arrangements for unpaid Students are going forward documented by way of a signed Commitment Agreement between the student and their supervisor on behalf of NIBRT
Our public engagement strategy has yet to be documented as a strategy - it operates successfully however and many examples of our engagement both with the scientific community as well as the public to engage them with science are given in the Actions template below in response to identified Gaps. Important also to reference how COVID has impacted activity in this area, and all areas.

Update at Award Renewal 2026

In preparation for the Award Renewal, NIBRT's HRS4R Steering Committee undertook a survey of our research community to confirm the status of NIBRT's performance against the 40 Principles, gain opinions on areas for further improvement and agree the appropriate Action Plan for the next period. The results for Ethics and Professional Aspects were as follows:

Rating	+ +	+ -	• +	•
Number of Principles	7	3	1	0

The most notable improvements since the Interim Review have been in the areas of engagement and management of students, the documentation of process and guidance for researchers, regular communication and knowledge sharing amongst researchers and NIBRT'S dissemination of research results and public engagement strategy. These improvements were achieved by:

- Introducing a new process for on-boarding students with an associated budget to cover costs of training and development, providing IT/home office equipment and their inclusion on HR systems, communication tools etc.
- The Research Handbook provides clarity for researchers on all aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, Authorship Rights, Ethics, Conflict resolution etc
- Following the appointment of a Research Communications Officer (RCO), a monthly Research Bites meeting was introduced and is facilitated by the Research Communications Officer which provides regular updates and discussions with all researchers on matters of importance to them. The RCO also runs a monthly Research Seminar inviting internal and external experts to NIBRT to deliver a scientific presentation on their research, building knowledge, networks and skills amongst our talented researchers
- The RCO's role is to focus on the dissemination of research results and engagement of NIBRT with its local and research communities. Great work has been undertaken by the RCO in this regard including a monthly NIBRT Research Brief, increased use of LinkedIn to showcase NIBRT's work, significant enhancements changes to NIBRT's website from a research perspective, NIBRT's participation in European Researcher's Night, Culture Night, hosting local schools (from local and disadvantaged areas) STEM focussed to tour NIBRT and much more. In addition, NIBRT's Director of Research and Innovation has introduced an annual Research Conference in NIBRT that attracts world class speakers to the facility. She has ensured that NIBRT researchers get the opportunity to present posters and deliver presentations to this prestigious audience improving their skill sets and enhancing their reputation and network in the biopharma research community.

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The areas that require further improvement in NIBRT and will form the focus in our Action Plan for 2026 is on refresher training and discussion on a more regular and frequent basis of key aspects of the Research Handbook to keep knowledge and understanding current and up to date. Another focus area is on consistent health and safety practices in Research Labs. This is being worked on through NIBRT's Safe Labs initiative working with a group of 15 Senior Researchers, the H&S Lead and the HR Director.

Remarks:

The NIBRT Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are very pleased to see advancements. It not only reinforces the value of NIBRT's accreditation with HRS4R and the 40 Principles, but it also provides tangible evidence of the return on investment in research over the recent years. The SLT are very committed to the Actions identified for the next level of improvement many of which feature in annual objectives for the Institute. Accreditation with HR Excellence in Research remains a crucial aspect of NIBRT's research structures particularly as we continue to grow our connections and collaboration with European partners.

The HRS4R Steering Committee were also pleased and proud to see that the research community in NIBRT are treated professionally and respectfully which according to them, is not something that is afforded to researchers in other settings.

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Recruitment and selection*

STRENGTHS and WEAKNESSES

Summary of Principle Scores:

Rating	+ +	+/ -	-/ +	- -
Number of Principles	4	1	2	3

NIBRT exist in a small and tightening labour market competing with much larger and financially affluent organisations for talent. Therefore, NIBRT have focused its attention on improving our existing recruitment process in 2018 with the aim of attracting the widest pool of strong talent as needed for our organisation. Our efforts have been directed towards providing a consistent and professional experience for candidates and a structured and equitable approach to recruiting and selecting from all hiring managers. Against this backdrop, NIBRT performs positively in many areas under the Recruitment Code.

The Gap Analysis revealed that our existing strengths in this thematic area is in our broad compliance with most areas. NIBRT compile adverts with the view to attract as many qualified candidates from across the globe as possible. Our selection criteria is drafted to assist people select themselves in to our process rather than deter anyone from making an application. The essential criterion for selection is pitched at the appropriate level for the role (which is often dictated by the conditions of the grant/funder) but by the very nature of the labour market we operate in, never higher than what is necessary to perform in the role being advertised.

NIBRT are not overly prescriptive on how candidates make their applications and therefore evidence-based CVs can and have been submitted. Gaps in the chronological order on CVs, changing disciplines and/or sectors or location are not used to prevent applications being progressed. In fact, these factors are often viewed positively by hiring managers in that having people work in NIBRT with a diverse range of skills and experiences only serves to strengthen our productivity and reputation.

Selection panels are asked to use templates for advertising, shortlisting and interviewing candidates to ensure equitable treatment of all candidates and a consistent basis on which to determine hiring decisions. This also positions NIBRT well to give robust feedback to candidates who request it. Our selection panels are always made up of technical and organisation experts and as far as reasonably practical, have a gender balance.

Having that said, our recruitment process would definitely benefit from improvements in the more detailed nuances as prescribed in the principles. More specifically, NIBRT don't currently provide prospective candidates with details of the full recruitment process from the outset. We don't currently detail working conditions or career development prospects in NIBRT in adverts or on our website. Our selection panels don't often use external experts to assist with selection (this might not always be appropriate or necessary but could be more formally considered as an option by hiring managers).

NIBRT's selection practices are relatively limited in their variety and our hiring managers are not provided with specific recruitment training to assist in their operation of the process. NIBRT do not have specific processes or procedures to govern the appointment of post-doctoral researchers or to validate and recognise (unfamiliar) qualifications.

Update at Interim Assessment 2022

We have embraced the OTM-R methodology (full policy now published on our website) and continue to embed the practices in our recruitment and selection activity. At this phase we are very satisfied with the improvements implemented, for example on the vacancy notice we now provide a calendar schedule for candidates from initial application through to intended interview dates to allow for forward planning on their part were selected for interview. We provide details of the employment benefits on the vacancy notice and refer candidates to our website where our benefits are explained and highlighted clearly for their consideration and to encourage applications for the role.

Also, on the vacancy notice now, we confirm the Principal Investigator and provide a link to their biography on our website so candidates can review the PI and understand the research direction of the PI and match it with their own research aspirations and expertise.

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We specify a timeline on the vacancy notice to allow researchers sufficient time to consider the vacancy, research the role, prepare an application etc. without putting undue pressure on prospective candidates.

Our website has been substantially overhauled and is an active repository for all details on our benefits, working conditions, entitlements (to attract and retain talent). We plan to introduce a section on career development prospects on job vacancy notices however this is covered verbally at interview with Researchers, we explain the supports, learning and developments opportunities available.

Selection panels including external guests with relevant expertise for example from the scientific community or other research/university facilities are a feature when appropriate on our panels, in particular for senior appointments. We are focussed on diversity and inclusion awareness and our teams have all received Unconscious Bias training, our senior leaders have all received Inclusive Leadership training which is a competency also of relevance during interviews. We utilise different methods of selection including offering a short screening call to allow the Researcher (candidate) explore the role directly with the PI in a non-committal way, we invite candidates to present their research to the panel to allow them to showcase career highlights - rather than just questions/answers they have presentation time to allow their own independent showcasing of their experience.

Selection panels regularly include external parties from our collaborating companies, as well as NIBRT interviewers for balance and variety and an external viewpoint.

Additional opportunities for a candidate to impress are offered through a visit to the facility and meeting of the wider research team(s) to better understand the position on offer and the suitability of the candidate to the role in question. This can take place relatively informally, including coffee with the lab team and it is very well received by candidates and does position NIBRT well in competing for talent allowing us to showcase our inclusive, friendly albeit scientifically expert environment.

We do however recognise that we need to further bolster our Employee Value Proposition and are actively engaged with a Recruitment Partner in this respect since May 2022.

Update at Award Renewal 2026

In preparation for the Award Renewal, NIBRT's HRS4R Steering Committee undertook a survey of our research community to confirm the status of NIBRT's performance against the 40 Principles, gain opinions on areas for further improvement and agree the appropriate Action Plan for the next period. The results for Recruitment and Selection were as follows:

Rating	+ +	+ -	• +	•
Number of Principles	10	0	0	0

NIBRT continues to operate in a challenging labour market. In the last number of years, we have seen an increasing need to hire from outside of Ireland and support researchers relocate to Ireland to take up a research position in NIBRT. This put increased pressure on the HR team and recruitment approach. Therefore, in 2022, NIBRT appointed a professional recruitment partner to manage NIBRT's OTMR recruitment process. This has yielded very positive results as demonstrated in the survey scores above.

Improvements are notable across each principle now that a dedicated professional recruiter is in place. Fastnet, our recruitment parter, tracks candidates satisfaction using the Net Promoter Score (NPS) methodology. NIBRT consistently scores at 9.5 / 10 satisfaction rating.

Since Interim Review, NIBRT's SLT and Board worked with Fastnet on defining a clear and compelling employee value proposition for employees and prospective candidates which is now articulated on our website and vacancy documentation. This is bolstered further by a LinkedIn #LifeatNIBRT campaign which provides prospective candidates with insight to the culture of NIBRT. We have also significantly improved the career's section of our website including information on the recruitment process, benefits and inclusive practices and accommodations available and the NIBRT values.

While the scores from the survey remain high and our recruitment statistics remain broadly positive, this is always a focus

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area for NIBRT with continuous improvement a priority. We continue to provide interview training to hiring managers, we continue to focus on gender balanced recruitment panels, ensure job vacancy notices are inclusive with criteria set at the appropriate levels for roles.

Recruitment is always a high priority for NIBRT particularly in research. We have seen our number of researchers grow significantly in the last three years and have ambitions to continue this expansion.

While not specifically called out in any of the 40 Principles, an area that NIBRT will focus on in 2026 is relocation assistance for researchers relocating to Ireland to take up research positions. The benefits that diversity has brought to NIBRT are immense, a trend we hope to continue. However, we are very cognisant of the pressures of relocating to Dublin with high cost of living expenses, shortages of accommodation and a poor public transport infrastructure.

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Working conditions*

STRENGTHS and WEAKNESSES

Summary of Principle Scores:

Rating	+ +	+/ -	-/ +	- -
Number of Principles	7	3	4	0

Working conditions, including equality, contracting, salaries, gender balance etc. are heavily regulated in Ireland and NIBRT are compliant with all of its obligations in this regard. In addition to our legal obligations (which would be considered providing for basic working conditions only), NIBRT perform very well under this thematic heading.

NIBRT have a comprehensive benefits package which when benchmarked externally against comparator organisations in our location, outperform what is on offer significantly, particularly in relation to work/family life balance policies and flexible working arrangements.

NIBRT treat researchers (and indeed all employees) as professionals at all stages of their careers. NIBRT's facilities are recognised as world class and state of the art with cutting edge technology, we work with a diverse range of funders including high profile industry partners and attract and retain high-quality talent therefore providing researchers with a stimulating environment in which to conduct their research.

Our equality policies and practices promote gender balance in the full employment life cycle. Our complaints procedures are clearly documented, are accessible and implemented to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. The view of researchers is represented at the highest level of decision making in NIBRT. Access to training and development opportunities in NIBRT is strong for all researchers.

The primary gap for NIBRT under this thematic heading is the provision of formal career planning strategies and promotional opportunities within NIBRT. NIBRT are compliant with all its legal obligations regarding contracting researchers, however due to our funding environment contracts of indefinite duration/providing a long-term employment contract for researchers can be a difficulty. NIBRT should endeavour to close the gap in how paid and unpaid students are administered.

Other less significant gaps but nonetheless worthy of improvement initiatives under this heading include; the formality in which Intellectual Property rights and obligations are communicated amongst researchers, the formality that govern co- authorship decisions are made, the formality in which teaching duties are encouraged, captured and coached by Supervisors with their researchers and the formality of providing career advice and mobility opportunities for researchers could all benefit from improvements.

Update at Interim Assessment 2022

To fill the primary gap identified at Initial Phase, namely formal career planning and promotional opportunities internally, NIBRT have introduced a robust Job Classification and Career Structure framework in 2022. This framework provides all NIBRT staff with career path options detailing the requirements and expectations for progression. In parallel, NIBRT have also introduced a structured set of job titles specifically for Researchers that aims to recognise professional status and progression within NIBRT and aligns with both academic and industry career paths available to researchers outside NIBRT.

NIBRT have introduced a Bridge Funding initiative - PIs can apply for internal 'bridge funding' to retain a talented researcher where the grant may have expired which was supporting their employment. This bridge funding bridges the gap between the expiration of one funding source and the commencement of the next. This is proving very effective in talent retention thus far - it is c.12 months+ inexistence.

Further NIBRT have, with Board support, taken a step change in retaining on a full-time permanent basis (contracts of indefinite duration) talented research staff. We have been in a position to offer permanent contracts to a number of Scientists who have worked with NIBRT on various projects and repeat contracts over a number of years. Notwithstanding our grant funding limitations, we have introduced this welcome improved working condition for many. In the current tight labour market this key offering where we can make it available will be a key talent retention tool.

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Our already positive flexible working conditions have been expanded upon, driven by the COVID pandemic which introduced widespread working from home. This is a new working condition that we have put on a permanent footing - supporting Researchers to determine their own working hours, day of the week they wish to work, length of working day, which location they prefer to work from (including a policy to allow researchers to temporarily work from a non-Irish jurisdiction) etc. It is a very expansive flexible working policy.

Lastly, NIBRT have introduced a Student Commitment Agreement, for unpaid students who are studying for a Masters or PhD with NIBRT. This agreement clearly outlines our commitment and support for the student and equally documents the student's dedication to their course of study. Students are recognised in NIBRT as a valuable resource, we are committed to our students and recognise their importance, and the support required by them both during study and thereafter.

We have published in our Research Handbook further direction on Intellectual Property rights and obligations and co-authorship decisions. Supervisors support and encourage teaching duties of researchers; we have a very close relationship with various faculties in UCD with whom we share campus.

Career discussions and advice by PIs to their talent is backed up by the Career Framework introduced recently, mobility opportunities will no doubt increase now post-COVID, we already have many examples of Researchers going to industry, Health Research Board, Science Foundation Ireland etc this will be further built upon.

Update at Award Renewal 2026

In preparation for the Award Renewal, NIBRT's HRS4R Steering Committee undertook a survey of our research community to confirm the status of NIBRT's performance against the 40 Principles, gain opinions on areas for further improvement and agree the appropriate Action Plan for the next period. The results for Working Conditions and Social Security were as follows:

Rating	+ +	+ -	• +	•
Number of Principles	7	4	3	0

NIBRT continues to perform well in this area confirmed by both the recent HRS4R survey and annual employee surveys (results of which are available to review on our HRS4R page of our website). In 2023, NIBRT completed an external review of our Compensation and Benefits offering undertaken by Ernst and Young. This review confirmed that NIBRT's package compares very favourably in the Irish market. NIBRT remain fully compliant with all Irish employment legislation in relation to working conditions.
The improvements most frequently cited by NIBRT researchers in this thematic area since the Interim Review related to flexibility, performance management and support provided to researchers through our new mentoring programme. Since 2022, NIBRT have won two awards for our Hybrid Working Framework which provides vital flexibilities for researchers and all employees. NIBRT have also introduced a tailored Performance Review Form for researchers forcing them to focus not just on project and scientific objectives but on longer term career planning and development. Our Mentoring Programme saw substantial take up by our Researchers in both 2024 and 2025 and is cited multiple times as a significant support

The focus areas for improvement in 2026 and beyond are:

- Gender Balance across all levels in NIBRT. Through comprehensive data analysis, NIBRT have identified the root cause of gender imbalance in NIBRT being related to historical societal norms. However, active plans are in place to bring about change and balance in this over the coming years. Our Gender Pay Gap is published on our website and contains further information on this key focus area for NIBRT.
- Career Development support for researchers. While the items mentioned above have improved conditions for researchers, the HRS4R Steering Committee have made recommendations for further action with regards to supporting researchers to make grant applications independently of their NIBRT PI.
- While NIBRT have a comprehensive complaints process detailed in the Research Handbook and the NIBRT Grievance Procedure, it has been noted that the inherent power imbalance that exists between a PI/Supervisor and PhD candidate relationship can make it impractical or uncomfortable for students to utilise these processes without fear of repercussion. NIBRT has robust complaints and appeals procedures in place through the Research Handbook and Grievance Procedure. To further enhance student confidence and engagement, HR will continue to meet regularly with

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PhD candidates, gather feedback through student representatives, and follow up on themes raised. These additional channels provide valuable opportunities to listen to students, address concerns, and support an ongoing positive student experience.

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Training and development*

STRENGTHS and WEAKNESSES

Summary of Principle Scores:

Rating	+ +	+/ -	-/ +	- -
Number of Principles	2	2	1	0

NIBRT is a small organisation that values individual and personalised relationships with all of our employees and students alike. This feature of NIBRT's structure and values gives us a core strength in this thematic area, the relationship with and quality of our supervisors and supervision for students and researchers alike. All our supervisors are sufficiently qualified and experienced to perform the role as required and our researchers confirm that these relationships work very well for them.

In addition, NIBRT have robust processes, a healthy budget and regular communication around training and development opportunities available to researchers and therefore NIBRT can proudly report a high take up and satisfaction ratings with such opportunities.

Like in other areas, the main challenge in this area for NIBRT is in the formality in which some of these principles are approached and implemented. For instance, while satisfaction levels with the relationship with supervisors is very high, technically their role is not documented anywhere and therefore not formally evaluated. In addition, the role of senior researchers in supervising their more junior counterparts could benefit from more structured coaching and role definition from their mentors.

While satisfaction with training is high, there aren't formal structured training plans in place for each staff member and the associated record keeping on training warrants more formality and rigour.

Update at Interim Assessment 2022

Since the Initial Phase NIBRT have undertaken a number of initiatives to bolster the formality with which training and career development is approached in NIBRT. First and foremost, in November 2019, NIBRT introduced a new streamlined Performance Review Form which aimed to allow more opportunities for researchers to capture achievements related to teaching/supervisory responsibilities and publications. It also included a detailed Training Plan section outlining how opportunities for development in NIBRT can be accessed. Finally, it also gave NIBRT employees the opportunity to document their wider contributions to NIBRT with a dedicated section on Culture and Values.

In addition, a training program to support emerging leadership talent was rolled out in 2020 and 2021 allowing talented researchers to progress their careers beyond research activities. Recently NIBRT have formalised that group of leaders as the Extended Management Team (which includes members of our research teams) who have a role in the overall management of NIBRT - their views are sought on both strategic and practical initiatives. They are involved in strategic decision making e.g. recently informed the Career Framework banding exercise and were key reviewers of that new Framework.

We continue to bolster the training and learning budget - we have a centralised training budget where we open courses on practical matters to all researchers e.g. presentation skills, resilience training, Grant/Report writing. Additionally, each PI had an individual budget for their researchers to support targeted individualised training during the year and finally we support formal academic courses e.g. we have a researcher undertaking their MBA funded by NIBRT presently.

Training plans captured in the Performance Review forms are scrutinised and inform the training courses and budget provided. Each researcher is asked to have a training plan and is supported by their PI, this is a key requirement of the performance review discussions during the year. Satisfaction with this process is also reviewed as part of our annual Employee Engagement survey undertaken in December each year.

As NIBRT is the National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training, we are well place to invite Researchers to join our formal training programs offered on a commercial basis to the bioprocessing industry both nationally and internationally. We have an online training platform NIBRT Online Academy, and we have made training available free of charge to researchers on that platform and it has been favourably received and utilised. We support offering the training with working time off to take

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that training.

Finally, the role and expectations of the Supervisor in NIBRT was considered and is now captured in the Student Commitment Agreement.

Update at Award Renewal 2026

In preparation for the Award Renewal, NIBRT's HRS4R Steering Committee undertook a survey of our research community to confirm the status of NIBRT's performance against the 40 Principles, gain opinions on areas for further improvement and agree the appropriate Action Plan for the next period. The results for Training and Development were as follows:

Rating	+ +	+ -	• +	•
Number of Principles	1	4	0	0

While many strides have been made to make meaningful improvements in this area, and those initiatives have been cited by researchers as having had positive impacts for them, this thematic area remains the primary area requiring focus and investment from NIBRT in the coming years.

The notable improvements since the last review include the introduction of a tailored Performance Review form for researchers, the expansion of researcher involved in the NIBRT Research Conference, the launch of the NIBRT mentoring programme and the increased training and development budgets available to all employees.

- The assessment and evaluation of the take up of training and development opportunities afforded to researchers and the impact it has on career progression
- To provide for focus on longer term career planning (as opposed to current upskilling and progression/promotion) with the PI particularly for those interested in pursuing careers as independent researchers
- To provide alternative avenues for early-stage researchers and/or PhD students to have concerns about their supervision addressed without fear of negative repercussion or awkward circumstances. NIBRT have started to look more closely at the role of Lead Researchers, the Research Office and the Mentoring programme as potential solutions in this regard.

Have any of the priorities for the short and medium term changed?

Yes, as we have closed off actions noted in the previous Action Plan 2022, we have set new priorities based on current circumstances. These are detailed in the Action Plan 2025 below. We have also addressed all feedback received in the Concensus Report and believe that NIBRT are fully compliant with the requirements for Award Renewal.

Have any of the circumstances in which your organisation operates changed and, as such, have had an impact on your strategy for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers? (max. 500 words)

While global geo-political factors have of course impacted NIBRT's operating environment, a recent review of the NIBRT strategy by the Board in September 2025 confirms that by and large, our HR strategy remains unchanged. The NIBRT strategic plan has set a very clear vision of its HR strategy in the People Pillar of the NIBRT Strategic Plan 2024 to 2028. This remains appropriate for the organisation. Annual objectives, relevant to current operating circumstances, are set to ensure NIBRT deliver on these ambitions.

Are any strategic decisions under way that may influence the action plan? (max. 500 words)

No

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2. Actions

Please consult the list of all the actions you have submitted as part of your strategy for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers. Please add to the overview the current status of these actions as well as the status of the indicators. If any actions have been revised or omitted, please provide a commentary for each action. You can also add new objectives.

Note: Choose one or more of the principles automatically retrieved from the gap analysis with their ratings.

	Action	Principle	Time	Responsible Unit	Indicator	Status 2022	Remarks 2022
1	Update Annual PR process to incorporate additional sections i.e. Teaching, Supervision	(-/+) 11. Evaluation/appraisal systems (-/+) 33. Teaching	Q4 2018	HR	Updated PR form used for 2018 PR process and on file for everyone	Complete	Further refreshed our Performance Review form to ensure teaching and coaching responsibilities undertaken are written in by the relevant Researchers to their Annual Review Form and accordingly will be duly recognised and acknowledged by the Reviewer.
2	Create and implement a Hosting Agreement for "Students" with NIBRT. Students qualify as Researchers for a Hosting Agreement where the student (Researcher) is a third country National holding an appropriate higher education qualification, which gives access to doctoral programmes, who is selected by a research organisation (NIBRT) for carrying out a research project for which the above qualification is	(+/-) 3. Professional responsibility (-/+) 5. Contractual and legal obligations	Q1 2023	HR, PI Team	Signed Commitment Agreement on file for all students.	Complete	Extended as we have developed a Commitment Agreement for all students, to support them during their learning with us. We will register students on our internal Time Management System for the purposes of further integration and inclusion, and the introduction of a formal Student Commitment Agreement underpins both of our responsibilities and commitment. A Hosting Agreement is available also which is a work

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	normally required. N.B. This does not apply to teaching-only positions.						permit/study visa). We also support payment of stipend payments which are facilitated through the NIBRT Payroll. NIBRT prepares and registers Hosting Agreements on the portal of Irish Universities Association as required. Our new Target is to get a Commitment Agreement in place for all existing and new students. **Update: 25th July 2025** - this is now in place for all students; they are all registered on our new Sage HR system.
3	NIBRT participation in Science Week (for 2nd level students)	(+/-) 9. Public engagement	Q1 2023	Marketing, Research Working Group	NIBRT presence at Science Week	Complete	NIBRT are represented by sending a number of our scientists to "Science Blast" exhibition annually which engages more than 12,000 children from schools across Ireland - it invites children to investigate the science behind a simple question that interests and excites them! We are also always on the lookout for similar initiatives we can support by making our staff available to present at same. (COVID interrupted events - this Action is extended therefore). We have previously pre-COVID and will again post COVID participate in Science Week and look forward to doing so.

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							Update: 25th July 2025 - NIBRT has an ESG Community Engagement and Outreach team in place as well as a Research Communications Officer. There is a dedicated Public Engagement strategy in place.
4	Introduce a new Leavers Process which includes IP/Confidentiality Declarations at Exit Interviews	(-/+) 5. Contractual and legal obligations (+/-) 31. Intellectual Property Rights	Q2 2019	HR, Research Office	Leavers process approved by SMT and in place.	Complete	At Exit Interview all employees are reminded of the Confidentiality clause of their respective contracts which they signed up to on appointment Their obligations are confirmed to them and their confirmation of compliance noted (that their duty is to maintain appropriate confidentiality even after exiting). We have a full Leavers Process including Checklist for Manager & Staff Member to follow capturing reminders on return of documentation, papers and other research property.
5	Update relevant job specs to include teaching/supervisory responsibilities as a formal part of researcher jobs	(-/+) 33. Teaching (-/+0 37. Supervision and managerial duties (+/-) 40. Supervision	Q2 2019	HR, PI Team	New job specs available for all researchers	Complete	Job specs are updated periodically and certainly in line with advertising of new positions, a detailed job spec is attached to all Contracts of Employment. Teaching/supervisory responsibilities are clearly documented in

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							Objective Setting as part of the Performance Process with the researcher and their supervisor - their responsibilities are formally noted and reflected as part of their Objectives. It is recommended that when updating or reissuing a job spec or description for an existing or new position to note Teaching/Supervisory Responsibilities so credit can accrue in this respect.
6	Create OTM-R Policy aligned to OTM-R checklist	(-/+) 13. Recruitment (Code) (-/+) 14. Selection (Code) (--) 15. Transparency (Code) (+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code) (++) 17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code) (++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code) (--) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code) (--) 31. Postdoctoral appointments (Code)	Q2 2019	HR	OTM-R Policy in Employee Handbook, on NIBRT website and managers trained	Complete	OTM-R Policy is uploaded on our website and stored in the NIBRT Policy Repository with HR documentation, which is openly available to all employees. Handbook (now hosted online in our Policy Repository rather than printed Handbook). This is reviewed regularly in line with our Policy review schedule (as required by Audit).
7	Send all researchers on Epigeum Research Integrity training and/or Ethics training module in	(-/+) 2. Ethical Principles (+/-) 3. Professional Responsibility	Q3 2019	HR	Training records on file for all researchers.	Complete	The new Research Integrity (RI) 2.0 training platform was rolled out to all NIBRT researchers. The updated

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	UCD						platform provided by Epigeum has a core list of 1-8 modules with an additional option for Specialist modules (5 in total). Certificates of completion are provided at the end of each module. Refresher Training every 3 years is provided and participation monitored by Research Office and attendance records maintained. Core Modules (8 in total) ➢ Good Research Conduct ➢ Irresponsible Research Practices ➢ Planning Your Research ➢ Managing & Recording Your Research ➢ Data Selection, Analysis & Presentation ➢ Scholarly Publication ➢ Professional Responsibilities ➢ Communication, Social Responsibility & Impact Specialist Modules (5 in total) ➢ Conflicts of Interest ➢ Research Involving Human Participants ➢ The Care & Use of Animals in Research ➢ Intellectual Property ➢ Export Controls

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8	NIBRT purchase licenses for 'Turn it in' software accessible to all PIs to check data and publications	(+/-) 3. Professional Responsibility	Q3 2019	Research Office	Software in place and all PIs given access to use it	Complete	Turn it in software package is more relevant to undergraduate submissions. Principles for Research Integrity are laid out in our Handbook, we have explicitly called out plagiarism in our Research Misconduct Policy which is published. We have dedicated research integrity training provided through Epigeum for all researchers and attendance is tracked, certified and monitored. Therefore, this action for this software has been superseded by an alternative solution.
9	Establish quarterly reviews of training up-take and effectiveness gathering feedback from participants	(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development (+/-) 39. Access to research and training and continuous development	Q1 2022	HR	Quarterly reports and associated interventions circulated to SMT by HR. Increase in training take up following intervention	Complete	Training effectiveness established through feedback taken by Trainer and informal feedback sought by HR from attendees. Specialised training e.g. research specific is organised by line manager and trainee. We offer General Skills Training which HR organise centrally, we offer Role Specific Training which the line manager and research organise themselves based on the individual need and we also support further learning/academic courses e.g. MBA etc.

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							Training provided under 3 Headings depending on who organises it. - brochure published yearly - we have introduced a system for our Finance team to manage the training budget and provide spending/take up reports as required. A detailed review is undertaken at year end. Training receives focus during performance review time; all perf reviews are scrutinised for a training plan and a clear instruction to have a training plan in place is the mantra of HR at the beginning of each year (and this is checked up upon).
10	Update Vacancy advert template to align to OTM-R Policy	(-/+) 13. Recruitment (Code) (-/+) Selection (Code) (+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code)	Q4 2019	HR	Template in place and used for all adverts thereafter as reviewed by HR	Complete	Template updated and includes the HRS4R accreditation - template fully aligned with OTM-R Policy and used for all Adverts in all fora. We have recently Q2 2022 appointed an external Recruitment partner whom we are currently training on our systems, methodology etc. OTMR advertising templates etc. are a cornerstone.
11	Provide all Researchers with the opportunity to attend IP Training through WIPO and Train the Trainer training	(-/+) 5. Contractual and legal obligations (-/+) 31. Intellectual Property Rights (-/+) 37. Supervision and managerial duties	Q1 2023	HR	Training records on file for all researchers	Complete	The IP Policy prepared by as part of the Research Handbook and linked to Research Misconduct Policy have been made fully available to all researchers and in fact new researchers are

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							taken through the documentation/referred to same during Induction. Whilst formal training records may not be on file - we do have records as referred to in Action 8 above which support this also. In line with our updated IP Policy, we will be working with NOVA UCD who are intellectual property commercialisation expert group - we plan to access their training for Researchers as a result and those records will be maintained by us.
12	Marketing consult Researchers to create Public Engagement Plan for 2020	(+/-) 9. Public Engagement	Q1 2023	Marketing	Annual Public Engagement plans represent all researchers as approved by PI team and SM	Complete	There is provision within the Research Office for a Research Communications Executive and that role was filled but has since been vacated and must be refilled when a talented resource can be sourced. Research achievements and other research publicity actions are a key focus of this role which will receive new impetus once the role is refilled. However, since creation of that role there have been positive engagements including through our NIBRT Newsletter, NIBRT website, our LinkedIn presence. Pandemic has limited face to face public engagement however this will now also change. The

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							target of having plan(s) in place approved by PI and SMT hasn't yet been brought to fruition but again the refilling of the vacant Research Office Communications Executive role will be key in fulfilling this target. We would like to reference the use of PubMed (a free resource supporting the search and retrieval of biomedical and life sciences literature) which is linked on our website and is a pathway for all of our Research published material - making our research/publications publicly available. **Update: 25th July 2025** - NIBRT has an ESG Community Engagement and Outreach team in place as well as a Research Communications Officer. There is a dedicated Public Engagement strategy in place.
13	NIBRT apply for SFI Discover Programme grant to enable wider engagement with general public	(+/-) 9. Public engagement	Q4 2019	Marketing	Grant secured and plans being executed accordingly	Complete	NIBRT decided not to apply for the SFI Discover Program and instead we have an annual Transition Year Program in partnership with local schools. We invite 15- and 16-year-olds from all backgrounds to experience for 1 week, the daily life of scientists working at one of

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							the world's leading research institutes. NIBRT scientists deliver activities for transition year pupil 'buddies' for the week. Introducing them to lab techniques etc. Pupils visit cutting edge research facilities and hear about the variety of careers available to scientists. Through practical work and talks the pupils will learn that science works as a global, multidisciplinary enterprise to solve great challenges.
14	Widen the types of journals NIBRT publish research result articles in to reach a wider audience	(++) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results (+/-) 9. Public engagement	Q4 2019	PI Team	Aim to increase the number of journals that NIBRT employees receive publication in by 5% over two years and increase the visibility of our publications on the NIBRT website.	Complete	Whilst we didn't necessarily widen the journals we publish in, in fact all Principal Investigator publications, and that of their teams, are displayed on the NIBRT website and linked automatically PubMed (the free open resource supporting the search and retrieval of biomedical and life sciences literature). We have increased the number of PIs/Adjuncts in NIBRT and therefore broadened the areas of research undertaken by NIBRT - also the number of new Affiliate PIs to the organisation will further increase our scientific presence.
15	Enhance our LinkedIn presence including the	(+/-) 9. Public engagement	Q4 2019	Marketing	Increased number of followers on	Complete	Business Development and Marketing have been

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	entire research group and their results	(+/-) 22. Recognition of the profession			LinkedIn. Increased connections for our researchers		driving traffic to NIBRT LinkedIn - we have HubSpot to inform results - we are seeing massively improved engagement in this area recently. PI's have been requested to be active on LinkedIn not only for recruitment but also information sharing, we are seeing a big uptake and engagement in this area and are very satisfied that this target has been achieved, we encourage our researcher in making connections and stats of our followership can be made available.
16	Compile and implement a NIBRT Professional Title structure to accurately reflect researcher's stage of career	(+/-) 22. Recognition of the profession	Q4 2023	HR, Research Office	All researchers' titles updated to reflect new structure and contracts updated to reflect changes. Increased satisfaction levels with recognition of professional scores in HRS4R Verification Survey (Survey available for review by HRS4R assessors, see reference to our support documentation in Implementation Comments below).	Complete	2022 will see professional title structure expanded upon - introduction of the new Job Classification Structure and Banding will document the career path for Researchers, state the required competencies for each Band and show a clear path for development and promotion. Further in 2023 we will introduce Levels within Bands providing further nuanced promotional opportunities. **Update: 25th July 2025** - The Job Banding Framework is in place, all researchers in NIBRT have consistent Job Titles and Levels across all research groups.
17	Update NIBRT website to include a section that links to all researcher's	(+/-) 9. Public engagement	Q1 2023	Marketing	New section of website live. Increased profile of	Complete	This have very recently been taken on by

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	profiles and their work and lists the journals we publish in	(+/-) 22. Recognition of the profession			researchers by increased contacts on LinkedIn		Business Development and Marketing management - the website is being improved all the time, and this is a key area for further attention in 2022
18	Up-skill Supervisors to have more open and diverse career conversations with researchers	(-/+) 28. Career development (+/-) 30/ Access to career advice	Q4 2027	HR	Researchers to draft more realistic CPD plans as part of PR process and rate it accordingly in annual staff survey.	Extended	The Training and Development section of the PR form must be completed by the researcher supported by their reviewer (manager). This is audited by HR and any gaps or area lacking in a plan are highlighted and notified to the Manager. NIBRT Job banding Structure further supports this area. It clearly lays out the competencies required of a researcher to move to the next band level. **Update: Nov 2026** - our latest survey of researchers suggest that further work is required to close the gap identified in Career Development and Access to career advice. While researchers are content that CPD is adequately catered for by NIBRT, it is the focus on longer term career development that remains a gap. NIBRT introduced a Mentoring Programme in 2024 which has greatly improved this for researchers. The next action is to further tailor

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							the Researcher Performance Review form to prompt PIs to have longer term career discussions with researchers at least once per year.
19	Opportunities to enhance mobility are advertised to entire research group	(-/+) 29. Value of mobility	Q4 2023	Research Office	5% increase in numbers availing of mobility experiences in 2020	Complete	We have encouraged and supported our Researchers to apply for grants particularly the SFI Industry Fellowships, which allow them to remain a NIBRT employee while working for a 12-month period in Industry/pharma. This supported mobility provides valuable industry experience but also the opportunity to return to NIBRT. Additionally, researchers have been retained by Industry as a result of the mobility/placement. Examples include placements in Pfizer, APC, BMS. We have coordinated a H2020 MSCA ITN "Staccatto" pan European grant, enabling mobility between researchers in academic institutions and industry partners, we have 3 NIBRT employees affiliated with this mobility opportunity. Due to COVID we virtually

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							hosted other European PhD Student placements from within the Consortium. Finally, H2020 MSCA Individual Fellows hosted in NIBRT for example a post-doctoral researcher was placed in NIBRT for 2 years as a result. We organise and host a biopharma industry wide Careers fair annually - connecting Researchers with industry. Our reach extends to running a relevant Transition Year program for Second Level school students (age 16+). We have retained the status of In Progress due to COVID limiting some mobility opportunities.
20	Deliver Recruitment Training for all hiring managers and interview panellists that is aligned to OTM-R principles	(-/+) 13. Recruitment (Code) (-/+) 14. Selection (Code) (--) 15. Transparency (Code) (+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code) (++) 17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code) (++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code) (--) 19. Recognition of	Q1 2023	HR	Training records on file and recruitment file audit shows compliance with OTM-R Policy	Complete	All internal members of the Interview Panel are partnered by HR. Where someone is new to interviewing, they are upskilled by HR in advance with focus on not only the legislative considerations e.g. equality or discriminatory reference but informed that we fully follow the

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		qualifications (Code) (++) 20. Seniority (Code) (--) 21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code)					pre-prepared Question Sheet for all candidates. We follow the OTM-R Process in this regard. The reason this is in progress is that capacity in the HR team has been limited and our new Recruitment partner will assist with this. Training Records will need to be introduced and maintained on file - this is an action going forward. We will benchmark ourselves against OTMR for compliance in the course of 2022 post the appointment of our new Recruitment Partner. **Update: 25th July 2025** - recent feedback has revealed that further work is required on this. While interview panels are assisted by NIBRT's recruitment partner, Fastnet, in complying with the OTMR Policy, the current gap relates to consistent approaches to managing interviews by Hiring Managers. NIBRT are designing a guide for managers that will form part of the initiation documentation for each recruitment campaign.
21	Create panel of trained Interviewers which includes senior researchers	(-/+) 13. Recruitment (Code) (-/+) 14. Selection	Q4 2023	HR	Formal list of interview panellists available to all hiring managers. Panel	Complete	All PIs and management are fully experienced interviewers and always joined on the panel by a HR

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		(Code) (-/+) 28. Career development			audit shows diversity		professional. Diversity from a gender perspective and also experience is a priority but cannot always be fulfilled as we are a small organisation. A formal documented Panel isn't maintained - all PIs interview for their own teams but also join panels as guest interviewers where that cross-research collaboration is important. We have an informal list of interview panellists and this aligns with our new job classification B5/B6 structure. We benefit as an organisation from great racial, ethnic and age diversity and this naturally contributes positively to our interviewing process, allowing as much as possible for diversity on panels but we recognise this could be put on a more formal footing and is something to work on with our new Recruitment partner in informing them on our desired interview panel makeup.
22	Adjust our template follow up correspondence to applicants to include feedback	(--) 15. Transparency (Code)	Q4 2019	HR	Template in place and being used for all recruitment campaigns	Complete	We do proactively offer feedback post interview, but it is available when requested. Feedback is readily available as we follow a Template (Question Sheet) for all interviews and the interviewers maintain notes for 6 months, in particular our PI population are very open to providing

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							one to one feedback to candidates as requested.
23	Introduce an internal Publication Recognition Procedure	(+/-) 22. Recognition of the profession	Q1 2020	PI Team, Research Office	Researchers to positively rate their satisfaction with this initiative in annual Staff Survey.	Complete	Whilst not a documented internal Publication Recognition procedure per se - recognition and acknowledgement of publications occurs in many ways for example: - NIBRT External Newsletter (reach 10,000+) Internal Newsletter (reach 100+) Board Report CSO Research Townhall Meetings CSO also emails all NIBRT employees to highlight when a new paper is published. We will include this as a topic to question on our next Survey to gauge satisfaction and to allow up act remedially if needed another idea here to gauge satisfaction is for the Chief Scientific Office to follow up on this as it is an area of keen interest.
24	Develop a Career Progression Matrix (CPM) for researchers that allows them to consider many career directions and discuss with Supervisor annually	(-/+) 28. Career development (+/-) 30. Access to career advice	Q1 2020	HR, Research Working Group	CPM rolled out to new staff, incorporated in Research Handbook and published on website	Complete	2022 will see the introduction of the Job Classification and Banding Structure with detailed career paths clear to all levels. The competencies for movement through the Structure are clear and unambiguous. The

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							Structure has been validated and is supported by all managers. This will enhance discussions and bring clarity to those progression and direction discussions held locally.
25	Provide series of external speakers to visit NIBRT to talk to researchers about various career avenues/options	(-/+) 28. Career development (+/-) 30. Access to career advice	Q1 2020	HR, Research Office	Researchers positively rate their satisfaction with this in annual Staff Survey	Complete	Pre and post COVID we hosted industry and academic relevant speakers - to discuss their career paths for example Board member Julie O'Neill, Prof Orla Feely VP Research UCD. We have linked up researchers with our recruitment partner, Fastnet, from a career options perspective.
26	Provide opportunities for researchers to work with Business Development to secure more diverse business for NIBRT	(-/+) 29. Value of mobility	Q1 2027	Business Development	5% increase in number of researchers working on Bus Dev projects	Extended	This was fulfilled somewhat by Researchers writing on their own grants, supported by PI and Director of Projects where appropriate, we have specific examples of researchers (not just PIs) developing business through their own Grant writing e.g. Characterisation and Comparability Lab – Manager (Janssen grant success) Senior Manager - Characterisation and Comparability Lab (Thermo lead). With the creation of a new role in NIBRT- Business Manager for research reporting to the CCO, this action can be extended as it will likely receive much enhanced

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							focus from the new Business Manager for Research. **Update: Nov 2026:** NIBRT have now appointed a Business Manager for Research specifically focused on working directly with PIs and the research community to support them secure funding opportunities to enhance their research.
27	Establish a Working Group to review International and National standards on co-authorship management with a view to drafting a NIBRT policy for inclusion in a Research Handbook	(-/+) 32. Co-authorship	Q1 2020	Research Office	Policy in Research Handbook and circulated to all researchers. Researchers Handbook to include: ➢ IP Policy ➢ Ethical Principles Policy ➢ Co-Authorship Policy ➢ Career Progression Matrix ➢ Professional Title Structure ➢ Plagiarism Policy ➢ Grants - Negotiating and Working under Grants Guideline ➢ Presenting at Conferences - Guidance ➢ Vaccinations	Complete	Completed and fully included in detail in the Research Handbook.

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					➢ Recognising Publications achieved by our Researchers ➢ Guidelines for Hiring Post Docs		
28	Create a Researchers Handbook to include: ➢ IP Policy ➢ Ethical Principles Policy ➢ Co-Authorship Policy ➢ Career Progression Matrix ➢ Professional Title Structure ➢ Plagiarism Policy ➢ Grants - Negotiating and Working under Grants Guideline ➢ Presenting at Conferences - Guidance ➢ Vaccinations ➢ Recognising Publications achieved by our Researchers ➢ Guidelines for Hiring Post Docs	(-/+) 2. Ethical principles (+/-) 3. Professional responsibility (-/+) 5. Contractual and legal obligations (++) 7. Good practice in research (--) 21. Postdoctoral appointments (+/-) 22. Recognition of the profession (-/+) 28. Career development (+/-) 30. Access to career advice (+/-) 31. Intellectual Property Rights (-/+) 32. Co-authorship (-/+) 33. Teaching (++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	Q2 2020	Research Office	Research Handbook in place, circulated to all researchers, covered in Induction Process and associated records of all above on file.	Complete	The inclusion as part of the Induction Process has commenced in 2022, all researchers attend. Also intending to undertake further info sessions to highlight key policies in the Handbook, to involve all researchers and further embed the Research Handbook in how we do things in NIBRT. For example, Misconduct Policy was explained at recent Research Townhall.
29	Create guidance for PI Team for managing the contracting process with Funders to include: ➢ Agreements on Co-Authorship ➢ Including opportunities for	(+/-) 22. Recognition of the profession (-/+) 28. Career development (-/+) 29. Value of mobility (-/+) 32. Co-authorship	Q2 2020	Research Office	Guideline in Research Handbook and researchers report increased satisfaction in these areas in HRS4R Verification Survey. (Survey available for	Complete	Section on co-authorship on Research Handbook - guidance is provided there on authorship disputes. Primary Funders e.g. EI and SFI require a declaration of PI/Research time commitment at grant

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	researchers' mobility ➢ Making funders aware of researchers' time available for their project i.e. they have other responsibilities	(-/+) 33. Teaching			review by HRS4R assessors, see reference to our support documentation in Implementation Comments below).		submission stage. Review of all proposals by Research Office ensures all data is correct.
30	Establish an Independent Review Board for Authorship disputes	(-/+) 32. Co-authorship	Q2 2020	SMT	Policy in Research Handbook and researchers report increased satisfaction in these areas in HRS4R Verification Survey. Researchers Handbook to include: ➢ IP Policy ➢ Ethical Principles Policy ➢ Co-Authorship Policy ➢ Career Progression Matrix ➢ Professional Title Structure ➢ Plagiarism Policy ➢ Grants - Negotiating and Working under Grants Guideline ➢ Presenting at Conferences - Guidance ➢ Vaccinations ➢ Recognising Publications achieved by our Researchers	Complete	The Authorship Policy in the Research Handbook provided advice and guidance to avoid Authorship Disputes. Should a case of authorship dispute arise, it may be managed though the Research Misconduct Procedure.

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					➢ Guidelines for Hiring Post Docs		
31	Publish Career Progression Matrix on our website	(++) 12. Recruitment (-/+) 13. Recruitment (Code) (-/+) 28. Career development (+/-) 30. Access to career advice	Q4 2027	Marketing	CPM on website in new Careers section	Extended	NIBRT Job Band Structure and Career Framework was launched in 2022. The Structure is published on our website. The Framework will be updated by 2028 to reflect the additional elements of relevance from EU Competence Framework for Researchers, known as Research Comp.
32	Establish tailored section of Induction Process for Researchers to include details of Research Handbook (delivered by RO)	(-/+) 2. Ethical principles (+/-) 3. Professional responsibility (++) 4. Professional attitude (-/+) 5. Contractual and legal obligations (++) Good practice in research (-/+) 28. Career development (-/+) 32. Co-authorship	Q3 2020	HR	New Induction process in place and being implemented for all new starters	Complete	The Research Handbook aspect of Induction has been introduced in 2022.
33	Deliver Workshops to up-skill researchers on contents of Research Handbook	(-/+) 2. Ethical principles (+/-) 3. Professional responsibility (++) 4. Professional attitude (-/+) 5. Contractual and legal obligations	Q3 2020	Research Office	Signed list of attendance by all researchers at Workshop. Increased ratings in HRS4R Verification survey. Researchers Handbook to include:	Complete	Given the nature of our Research Groups it was decided a better approach was to introduce this through Townhalls etc. to discuss and explain in detail each policy document in turn through face-to-face interaction periodically

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		(++) 6. Accountability (++) 7. Good practice in research (--) 21. Postdoctoral appointments (+/-) 22. Recognition of the profession (-/+) 28. Career development (+/-) 30. Access to career advice (+/-) 31. Intellectual Property Rights (-/+) 32. Co-authorship (++) 38. Continuing Professional Development			➢ IP Policy ➢ Ethical Principles Policy ➢ Co-Authorship Policy ➢ Career Progression Matrix ➢ Professional Title Structure ➢ Plagiarism Policy ➢ Grants - Negotiating and Working under Grants Guideline ➢ Presenting at Conferences - Guidance ➢ Vaccinations ➢ Recognising Publications achieved by our Researchers ➢ Guidelines for Hiring Post Docs		at Research Townhalls rather than in one big bang workshop approach. This allows employees more time to consider each policy individually and be absorbed perhaps more readily in this way. For new Researchers joining NIBRT our preference is to manage this at Induction to introduce the Handbook at a high level to new researchers. Highlight certain policies at that point. Further at our regular Research Townhalls present aspects of the Handbook as detailed above.
34	Create new Careers page with CPM, OTM-R Policy and any other info for prospective candidates	(++) 10. Non discrimination (++) 12. Recruitment (-/+) 13. Recruitment (Code) (-/+) 14. Selection (Code) (--) 15. Transparency (Code) (+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code)	Q3 2020	HR	Careers Page on NIBRT fully aligned to OTM-R checklist	Complete	Completed and continuously under review and updated and upgraded appropriately fully aligned to OTM-R.

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		(++) 17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code) (++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code) (--) 21. Postdoctoral appointments (-/+) 24. Working conditions (-/+) 28. Career development (-/+) 29. Value of mobility (++) 38. Continuing Professional Development					
35	Enhance our research desk neighbourhood (environment) to offer appropriate equipment, facilities and opportunities, for collaboration within NIBRT - we have a broad research population employed - important to facilitate shared learning and sharing of knowledge. A more superior work desk environment could support this. Action to create a 'Research Neighbourhood' in NIBRT that encourages researchers to gather, collaborate and learn from each other. Enhance	(++) 23. Research environment	Q3 2020	Facilities, HR, PI team	Renovation of our research desk/office neighbourhood/ environment (not Lab) to facilitate further informal collaboration, sharing of ideas, innovation, expertise etc. Sufficient budget provided for. Professional expertise in redesigning the desk neighbourhood to be utilised.	Complete	This work was completed in December 2022. An associated Hybrid Working Framework has been introduced to support researchers manage this area. The results of this change have been remarkably well received amongst the research community. It plays an important role in supporting early-stage researchers who may work for a PI that is employed under a Joint Appointment model with NIBRT meaning they are not in NIBRT that often. Working together with other researchers in a shared office space has enhanced opportunities for support and

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	our research desk neighbourhood (environment) to offer appropriate equipment, facilities and opportunities, for collaboration within NIBRT - we have a broad research population employed - important to facilitate shared learning and sharing of knowledge. A more superior work desk environment could support this. Action to create a 'Research Neighbourhood' in NIBRT that encourages researchers to gather, collaborate and learn from each other.						mentoring among research groups.
36	Expand permanent opportunities/contracts for Researchers. Currently we are limited in offering contract to match the grant funding-action to support and retain Researchers on a permanent basis - set in place budget/funding directly notwithstanding grant limitations to allow us to do that. Remodel the financing of research positions to allow for more permanent Research Scientists positions in NIBRT.	(++) 25. Stability and permanence of employment (++) 26. Funding and salaries	Q3 2023	HR	Review the number of permanent contracts offered to Researchers in NIBRT - benchmark the number of permanent Researchers -v- grant (temporary) employed Researchers year on year.	Complete	**Update 23rd Sept 2025:** The NIBRT finance team has significantly changed its management and reporting on research budgets to allow PIs retain excellent researchers on a permanent basis. At the time of writing, NIBRT employs 22% of its researchers on contracts of indefinite duration.
37	Complaints/appeals are handled by our Grievance	(++) 34. Complains/appeals	Q4	HR	Review the Grievance Procedure	Extended	**Update: Nov 2026:** while the original iteration of this

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	Procedure which is a published (HR) Policy - it is not Researcher specific but applies to all NIBRT employees. We will review the Grievance Procedure and the relevant sections of the Researcher Handbook with a view to ensuring researchers are very clear on how to raise a complaint - and how it will be dealt with once raised. We may reference the Grievance Procedure specifically in the Researcher Handbook, this will be considered as a remedy action.		2027		and Research Handbook - make a decision on any improvements or communication needed to ensure Researchers are aware of their route if travelling a complaint.		Action Item is complete (i.e. the Research Handbook does link to the Grievance Procedure, and all research staff have access to this) the most recent HRS4R survey highlights a nuance of this that requires more consideration. Researchers highlight the inherent power imbalance between a Supervisor and a PhD student which renders these traditional employment-based processes impractical for this working relationship. NIBRT are exploring other avenues to allow PhD students to have supervision concerns addressed without fear of repercussion.
38	Review how effective our performance review discussions during the year are for Researchers, review the recommendations of the Research Handbook vis a vis maintaining work records, lab notebooks, research outputs as an early-stage researcher	(++) 36. Relation with supervisors (-/+) Supervision and managerial duties				Complete	**Update 23rd Sept 2025:** Researchers confirm that regarding relationship with supervisors and capturing of managerial duties, the tailored PR form for Researchers as well as the Job Banding structure have improved this concern. The recent update of the Research Handbook also addressed gaps regarding lab notebooks etc.
39	Agree a set of flexible working arrangements specifically for NIBRT researchers as captured in our Project Led Employee Persona.	(++) Working conditions	Q3 2022	HR	Publication as part of our Flex Working Hybrid Policy specific flex arrangements to support Researchers.	Complete	**Update 23rd Sept 2025:** This action was successfully completed in November 2022. The NIBRT Hybrid Working Framework, sub-divided in to 4 personas, provides

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							clarity for researchers on flexible working, work from home supports, management of the research neighbourhood etc. This framework won two national awards and remains a cornerstone of how NIBRT supports employees.
40	In order to recognise the value of geographical mobility, complete the trial of our 'Working from a non-Irish jurisdiction' with a view to finalising and publishing the NIBRT Policy of the same name.	(-/+) (-/+) 29. Value of mobility	Q4 2022	HR	Publish the Policy post-trial.	Complete	**Update 23rd Sept 2025:** This objective is completed. NIBRT explored two supports, namely (1) Employing people permanently based from a European jurisdiction and (2) allowing employees to temporarily work from a non-Irish jurisdiction. The former will not be pursued by NIBRT again. The latter is not a permanent option in our Hybrid Working Framework and is routinely availed of by NIBRT employees.
41	Having partnered with a professional Recruitment Firm, NIBRT are now in a position to provide career advice and job search services to researchers leaving NIBRT at the end of their funding. This service should commence from Q3 2022.	(+/-) 30. Access to career advice	Q3 2022		Take up statistics/use by Researchers of this (new) service we will offer and fund on their behalf.	Complete	**Update 23rd Sept 2025:** This service is available for rarely utilised. It has typically being required when employees are leaving under a redundancy situation. Other employees have either been secured on a further NIBRT contract or resign following a successful job search.
42	As part of our Equality Diversity Inclusion Objectives 2022, NIBRT	(++) 10. Non discrimination	Q4 2022		Publication of our statistics as committed to	Complete	Gender pay gap report now published on the NIBRT Website

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	will commence publishing our organisation and research specific gender pay gap						
43	Introduce recurring agenda item to the monthly Research Bites meetings to provide for refresher training/discussion on various topics covered in the Research Handbook.	(-/+) 2. Ethical principles (-/+) 5. Contractual and legal obligations (+/-) 31. Intellectual Property Rights (-/+) 32. Co-authorship	Q1 2026 - 2029	Research Office	Improved scores on related topics in 2026 HRS4R survey	New	**Update: Nov 2026:** The Research Office reviews, updates and communicates research-related guidance and resources, including the Research Handbook and delivers regular awareness and refresher sessions through the monthly Research Bites forum to promote a strong culture of research integrity and responsible research conduct.
44	Through the NIBRT Safe Labs initiative, improve documentation, training and equipment maintenance support to Lab Points of Contacts to implement consistent safety standards and practices across all NIBRT labs.	(++) 7. Good practice in research	Q2 2027	H&S	All action items identified in the 2025 H&S Internal Report closed	New	**Update: Nov 2026:** There has been a continued focus on Health and Safety (H&S) matters across the organisation in 2026. This includes the establishment of the H&S Steering Committee (Sept 2024) which meets on a monthly basis to review aspects of H&S. One of the areas the committee has focused on Risk Assessments, particularly in labs. To supplement internal knowledge, NIBRT has also secured an external safety consultant for expert advice and guidance in this area. 1. Increase need for Risk assessments 2. Addition

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							of external consultant into the steering committee and that helps with an external Guidance. 3. Director of Technology, Digital and Data was introduced to the team as the custodian of technology and data expertise.
45	Describe, communicate and reiterate at regular intervals and through multiple channels the options and supports available to researchers, and particularly PhD students, who are experiencing challenges with their NIBRT supervisor.	(++) 34. Complaints/ appeals (++) 36. Relation with supervisors	Q1 2026	HR, Research Office	Improved scores in 2026 HRS4R survey	New	**Update: Nov 2026:** Since the previous review, HR has further strengthened support for PhD students through regular information and engagement sessions, providing dedicated opportunities to discuss researcher supports, career development and the wider PhD experience. In addition, dedicated Microsoft Teams channels have been established to bring PhD students together as a connected community, promoting peer networking, knowledge sharing, collaboration and access to information and support across NIBRT. These initiatives have enhanced communication, visibility of supports and the overall researcher experience.
46	Update the Performance Review form for researchers to include a section specifically	(-/+) 28. Career development (+/-) 30. Access to career advice	Q1 2027	HR	Improved scores in 2026 HRS4R survey. Completed forms returned to HR from	New	**Update: Nov 2026:** The original action was implemented through the introduction of a

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	related to long term career discussions that prompts PIs to not just focus on annual upskilling but assisting with career planning.	(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development (+/-) 39. Access to research training and continuous development			researchers		dedicated Performance Review form for researchers, which included a specific section on long-term career development discussions between researchers and PI's encouraging a focus beyond annual training and skills development. Since then, the process has been further enhanced through the implementation of the paperless Sage HRIS platform. Performance Reviews are now completed digitally, and a dedicated section is included within the system to record career development conversations between researchers and PIs, ensuring that long-term career planning and progression are discussed and documented as part of the annual review process.
47	Add a task to Sage HR that sends reminders to PIs to have targeted career conversations with researchers who are on fixed term contracts 6 months before their contract end date	(-/+) 28. Career development (+/-) 30. Access to career advice (++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	Q2 2027	HR	Tasks being completed on Sage HR	New	**Update: Nov 2026** : Automated reminders/tasks are embedded within the Sage HR system to support annual and mid-year review processes and prompt managers and PI's to engage in career planning discussions with their researchers. Together,

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							these HR communications, HRIS reminders help ensure that career development remains an ongoing and visible priority across the research community. In addition, researchers approaching the end of their contracts are proactively supported by the HR team through engagement with our external recruitment partner. This includes CV screening and review, interview preparation, and guidance on current job market trends to support career transition and future employment opportunities. Proactively supported by the HR team through engagement with our external recruitment partner. This
48	Complete and publish NIBRT's Gender Pay Gap report internally and externally.	(++) 27. Gender balance	Q4 2026	HR	Report available	New	**Update: Nov 2026:** NIBRT gender pay report 2025 is published on the website. 2026 Report will be published in November 2026 in line with legislative requirements.
49	Formal mentoring framework and supervisor capability programme	(+/+) 28. Career development (++) 38. Continuing Professional Development (+/+) 39. Access to research training and continuous development	Q2 2027 – Q1 2029	HR, Research Office, Lead Researchers	- Annual mentoring participation and satisfaction levels measured and reported each year. - A percentage of PIs and senior (lead) researchers trained.	New	

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					- Improved survey results relating to supervision, mentoring and career development support.		
50	Inclusive Research Culture and EDI Programme	(++) 10. Non discrimination (++) 27. Gender balance (++) 23. Research environment	Q1 2028	HR, SLT, Research Office.	- Inclusion and belonging scores in the employee and HRS4R surveys. - Participation in EDI activities will be monitored annually.	New	**Update: Nov 2026 :** Continue to strengthen an inclusive research culture through engagement with national initiatives, including active participation by the Research Office in the All-Island Research Culture Network (AIRCN). This participation supports alignment with emerging research culture standards, researcher development, inclusion, and institutional best practice across Ireland and the UK.
51	Researcher Voice Forum	(++) 23. Research environment (+/+) 24. Working conditions	Q1 2027 – Q1 2029	HR with the RIC Manager, CSO, Research Office and the HRS4R Steering Committee	- Annual forum held with feedback documented and reviewed by the HRS4R Steering Committee. - Number of researchers attending and submitting topics, with representation across career stages, including PhD candidates. - Feedback report ("You said, we did")	New	

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					published internally.		
52	Formalise career development in alignment with Research Comp: European Research Competence Framework	(+/+) 28. Career development	Q4 2028-Q1 2029	HR, Research Office, Senior Leadership Team.	- Updated career framework approved and communicated. - Revised role descriptors published. - Career progression guidance available to researchers and managers. - Positive feedback on career clarity in researcher surveys.	New	
53	Review and strengthen Steering Committee representation and clarify member roles	(++) 23. Research environment (+/+) 40. Supervision and managerial duties	Q2 2027	HR, Research Office, HRS4R Steering Committee	- Steering Committee membership reviewed and documented. - Representation from researchers across job bands and career stages achieved. - Roles, responsibilities and terms of reference communicated to members.	New	

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Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles (Initial Phase) –

NIBRT do not currently have an Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Policy in place. While we have elements of it, there is no cohesive policy that clearly outlines recruitment standards or procedures that are in keeping with this principle.

In simple terms, NIBRT are starting from scratch on this. Therefore, the OTM-R Toolkit will be invaluable to reviewing existing policies and practices with a view to designing and implementing the Policy across the organisation. The OTM-R Checklist as well as the details of the Recruitment Code will be used to guide the review work on this. Roll out will be managed by HR using our standard methodology:

1. Create the Policy in consultation with stakeholders that upholds the necessary standards
2. Secure approval from the SMT to proceed
3. Raise awareness of our new policy e.g. through Town Hall meetings, company newsletters, publication on our website etc.
4. Educate and support Hiring Managers and Interview Panellists on implementing this new procedure
5. Monitor compliance and/or success of implementation on a regular basis through HR

Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles (Internal Review for Interim Assessment)

On 23rd July 2020 we published our OTMR Recruitment and Selection Policy, this Policy was created in consultation with stakeholders. We received approval from SMT and published the newly created Policy on our internal Policy repository and uploaded it to our website for review by all publicly.

We have raised awareness continuously at every opportunity primarily during interview processes when we are briefing the interview panel on the process and procedures to be followed - OTMR is rigorously adhered to. It supports us in all of our advertising right through to interview procedures, the strict methodology is very useful in ensuring clear and transparent selection process is used in all cases.

Of note at this time (May 2022) is that NIBRT is at the very final stages of appointing/outsourcing to an External Company to handle all of our Recruitment activity - the OTMR methodology will be followed, and we plan to take the Provider fully through the requirements and to audit adherence periodically.

Also, therefore this is an opportune time for us to review fully the OTMR policy now 2 years in existence and to make relevant changes to the Policy - this is a commitment for 2022 - the revised Policy will then be approved internally and publicly uploaded to our website to replace the initially created Policy which has served us very well. We have reviewed our Recruitment activity -v- OTMR checklist and it is very favourable with some minor improvement to be made. We will however need to ensure our newly appointed Recruitment Partner Fastnet the Talent Group are fully in compliance with OTMR and during our embedding of Fastnet, the OTMR methodology will feature heavily.

Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles (internal review for award renewal)

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NIBRT is in full compliance with our OTMR Policy and the associated Principles.

Since Interim Review, NIBRT have appointed a Recruitment Partner organisation, Fastnet, who administer our recruitment campaigns in strict compliance with our policy. The recruitment partner tender needs to be reviewed every three years and at the time of writing, it was affirming to see that many of the tenders submitted for NIBRT review referenced the requirement to and their experience of operating under the OTMR principles.

While NIBRT is in full compliance and we do not have designated Action Items assigned to this thematic area at this time, this does not mean that it is less of a priority for the institute. On the contrary, we are constantly making improvements to our documentation (e.g. recently published a Guidance document for managers to ensure recruitment standards are maintained), our website (you will note a page dedicated to the recruitment process, inclusive processes and accommodations available), our LinkedIn presence (see #LifeatNIBRT for some examples).

Ideally, the extended version of the reviewed OTM-R policy and actions should be published on your organisation's website.

Please provide the web link to the OTM-R dedicated webpage(s) if it is different than the one where the reviewed HR Strategy is located.

URL: HR Strategy for Researchers - National Institute for Bioprocessing Research

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3. Implementation

General overview of the expected overall implementation process of the action plan:

Using standard best practice project management methodology, NIBRT will run the implementation of agreed actions through a project team with the necessary oversight and approval committees in place. In practical terms, this means that the Action Plan, as submitted to the HRS4R portal, was and will be converted to an internal project plan with actions and deadlines assigned to responsible stakeholders. Oversight was and remains the responsibility of HR with crucial members of the research community consulted throughout. We plan to continue to work in a consultative manner, involving all relevant stakeholders (directly and/or indirectly) at all stages of implementation. The SLT are informed of HRS4R progress and the important role it plays in our overall People Strategy. The HRS4R Steering Committee play both an oversight and analysis role. They also often act as representatives of the wider research community view for those areas they work in.

Transparency will continue to underpin our project methodology. Being transparent on project progress and substance has served to keep people engaged with the project and to enhance the quality of the outputs.

Communication is a key contributor to our success. We use multiple channels to keep people informed (e.g. Town Hall meetings, Research Bites meetings, SLT meetings, Microsoft Teams channels, HR SharePoint Page).

Make sure you also cover all the aspects highlighted in the checklist below, which you will need to describe in detail:

Note: Click on each question of the checklist to open the editor.

How have you prepared the internal review?
Preparation for Award Renewal review involved the following steps: 1. An updated HRS4R Steering Committee (HSC) were established, chaired by the HR Director and supported by the Chief Scientific Officer. This was achieved by the HR Director making a presentation to the full research community at a Research Bites meeting asking for volunteers. 2. The first piece of work undertaken by the updated HSC was to address all of the feedback received in the Interim Review Consensus Report. This included creating a clearly accessible location on our website that details who the HSC are, the journey NIBRT has taken with HRS4R to date and uploading documentation requested by the reviewers to the NIBRT website. 3. The first piece of work Once satisfied that the feedback was fully addressed, the next piece of work undertaken was to check and review the status of all the current action items outlined in the Action Plan 2022. The HSC were pleased to confirm that the majority of action items had been completed. 4. The next step the HSC undertook was to conduct a HRS4R survey amongst the research community to ascertain their views on NIBRT's performance against the 40 principles. It was agreed by the HSC that it was important to get new data on this as NIBRT has expanded significantly since 2022 with a lot of new starters joining the various teams. Their views were important to planning any new action items. We were pleased with a 50% response rate on this survey. 5. The HR Director then compiled the results and compared them off the 40 principles. A HSC meeting was convened to discuss the feedback received against each principle to agree on a rating of NIBRT's current performance against the standards prescribed. 6. A subsequent HSC meeting was convenced inviting additional stakeholders from the Research Office to discuss and agree appropriate actions to support the closing of the gaps identified by the research community. This allowed the team to assign responsibility and timelines for completion to the appropriate members of the NIBRT team. 7. The HR Director undertook the administration of compiling the summary under each thematic area and uploading these and all of the action items to the Euraxess portal. The printable version of the completed submission was sent to the HSC for review before submission. 8. The HR Director, on behalf of the HSC, presented a summary of NIBRT's status in the HRS4R accreditation process and findings from the HRS4R survey to the NIBRT Senior Leadership Team.

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How have you involved the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?

The NIBRT research community have been central to the implementation of the NIBRT HR Strategy.

- All decisions on appropriate actions for NIBRT were a direct result of the feedback received through the HRS4R survey completed by the research community
- Communication on the activities and actions taken to implement our HR Strategy were distributed through multiple channels including Town Hall meetings, HR SharePoint page but most importantly at our monthly Research Bites meeting
- The HR strategy was designed through the HSC made up of a representative group of researchers
- The Research Handbook, which serves to address many of the gaps identified, was inputted to by the research community
- Research staff are encouraged to join cross departmental Working Groups that are tasked with implementing various aspects of the HR strategy

Do you have an implementation committee and/or steering group regularly overseeing progress?

Project Managers:

Elaine O'Farrelly, HR Manager – Supported the governance and administration of HRS4R activities through project coordination, maintenance of action plan documentation and supporting evidence, organisation of Steering Committee meetings and researcher consultation activities, and monitoring of action progress and reporting requirements.

Jaspreet Kaur, HR Administrator – Coordinated the implementation of the HRS4R Action Plan, monitored progress against agreed actions and timelines, coordinated reporting and evidence-gathering activities, facilitated engagement across stakeholder groups, and supported the Steering Committee in reviewing progress and setting implementation priorities.

Executive Sponsor:

- **Fiona Killard-Lynch, CSO and Director of Research & Innovation (R4 Researcher)** – Served as Executive Sponsor, providing strategic oversight of HRS4R implementation, ensuring alignment with NIBRT's research and innovation strategy, championing the HR Excellence in Research Award at senior leadership level, and supporting decision-making and resource allocation to enable successful delivery of the Action Plan.

Members:

- **Carragh Tisdall, Research Officer (R3 Representative)** – Represented researcher interests, contributed to policy development and implementation activities, provided insight on researcher development needs, and supported the review and implementation of actions relating to researcher support and career development.
- **Julia Serna, Senior Research Scientist (R3 Representative)** – Represented experienced researchers, contributed senior researcher perspectives to discussions and decision-making, supported the evaluation of research practices, and contributed to the development and implementation of initiatives promoting research excellence and career development.
- **Corentin Beaumal, Research Scientist (R2 Representative)** – Represented the views and experiences of mid-career researchers, contributed to researcher consultation activities, supported action planning and implementation discussions, and provided feedback on policies and practices impacting the researcher experience.
- **Palesa Caroline Mphaka, PhD Student (R1 Representative)** – Represented early-stage researchers and PhD students, providing feedback on the doctoral researcher experience, researcher development needs, training opportunities and implementation of actions affecting researchers at the beginning of their careers.
- **Marie Bishop, PhD Student (R1 Representative)** – Represented early-stage researchers, contributed feedback on researcher support mechanisms, policies and development opportunities, and ensured the

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views and experiences of PhD researchers informed Steering Committee discussions and implementation activities.

- **Laura Breen, Research Impact and Communications Manager (R4 Representative)** – Supported stakeholder engagement and communications, promoted awareness of HRS4R activities and achievements, facilitated dissemination of progress and outcomes, and contributed to enhancing the visibility of the HR Excellence in Research Award across the organisation and externally.

The HRS4R Steering Committee provides oversight of the implementation of the Action Plan and includes representatives from researcher career stages R1-R4, Human Resources, Research Management and Senior Leadership. The Committee reviews progress against actions and indicators, considers researcher feedback obtained through surveys, Research Bites and other consultation mechanisms, and makes recommendations to support continuous improvement of the researcher experience. Meetings are held on a bi-weekly basis to review progress against the Action Plan, monitor implementation, consider researcher feedback and agree priorities. Progress is reported regularly to the Executive Sponsor. Recommendations arising from Steering Committee discussions are reviewed by the Executive Sponsor and, where appropriate, escalated to the Senior Leadership Team for approval and implementation.

Is there any alignment of organisational policies with the hRS4R? For example, is the HRS4R recognised in the organisation's research strategy, overarching HR policy.

HRS4R accreditation is an integral part of the overall People Strategy in NIBRT. However, as NIBRT is both a research and training institute, with many of the principles listed in the Charter and Code relevant only for our research community, our overall People Strategy encompasses other priorities too.
Organisational policies are aligned with HRS4R principles particularly in relation to recruitment. The logo is prominently displayed on our website and all recruitment documentation.

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How has your organisation ensured that the proposed actions would be also implemented?
Due to the diligence of the Steering Committee and the buy in and support from a very senior level - we have ensured no barrier exists in implementing actions. We enjoyed the support of the Chief Scientific Officer of NIBRT as the sponsor of the project work and advocate for the value of the accreditation with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). By extension, research are heavily represented at our SLT with the CSO, Director Principal Investigator and the Associate Director of Research all members. Finally, the NIBRT CEO and Board of Directors are supporters of NIBRT's continuing accreditation which provides focus and attention on the work required to ensure gaps are closed. HR Objectives are set annually and reviewed throughout the following year - each year, year on year actions associated with HRS4R action items has been a key objective assigned to either the most Senior HR team member i.e. HR Director or one of her direct reports. This project has been a key deliverable and objective and remains so.

How are you monitoring progress (timeline)?
This HR Manager and HR Administrator have responsibility as Project Managers of the HRS4R Steering Committee for monitoring progress and following up on action items.

How will you measure progress (indicators) in view of the next assessment?
The indications are written in clear unambiguous language - it is certain what must be achieved and by when. We will review responsibilities and likely at project team level reassign responsibilities and seek support for certain activity from the wider research community. We will also use Staff Survey and other pulse surveys during the period to monitor understanding, progress and achievements.

How do you expect to prepare for the external review?
We have reviewed all of our documentation and the template to be used in the external review has been interrogated to ensure we are prepared for each specific requirement. We will bring a presentation to our Townhall meeting of all staff after this submission is made. We will bring all staff through our current state of progress in holding the HRS4R accreditation and highlight the areas we will focus on going forward. A more localised version of this will be discussed with our research community in our Research Bites meeting. We will issue further communications and likely surveys to research staff - this will help us understand in what areas our Research staff may need more support to understand how we are embedding HRS4R in all that we do in relation to our HR strategy for researchers.

How do you Additional remarks/comments about the proposed implementation process
The HRS4R Steering Committee have worked diligently to meet all requirements outlined in the guidance documentation available. We sincerely hope we have met all expectations on behalf of NIBRT. We very much look forward to receiving your feedback and welcoming reviewers to NIBRT in Dublin in the not-too-distant future.

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Strategic Narrative for the Action Plan 2026-2029
The focus of this action plan is on strengthening researcher career development, enhancing supervision and mentoring practices, fostering an inclusive and supportive research culture, and ensuring that researchers have meaningful opportunities to contribute to organisational decision-making. This will support continued alignment with the next phase of the European Charter for Researchers while reinforcing NIBRT's position as a leading industry-academic research environment. As NIBRT enters the next phase of its HR Excellence in Research journey, many of the commitments underpinning the Charter remain embedded within NIBRT's policies, practices and organisational culture. NIBRT is already strongly aligned with the principles through its ongoing investment in researcher support, career development, equality, diversity and inclusion, wellbeing, training, mentoring, recruitment practices and research culture. The focus of the next cycle is therefore on strengthening and embedding existing good practice while addressing areas identified through researcher feedback and organisational review. Over the coming years, particular emphasis will be placed on building supervisory capability, expanding mentoring opportunities, promoting an inclusive and equitable research environment, amplifying the researcher voice through structured engagement mechanisms, and supporting researchers to navigate diverse and sustainable career pathways. NIBRT will also continue to strengthen its ability to measure researcher experience and evaluate the impact of initiatives implemented through the HR Excellence in Research framework. By 2029, NIBRT aims to further embed the principles across organisational culture, researcher experience and strategic decision-making, demonstrating clear evidence of continuous improvement and a mature, researcher-centred environment.

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