HR Strategy Action Plan 2022-2025

ACTION 1   Recruitment and selection

ACTION 1	Recruitment and selection
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Departement
TIMING	Development of an on-site training on interviewing skills 2022 Q3 Update employer branding 2022 Q4 – 2023 Q3 Improve R&S of Contract Academic Staff 2023 Q2 Survey to evaluate candidate experience and OTM-R 2024 Description of the 'to be' situation for the R&S back-office 2025
GAP Principles	The Code of Conduct for the recruitment of Researchers (recruitment, selection, transparency, judging merit, variations in the chronological order of CV's, recognition of mobility experience, recognition of qualifications, seniority, postdoctoral appointments)

Employer branding
Our external website is available in English and Dutch. On our jobsite we provide information about working at the University of Antwerp. We still want to improve our employer branding by: investing in more (visual) information for international candidates and other underrepresented group (story telling), sharing video testimonials of employees, updating the job site with even more information for international candidates and information about our efforts for a more inclusive organisation, sharing better information about our job offer, national system and training opportunities and career development

Contract Academic Staff (BAP)
Although we have well-documented processes for recruiting tenured academic staff, there is still room for improvement in the recruitment and selection process of contract research staff (BAP). We need to make sure that the 'best practices' (as shared in our online R&S training) are adapted in these procedures and further action is taken to judge merit in these R&S procedures. The following action are needed:
- Design the recruitment and selection process for each function category within BAP
- Invest in the communication and feedback flow with candidates
- Stress the importance of the use of our vacancy templates and e-recruitment tool
- Further implement our job application appendix for contract academic staff
- Adapt the multiple eyes- principle in each step of the selection procedure
- Introduce other selection instruments than only an interview

Gender & diversity
We have an updated job matrix which includes a wide range of recruitment channels. Although the use of the job matrix is well spread in the organization, we want to draw attention to the use of (informal) networks to recruit candidates from underrepresented groups (for example for senior academic staff women). They will still have to apply through our candidate gateway (the formal way). In addition to enlarging the candidate pool from underrepresented groups, we want to implement positive action measures in other phases of the recruitment and selection procedure.

Training for selection committees (2022 Q3)
The online training for selection committees is in place and gives an overview of the best practices for each step of the recruitment and selection process and its (implicit) bias pitfalls. The following actions are still necessary:
- Update and evaluate the communication plan of the online training
- Monitor the number of participants of the online training

	- Evaluate the progress in the field, whether the quality of the recruitment and selection process has improved - Develop an on-site training on interviewing skills - Monitor the number of participants of the online training *Survey to evaluate candidate experience (2024)* In order to monitor the candidate experience and the quality of our recruitment and selection processes, we strive to build a questionnaire around the topics of the OTM-R checklist. The feedback can be used to evaluate our training, toolbox and serve as an extra incentive to make sure everyone participates in the R&S training. *Back- office* We are continuing to invest in our digital recruitment process. The back-office is not yet automated. First, we need to invest in a description of the 'to be' situation and search for a 'win-win' situation for the hiring entity balancing the additional administration requirements out with other advantages.

Indicators	▪ Monitoring the share of internal and external candidates
	▪ Monitoring the share of international candidates, the gender balance and other diversity characteristics
	▪ Updated job site with even more information for international candidates and other underrepresented groups and other underrepresented groups, sharing better information about our job offer, national system, efforts for a more inclusive organisation and training opportunities and career development
	▪ Optimalisation of our employer branding (investing in more visual information- storytelling, video testimonials)
	▪ Evaluate communication plan to increase the use of our Recruitment & Selection toolbox and to increase the number of participants in the training
	▪ Training for selection committees focusing on competence-based interviewing (in addition to the existent online R&S training)
	▪ Continuously update the R&S toolbox: publication of guidelines on the appointment and composition of selection committees on Pintra, a guide to introduce positive action measures in recruitment and selection procedure, an extensive interview script is accessible on Pintra,... Number of participants in the R&S training offer
	▪ Rolling- out of a survey to evaluate the candidate experience
	▪ The setup of automated reports of recruitment data in PowerBI
	  ○ Pre-analysis of the needs for the back-office process with important stakeholders (ICT, faculties,…)
	  ○ Setup of a regular proactive survey toward applicants (candidate experience)
	  ○ Monitor the complaints regarding selection procedures and processes

ACTION 2   Skills Development

ACTION 2	Skills development
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Department, Research, Innovation & Valorisation Antwerp, Antwerp Doctoral School
TIMING	One stop shop 2024 Available for everyone 2023 Q3 Up to date training offer ongoing
GAP Principles	Access to research training and continuous development, Research environment, Access to career advice, Supervision, Teaching'

One stop shop
Nowadays target groups need to consult various platforms to get an overview of the complete UAntwerp training & development offer to which various departments contribute. The information is fragmented and available at different locations. There is no 'one stop shop'. We want to move towards an integrated location where all information about the training and development offer can be found. In the long term, this platform is ideally supported by an integrated administration system (e.g., for subscriptions, co-ordination, planning, administration, …).

Available for everyone
Most of our employees have access to our training offers in Peopsoft Selfservice, the HR administration system, but there are some exceptions for particular staff categories for reasons that are hard to make a case for today. Postdocs can subscribe through a non-automatic workflow. Other categories of staff can only participate on an ad hoc basis. The University of Antwerp wants to invest in the growth and development of its employees regardless of their type of contract or the amount of time they spend at the university. All our employees are ambassadors: we do not aim for lifelong employment -instead we invest in lifelong employability. If we want to live up to that promise, we need to open our training and development offer for everyone. First, the learning module of our HR registration system PeopleSoft needs to cover all categories of staff - except PhD's whose single point of contact and dedicated training provision is the Antwerp Doctoral School. Second we need to broaden and scale up our training courses. This is linked with the action about wellbeing. By doing so we work on psychosocial wellbeing and the prevention of absence due to stress and burn-out.

Although learning and developing is important in our organization, the academic staff struggle with taking time for personal development. The high workload, the pressure of the (international) academic system, the many responsibilities, … are dealbreakers. While some would argue that certain training courses should be made compulsory, other disagree. For now, the focus is on providing training opportunities that best meet the needs of our target groups and that are high-quality, attractive and flexible to plan.

In addition to investing in their own personal development, supervisors could invest more in the development of their predoc and postdoc researchers by having conversations on a regular basis about personal and career development (not only for the current appointment, but also towards next opportunities inside and outside academia) linking it with the existing training offer. In addition, we will explore the possibilities to involve a (non-academic) mentor for 'personal and career development'.

Up to date
Broadening of training offers in accordance with the current needs and trends stays important, the needs of the target groups are quickly evolving along with the organization (culture). Special attention needs to be paid to entrepreneurship and diversity and inclusiveness.

Antwerp University Action Plan 2022-2025

Indicators	- A webpage with a complete overview of the training offer provided by all departments - Give postdocs (priority) as well as all other categories of staff (except PhD's) direct access to the Peoplesoft Selfservice - Broadening of training offer - Provide more training for every category of staff - Include more training about entrepreneurship - Update and broaden the courses about diversity and inclusiveness. - Introduce new topics linked to current needs and trends

ACTION 3 Career Development

ACTION 3	Career Development
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Department (Talent Center), Antwerp Doctoral School
TIMING	Vision on employability 2024 Q2 Raise awareness on our career development offer (communication) 2023 Q1 Invest in employability in an earlier stage of the career 2022 Q3 Reaching more researchers 2024 Q1 Collaboration with external stakeholders ongoing
GAP Principles	Career Development, Access to career advise

Vision on employability
As part of its vision and mission as an employer, the university wants to invest in sustainable employability for all employees, including those with only temporary appointments at the university. Unfortunately, not all supervisors are convinced of the importance of career development initiatives, because they focus on research related tasks. The university needs to invest in a broadly accepted, consistent view on (career) development (e.g. employability) and making sure that every researcher can invest in (career) development initiatives.

Raise awareness on our career development offer (communication)
We need to better communicate our career development offer in order to have a more diverse representation of researchers participating in our career related activities. A lot of information is available on the internal and external website but we need to refresh and reassess the information flow by using a more user-centered approach. For this purpose, branding towards the different target groups (senior academic staff, PhD's, postdocs, faculties) is important.

Invest in employability in an earlier stage of the career
Although there is a custom-made training and coaching offer on career development for PhD and postdocs (Antwerp Doctoral School and Talent Center), some PhD's/ postdocs only start thinking about their career development near the end of their appointment. Thus, researchers need to invest in career development in an earlier stage of their career. The Talent Center is planning to bring its offers closer to the target user by providing a menu of different (career) workshops for faculties to choose at least one workshop a year. If researchers are better informed about their career options and the reflection on employability is triggered, they are more likely to participate and be in the driver seat for their career. Also, the faculty staff need to be better informed about the possibilities through the faculty board and other initiatives. The postdoc researchers are a diverse group with different profiles and backgrounds, in their employee journey there are only a few touchpoints. By introducing a postdoc day they can exchange experience and invest in (career) development. Also a more integrated view is needed concerning the interrelatedness of skills and career development linked with for instance goal setting interviews or progress monitoring. So researchers have a more structured approach on working on their personal development spread over several years in their research career (linked with our vision on employability).

Reaching more researchers
For the moment we are experimenting with the online learning platform MyCareerCompanion. If the pilot is positively evaluated, we can use the platform to enlarge and enrich our current career development offer considering opportunities to reach more researchers at once. For the moment we focus mainly on individual career coaching trajectories where the platform can be used to facilitate prework and homework. In the future the Talent Center will organise collective session and the platform can be a support tool.

Collaboration with external stakeholders

Broadening the view of our researchers on careers is not only based on career coaching. The University of Antwerp strongly believes in collaboration with other stakeholders: employers' associations, the Flemish employment service of Flanders (VDAB), the association of Flemish universities (VLIR),… to take joint initiatives. Inspiring researchers to appreciate international careers, entrepreneurship, internships, is high on the agenda.

Indicators	- A vision text on employability - Every researcher participates in at least one (career) development activity a year - The external Talent Center website is up-to-date and promoted via different channels (e.g. Pintra news, screens, etc.) - The information about the Talent Center can be more easily found on the internal website (from a user's point of view) - Targeted communication about Talent Center (e.g., senior academic staff, ATP) - Scale-up of (career development) workshops on demand for all faculties: a "menu" of different workshops for the faculties. - Each faculty organizes at least one workshop a year - The organisation of collective career development workshops to reach more researchers at once - Organisation of a postdoc day with a focus on career development - An elaborate evaluation of the currently used career platform 'mycareercompanion' - In case of a good evaluation: further implementation of 'mycareercompanion' … In case of an unfavorable evaluation, scouting for other providors - Organisation of a career session on entrepreneurship - A training on international careers is organised, given by an external expert

ACTION 4   Leadership

ACTION 2	Leadership
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Department & Antwerp Doctoral School (training for supervisors)
TIMING	Leadership vision 2022Q4 - ongoing A training course for each level of supervision 2023 Q4 – 2025Q4 Learning formulas (ongoing)
GAP Principles	'Supervision'

Leadership vision
The University of Antwerp developed a vision on leadership (or in a broader sense on "working together"). This vision should be translated to a low-threshold accessible text. Next, we need to disseminate this vision within the university. In the end every line manager in the university should be familiar with this vision on leadership.

A training course for each level of supervision
We strive to have training in place for each level of management.
- It starts by evaluating and updating the training for PhD supervisors (promotorenopleiding).
- An additional more elaborate training for starting (tenure track) ZAP is needed, in order to make them familiar with every aspect of their role. A lot of information is available, but we need to bring this together in a learning network to exchange (unwritten) tips and tricks and share experiences not only from a HR point of view but also combined with research and services-related topics.
- Next, we need to develop a training about leading a small research group and leading a large research group.
- The (vice-)deans are selected for a period of three years. After each election, the training for (vice)deans will be organized. In the future we wish to include the faculty directors because they represent the day-to-day leadership continuity (as they are not elected but appointed permanently).
- An in-dept training on inclusive leadership skills will be offered (linked with an initiative of the VLIR, the association of Flemish universities). This is pilot in order to explore possibilities to implement inclusive leadership (training) within the university on a structural basis.

Learning formulas
Searching for the perfect formula to reach as many supervisors, we strive to offer a learning mix: longer training course (to learn the basics) and learning networks (short intervision session with peers), workshops to inspire, … We continue to search for ideal moments in the academic year to offer courses and mainstream elements of inclusive leadership in the leadership training.

On an organizational level there is an on-going dialogue about making certain (leadership) training obligatory.

Indicators	- Dissemination of the vision on leadership - Develop a low threshold accessible text - Dissemination plan for the leadership vision - Leadership training offer for each level of supervision - Evaluate and update training for supervisors (promotorenopleiding) – How to coach PhD's - Learning network for starting (tenure track) ZAP - Develop a training 'how to lead a small research group'

Antwerp University Action Plan 2022-2025

	- Develop a training 'how to lead a large research' group/department Q2024 - Organize training for deans and include the faculty directors

ACTION 5   Well-being

ACTION	Wellbeing
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Department, Health and Safety Department, Antwerp Doctoral School
TIMING	Clear, low threshold point of contact 2022 and continuous Clear communication in particular toward PhD researchers 2023 Addressing the challenge of (preventing) long-term sickness and subsequent re-integration 2022 and continuous Follow up of the job satisfaction study 2022 Q3
GAP Principles	Training & development, Relation with supervisor, Supervision and managerial duties, Continuing professional development, Access to research training, Working conditions and social security, Recognition of profession, Working conditions, Stability of employment, Gender balance, Career development, Career advice, complaints/appeals Ethical & professional aspects, Ethical principles, Professional attitude, Non-discrimination, Evaluation & appraisal

Clear, low-threshold points of contact
In order to guarantee that every staff member knows who to turn to for support in the event of a conflict or problem of a psychosocial nature, we make a continuous effort to draw attention to the contact points in the organization: clearly visible on the website, through a pamphlet campaign, continuously mentioning activities related to psychosocial wellbeing and support in newsletters and consultative bodies, through testimonials (everything also available in English) with extra attention to specific thresholds some may experience (linked with our aim for a more inclusive organisation).

Clear flow for wellbeing issues in particular towards PhD researchers
PhD researchers are always enrolled as student and are often also staff member and therefore linked to various regulations. In order to avoid confusion and create clarity about the right information and contact points for each problem, we communicate with a specific focus to this group, distinguishing between problems and support related to the doctoral training program (PhD student) on the one hand, and their responsibilities regarding research or teaching (as a staff member) on the other hand. We extend this specific focus in communication with regard to contact points for questions and problems related to psychosocial wellbeing.

Addressing the challenge of (preventing) long-term absence and subsequent re-integration
The prevention and follow-up of long-term absence due to illness (including burnout) is a priority action in the monitoring of well-being for academic staff. A policy text and a procedural text have been endorsed in which the preventive and curative approach is described step by step, with an explanation of preventive measures, accessible information and designated contact points, a clear division of roles for the HR department, Health and Safety department, as well as for direct supervisors (line managers) and the external wellbeing partner. The process of reintegration after long-term illness is also part of the vision to protect and support academic staff against drop-out by providing information, preventive measures, and collective (training) and individual support (coaching). This information needs to be disseminated and implemented in day-to-day processes.

Follow-up of the job satisfaction study
Results of the recent job satisfaction survey show a more diffuse picture of actions to be taken. These actions will be focused around three areas: (1) process simplification, (2) feedback culture and (3) professional behavior. For the first time, we have also gathered information about

discrimination and disability in the organisation. Specific actions towards those target groups will be put in place. For the moment, attention is drawn to transgressive behavior in academia in the (Belgian) media. Accordingly, the University of Antwerp will upscale its investments in prevention, bystander training and mediation.

Indicators	- Clear communication on vision, approach and contact points for psychosocial wellbeing for all staff - Clear communication towards PhD researchers about contact points (available in English and accessible for all PhD researchers) - Bringing the policy text and procedural text about long-term absence and re-integration 'to live': communication plan and training of staff - Follow-up to wellbeing questionnaire with actions focused around (1) process simplification, (2) feedback culture and (3) professional behavior. - Addressing transgressive behavior and discrimination through prevention, bystander training and mediation. - Focus on specific need of certain groups related to diversity and inclusion (cf. job satisfaction study 2021) diversity and inclusion

Antwerp University Action Plan 2022-2025

ACTION 6   Gender and diversity

ACTION 6	Gender & diversity
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	Diversity and equal opportunity team, HR Department
TIMING	2022 - 2025
GAP Principles	Gender balance, Non-discrimination, Ethical principles, Continuing professional development, Access to research training & continuous development, Complaints/appeals, Participation in decision-making bodies, Research environment, Working conditions, Value of mobility

Since 2008, the University of Antwerp has been actively fulfilling its social responsibility commitment by creating a more inclusive organization with equal opportunities for all its students and staff. The more recent Diversity Action Plan (DAP) for staff (2021) indicates the direction in which UAntwerp plans to take its diversity actions for staff. This includes academic staff and actions directly or indirectly addressing gender inequality. The DAP for Staff explicitly addresses six diversity topics: Disability, Sexual orientation, Ideology, Ethnic-cultural diversity, Gender identity (M/F/X) and Internationalization. These topics are not limitative and strongly interconnected. As an institution we approach challenges through inclusive actions when possible, and specific targeted actions whenever necessary.

The Diversity Action Plan of the University of Antwerp is covering four strategic objectives:
- The University of Antwerp develops a diversity culture and creates a positive working atmosphere and organisational structure in which diversity contributes to quality and innovation within our institution.
- The University of Antwerp further develops its inclusive recruitment policy in which everyone's talents are appreciated.
- The University of Antwerp applies an inclusive career development policy aiming at greater diversity.
- The University of Antwerp invests in qualitative and quantitative monitoring in order to stimulate a diverse organisation.

Activity 1: Fully integrating the "Gender Equality Plan", which was updated to meet the criteria for Horizon Europe funding, into the DAP for Staff will furthermore strengthen the inclusiveness and intersectional approach on diversity and gender, including researchers.

Activity 2: UAntwerp has already made considerable efforts regarding the implementation of the DAP for Staff actions but is determined to keep challenging itself and to remain self-critical. The DAP for Staff is therefore not an end point, but a continuous process of improvement. It is a dynamic plan that will be continuously followed up, updated and implemented.

Activity 3: Mainstreaming the diversity and gender related policy in general and HR strategies is a crucial part in the inclusiveness approach of the DAP for Staff. Therefore, there will be continuous monitoring of the four strategic objectives from the DAP for staff within the implementation of the renewed HR strategy action plan.

Indicators	- Full integration of the gender action plan for staff into the diversity action plan for staff (DAP) (timing 2023). - Implementation of the current DAP for staff and continuously evaluating and updating. (Ongoing 2021-2025) - Continuous monitoring of the four strategic objectives from the DAP within the implementation of the renewed HR strategy action plan. Among others through representation of team diversity in the sounding board group and in the steering committee. (ongoing 2021-2025)

ACTION 7   Internationalisation (single permit)

ACTION 7	Efficient implementation of the single permit for non-EEA researchers
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Department, Faculties
TIMING	2022 Q2 – 2023 Q4
GAP Principles	- Contractual and legal obligations (Ethical & Prof aspects) - Supervision and managerial duties (T&D) - Working conditions (Working conditions & social security) - Stability and permanence of employment (Working conditions & social security) - Value of mobility (Working conditions & social security)
On 1 January 2019, Belgium implemented the EU Single Permit Directive which aims to increase the employment mobility of non-EEA nationals to Europe. The intention of the EU Directive is to introduce one single application procedure for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State. The International Staff Office already submits single permit applications for other staff categories (ATP, ZAP and unremunerated staff). Currently, researchers apply for a visa themselves at the Belgian embassy, which allows them to live and work in Belgium. From December 2022 onwards the employer will have to initiate a single permit application before the researcher can obtain a visa. The International Staff Office will take care of this administrative process (Informing researchers of the applicable procedure, assisting with collecting the required documents, submitting the application and follow up). Despite being designed to facilitate international mobility, the new procedure for researchers will create extra administration, both for the researchers and for the university. In the coming year, the International Staff Office will focus on making this changed procedure run as efficiently and smoothly as possible within the university. We will mainly focus on communication and pro-active follow-up of contracts that come under this new procedure.
Indicators	- Development of a system to follow up applications (Q2 2022) - University-wide communication (supervisor, faculty secretaries and researchers) on the new single permit procedure for researchers. This communication will include information sessions, newsletter, etc. (Q3 2022) - Including single permit information in onboarding communication (Q3 2022) - Pro-active follow up and communication for extensions possible under the current procedure (Q3 2022) - Evaluation of points of improvement that can be made within the institution to make the procedure as efficient as possible (Q3 2023)

Antwerp University Action Plan 2022-2025

ACTION 8   Welcome services for international staff & family

ACTION 8	Welcome services for international staff & family
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Department (Talent Management Team & International Staff Office)
TIMING	Development of action plan on services offered to international staff (optimalisation & new services) (Q4 2022) Development of a brochure for partners of employees on living and working in Belgium (Q4 2022) Investigate opportunities for cooperation with external partners for career advice for spouses (Q2 2023) Improvement of onboarding process, including communication to international staff (Q2 2023)
GAP Principles	▪ Working conditions (Working conditions & social security)

For researchers and professors who move to Belgium for a longer period of time, it is important that they receive the necessary information and support to integrate in Belgium.
In recent years, the International Staff Office has developed several additional services for international staff and their family to facilitate their arrival in Belgium. For instance, the application of the residence permit and the registration with the health insurance agency can be done through the university. The International Staff Office also offers extra support when opening a bank account, taking out additional insurance, etc.
In the coming years, we want to optimize these services further and look for new opportunities where possible.

It is not only important to support our international staff members, but also to provide family members with the necessary information and support during the relocation process and upon arrival in Belgium. That is why we want to focus more on dual career support in the coming years.
We want to assist partners of new staff members when moving to Antwerp/Belgium and help them to build up a (professional) network, get familiar with the Belgian labour market to seek new employment or look for volunteer work or study opportunities. It is not our intention to look for an actual job for partners of our staff members, but rather to provide them with sufficient knowledge and tools to facilitate their search.
In a second phase of this project, we will further examine whether cooperation with external partners is possible and/or desirable.

In addition to supporting partners of staff members in the development of their network, we also want to provide them with sufficient information on all kinds of practical aspects of moving to Belgium, both for the partner (e.g. information on recognition of diplomas, health insurance, ...) and for the children (e.g. information on schools, childcare, child allowances, ...).
Finally it is also very important to give new staff members a warm welcome at our university and to help them find their way at the university. In the coming years, the International Staff Office will further focus on the improvement of the onboarding process of international staff by organising welcome sessions, offering social activities and taking actions to show new staff members around at the university. An important aspect here remains the bilingual communication at our university - it is essential that international colleagues can consult all information from the central departments in English and that internal communication to all staff is done in both Dutch and English.

Indicators	▪ Development of action plan on services offered to international staff ▪ Development of a brochure for partners of employees on living and working in Belgium

	▪ Investigate opportunities for cooperation with external partners for career advice for spouses ▪ Improvement of onboarding process and communication to international staff

ACTION 9   Digitalisation and optimisation of appointment process of contract research staff

ACTION 9	Digitalisation and optimisation of appointment process of contract research staff with external funding, doctoral and postdoctoral scholarship holders (BAP)
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Department with involvement from IT, Finance, Research & Innovation Department, Department of Education and Process Management & Privacy Office
TIMING	The University has opted for an incremental approach for development, testing, documentation and delivery of this project. The first increment has been delineated and will consist of the digitalisation and optimisation of the appointment process of contractual research staff with external funding. Delivery of this increment is expected in **Q3 2023**. Future increments will include the digitalisation and optimisation of the appointment process of doctoral and postdoctoral scholarship holders, as well as the extension of existing appointments. Timing and content of these increments will be determined in partnership with IT.
GAP Principles	• Working conditions and professional aspects - Contractual and legal obligations • Recruitment & Selection – Transparency

1. **Description**

The BAP staff category encompasses an ever-increasing group of researchers, ranging from PhD candidates to senior research experts. Their appointments are predominantly funded by external research grants. Before a bursary agreement or appointment contract can be offered or an existing bursary agreement or appointment contract can be extended, the endorsement and/or cooperation of various stakeholders is required, depending on the position within the BAP staff category in which the appointment occurs. These stakeholders include:

- The candidate or staff member.
- The applicant for the appointment (e.g., supervisor or Faculty administrator), responsible for gathering the required information, filling out and submitting the correct form.
- The budget manager of the project to which the appointment is related.
- The Department of Finance for budget allocation.
- The Department of Research and Innovation for funder regulations in bursary agreements.
- The Department of Education for PhD registration.
- The International Staff Office.

The HR Department coordinates communication and exchange of information between the parties involved. This results in an appointment process that is administratively complicated, lengthy, untransparent and increasingly difficult to manage.

2. **Objectives**

We aim at the digitalisation and optimisation of the process for appointment (or extension of an existing appointment) of contractual research staff with external funding, doctoral and postdoctoral scholarship holders. More specifically: the development of an application process that guides a request for an appointment through a dynamic workflow depending on the type of request, position, nationality of the candidate/staff member etc. This includes automating checks that are currently executed manually by the parties involved and allows to omit the letterbox-role of the HR Department.

Parallel to the digitalisation of the appointment process, HR metrics based on this process will be developed. This will allow stakeholders of the process to report, measure performance, track KPI's etc.

Concrete objectives are:
- Increasing the overall quality of requests by:
  - o Enforcing contractual and legal obligations in the digital request, for example regarding the appointment period.
  - o Automating checks, for example regarding budget availability.
  - o Providing an automatic pushback to the applicant when a request is rejected during the approval process.
- Increasing transparency of the approval process by allowing all stakeholders (thus including the candidate/staff member) to view a request and the status it is in, whereas this is currently only known by the HR Coordinator.
- Reducing lead time by:
  - o Automating checks.
  - o Allowing the candidate/staff member to provide necessary information and documents digitally and adding this data to the request automatically.
  - o Informing the International Staff Office in advance, for example when a Single Permit is required.
  - o Facilitating the approval process by providing a digital portal for stakeholders through which a request can be approved or rejected.
  - o Facilitating the approval process by providing instant notifications to stakeholders when a request is waiting for approval (whereas now, requests are bundled by the HR Coordinator and submitted for approval once a month).
  - o Automating data entry in the HR Information System (whereas now, this is done manually).
- Developing a HR metrics portal for stakeholders of the appointment process.

3. **Activities**

The decision for digitalisation and optimisation of this process dates from Q4 2020. The following steps have been taken since:
- Q1-Q4 2021: an initial functional analysis was executed. Every step in the current process was identified, a hierarchy was defined between essential quality checks and desirable quality checks, and suggestions for optimisation were formulated.
- Q1 2022: capacity of the HR Analytics team was increased through the appointment of a new team member, who will be responsible for the coordination of the project and will act as liaison between the stakeholders and the HR Department.
- Q1 2022: a working group consisting of stakeholders of the process was set up. This working group documented the current (sub-)processes of the parties involved using tried and tested analysis and modelling techniques (e.g., SIPOC analysis, SWOT analysis, FMEA Risk assessment), based on the initial analysis from 2021.
- Q1 2022: the working group re-evaluated the ideal 'to be'-situation and established a high-level 'happy flow', which serves as the backbone for the actual digitalisation process.
- Q2 2022: a plan of action was drawn up by the HR Department and approved by the University Investment Office and ICT Governance Committee. This plan of action describes an incremental approach.

Further steps to be taken, are:
- Q2 – Q3 2022: in-depth analysis and documentation of the first increment (digitalisation and optimisation of the application process for contractual research staff with external funding).

	• Q3 2022: the request for digitalisation of the first increment will be submitted to the University Investment Office and ICT Governance Committee. • Q1 – Q3 2023: development, testing and documentation of the first increment. • Q2 – Q3 2023: definition of content and timing of the second increment, in-depth analysis, submitting request for digitalisation. • Q3 2023: delivery of the first increment. • As the process continues, additional operational steps for subsequent increments will be defined in consultation with the relevant stakeholders…
Indicators	• Digital process to appoint contractual research staff with external funding is in place. • Define content and timing of subsequent increments and gain approval of University Administration. • Digital process to extend the existing appointment of contractual research staff with external funding is in place. • Digital process to appoint doctoral scholarship holders is in place. • Digital process to extend the existing appointment of doctoral scholarship holders is in place. • Digital process to appoint postdoctoral scholarship holders is in place. • Digital process to extend the existing appointment of postdoctoral scholarship holders is in place. • Time needed between supervisor's intention to appoint research staff member and drawing up of contract: reduction of average of 1 month to average of 2 weeks. • At least 90% of requests for the appointment or extension of the current appointment of BAP research staff are submitted via the digital workflow. Maximum 10% of requests that deal with extraordinary situations and require additional effort can be submitted through different channels.

ACTION 10   Revision BAP structure (Non-statutory Academic Personnel)

ACTION 10	Revision BAP structure (Non-statutory Academic Personnel)
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Department
TIMING	Q1 2020 – Q1 2023
GAP Principles	Professional responsibility, Professional Attitude, Contractual and legal obligations, Relation with supervisors, Supervision and managerial duties, Continuing professional development, Recognition of the profession, Stability and permanence of employment, Funding and salaries, Career development, Access to research training and continuous development, Access to career advice, Supervision, Evaluation / appraisal system, Postdoctoral appointments

This action encompasses a broad range of activities within the reform of one of the largest staff categories in the University: that of BAP ("Bijzonder Academisch Personeel" or Non-Statutory Academic Personnel). Typically composed of PhD candidates, researchers funded by external project-based resources and of staff members temporarily filling in for academics on leave, this group faces many challenges associated with precarious careers. Two or three decades ago, this group represented a minority of staff members. Today it is the largest staff category within the university but the regulations governing them, still assume these positions are temporary, unusual, with a high turnover rate;these regulations are in need of revision. At university level we cannot solve the challenges imposed by short-term project-based research funding, but at least we can provide clarity and career development support.

The HR principles underlying the reform, are the following:
- **Clearer career expectations for BAP-staff**: tasks, expectations, career perspectives, opportunities for development – including setting boundaries against the risk of overcommitment, as well as additional attention for their vulnerability in terms of exposure to transgressional behaviour --> to be met with new structure, job profiles & performance results framework which match the changing nature of the BAP-role. See also initiatives undertaken in action 5 (well-being).
- **More sustainable careers where possible, without guaranteed career security** --> more continuity of appointments across projects, no culture of single-use-researcher, from "employment" to "employability" through training & development
- **A better balance between flexibility and control** --> better informed BAP-staff will ensure that job profiles & salaries are more in accordance with job expectations; a more solid dialogue between supervisor and BAP-staff will allow for flexibility and short-term needs; the possibility to extend contracts across projects and incorporating a wider range of funding streams, will bridge gaps between funding contracts
- **The lack of regulation within the BAP staff category can be an advantage if there is also a shared responsibility** --> flexibility can be a benefit for supervisors and BAP-staff, but within limits. With better tools and clearer information, joint (career) decisions can be made which are mutually beneficial, supervisors can take on their role more effectively, career guidance activities can be targeted more specifically.

The new proposed BAP structure maps all BAP staff categories across the following matrix, making use of the European Framework for Research Careers. The first three rows compose staff members with a project-based, time-defined objective. The row of "knowledge brokers" contains BAP-staff with a long-term career perspective.

	R1	R2	R3-R4
Focus on education			
Focus on research			
Focus on project management			
Focus on sustainable role as 'knowledge broker'			

The actions include the following elements:
- Design and endorse new regulations for the BAP-staff category
- Implement the new BAP staff categories in the HR IT system and in all BAP-related communication
- Communicate the plan, the vision behind it and its expected impact across the university and across all staff categories
- Invite the university community – and faculties in particular - to build even further on these principles and support the careers of BAP by means of additional incentives, removing existing barriers, and creating incentives to lead a significant number of BAP staff into a sustainable career track (for example by providing bridging funds between projects)
- Consolidate the activities of the Antwerp Doctoral School and the Talent Center to provide career support (see other actions)

Indicators	• University-wide communication and acceptance of vision and HR-principles underlying proposed new BAP career policy (**Q1 2022**) • University-wide communication and acceptance of proposed new BAP staff categories and job profiles, ensuring that the entire academic community is committed to the principles for the BAP-reform (Q2-Q3 2022) • Endorsement of new legal base for BAP staff category (Q1 2023) • New BAP staff categories are programmed in the IT system (Q4 2022) • Implementation of new BAP staff categories in HR IT management system: 100% of existing BAP staff members must be transferred into the new system (to be completed Q4 2022, launch 1/1/2023); all newly appointed BAP staff members must be appointed within the new system from 2023 onwards • New BAP profiles and performance results framework are being used throughout the university (Q1 2023)

ACTION 11 Open Science & Research Assessment

ACTION 11	Action Open Science & Research Assessment **There are links between this action and other actions on OTMR** **& Knowledge Valorisation**
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	RIVA (Research, Innovation Valorisation Antwerp) Department, HR Department
TIMING	Different deadlines for various sub-actions 2022 Q4: Scientific Integrity: Mind The Gap as standard course in training offer for Antwerp Doctoral School • 2022 Q4: motivated position towards Coalition of the Willing on Research Assessment, including commitment for further reform • 2023 Q2: application flow for all ethical committees integrated in UAntwerp CRIS • 2023 Q4: scope definition of implementation of Research Assessment principles, as defined by the Coalition • 2023 Q4: data-infrastructure in collaboration with Flemish Open Science Board • 2022-2026: continuous quality assurance process & improvement where necessary
GAP Principles	*Name the principles of C&C that are applicable* ▪ Accountability (scientific integrity, datamanagement) ▪ Professional Attitude (scientific integrity, datamanagement) ▪ Professional Responsibility (scientific integrity, datamanagement, research assessment) ▪ Good practice (datamanagement, research assessment) ▪ Ethical princies (integrity, research assessment) ▪ Intellectual property rights (integrity, datamanagement) ▪ Co-authorship (integrity, research assessment) ▪ Research environment (datamanagement, research assessment)

Description of the action (summary, bullet points)

Research data management – data life cycle
The University's own initiative as well as funding from the Flemish Open Science Board have made it possible to establish an RDM-team that encompasses expertise in the research support offices (RIVA), the library department, the IT department and the faculties. By 2023 Q4 the University will have implemented an end-to-end offering in terms of RDM-support, starting with the application for project funding, the submission of the RDM-plan to the funder, the data-lifecycle while projects are running and resulting in the storage and preservation for the long term as appropriate. This will include the establishment of routines for the archiving of research data as well as participation in a Flemish data-vault solution. Datamanagement comes with significant costs, and this remains a challenge in the future.

Scientific Integrity and Research Ethics
The Flemish universities collaborated to develop the online "Mind The GAP training" platform for research integrity, intended for both junior (PhD) researchers and senior researchers who want to learn more about research integrity. Mind the GAP became available in December 2021 and will be

compulsory at the University of Antwerp for all newly starting PhD researchers from October 2022 onwards (start of the academic year 2022-2023). The Antwerp Doctoral School will also actively promote the training among all early career researchers and supervisors that started earlier on at the University.

Also the target group of more experienced and established researchers would ideally be included, and the debate on the possible compulsory nature of such training for all researchers must be held. The application flows for Research Ethics will be integrated in the University CRIS (Current Research Information System) by 2023 Q2. In addition, continued updates will be made in terms of the scope of Research Ethics, e.g. relating to human rights (where the Flemish universities have together established a human rights checklist), decolonisation, knowledge security and embargo compliance.

Research Assessment

The University of Antwerp is directly engaged in the European Commission initiative with the Coalition of the Willing committed to developing a new approach to research assessment. We contribute to the shaping of a Europe-wide consensus text as well as a shared approach to the implementation process.

The University of Antwerp is committed to staying up to date on the topic, continuously checking our own practices against these principles, and where necessary, review evaluation processes of project funding applications, defining steps of career progress.

The Coalition is expected to reach consensus on their approach by the end of 2022. If this timeline is sustained, the University of Antwerp is committed to reach an agreement internally within the university on the scope of relevant and required changes in research assessment by Q4 2023, and subsequently implementing this approach.

Indicators	
	• Research data management: RDM-plan in place for 65% of all publicly funded research projects to which RDM applies by end of 2024 (and 100% by end of 2026);
	• Research data management: the number of FAIR datasets made available and registered as such in the university repository doubles by end of 2023 compared to end of 2021;
	• Scientific Integrity: implementation growth path over 3 years for the Mind the GAP training: at least 30% of the starting PhD researchers in AJ 2022-2023 have completed the Mind the GAP training by Q3 2023; 50% of the starting PhD researchers in AJ 2023-2024 by Q3 2024; 70% of the starting PhD researchers in AJ 2024-2025 have completed the training by Q3 2025; this process will be facilitated by a gradual implementation in the progress report towards Q3 2025.
	• Scientific Integrity: consensus in the university on either strong incentives or a compulsory approach to completing the Mind the GAP Training for all ZAP;
	• Research Assessment: agreement on scoping and implementation plan by Q4 2023;
	• Research Assessment: implementation of agreed changes by Q4 2025 (will probably be implemented in phases/compartments)

Antwerp University Action Plan 2022-2025

ACTION 12   Knowledge Valorisation

ACTION 12	Knowledge Valorisation
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	RIVA (Valorisation Office) and HR department
TIMING	2022 Q1 - 2024 Q4 (timing when effect of efforts during 2022-2024 should be visible)
GAP Principles	Dissemination and exploitation of Results, Evaluation and appraisal, Recruitment, Variations in CV, Recognition of the Profession, Funding and salaries, Career development, Intellectual property rights, Continuing professional Development, (Access to) research training & continue development

Description of the action (summary, bullet points)

1.   Recognition of Valorisation initiatives in promotion Rounds

Currently few initiatives (e.g. the AhA!-Awards) put entrepreneurial professors in the spotlight but the incentives in the promotion procedure to reward entrepreneurial professors still vary from faculty to faculty. The income generated via the UAntwerp valorisation procedure and that flows back to the entrepreneurial researchers is still rather limited. Knowledge valorisation, and more broadly all activities relating to knowledge transfer and community service, should be adequately valued throughout the academic career, and as such be incorporated in selection, evaluation and promotion criteria. In the long term, this will also have a positive impact on the appreciation for previous R&D experience in industry and non-profit sector when being recruited for academic positions, and on the appreciation in society for scientific research. This change is linked to action 11 (Open Science & research assessment)

2.   Increase of "knowledge brokers" in the BAP staff category

Included in the implementation of action 10 (BAP) is the definition of a new BAP-staff category which is focused on "knowledge brokers": researchers and research managers who take up a coordinating role, including knowledge circulation and knowledge valorisation. As the university-wide recognition for such activities increases, this staff category is expected to increase over the coming years, leading to more valorisation initiatives in the university.

3.   More internal and external training options in Knowledge Valorisation.

The Valorisation office is providing courses and support to those staff members that are interested in Knowledge Valorisation. Unfortunately, these courses are attended by a relatively small part of the total staff. More staff should be encouraged to follow courses around Knowledge Valorisation and will be incentivized to do so if they know Knowledge Valorisation is valued in the evaluation criteria. The attractiveness of training offers could be further enhanced by involving external experts (entrepreneurs, innovators, business leaders) in coaching and training. More internal and external courses need to be on offer and this at all levels (students, early career researchers and professor-level). Ideally all new staff members are trained and acquire a proven basic proficiency regarding Knowledge Valorisation (profit or non-profit). An online training and testing module should be foreseen so that many staff members can be trained.

The above actions aim at a culture change; there are strong links with other actions in this strategy. It will take time for these to result in tangible effects; the foreseen activities will be carried out throughout this period.

Indicators	• Valorisation output adequately assessed in promotion procedures, in balance with attention given to education and research

	- Increase of numbers in BAP staff category "knowledge brokers", more specifically those focusing on knowledge valorisation - Number of attendees at courses related to Knowledge Valorisation until more than 50% of the staff is trained and evaluated - Number of courses available related to Knowledge Valorisation