



## HR Strategy Action Plan 2026-2028

### Content

1. ACTION 1: Recruitment and selection.....	2
2. ACTION 2: Onboarding .....	5
3. ACTION 3: Skills development.....	7
4. ACTION 4: Career development.....	10
5. ACTION 5: Leadership .....	13
6. ACTION 6: Well-being .....	16
7. ACTION 7: Gender and diversity.....	19
8. ACTION 8: A more international campus .....	21
9. ACTION 9: Digitalisation and optimisation .....	23
10. ACTION 10: Research assessment & Open Science .....	29

## 1. ACTION 1: Recruitment and selection

ACTION 1	RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Departement
TIMING	2026 - 2028
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)
<p>The University of Antwerp continues its commitment to keep improving recruitment and selection procedures inspired by the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment. The three areas of priority are currently (1) employer branding, (2) mainstreaming the OTMR principles through training and awareness raising activities and (3) professionalizing our monitoring systems.</p> <p><i><b>Employer branding</b></i></p> <p>Our external website is available in English and Dutch. On our jobsite we provide information about working at the University of Antwerp on the jobsite and separate pages for postdoctoral researchers and international staff. We want to bring a more integrated perspective on working at the University of Antwerp. We also want to improve our employer branding by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- investing in more (visual) information for international candidates and other underrepresented groups (story telling), updating the job site with even more information for international candidates and information about our efforts for a more inclusive organisation, sharing more information about our job offer, national system, training opportunities, career development and organisational culture.</li><li>- sharing video testimonials of (international) employees.</li><li>- encouraging (new) internal employees to share their experiences as employees of UAntwerp. This content can be shared both within UAntwerp (Pintra) and outside UAntwerp (job site/LinkedIn).</li><li>- sharing more internal stories by using existing storytelling of our Pintra blog (internal communication) and link them to working at UAntwerp. This can be shared on our webpage but also on social media (LinkedIn, Instagram, ...)</li></ul> <p><i><b>Training on the OTM-R principles</b></i></p> <p>We have developed a digital recruitment and selection toolbox with a large number of guidelines for each phase of the selection procedure. We have also developed a webinar with short videos. Furthermore, we have designed a 2 day skills training and a shorter training around conducting selection interviews. All content is screened from a diversity and inclusion point of view. All these materials contain a great deal of information, but are not consulted often enough.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- We need to invest in an ongoing communication campaign to bring this information closer to our researchers.</li><li>- We aim to increase the uptake of training offers by collaborating more closely with faculty-specific and team-based initiatives</li><li>- We will explore the option to offer hands-on advice sessions, to help researchers with specific questions about recruitment and selection once they are involved in a procedure. The aim is to support them during a recruitment and selection assignment and, at the same time, to promote the available tools.</li></ul>	

*Increase awareness of behavioural competencies for the recruitment and selection of professors*

3 years ago we introduced assessments for professors to assess behavioural competences through an external agency at the time of recruitment. The way faculties assess behavioural competencies throughout the selection process may vary. Some faculties use full day assessments, others invested in training interview skills and other faculties use development centers to prepare the first goal setting interviews.

- There is a wish to share practices between faculties and learn from each other. Based on the feedback of the faculties we can evaluate our approach.
- We will make an extra guideline on how to install a qualitative approach throughout the whole recruitment and selection process.

The competencies of selection committees can be expanded further through training. It is also necessary to take a more critical look at the size of the selection committees. Selection committees can count up to 10 members. This has an impact on the experience of the candidate, the dynamics in an interview and this has an impact on the already overloaded schedules of the professors.

*BI recruitment and selection*

We gather a lot of data throughout the recruitment process. The anonymized data have not yet been analyzed. To identify trends, we will develop a Business Intelligence tool. The expectation is that we can make better decisions based on insights in our recruitment channels, in the characteristics of our applicants (such as gender, age, nationality, ...).

<b>Indicators</b>	<p><i>Employer branding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ More integrated information on the job site about our efforts for international staff, for a more inclusive organisation, sharing better information about our job offer, national system, training opportunities, career development and organisational culture by Q4 2026</li><li>▪ Video testimonials of academic staff by Q2 2027</li><li>▪ More visual information for international candidates and underrepresented groups on the jobsite by Q1 2028</li></ul> <p><i>Training OTM-R principles</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Increase in number of online consultations of the recruitment and selection toolbox, webinar (min. 400 views by Q4 2028) and trainings about recruitment and selection (at least 100 participants in OTM-R training by Q4 2028).</li><li>▪ Guideline around a qualitative approach throughout the whole recruitment and selection process by Q4 2026</li><li>▪ Cultural change in academic recruitment processes, as evidenced by the inclusion of external assessments or in recruitment reports integrating a conversation about behavioural competencies in the selection process by Q1 2028</li><li>▪ University-wide consultation on the composition of selection committees, with a possible outcome of new guidelines regarding size by Q4 2027</li></ul> <p><i>BI recruitment and selection</i></p>
-------------------	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Business Intelligence tool monitoring recruitment &amp; selection process by Q1 2026</li><li>▪ Follow-up actions based on the Analysis of these data (scope &amp; target dependent on data) by Q4 2026</li></ul>
--	--

## 2. ACTION 2: Onboarding

ACTION 2	ONBOARDING
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR, faculties, all central departments
TIMING	2026 - 2028
GAP Principles	Training & development, supervision and managerial duties, continuing professional development, access to research training and continuous development, Research environment, Access to career advice, Supervision, Ethical & professional aspects, ethical principles, professional attitudes, non-discrimination

*Onboarding PhD researchers, postdocs, ZAP (=abbreviation for "Independent Academic Staff", ranging from tenure track professor to full professor)*

New employees have an onboarding process at the central level and in their own faculty. Central initiatives are the following:

- For PhD researchers: doctoral researchers receive a number of welcome e-mails with essential information and are expected to participate in a central Doctoral Day during their first year.
- For postdocs: the information of the central level is brought together in 1 e-mail for postdocs and the organisation of an annual postdoc day.
- ZAP: new professors receive 5 mailings during their first term with university-specific information combined with a networking reception.

The faculties also organize the local onboarding process. Each faculty has its own approach and they are eager to learn from each other. Newcomers are often overwhelmed by all the information and find it hard to fully process this. Moreover, the information on our intranet does not follow a demand driven approach – although we do have a quick guide for newcomers. There is need for a more coordinated onboarding strategy between the central level and faculties. By setting up a community of practice, we can exchange best practices and detect the needs and missing links.

- We will start with the evaluation of the onboarding process of ZAP.
- We want to link the new onboarding process for newly appointed ZAP with leadership development needs and the need for language training (all academic staff engaged in education must by law obtain B2 level Dutch within 5 years of appointment – see also action 8). As such we invest in an integrated approach.
- A few months after their start date, new postdocs will be invited to informal online lunch sessions introducing the Talent Center's offer, career development opportunities, and space for questions.
- Next, we will start the evaluation of the onboarding process for postdocs.

*A shared understanding of organisational culture and practices*

Organisational processes and methods are not always communicated with optimal clarity, which can lead to efficiency loss across the university. From an institutional perspective, it is important to identify and share the essential information that supports effective work within our university. This includes articulating our view on wellbeing, inclusion, leadership development, and our commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to transgressive behaviour. By doing so, we aim to foster a shared understanding of our organisational culture and working practices across

departments and faculties, ensuring that expectations and values are clear to all colleagues, including those who have been part of the university for many years.

We need to develop a university-wide inventory of essential information for academic staff, clearly distinguishing between what is 'nice to know' and what is 'need to know'. This will help prevent information overload and ensure a realistic investment of time. We should determine practical and accessible formats for sharing this information with all relevant groups, including professors, AAP and BAP staff, and PhD researchers.

**Disclaimer:** A crucial element in adapting our on- and reboarding strategy is the selection and implementation of a new Learning Management System (see action 3). Without this digital investment, these initiatives will be much more difficult to implement.

<b>Indicators</b>	<p><i>Onboarding ZAP, PhD researchers and postdocs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New onboarding process for ZAP in place by the start of Q4 2026.</li> <li>- A reach of 80% of all new ZAP employees (in the first three years of their appointment) with our new onboarding strategy.</li> <li>- Leadership development integrated in onboarding process for new professors in Q3 2027.</li> <li>- Organising at least two online lunch sessions per semester for new postdocs (cfr. Action 4 – career development), introducing the Talent Center's offer, highlighting relevant career development opportunities and providing space for questions, starting in Q1 of 2026.</li> <li>- Updated onboarding process of postdocs, based on best practices exchange between faculties and the central level Q4 2028.</li> </ul> <p><i>Shared understanding of organisational culture and practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Updated information package for newly appointed staff, containing crucial need-to-knows for working at the University of Antwerp (Q4 2028)</li> <li>- Learning paths integrated into a potential Learning Management System (LMS), which will facilitate accessibility and encourage participation (link with Action 3, Q4 2028).</li> </ul>
-------------------	--

### 3. ACTION 3: Skills development

ACTION 3	SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Department, Research, Innovation & Valorisation Antwerpen, Antwerp Doctoral School, MarCom
TIMING	2026 - 2028
GAP Principles	Access to research training and continuous development, Research environment, access to career advice, supervision, teaching

#### *Learning Management System*

Today, staff members need to consult various platforms to get an overview of the wide range of UAntwerp training offers to which various departments contribute. The information is fragmented and advertised at different digital locations. Our goal is to streamline the front and back-office processes. We want to move towards an integrated location where all information about our training offer and learning materials in different forms (leaflets, webinars, ...) can be found. This project already featured in our previous action plan but proved to be much bigger in scope and effort than initially foreseen. Over the last two years we have invested in making an inventory of all the different needs and requirements across departments. We initiated the change process to move towards a more standardised approach. Next steps are a European procurement procedure and a formal decision on the associated investment. The implementation process will align the processes and procedures of all internal training providers and incorporate them into one learning management system.

#### *Communication*

In an area of a constant flow of information our staff training offer often disappears in overloaded mailboxes. We need to diversify our communication approach. We keep investing in repeating the message by using different communication carriers and different timelines: well in advance for professors and a combination of advance and short notices for our PhD researchers and postdoctoral researchers. We would like to bring best learning practices to life through storytelling. Furthermore, we also see an opportunity in bringing our training offer closer to faculties, academic staff and supervisors. On top of that we need to invest in the role of the supervisor as an accelerator of personal growth. Since PhD researchers have "rights equivalent to staff" but not all of them have an administrative "staff registration", some miss out on necessary information and additional training offers on the staff intranet. The technical possibilities to solve this are currently being investigated.

#### *Permanent feedback culture*

We have translated our code of conduct, our vision on personal development and leadership in a behavioural competence dictionary. This glossary explains in detail 30 different behavioural competences. It provides a framework to talk about behaviour, to start conversations, to give feedback. In order to build a permanent feedback culture, the dictionary needs to be incorporated in all HR processes and HR instruments. The aim is to pay attention to not only output, but pay even more attention to the way in which people work, collaborate and fulfil a leadership role.

- Embed the new behavioural competences in the career cycle for professors (ZAP).
- Streamline the career cycles for AAP en BAP and incorporate the behavioural competences in these career cycles.
- Informal, frequent and oral or written feedback should become the gold standard for anyone with a coaching responsibility towards others

- Formal goal-setting interviews will continue to be encouraged, with explicit attention to wellbeing and career development. To support this, clear templates for goal setting interviews will be developed (cfr. HR toolbox), and training on conducting these conversations will be redesigned and offered (see action 5 leadership).

*Content of training offer*

Our university-wide training offer is solid, but continuously broadening training offers in accordance with the current needs and trends stays important. The needs of the target groups are quickly evolving along with the organisation (culture). We will experiment with different formats in order to reach more academic staff.

- Professors (Soft skills PeopleSoft after login, [ECHO](#), [RIVA](#),..): invest in training on stress resilience, personal effectiveness and short formats to nudge, to inspire them and lead them to more elaborate training programs.
- [Postdoctoral researchers](#): training in creativity, artificial intelligence, leadership as a transferable skill, at least one new topic a year.
- [Doctoral researchers](#): at least two pilots a year based on needs analysis and crucial evolutions and further strengthen the interuniversity training offer
- All categories of staff: evaluate our training offer to cover the competences in our framework.
- All researchers: training and support programs focused on research excellence, valorisation, innovation, business and entrepreneurial skills will be continued, with differentiation in terms of their level of experience and needs.
- Additional useful guidelines will be incorporated into the HR toolbox such as conflict management, ...

*BI learning and development*

When we introduce a new learning management system, we will also develop a BI for learning and development. This will enable us to analyse these data and adjust our training and development policy.

<b>Indicators</b>	<p><i>Learning management system</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Launch of a European procurement procedure to select a provider for a learning management system. Q1 2026</li> <li>▪ A formal approval of the university board for the (financial) investment in a learning management system. Q2 2026</li> <li>▪ Implementation of a new learning management system. Q3 2026-Q4 2027</li> <li>▪ At least 60% of our staff use new learning management system.</li> </ul> <p><i>Communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved communication about training through newsletters, storytelling and a structured communication plan. Q2 2026</li> <li>▪ Access to all staff-relevant information, training offer and services for the group of PhD researchers that do not have an administrative "staff" registration. Q3 2027</li> </ul> <p><i>Permanent feedback culture</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Behavioural competences are embedded in the career cycle for professors. Q1 2026</li> <li>▪ Behavioural competences are embedded in a wide range of HR tools for all staff categories Q4 2028</li> </ul> <p><i>Content of training offer</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continuous evaluation of the training offer for all staff categories. Ongoing</li> <li>▪ Ensuring optimal collaboration between departments in the context of public procurement.</li> <li>▪ Updated training offer for professors: more short formats, training on stress resilience, personal effectiveness, ... Q2 2027</li> <li>▪ Updated training offer for postdocs (transferable skills): training on creativity (2026), artificial intelligence (2028), at least one new topic a year</li> <li>▪ Updated training offer for doctoral researchers: at least two pilots a year</li> <li>▪ More time- and place-independent learning opportunities through old and new digital learning platforms (Altissia, Nature Master Classes, OASE, UAntwerp digital toolbox)</li> </ul> <p><i>BI learning and development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Business Intelligence tool monitoring learning and development by Q2 2027</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Follow-up actions based on the Analysis of these data (scope &amp; target dependent on data) by Q3 2027</i></li> </ul>
-------------------	--

## 4. ACTION 4: Career development

ACTION 4	CAREER DEVELOPMENT
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Department (Talent Center), Antwerp Doctoral School
TIMING	2026 - 2028
GAP Principles	Career Development, Access to career advise
<p><i>Promote awareness of career development</i></p> <p>New researchers must be informed about the importance of expanding their skillset, investing in career development. We want to diversify and improve communication towards this target group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We keep our LinkedIn page attractive and up to date ('UAntwerp Talent Center') by sharing inspiring events, tips and tricks for navigating your career, and space for changing ideas with peers.</li> <li>- We enhance our internal visibility of initiatives by keeping the Talent Center intranet page and Talent Center website up to date.</li> <li>- We intensify our communication with postdocs by communicating well in advance and close to upcoming events. Special attention is paid to the communication of the initiatives of the interuniversity working group (<a href="#">PhD talent coordination team</a>).</li> <li>- Through information sessions and keynotes for faculty members and faculty ambassadors, we raise awareness of the importance of career development among both researchers and supervisors.</li> <li>- Online lunch sessions for new postdocs will be organised a few months after their start date. These informal sessions will introduce the Talent Center's offer, highlight relevant career development opportunities, and provide space for questions.</li> <li>- We will keep organising the annual Postdoc Day to foster interaction among postdocs and inspiring them through tailored plenary and parallel sessions. Topics around career development and transferable skills are an integral part of the Postdoc Day.</li> <li>- We keep on organising the Antwerp Doctoral School Day (at least 2 times a year) where the importance of developing a broad range of competences and focussing on (career) development is the key message of the vision behind the doctoral study programme.</li> <li>- Being part of <a href="#">YUFE</a> and engaging in running pilot projects for early career researchers, provides us with an opportunity to further try out and evaluate concepts (like non-academic mentoring for doctoral researchers, and interview sessions for postdoctoral researchers), which are not yet structurally embedded.</li> <li>- We structurally monitor the reach of the Talent Center initiatives (both on career development and transferable skills initiatives) through a BI analysis and use this information to evaluate our approach.</li> </ul> <p><i>Provide new and flexible learning opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The existing online toolbox will be expanded to include career development exercises that all staff members can use independently. These exercises are designed for those who wish to reflect on their career path or develop specific skills at their own pace, without necessarily participating in formal programmes. A new learning management system will allow us to monitor the usage of these career development exercises.</li> <li>- In addition, a career workbook specifically for researchers (PhD researchers and postdocs) will be developed. This workbook will guide them step by step through self-reflection and</li> </ul>	

<p>career exploration, helping them gain insights into their strengths, interests, and options both inside and outside academia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complementary to this, a new (classroom) workshop “From Self-Insight to Career Impact” will be launched. This interactive workshop will support researchers in translating personal insights into concrete career actions.</li> <li>- We will evaluate the current offer of collective career workshop for postdocs in order to avoid overlap. This training offer will be expanded with a workshop on international career management.</li> <li>- We organize sessions to inspire doctoral and postdoctoral researchers in their final years about different career options such as working inside and outside academia, funding research, entrepreneurship, ... and search for a permanent format to consult this information regardless of location and time.</li> <li>- We evaluate the individual career coaching sessions as part of our quality cycle.</li> <li>- In addition to these new learning formats, we will further strengthen our collaboration with the PhD researchers Talent Pool Flanders initiative, coordinated by the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR). Through this platform, PhD researchers and postdocs gain access to a wide range of tools, events and connections that bridge academia and the non-academic labour market. Initiatives such as the annual Job Market for Young Researchers, Job Shadowing programmes, and the PhD researchers Talent Stakeholder Meeting provide valuable opportunities for researchers to explore career paths beyond academia, interact directly with employers, and build their professional network.</li> <li>- We tailor our communication more closely to the needs of the different target groups of our contract academic staff (BAP).</li> <li>- We build a BI to monitor the reach of our Talent Center offer.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Promote awareness of career development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Up-to-date LinkedIn page, Talent Center Pintra page and Talent Center website (ongoing)</li> <li>▪ Two ADS Doctoral Days are organised annually, with at least one session dedicated to career development.</li> <li>▪ At least two online lunch sessions per semester are organised for new postdocs, starting Q1 2026.</li> <li>▪ A Postdoc Day is organised annually, with at least one session dedicated to career development</li> <li>▪ Newsletters for postdocs on a regular basis (at least 2 times a year), combined with short messages for upcoming events, launched via our other communication platforms</li> <li>▪ The Talent Center will have provided an information session or keynote for each faculty focusing on the importance of career development for early-career researchers, by Q4 of 2027</li> <li>▪ Structural evaluation of the individual career coaching sessions (ongoing).</li> <li>▪ Evaluate concepts of the YUFE pilot projects for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, Q1-2 2026</li> <li>▪ Tailor made communication for different target groups of our contract academic staff (BAP). Q2 2026</li> </ul> <p><i>Provide new and flexible learning opportunities</i></p>
--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The online toolbox on Pintra is expanded with at least five new self-directed career development exercises by Q3 of 2026.</li> <li>▪ A career workbook for researchers is developed and launched by the end of Q3 2026.</li> <li>▪ The new workshop ‘From Self-Insight to Career Impact’ is launched by the end of Q3 2026 after running pilot sessions in Q1 2026.</li> <li>▪ The collective career workshop offer is evaluated, and gaps/overlaps are documented Q3 2026.</li> <li>▪ The organisation of sessions to inspire researchers about different career options in a permanent format by the start of 2027.</li> <li>▪ A new workshop on international career management is added to the training offer Q2 2026.</li> <li>▪ Build a BI to monitor the reach of our Talent Center offer Q2 2027.</li> <li>▪ PhD Talent Pool Flanders initiatives are structurally promoted through the Talent Center and Antwerp Doctoral School communication channels.</li> </ul>
--	---

## 5. ACTION 5: Leadership

ACTION 5	LEADERSHIP
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	Human Resources (HR) Antwerp Doctoral School (ADS)
TIMING	2026 - 2028
GAP Principles	Supervision
<p><i>Clarify and communicate the expectations towards supervisors</i></p> <p>The University of Antwerp developed various policy instruments such as a vision on leadership, a glossary of behavioural competences, code of conduct, postdoc charter, charter for PhD researchers,... in which the role and responsibilities of a supervisor are clarified. Nevertheless, we need to bring these documents to life in clear, concise communications and incorporate them in the onboarding process, training for supervisors and all (HR) processes and instruments.</p> <p>Furthermore, we need more communication about the role of the supervisor by sharing good practices, leadership stories, ... The involvement of the leadership team of the university (rector, vice rectors, deans) is crucial, to raise the bar on leadership expectations and to clarify and embody the culture of the organisation and emphasize the importance of the role of supervisors. By sharing their personal experiences (successes and more difficult moments) related to this topic, they highlight the importance of personal growth and training.</p>	
<p><i>Reinforce the expectations towards leadership development</i></p> <p>On an organisational level there is an on-going dialogue about making (leadership) training obligatory. Nowadays leadership development is not mandatory. However, we do not reach all supervisors and often not the ones who need it the most.</p> <p>We need to build in mechanisms in our (HR) processes to reach all supervisors by finding a balance between encouraging their willingness to develop their leadership skills and pushing the organisational needs. Therefore, we need to put more emphasis on opportunities to grow in a leadership role by tailor-made trajectories that match their curiosity to learn and the needs related to their roles and responsibilities. Leadership development should be recognized as an integral component of a professor's career progression. We need to make sure that new professors participate in the training for supervisors as soon as possible in the first years of their appointment, in particular if that supervision role is new to them. Making sure that newcomers are properly trained, strengthens the organisational culture and the university's ambitions to raise the bar when it comes to leadership skills. Making leadership development a key criterion for promotion to the level of full professor is one of the measures that could be very effective in emphasizing the life-long development as a leader, up to the level of senior professor. We want to make sure these development activities are in line with their personal development goals and needs.</p> <p>While investing in leadership development requires time investment, University of Antwerp wants to promote the view that the amount of time gained from a more professional approach is ten times more valuable.</p>	
<p><i>Leadership in development programmes</i></p> <p>The current training offer must grow towards a more structured approach for leadership development. We strive to have learning initiatives in place for the different levels of leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We redesign the existing training for PhD researchers' supervisors: we will focus on clear expectations (role clarity), put more emphasis on the bigger picture, the value and impact</li> </ul>	

of this role (why) and make sure the organisational processes linked to this role are clearer. We will launch a modular learning track, considering both general and individual learning needs of the target group.

- We provide a training focused on leading small and large research groups.
- We identify our university's leadership team (rector, vice rectors and deans) as experienced academics and significant role models to inspire other academics in their leadership role. They may help to promote further development on certain leadership topics (e.g. strategic leadership, goalsetting interviews, selection interviews) and help to implement a leadership culture, in particular when adopting new roles in an academic career (e.g. as research team leader, as chair of a selection panel, as head of department, ...).

Beside the formal leadership training we keep investing in skills training for supervisors. We will broaden our training offer with topics such as conflict management for supervisors and develop a new training on conducting goal setting interviews. The principles of inclusive leadership will be incorporated in all training formats. Special attention will be paid to the development of leadership skills of the postdoctoral researchers with respect to their unique role in a research group and as a transferable skill. Searching for effective formula to reach as many supervisors, we strive for a mix between internal and external trainers.

<b>Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Clarify the expectations of supervisors</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A leaflet summarizing and explaining the role and responsibilities of a supervisor (expectations management) Q3 2026</li> <li>○ A communication plan to streamline communication on this topic (cfr. above) 2027 Q1</li> <li>○ At least 5 stories in our Pintra blog to raise awareness on the importance of a leadership role, sharing good practices and leadership stories inspiring supervisors (by Q4 2028).</li> <li>○ Involvement of the university leadership team in communicating and raising awareness about leadership development (ambassadorship) in at least one Pintra blog story and one video message, ...</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <i>Reinforce the expectations towards leadership development</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Build in mechanisms to make sure that more supervisors develop their leadership skills.</li> <li>○ Reconsider promotion criteria to full professor, recognizing the significance of leadership development Q4 2026.</li> <li>○ Link leadership development to other HR processes such as onboarding and promotion Q1 2027.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <i>Leadership development programs</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reform the existing training for supervisors ("promotorenopleiding") into a new modular approach and evaluate by running a pilot track by Q3 2026</li> <li>○ Training offer for supervisors of small and large research groups by Q1 2027</li> <li>○ On demand training offer for the leadership team, deans (timing according to their specific needs)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
-------------------	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Broaden our learning offer on skills training for supervisors: new initiatives about conflict management (Q1 2026), goal setting interviews (Q1 2027), ...</li><li>○ We reach 80% of newly appointed supervisors as participants in supervisor training on a yearly basis by Q4 2028. We also aim for a fair spread of participants from the different faculties.</li><li>○ The number of newly trained supervisors increases to 20% of the total population of ZAP by Q4 2028.</li></ul>
--	---

## 6. ACTION 6: Well-being

ACTION 6	WELL-BEING
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Department, Health and Safety Department, Antwerp Doctoral School, Departement Student affairs and services (DSAS/STIP), Team Diversity & Inclusion
TIMING	2026 - 2028
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
<p><i>Well-being survey</i></p> <p>In 2026, a well-being survey will be conducted to gain a broad and nuanced understanding of how staff experience well-being within our organisation. This involves mapping predictors in work situations (individual resources, task load, task motivators, team, management, and organisation), outcome indicators of well-being (engagement, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, loyalty, net promoter score, stress, burnout, absenteeism and transgressive behaviour) and socio-demographic factors. After filling in the questionnaire individual participants receive an individual feedback report with development advice (training opportunities), services within the university (e.g. psychosocial reporting and support channels). The results will serve as a starting point for developing targeted policy-level actions. Special attention will be paid to the results of international researchers, evidence of transgressive behaviour and issues concerning leadership and feedback. Alongside the central analysis, we aim to empower faculties to design and implement concrete initiatives in the immediate working environment of researchers.</p> <p>In follow-up to previous wellbeing surveys, we developed a communication campaign 'we care' in which we highlight the services across department around 5 aspects of wellbeing: 'feeling good mentally', 'feeling good physically', 'feeling accepted', 'feeling good in your job' and 'feeling good with colleagues'. We will keep investing in the visibility of the reporting channels through targeted communication.</p>	
<p><i>Avoiding transgressive behaviour</i></p> <p>The last years we have invested in raising awareness with regard to bullying and transgressive behaviour. A more advanced bystander training aimed at fast and adequate interventions has been developed within the university given by internal trainers across departments and faculties. The bystander training is a part of the recurring training programme and contributes to a safer and more inclusive work culture.</p> <p>Every Flemish university has signed a charter addressing transgressive behaviour. The charter affirms the commitment of the university to develop a sustainable policy, streamlining existing procedures and send a strong message that such behaviour is not tolerated and complaints are taken seriously. The charter will be followed up, with continued attention to prevention, awareness-raising and appropriate follow-up.</p> <p>In 2023 the Flemish government introduced new regulations about transgressive behaviour in higher education, including a requirement to keep a register of such reported cases. Until now, this was handled by an external partner. Starting in Q1 2026, two new staff members will take on</p>	

this responsibility (one for students and one for staff). They will register the cases (register of transgressive behaviour) across contact points (confidential counsellors, HR, ombudspersons,..) and follow-up if (policy) actions are required. These actions will be linked with primary prevention (prevention), secondary prevention (detection) and tertiary prevention (managing the long-term impact). The coordinator for staff will be in close contact with the confidential counsellors for psycho-social wellbeing and facilitate intervention sessions. Together with other stakeholders within the university (HR, Antwerp Doctoral School, Health and Safety Department, faculties, ...) they will work on improvement of leadership, continuous feedback culture, eliminating toxic work behaviour .... This is also linked with the actions around skills development, leadership, ...

#### *Reintegration*

In response to upcoming legislative changes, the reintegration procedure when returning to work after long-term illness will be revised to align with the new legal framework. This includes the development of digital monitoring capabilities and a comprehensive training and communication plan to ensure visibility and understanding of the updated procedure.

#### *Resilience*

Resilience building initiatives will be organized for academic staff related to the themes of stress and disconnection. These will include inspirational sessions, trainings, online and live, aimed at early detection, preventing burn-out or early dropout, and managing stress-related challenges. Furthermore individualised stress-management counselling for doctoral researchers will be offered (STIP) and access to self-paced modules via the BloomUp Learn platform. Finally, actions will also be taken to promote education and awareness about neurodiversity. We want to focus on knowledge sharing, inclusion and creating an environment in which everyone feels recognised and supported. One of the upcoming initiatives is dealing with neurodiversity as a supervisor.

<b>Indicators</b>	<p><i>Wellbeing survey</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wellbeing survey Q2 2026 with a response rate of at least 40%</li> <li>▪ Personal feedback reports linked with development actions and services within the university Q2 2026</li> <li>▪ Action plan linked with the results of the wellbeing survey with actions on the level of the faculties and central level Q4 2026.</li> <li>▪ Continuing communication campaign ‘we care’ with various “push initiatives” throughout the year</li> <li>▪ Reporting channels are prominently displayed on both the student and staff portals and are accessible via the public website with visibility optimised for search engines (e.g. indexed and searchable via Google) and also displayed in the workplace through posters Q3 2026.</li> </ul> <p><i>Avoiding transgressive behaviour</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The next three years we will organize 24 bystander trainings with a reach of 200 participants.</li> <li>▪ Continued follow-up action plan of the charter for transgressive behaviour</li> <li>▪ Onboarding of the new coordinator transgressive behaviour Q1 2026</li> <li>▪ The network of confidential counsellors is expanded Q1 2026</li> </ul>
-------------------	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At least three intervension sessions with confidential counsellors a year.</li> </ul> <p><i>Reintegration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Digital monitoring enables improved follow-up Q2 2026</li> <li>▪ Reintegration policy is revised and communicated, in line with upcoming changes in national legislation Q2 2027</li> </ul> <p><i>Resilience</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Online stress relieving initiatives are organized for ZAP Q1 2026</li> <li>▪ New format for the live training around self management for ZAP Q3 2026</li> <li>▪ Sustainable alignment of initiatives for staff with the “mind matters week” for students held every November, which highlights mental health across the university</li> </ul>
--	---

## 7. ACTION 7: Gender and diversity

ACTION 7	GENDER AND DIVERSITY
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	Team Diversity and Inclusion, HR Department
TIMING	2026 - 2028
GAP Principles	Gender balance, Non-discrimination, Ethical principles, Continuing professional development, Complaints/appeals, Participation in decision-making bodies, Research environment, Working conditions, Value of mobility
<p>Since 2008, the University of Antwerp has been actively fulfilling its social responsibility commitment by creating a more inclusive organisation with equal opportunities for all its students and staff. The updated <a href="#">UAntwerp Policy plan for Diversity and Inclusion (2026-2030)</a> integrates D&amp;I policies for staff (including PhD researchers) and includes actions directly or indirectly addressing inequalities affecting minoritized students and staff in particular. Six D&amp;I fields of expertise are particularly relevant to address the particular challenges of minoritized staff in a higher education context: Ethnic-cultural diversity, Global engagement, Gender, Disability, Religion/ideological conviction, Socio-economic diversity and LGBTQI+. These topics are not limitative and strongly interconnected. As an institution we approach challenges through inclusive and intersectional actions when possible, and specific targeted actions whenever necessary.</p> <p>The Policy Plan for diversity and Inclusion covers seven strategic objectives, including inclusive research, inclusive HR policy, inclusive university (comprising an accessible digital and physical campus) and monitoring diversity and inclusion. The wide variety of topics covered in this policy plan mirror the 4 pillars of the EU charter for Researchers. Hence, many activities in the policy plan for Diversity and Inclusion are integrated in other actions of this HR strategy. The opposite holds true as well: many actions in this HR strategy are important to achieve a more inclusive university, without those actions being explicitly labelled as, for example, 'measures for a better gender balance in academia'.</p> <p>Incorporating the relevant activities of the Diversity &amp; Inclusion Policy Plan within the HR Excellence in Research Action plan allows us to not only better align these policy ambitions but also to add power and impact to their implementation.</p>	
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Activity 1: Inclusion is further mainstreamed as a core value and guiding principle in the implementation of the other actions in this HR Strategy.</li> <li>▪ Activity 2: UAntwerp regularly monitors and evaluates the results and the impact of its D&amp;I policy. New activities and initiatives are mainstreamed as much as possible in the other actions in this HR Strategy. Both the HR Strategy as the Policy plan for inclusion and diversity will be continuously followed up, updated and implemented.</li> <li>▪ Activity 3: UAntwerp proposes an extensive training offer to professionalise and empower staff to work in a diverse context and develop inclusion-competence. We provide training for specific target groups such as people in leadership position or minoritized staff members in order to respond to their most pressing needs.</li> </ul>

	<p>More detailed information and targets can be found in the Policy Plan for Diversity and Inclusion on the University of Antwerp website. The most relevant indicators for the HRS4R action plan are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inclusion and attention to gender equality are explicitly mentioned in the relevant strategic actions throughout this document. In subsequent evaluations and follow-up meetings on all relevant actions in this HR-strategy, there is explicit attention to the impact on gender-equality and inclusion</li> <li>▪ UAntwerp continues to update its <a href="#">gender monitoring</a> on a yearly basis to make sure we do not regress towards a bigger gender imbalance between women and men in <a href="#">academic staff</a>. By 2030 we expect the University of Antwerp to achieve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ More than 40% of associate professors are women</li> <li>○ More than 30% of professors are women</li> <li>○ More than 22% of full professors are women</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Every year at least 1 new training with a specific D&amp;I-focus is tried and evaluated. Trainings with a D&amp;I-focus are incorporated in the all-comprising training-menu for staff. The management team of UAntwerp support and promote the importance of training inclusion-skills and they actively encourage academic staff to take part in these trainings.</li> </ul>
--	--

## 8. ACTION 8: A more international campus

ACTION 8	A MORE INTERNATIONAL CAMPUS
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	HR Department, International Staff Office
TIMING	2026 - 2028
GAP Principles	Working conditions
<p>University of Antwerp has an Internationalisation Steering Group as well as a working group “International Campus” reporting to this Steering Group. Its scope/target group is much broader than just researchers within University of Antwerp, but the actions defined here in the context of our HR Excellence in Research action plan are integrated within the priorities set by the Steering Group and the activities defined within the International Campus working group.</p> <p>The current priorities of this International Campus working group involve (1) PhD researchers’ access to information and training, as integrated in action 3 and 4 of this action plan; (2) language and integration, elaborated here in the current action 8; and two additional actions targeting students rather than researchers), which are beyond the scope of HRS4R. The integration of our International Campus ambition in this HRS4R action plan helps us to align transversal policies related to researchers and to ensure better implementation.</p> <p>In our “International” Campus, we want to ensure that language does not become a barrier to integration, participation, or professional development for staff members at the University of Antwerp. English is the <i>lingua franca</i> of 21<sup>st</sup> century academic culture. Nevertheless, we operate in a legal context which defines Dutch as the official working language of the university and B2 level Dutch is a legal requirement for any international staff member involved in teaching (even if they teach in English), within 5 years of their appointment.</p> <p>As the university community has become increasingly international, language plays a crucial role in promoting inclusion, collaboration, and engagement. This action point aims to promote an environment in which both Dutch and English language skills are valued and supported, ensuring that all staff can participate fully in academic and social life at the University of Antwerp.</p> <p>In addition to language support, the university also continues to invest in comprehensive guidance for international staff and their families through the International Staff Office. This service combines a personal approach with the goal of encouraging self-reliance, helping newcomers find their way in Belgium. Although a lot of information and support is already available, international staff are often faced with a large amount of information in a short time upon arrival in Belgium. We therefore aim to strengthen our efforts to ensure that key information reaches them in a timely and accessible way, while continuing to improve and expand our support services in the coming years. Obviously, this ambition is closely linked with action 2 (onboarding).</p>	
Indicators	<p><i>Support for learning Dutch</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthen the existing B2 Dutch language trajectory for academic staff involved in teaching (Q4 2026)</li> <li>▪ Explore complementary initiatives that enhance the learning process, such as individual coaching, language cafés and informal opportunities to practice Dutch (Q4 2026).</li> </ul>

	<p><i>Inclusive communication practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Map out which internal communications (e.g. on Pintra, group emails, staff updates) are still insufficiently accessible in English (Q1 2027).</li> <li>▪ Develop guidelines and priorities for bilingual or English-language communication where necessary, to ensure equal access to essential information (Q2 2027).</li> <li>▪ Promote greater awareness throughout the university community that not all colleagues are proficient in Dutch, encouraging accessible communication practices (continuous effort).</li> </ul> <p><i>Support services for international staff</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Further strengthen and streamline the services offered by the International Staff Office, ensuring that international staff and their families receive tailored, accessible and proactive support (continuous effort).</li> <li>▪ Identify effective ways to reach international staff with key information at the right time, recognising that they often need to process a large amount of information shortly after their arrival (see timelines provided for action 2, onboarding).</li> </ul>
--	---

## 9. ACTION 9: Digitalisation and optimisation

<b>ACTION 9</b>	<b>DIGITALISATION AND OPTIMISATION (e.g. appointment process of contract research staff)</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE UNIT</b>	HR Department, with involvement from IT, Business Intelligence Office, Finance, Research, Innovation & Valorisation Department, Department of Education and Process Management & Privacy Office
<b>TIMING</b>	<b>2026-2030</b>
<b>GAP Principles</b>	Working conditions and professional aspect, contractual and legal obligations

### **Digitalisation and optimisation of appointment process of contract research staff**

#### **1. Description**

The BAP staff category encompasses an ever-increasing group of researchers, ranging from PhD researchers 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, Innovation & Valorisation for funder regulations in bursary agreements.
- The Department of Education for PhD researchers 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.

As already outlined in our previous HRS4R action plan, the University has opted for an incremental approach for the 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.

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.

#### **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 minimises email workflows to and from 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:
  - Enforcing contractual and legal obligations in the digital request, for example regarding the appointment period.
  - Automating checks, for example regarding budget availability.
  - 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.
- Reducing lead time by:
  - Automating checks.
  - Allowing the candidate/staff member to provide necessary information and documents digitally and adding this data to the request automatically.
  - Informing the International Staff Office in advance, for example when a Single Permit is required.
  - Facilitating the approval process by providing a digital portal for stakeholders through which a request can be approved or rejected.
  - Facilitating the approval process by providing instant notifications to stakeholders when a request is waiting for approval.
  - Automating data entry in the HR Information System.
- 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 is responsible for the coordination of the project and acts 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.
- Q3 2022: the first increment of the project was delineated, analysed and documented by HR.

- Q3 2022: approval for development of this first increment was requested and granted by the University Investment Office and ICT Governance Committee.
- 2023, Q1 2024: the first increment was developed by the ICT Department, in consultation with HR and other stakeholders.
- Q4 2024, 2025: user acceptance testing and changes of the first increment. Documentation and creation of training material.

Further steps to be taken, are:

- Q4 2025: training of users
- Q1 2026: delivery of the first increment, organisation of feedback sessions and additional training.
- 2026: definition of content and timing of the second increment, in-depth analysis, submitting request for digitalisation.
- As the process continues, additional operational steps for subsequent increments will be defined in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

### **Self-service application for salary estimates**

#### **1. Description**

Since 18/08/2022, a self-service application 'Salary Estimate' has been available for all university staff. The current version of the application allows users to perform a salary estimate for new contractual appointments on external funds. The calculation method developed for the Salary Estimate module is also used for the salary estimate included in the digital application form for an appointment on external funds. Both projects are therefore linked: the next steps within the latter project can only be taken once calculation methods for salary estimates are available in the former. In the future, this functionality should be expanded to include the possibility of submitting a digital application for the renewal of current contractual appointments, as well as the possibility of submitting an application for a new appointment or renewal of both doctoral fellowships and post-doctoral fellowships.

In addition, users have also requested that the standalone module for salary estimates be further developed. This module allows users to independently explore various options for appointments to external funds and immediately see the results, without having to contact HR and then wait for the results.

HR processes approximately 2,200 salary estimation requests each year, each of which takes an average of 10 minutes to complete. In the case of complex salary estimates that require exploring several options at the same time (e.g. combinations of changes relating to salary scale, seniority, employment percentage, appointment period, etc.), this processing time increases.

#### **2. Objectives**

The 'Salary Estimate' module is a method of salary calculation to support all future types of requests within the digital appointment process. Specifically, we are expanding the current functionality for salary estimates to include:

- Extensions or changes to current contractual appointments on external funds;
- New appointments and extensions of doctoral fellowships;
- New appointments and extensions of post-doctoral fellowships.

#### **3. Activities**

The following steps have been taken since the launch of the first phase of the salary estimate module in Q3 2022:

- Q1-Q2 2024: in-depth analysis and documentation of the desired functionality for extensions or changes to current contractual appointments on external funds.
- Q3-Q4 2024: in-depth analysis and documentation of the desired functionality for new appointments and extensions of doctoral fellowships and post-doctoral fellowships.
- Q1 2025: approval for development was requested and granted by the University Investment Office and ICT Governance Committee.
- Q1-Q2 2025: development by the ICT Department, in consultation with HR.
- Q3-Q4 2025: user acceptance testing and changes.

Further steps to be taken, are:

- Q1 2026: communication, training of users and delivery.

**Access to relevant information (safety, wellbeing, training offer) for all PhD researchers regardless of their administrative registration**

**1. Description**

While the Antwerp Doctoral School targets the entire group of PhD researchers very comprehensively, there is a lot more information circulating in the university that is relevant to PhD researchers. Depending on how a PhD is funded, however, PhD researchers' registration in the university databases differs. This administrative matter should have no impact on access to relevant information, but considering the set-up of the IT system and the university's intranet with different entries for "staff" and for "students", this is not easy to implement from a technical point of view.

**2. Objectives**

Despite these technical difficulties, all PhD researchers must have access to the same information and the same training offers.

Any monitoring and policy analyses related to PhD researchers must rely on complete and reliable data, combining information from the student database (e.g. PhD completion rate) and the staff database (e.g. type of appointment or funding).

**3. Activities**

To ensure equal access to information on e.g. safety and wellbeing, the group of PhD researchers that do not have "staff ID" (e.g. because they are self-funded or funded through scholarships in their home countries) will be given full access to the staff intranet through a technical workaround.

To ensure equal access to training offers targeted at staff, the technical requirement for a new Learning Management System (see Action 3) must include accessibility for people who do not have an UAntwerp staff ID. This will include PhD researchers from our own university as well as external PhD researchers who engage in interuniversity training initiatives hosted at UAntwerp.

In addition, a high-quality link between the UAntwerp student database SISA (entry in the PhD programme) and the UAntwerp staff database Peoplesoft (linked to PhD researchers' bursary or appointment) will be established in order to combine data for monitoring purposes and to make sure that the entire target group is available in both systems.

The following steps have been taken:

- Q1-Q2 2025: exploratory meetings with a project group that consists of stakeholders on scope and requirements of this project.
- Q4 2025: agreement on a plan of action to further research solutions.

Further steps to be taken, are:

- Q4 2025: provide feedback about researched solutions to the project group.

- Q1 2026: agree on next steps and establish a detailed plan of action, involve additional partners where necessary, request approval at the University Investment Office and/or ICT Governance Committee if necessary.

#### **Internal quality assurance update**

##### **1. Description**

Update existing quality controls of HR data and add additional checks.

##### **2. Objectives**

Initiatives to expand and update internal quality assurance in order to have complete and accurate HR data of research staff (and other staff). Accurate data is necessary for correct remuneration, access to information and programmes, enables data exchange, accurate reporting, etc.

##### **3. Activities**

The following steps have been taken:

- Q2 2025: started analysis of quality control update and expansion.

Further steps to be taken, are:

- TBD: completion of initial analysis, determine which quality controls will ultimately be retained and agree on a working method in collaboration with stakeholders, implement changes in cooperation with Business Intelligence Office.

	<p><b>Digitalisation and optimisation of appointment process of contract research staff</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Digital process to appoint contractual research staff with external funding is in place (Increment 1: Q1 2026; Increment 2: Q2 2027).</li> <li>▪ Content and timing of subsequent increments (e.g. extension of contracts, bursary appointments, ...) is approved by the IT Governance Board</li> <li>▪ 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.</li> <li>▪ 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.</li> </ul> <p><b>Self-service application for salary estimates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Self-service functionality for externally funded new and extended contractual appointments and fellowships is in place (Q1 2026).</li> <li>▪ At least 90% of requests for salary estimates are carried out by the requesters themselves, either through the self-service module or via the digital appointment workflow. Maximum 10% of requests that deal with extraordinary situations and require additional effort can be requested directly at HR.</li> </ul> <p><b>Access to relevant information (safety, wellbeing, training offer) for all PhD researchers regardless of their administrative registration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All PhD researchers have access to the staff intranet (Q3 2026).</li> <li>▪ A high-quality link can be established between both databases (Q1 2026).</li> </ul>
--	---

- All PhD researchers have access to the staff training platform in the new Learning Management System (Q4 2028)

**Internal quality assurance update**

Continuous improvement

## 10. ACTION 10: Research assessment & Open Science

ACTION 10	RESEARCH ASSESSMENT & OPEN SCIENCE
RESPONSIBLE UNIT	RIVA HR
TIMING	2026 - 2028
GAP Principles	Professional Responsibility Good practice Research environment
<p>The University of Antwerp's research policy for the coming years is aimed at creating a stimulating and innovative environment in which excellent research flourishes and impact is central. The university aims to be a dynamic and internationally respected research institution, with a clear focus on quality, integrity, sustainability and interdisciplinarity. Researchers are actively supported in their professional development, with a specific focus on career guidance, mentoring and attracting and retaining top talent, both nationally and internationally. Our researchers benefit immensely from operating in a country which scores highly on the Academic Freedom Index (<a href="#">Academic Freedom Index Update 2025</a>), and it is a joint responsibility to cherish and support this. Strategic investment in cutting-edge research infrastructure and optimising funding strategies - including space for non-competitive resources - strengthen the university's scientific potential. Interdisciplinary research and innovative approaches, such as the use of AI and open science, are actively promoted to address complex societal challenges. Furthermore, the university is strongly committed to increasing the visibility and valorisation of its research results through targeted communication, collaboration with external partners and participatory research.</p> <p>Within the scope of this research policy statement, the University of Antwerp is opting for a thorough reform of research evaluation processes (via the institution's CoARA Action Plan). The existing system of research evaluations with site visits will be revised and replaced by an approach that focuses on continuous improvement, in close alignment with the university's updated strategic objectives. Greater emphasis will be placed on the broader context in which the research takes place, such as collaboration, infrastructure and contribution to a healthy research culture. The University has already modernized in line with broad European and international evolutions (e.g. introducing changes in the recruitment process, assessment of research professors, and OTMR) and will continue these efforts regarding other procedures in the assessment of researchers, research proposals, and research outcomes by the University's Research Council. In addition the university recognizes the critical role of incentives in fostering Open Science practices. To support this transition, the university commits to integrating Open Science practices into research evaluation frameworks, including project proposals and the assessment of researchers, and broaden recognition beyond traditional publications to include datasets, software, and collaborative outputs.</p> <p>Obviously, the COARA principles are also integrated in Action 1, focusing on Recruitment and Selection, and action 5, focused on Leadership.</p> <p>As part of this action on Research Assessment, we also want to highlight the human resources component of our university's valorization policy, which is linked to the challenge of recognition and rewards (fostering collaboration with external stakeholders and the private sector; the acquisition of private funding; the management of valorization assets (IP); and positioning the university</p>	

regional innovation ecosystems). In order to realize these mission and objectives we see a need to (re)define and recognise roles and priorities, skills development, training, and assessment.

First, some specific actions will target the mainstreaming of a culture of valorization and entrepreneurship within the university. This comprises:

- Provide an attractive offer of courses and training on KT and TT for all kind of researchers: doctoral, postdoctoral and tenured staff, and for the R&I support staff
- Stimulate all incoming tenured staff to take a basic IP course or training
- Stimulate all R&I support staff to take a basic IP course or training

Second, we plan to redefine the role of valorization managers (supported by the Industrial Research Fund) and the way they are embedded within the university. This comprises:

- Task definition: differentiating between generic and specialised tasks
- Connect valorization managers to broader thematic domains instead of consortia, allowing meaningful clustering of valorization support activities
- Create teams of valorization managers and other types of managers and experts within the university, to foster collaboration
- Develop more clear reporting lines, fostering responsiveness

<b>Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Q4 2025: the University's CoARA Action Plan is approved by the Research Board</li> <li>▪ As from 2026, UAntwerp will stop evaluating research teams according to a process similar to the SEP protocol, but will work with a completely formative exercise in which teams are no longer evaluated in a summative way, but are embedded into larger research clusters in which appreciation and discussion are key. The general set-up of this new visitation style was approved by the Research Board in the Spring of 2025.</li> <li>▪ Assessment of research professors: after the initial five-year implementation period (2021–2026), the adapted evaluation system will be reviewed and further refined where necessary, based on input from both the faculty representatives on the Research Board and the experiences of the research professors themselves (2027).</li> <li>▪ Assessment of early career researchers: although the general and the faculty regulations for PhD researchers-trajectories, including the procedures to measure progress and the minimal requirements for obtaining the PhD researchers, are clearly stated, PhD researchers sometimes report differences in the way internal PhD researchers committees use and interpret these standards. UAntwerp will continue to establish awareness and transparency regarding these standards and will continue to encourage appropriate use and decision-making in all internal PhD researchers committees.</li> <li>▪ Assessment guidelines: Although current research assessment practices are already primarily based on qualitative evaluation (for which peer-review is central) and supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators, it remains important to continue to sensitise</li> </ul>
-------------------	---

	<p>and inform selection panels, researchers and reviewers on the correct use and interpretation of quantitative indicators, and the differences that exist in this regard between the different research disciplines. To support our panels, reviewers and experts, UAntwerp will develop guidelines about good research assessment practices and the role of metrics (2027).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Open Science in research assessment: UAntwerp will explore how Open Science practices can be recognised, rewarded, and included in the assessment of researchers, research proposals and research outcomes (2027-2028).</li> <li>▪ The actions designed to mainstream and to reward a culture of valorization and entrepreneurship within the university (training, communication, ...) will have been implemented by Q4 2026</li> <li>▪ A new framework defining the role, responsibility and position/structure of valorisation managers will be in place by Q4 2027</li> </ul>
--	--