

HR Excellence in Research

GAP Analysis (Charter and Code Checklist)

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Case number

2025IT300593

Name Organisation under review

Università degli Studi di Ferrara

Organisation's contact details

Via Ariosto, 35, Ferrara, Italy, 44121, Italy

Date endorsement charter and code

30/01/2025

GAP Analysis overview

The Charter and Code provides the basis for the Gap analysis. In order to aid cohesion, the GAP Analysis principles have been renumbered under the following headings. Please provide the outcome of your organisation's GAP analysis below. If your organisation currently does not fully meet the criteria, please list whether national or organisational legislation may be limiting the Charter's implementation, initiatives that have already been taken to improve the situation or new proposals that could remedy the current situation. In order to help the organisation's recruitment strategy, a specific self-assessment checklist is provided for Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment.

European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers : GAP analysis overview

- **Status** : to what extent does this organisation meet the following principles?
- **Implementation (++, +/-, -/+, --)** :
 - ++ fully implemented
 - +/- almost but not fully implemented
 - -/+ partially implemented
 - -- insufficiently implemented
- **GAP** : In case of --, -/+, or +/-, please **indicate the actual "gap"** between the principle and the current practice in your organisation.
- **Implementation impediments** : If relevant, please list any national/regional legislation or organisational regulation currently impeding implementation.
- **Initiatives undertaken/new proposals** : If relevant, please list any initiatives that have already been taken to improve the situation and/or new proposals that could remedy the current situation.

Status

PILLAR 1 – ETHICS, INTEGRITY, GENDER AND OPEN SCIENCE

Status

1. ETHICS AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
+/- almost but not fully i...	<p>Despite the presence of a structured regulatory framework, there remains a need to update the Code of Conduct for Research Integrity in light of the most recent European provisions and recommendations concerning research integrity, research ethics, data management, publication, peer review, assessment, and the prevention of misconduct. Furthermore, the results of the questionnaire reveal that awareness of the Code of Ethics and Conduct, the European Charter for Researchers, and the Code of Conduct for Research Integrity is not yet fully widespread across the academic community. It is therefore necessary to strengthen communication, training, and awareness-raising actions aimed at all categories of researchers—with particular attention to early-career researchers—and to make the procedures for identifying, reporting, and managing potential breaches of scientific integrity principles more visible and accessible.</p>	<p>The University of Ferrara possesses a comprehensive regulatory framework governing ethics, research integrity, and code of conduct within the academic community. Pursuant to Article 2, paragraph 4, letter g) of Italian Law no. 240/2010, the University has adopted a Code of Ethics and Conduct, which applies to the entire university community. This Code incorporates the behavioral duties provided for by Presidential Decree no. 62 of April 16, 2013, as amended, distinguishing between violations subject to disciplinary sanctions and breaches of ethical and professional principles that entail consequences of a different nature. Furthermore, since 2018, Unife has adopted a Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and established an Ethics Committee, which is responsible for reviewing cases related to both the Code of Ethics and Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. In October 2025, the University established the Research Ethics Committee, with the aim of safeguarding the rights, dignity, integrity, and well-being of individuals involved in research, ensuring respect for other living organisms and the environment, as well as protecting freedom of research and promoting scientific ethics. The Committee performs ethical evaluations of research projects and experimental protocols submitted for its review; it also issues opinions regarding requests from national, European, or international institutions, as well as within the framework of procedures linked to funding calls. Overall, Unife features a significant regulatory and organizational foundation regarding ethics and research integrity, which has been recently reinforced by the establishment of the Research Ethics Committee.</p>

Status

2. FREEDOM OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
++ fully implemented	No structural criticalities emerge regarding the formal recognition of freedom of research, which is broadly guaranteed by the constitutional, legislative, and university regulatory framework.	<p>Freedom of research is grounded, first and foremost, in the Constitution of the Italian Republic. Article 9 establishes that “the Republic promotes the development of culture and scientific and technical research,” while Article 33 states that “art and science are free, and free is their teaching.” This principle is further invoked by Law no. 168 of May 9, 1989, which grants universities educational, scientific, organizational, financial, and accounting autonomy, identifying them as the primary centers for scientific research and providing that they operate in respect of the freedom of research of professors and researchers, as well as the autonomy of scientific structures. Law no. 240 of December 30, 2010, Article 1, likewise reaffirms that universities are the primary centers of free research and free education. In line with this regulatory framework, the Statute of the University of Ferrara, in Article 3, declares that it guarantees research autonomy, freedom of teaching, and equal opportunities for access to research funding, as well as to the facilities and tools necessary for its conduct. The principle is also recalled in the Code of Ethics and Conduct, updated in 2025, which in Article 2 affirms the University's commitment to creating an environment favorable to individual freedom and autonomy, considered essential conditions for the pursuit of knowledge, the quality of teaching, research, and study, as well as for the assertion of professionalism and excellence. Furthermore, the University fosters freedom and autonomy in teaching, research, study, and learning. Since 2018, Unife has also possessed a Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, the preamble of which recognizes that research is founded on the freedom to formulate research questions, develop theories, collect empirical material, and employ appropriate methods. To support the freedom to disseminate scientific results, the University has additionally adopted policies on Open Access and Open Science, aimed at promoting transparency, sharing, and the circulation of knowledge. The results of the internal survey confirm an overall positive perception: approximately 80% of respondents state they "strongly agree" or "completely agree" with the statement that Unife guarantees freedom of research and promotes the free movement of researchers, scientific knowledge, and technologies.</p>

Status

Status

3. OPEN SCIENCE

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
+/- almost but not fully i...	<p>The results of the internal survey show an overall positive perception: 78.5% of respondents believe that the University supports and promotes the culture of Open Science in accordance with the FAIR principles, and 74.4% feel encouraged to communicate, disseminate, and promote their research results. However, certain tools and initiatives have been introduced only recently and may not yet be fully known or consistently utilized across the academic community. It is therefore necessary to consolidate their dissemination, awareness, and utilization through structured communication, training, and operational support actions aimed at all categories of researchers, with particular attention to early-career researchers. A further area for improvement concerns the Fund for the promotion of Open Access publishing, which is currently</p>	<p>The University of Ferrara initiated its transition toward Open Science with the signing of the Messina Declaration in 2004 and, subsequently, the Berlin Declaration in 2006. In line with national legislation and the University's Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, Unife has progressively developed tools, policies, and services to support Open Science, making them available to the entire academic community. A primary, pivotal tool is SFERA (the University of Ferrara Research Products Catalogue), the institutional repository for publications produced by the Unife scientific community. SFERA enables the self-archiving of bibliographic metadata and full-text publications by University staff, ensuring their preservation and public access. Even in cases where a publication is not available via Open Access, a document request service is active; this allows internal authors, provided they hold the relevant rights, to transmit a copy of the document to anyone requesting it. The institutional repository also integrates sections dedicated to the deposition of FAIR data and the registration of persistent identifiers, and is governed by the Regulations for the coordination and management of the University Institutional Repository of scientific production, Rectoral Decree (D.R.) no. 1197/2023 of 01/08/2023. In terms of policy, Unife adopted a University Policy for open access to publications within the Institutional Repository as early as April 2015. In 2023, this policy was revised and updated to integrate further aspects of Open Science, including the open access deposition of research data and doctoral theses. The new University Policy on Open Science, Rectoral Decree (D.R.) no. 38/2024 of 11/01/2024, in force since January 2024, establishes the University's commitment to supporting forms of open access through various instruments, such as institutional publishing services, agreements with commercial publishers, and departmental publishing platforms. Creative Commons licenses, in their various forms, are adopted for open access publications. Furthermore, the Open Science Commission of the</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
	<p>limited to journal articles. It would be advisable to evaluate, compatibly with available resources, a progressive expansion of this support to other forms of scientific production and research outputs that are consistent with Open Science principles. Furthermore, it remains appropriate to strengthen practical support on topics such as the deposition of research data, FAIR principles, the drafting of Data Management Plans, the use of open licenses, the selection of reliable publishing venues, the management of publication costs, and the use of institutional infrastructures for the deposition and preservation of research results.</p>	<p>University of Ferrara was established in 2024 with the objective of implementing practices and policies that support collaboration, as well as the open and timely sharing of research results. Starting from January 2024, Unife also created its own community on the Zenodo repository, named University of Ferrara Zenodo Community – UnifeZen, which is governed by a Curation Policy, Rectoral Decree (D.R.) no. 7/2024 of 03/01/2024, encouraging the use of open formats. This space is designated for the publication and deposition of research data and other outputs deriving from the activities of Unife-affiliated staff, ensuring data backup and DOI assignment. The University also carries out internal training activities and events dedicated to Open Science, including webinars and seminars aimed at research staff. For the past two years, it has also organized the annual event "Embracing the Future. Doing Open Science Today," featuring the participation of Open Science experts and both Italian and international scholars. Starting in 2025, Unife established a University Fund for the promotion of Open Access publishing, regulated by the Regulations governing the University fund for the promotion of publishing scientific articles in open access journals, Rectoral Decree (D.R.) no. 2143 of 07.11.2024. The fund provides financing or co-financing for the costs of publishing open access scientific articles that have been accepted for publication, but are not yet published, by scientific publishers practicing ethical open access—aimed primarily at opening up knowledge rather than being limited solely to profit. Additionally, since 2023, Unife has implemented monitoring of scientific publication expenditures incurred by research staff. Starting in July 2023, specific items were introduced into the chart of accounts to distinguish between expenses for publishing in Open Access, expenses for standard publishing, and expenses for editorial services, in accordance with the CODAU Guidelines for the consistent monitoring of Open Access publication expenditures. Furthermore, since May 2024, the University has integrated a solution into the SFERA research</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
		<p>catalogue for the standardized submission of payment requests for costs incurred for scientific publications, enabling the linkage between catalogue data and the accounting data of individual Departments. The University of Ferrara actively participates in the national and international debate on Open Science through networks and associations such as the EOSC Association. It is also among the signatory universities of the CoARA Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment, which recognizes Open Science as a qualifying research activity. Finally, Article 22, paragraph 6 of the Doctoral Regulations stipulates that PhD students are required to enter their research products into the University Catalogue of scientific production, associating them with their personal ORCID identifier.</p>

Status

4. GENDER EQUALITY

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
+/- almost but not fully i...	<p>Despite the presence of a comprehensive statutory, organizational, and planning framework, several substantial criticalities persist in the effective achievement of gender equality, particularly regarding the distribution of women across different career levels and the persistence of economic gaps. Although 73% of respondents to the internal survey believe that gender equality has been achieved at all career levels, the 2025 report of the Single Guarantee Committee highlights a numerical predominance of women primarily in the most precarious positions and at the lowest levels of the career hierarchy. It is therefore advisable to strengthen actions aimed at reducing vertical segregation, supporting women's career advancement, monitoring and countering pay differentials, and promoting measures for balancing personal, family, and professional life that are genuinely</p>	<p>The University of Ferrara recognizes and promotes the principle of gender equality within its statutory and organizational framework. In particular, Article 5 of the University Statute guarantees compliance with the constitutional principle of equal opportunities between men and women regarding access to public office and promotes gender balance in the appointment of members to the University's governing bodies, as well as equitable representation within elective bodies. To safeguard and implement gender policies, several statutory bodies are active, in addition to the Vice-Rector for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Pursuant to Article 28 of the Statute, the Single Guarantee Committee (Comitato Unico di Garanzia – CUG) performs proactive, advisory, and monitoring functions regarding equal opportunities, respect for individual dignity in the workplace, the prevention of all forms of discrimination, and the promotion of organizational well-being. Pursuant to Article 27 of the Statute, the Equality Council (Consiglio di Parità) promotes initiatives for the implementation of equal opportunities and the enhancement of diversity, monitors compliance with the principle of non-discrimination, and provides support to victims of violence and mistreatment. The Technical and Administrative Staff Council (Consiglio del Personale Tecnico- Amministrativo), provided for by Article 26 of the Statute, performs advisory and proactive functions in representation of the technical and administrative personnel. Furthermore, the University has adopted a Positive Action Plan (Piano di Azioni Positive), which since 2022 has been annexed to the PIAO – Integrated Activity and Organization Plan (Piano Integrato di Attività e Organizzazione). This plan aims to identify and remove economic, administrative, and cultural obstacles that limit full equality between women and men. The Plan adopts a gender perspective in analyzing the University's organization, provides for monitoring activities of the work environment, and utilizes indicators to verify the potential</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
	accessible to all categories of staff and researchers	presence of discrimination. With a view toward streamlining and avoiding the duplication of planning instruments, Unife has also integrated the actions outlined in its Gender Equality Plan (GEP) into the dedicated section for positive actions within the PIAO. The current Gender Equality Plan of the University of Ferrara features numerous actions aimed at reducing gender disparities and promoting an academic and working environment that is more equitable, inclusive, and attentive to work-life balance. These instruments are complemented by the analysis and reporting activities contained in the Gender Report (Bilancio di Genere), which enables the monitoring of gender distribution across the various components and levels of the university organization.

Status

5. EMBRACING DIVERSITY

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
++ fully implemented	No relevant structural criticalities emerge regarding the formal recognition of the principle of inclusion and non-discrimination, which is supported by dedicated bodies, institutional figures, and tailored services, as well as by a positive perception within the research community.	The University of Ferrara promotes a multicultural academic community founded on mutual respect, tolerance, the enhancement of diversity, and the countering of all forms of discrimination. The University aligns its inclusive policies toward building a learning and working environment capable of recognizing and safeguarding differences related to, among others, gender, age, origin, disability, sexual orientation, and personal and social conditions. Non-discrimination policies are overseen by several institutional bodies and figures. Pursuant to Law no. 183/2010 and also regulated by Ministerial Directive no. 2/2019, the Single Guarantee Committee (Comitato Unico di Garanzia – CUG) performs functions aimed at promoting equal opportunities, preventing discrimination, protecting personal dignity, and fostering organizational well-being. It is supported by the Vice-Rector for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, the Equality Council, and the Coordination Office for Inclusion Policies, which contribute to the development of initiatives, programs, resources, and strategic collaborations with external entities committed to objectives aligned with the University's inclusive mission. Unife also features a Confidential Counsellor (Consigliera di Fiducia), whom anyone studying or working at the University can contact if they believe they have experienced acts or behaviors detrimental to personal dignity, attributable to mobbing, harassment, sexual harassment, or other forms of discrimination. This figure provides advice and assistance, contributing to the prevention and management of critical situations within the university community. Furthermore, the University has established the "AURORA" University Anti-Violence Desk, a free service available to all cisgender and transgender women within the university community—including students, professors, researchers, technical-administrative staff, and collaborators in various capacities. The Desk offers a non-judgmental listening and support space, managed by qualified experts from the Centro Donna Giustizia, for individuals experiencing or who have experienced situations of violence either inside or outside the University. The results of the questionnaire addressed to researchers confirm an overall positive perception of

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
		Unife's commitment: 82% of respondents believe that the University does not discriminate based on sex, gender, age, or other personal characteristics.

Status

6. THE RESEARCHER

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
+/- almost but not fully i...	<p>Although the framework of researchers' professional responsibilities is formally defined and supported by University statutory and regulatory instruments, there emerges a need to strengthen its awareness and consistent application across different categories of researchers and across Departments. Specifically, the questionnaire results indicate that approximately 40% of respondents report limited knowledge of institutional strategies and research funding mechanisms. This figure highlights the opportunity to enhance information and training actions concerning the University's strategic objectives, funding opportunities, authorization procedures, project management, and reporting obligations. A further area for improvement relates to knowledge concerning intellectual and industrial property aspects, which is not yet fully widespread among all researchers. More generally, there is a recognized need to make information regarding the professional duties of researchers, the responsibilities associated with the use of public funds, research ethics, the management of conflicts of</p>	<p>At Unife, researchers across all career stages have defined responsibilities regarding the quality, fairness, integrity, and social utility of their research and teaching activities, in coherence with national legislation, the Code of Ethics and Conduct of the University of Ferrara — Rectoral Decree (D.R.) Rep. no. 881/2025 of 19/06/2025 — and the principles of the European Charter for Researchers. The professional attitude required of researchers is grounded in integrity, scientific rigor, transparency, accountability, collaboration, and respect. Researchers are required to operate avoiding conflicts of interest and misconduct, to respect project objectives and timelines, to collaborate constructively with colleagues, students, the administration, and the scientific community, as well as to contribute to the enhancement and dissemination of research results. They are also responsible for the fair and transparent management of entrusted public and private resources, compliance with reporting regulations established by funded projects, and standards concerning research ethics, intellectual property, and scientific integrity. Aspects related to intellectual property are protected by national legislation and the University Regulations on Intellectual and Industrial Property. Researchers who produce inventions or results eligible for protection are expected to engage with the University during the various stages of protecting, managing, and commercializing the relevant industrial and intellectual property rights. Regarding early-career researchers, PhD students, research fellows, and scholarship holders are required to regularly document the results of their activities. PhD students periodically report on their research progress to their respective supervisors and the Doctoral Academic Board, also for the purposes of admission to the following year or the defense of the final thesis. They have access to mobility funds and benefit from activities promoted by the Doctoral School, which supports the interdisciplinary</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
	interest, and the reporting of activities more accessible and visible.	and intersectoral dimension of training, including initiatives dedicated to transferable skills and employability. Postdoctoral and postgraduate researchers engaged in specific research programs are required to submit, annually or as provided for by the call, a detailed written report on the activity carried out to the Principal Investigator and the Department Council for the relevant evaluation. Associate and Full Professors, in addition to their research and teaching responsibilities, perform guidance, supervision, and mentorship functions for younger researchers, contributing to the creation of a healthy, inclusive, and professionally solid working environment.

Status

7. FREE CIRCULATION OF RESEARCHERS

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
-/+ partially implemented	<p>Despite an institutional orientation favorable to mobility and internationalization, there remain areas for improvement in the structuring of specific and stable instruments to support researchers' mobility. Specifically, there are no University funds explicitly allocated in the budget to foster the extra-European mobility of professors and research staff, beyond the instruments already available through European programs or competitive projects. A further aspect for improvement concerns the formal recognition of international mobility within selection, evaluation, and career advancement processes. Although international experience is valued in various contexts, it is not explicitly indicated as a structured and consistent evaluation criterion in all competitive calls and career procedures.</p>	<p>The University of Ferrara recognizes the value of the free movement of researchers, scientific knowledge, and technologies, as well as geographic, international, interinstitutional, intersectoral, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary mobility as fundamental instruments for professional development and for strengthening research quality. Unife adheres to this principle in coherence with national legislation and its own internal regulations. Specifically, in selection and evaluation procedures—also in implementation of Ministerial Decree (D.M.) no. 243/2011—consideration is given to the geographic and international mobility experience gained by candidates, including training and research periods in Italy and abroad, collaborations with foreign or international universities, institutions, and research centers, participation in international conferences, teaching activities at international universities or research centers, and the attainment of international awards or prizes. Furthermore, internationalization represents one of the relevant pillars of the University's strategy. Unife promotes and supports participation in European projects, international networks, scientific and educational collaboration agreements with foreign universities, as well as the utilization of European programs and funds, including Erasmus+, aimed at fostering the mobility of students, researchers, and professors. Overall, the University possesses instruments and initiatives consistent with the principle of free movement, both through the enhancement of international experience within career paths and through participation in international programs, networks, and agreements.</p>

Status

Status

8. SUSTAINABILITY OF RESEARCH

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
++ fully implemented	No relevant structural criticalities emerge	<p>The University of Ferrara promotes the principle of sustainability within its research, innovation, and technology transfer activities, in coherence with European, national, and regional priorities regarding ecological transition and environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Through PNRR (National Recovery and Resilience Plan) funds, Unife is currently engaged in major sustainability-oriented research projects, including ECOSISTER, which aims to promote the ecological transition of Emilia-Romagna's economic and social system. The project involves various sectors, technologies, and skills, integrating digital transition and sustainability with the objective of improving work, human well-being, and environmental protection. ECOSISTER aligns with the objectives of the Emilia-Romagna Region's Pact for Work and Climate and integrates with regional, national, and European strategies. In the 2026–2028 PIAO, the University explicitly outlines its contribution to the implementation of an extensive technology and knowledge transfer program from the university and research sector to the production system, across all areas of sustainability. This program aims to contribute to the reconversion of production processes, the creation of quality employment, the modernization of the healthcare system and health-dedicated services, the development of new life rhythms, a more efficient public administration, and more effective actions for environmental protection. The planned interventions specifically concern: applied research, including through the use of research and innovation infrastructures accessible to businesses and private research groups; technology transfer and the enhancement of research results; support for the creation and development of research-based start-ups and spin-offs; the promotion of incubation activities and services and venture capital funds; training conducted in synergy between universities and businesses, with a particular focus on SMEs; industrial PhDs; and the involvement of civil society in themes of innovation, economic and social sustainability, technical skills, and scientific culture. Furthermore, Unife has included specific sustainability-related objectives within its strategic planning documents. Specifically, objective VP.2.1 concerns the promotion of the enhancement and inventorying of research products within the field of environmental, economic, and social sustainability in IRIS. Objective VP4.9 aims to</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
		<p>strengthen the analysis and optimize the management of energy resources, fostering the development of responsible behaviors inspired by knowledge, respect for legality, and environmental sustainability. Overall, Unife possesses a significant strategic and project framework to link research, innovation, technology transfer, and sustainability, with particular reference to ecological transition, territorial development, and the enhancement of research results.</p>

PILLAR 2 – RESEARCHERS ASSESSMENT, RECRUITMENT AND PROGRESSION

Status

9. RESEARCHERS' ASSESSMENT

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
-/+ partially implemented	<p>Despite the existence of a national and University framework for research assessment, the questionnaire results reveal that approximately 50% of respondents are unaware of the existence of a periodic, independent, and transparent system for evaluating the professional performance of researchers. This finding highlights the need to strengthen internal communication regarding existing assessment systems, the criteria used, the purposes of evaluation, and the roles of the various actors involved, such as ANVUR, ASN, VQR, the Evaluation Board (Nucleo di Valutazione), Departments, and University bodies. A further area for improvement involves a discussion on the opportunity for a progressive alignment of evaluation practices with the principles promoted by CoARA, particularly regarding the recognition of a plurality of research outputs and activities beyond scientific publications. It would be advisable to make the recognition of contributions such as research data, software, patents, methodologies, Third Mission activities, public engagement, supervision, scientific leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, mobility, and the social impact of research more visible and structured. Furthermore, it is appropriate to enhance the transparency and</p>	<p>The assessment of research and researchers at the University of Ferrara is integrated into the national regulatory framework and the evaluation systems established for the Italian university system. In particular, Article 16 of Law no. 240/2010 regulates the National Scientific Qualification (Abilitazione Scientifica Nazionale – ASN), a mandatory procedure for access to the roles of Associate Professor and Full Professor. The ASN involves the assessment of candidates' scientific profiles by national committees, taking into account not only scientific publications but also further qualifying elements, such as the ability to coordinate research groups, participation in national and international projects, mobility, patents, and other research outputs. At the national level, ANVUR (the National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes) periodically conducts the Evaluation of Research Quality (Valutazione della Qualità della Ricerca – VQR), which assesses universities and departments as a whole, considering scientific production, products selected by the institutions, and activities attributable to the Third Mission. At the University level, Unife has defined an internal document on the criteria and methods for resource allocation, aimed at ensuring the achievement of strategic and operational planning objectives both at the University and departmental levels. This document regulates the allocation of resources with reference to staff recruitment, funding for research and the Third Mission, allocations to Departments, and allocations to Centers, and is available on the University intranet. In accordance with Law no. 240/2010, Unife also utilizes the Evaluation Board (Nucleo di Valutazione), which is responsible for verifying and evaluating the overall quality of the University's institutional activities,</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
	<p>accessibility of the documents and procedures governing resource allocation, recruitment, career progression, and the assessment of research results, so that researchers can better understand the link between evaluation, strategic planning, funding, and professional development.</p>	<p>including research activities and the professional performance of staff, according to criteria of regularity, transparency, and independence. A particularly significant element is represented by Unife's adherence to the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA). Through this adherence, the University commits to progressively improving the assessment criteria and practices for research and researchers, enhancing the quality, impact, and diversity of research activities, practices, and outputs, in line with European evaluation reform principles.</p>

Status

10. RECRUITMENT

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
<p>+/- almost but not fully i...</p>	<p>Even within a framework of formally regulated procedures that comply with national legislation, the alignment of recruitment and selection practices with OTM-R (Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment) principles can be further strengthened. Specifically, it is advisable to increase the public notice and visibility of calls, ensuring their broader, systematic, and timely dissemination through national and international channels, including portals dedicated to researcher mobility and recruitment. This would enhance the accessibility of opportunities, widen the candidate pool, and foster greater international attractiveness for the University. A further area for improvement concerns the availability of calls and selection documentation in English. Furthermore, recruitment procedures could be monitored from the perspective of equal opportunities, inclusion, and bias prevention, including through the collection and analysis of data regarding the composition of selection committees, the participation of male and female candidates, the outcomes of the procedures, and the presence of potential gender or other imbalances. Finally, it would be appropriate to provide information or training activities for members of selection committees, with particular reference to OTM-R principles, responsible research assessment, the</p>	<p>The recruitment and selection procedures for research staff at the University of Ferrara are conducted in compliance with national legislation and the principles of public notice, transparency, impartiality, equal opportunities, and merit. The primary reference framework is established by Law no. 240/2010, which regulates the recruitment of academic staff, including procedures for First and Second-tier Professors and for researchers. Comparative procedures are further governed by internal University regulations, which define criteria, operational modalities, the composition of selection committees, the public disclosure of records, and administrative requirements. Unife publishes calls and notices regarding recruitment procedures through its institutional website and the channels provided for by legislation, ensuring the accessibility of information concerning eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria, deadlines, required documentation, and the outcomes of the procedures. Selection committees are appointed in accordance with current provisions and operate on the basis of predetermined criteria, ensuring the comparative assessment of both male and female candidates. In coherence with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, the University recognizes the importance of open, transparent, and merit-based selection procedures. The assessment takes into account the scientific and professional profile of the candidates, their publications, teaching activity, participation in research projects, national and international experience, and further qualifying elements provided for by the calls. Furthermore, the University</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
	prevention of unconscious bias, and the evaluation of non-linear, interdisciplinary, or international career paths.	promotes the principle of equal opportunities within recruitment and selection procedures, in line with the Statute, the Code of Ethics and Conduct, the Gender Equality Plan, the Positive Action Plan, and the inclusion policies adopted at the institutional level.

Status

11. SELECTION

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
+/- almost but not fully i...	<p>Even within a framework of regulated and public selection procedures, the alignment of selection practices with OTM-R (Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment) principles can be further strengthened. An area for improvement concerns the public notice of calls and their linguistic accessibility. It is advisable to enhance the dissemination of selection opportunities also through national and international channels dedicated to researcher recruitment, and to ensure the availability of calls—or a substantial summary thereof—in English. Furthermore, it would be appropriate to promote, where compatible with national legislation and University regulations, greater openness and diversification in the composition of selection committees, encouraging the presence of members from foreign institutions and a more balanced representation of different genders. This would contribute to strengthening impartiality, internationalization, a plurality of perspectives, and the prevention of potential bias within evaluation processes. It would also be useful to consolidate the monitoring of selection procedures from the perspective of equal opportunities, inclusion, and bias prevention, through the periodic collection of data regarding the composition of committees, the number and profile of candidates, procedural outcomes, and the presence of any gender, disciplinary, geographic, or other imbalances. Finally, it is advisable to strengthen the training or</p>	<p>The selection procedures for researchers at the University of Ferrara are governed by national legislation and University regulations, in accordance with the principles of transparency, impartiality, public notice, equal opportunities, and comparative assessment of merit. For professors and researchers, the primary reference is Law no. 240/2010, which regulates the recruitment and appointment procedures for academic staff. For the various types of positions—First and Second-tier Professors, fixed-term researchers, research contract holders, PhD students, and other research figures—Unife adopts public selection procedures, with calls that define eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria, required documentation, procedural modalities, and application deadlines. Selection committees are appointed in accordance with current statutory and regulatory provisions and operate on the basis of predetermined criteria, which are minuted and made public. The assessment of candidates takes into account their scientific and professional profile, publications, research activity, teaching activity, participation in national and international projects, mobility, awards received, and further elements provided for by the calls. The University publishes calls and procedural outcomes on its institutional channels and other legally required platforms, ensuring procedural traceability and candidates' access to information. Furthermore, the procedures are oriented toward respecting equal opportunities and preventing discrimination, in</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
	information provided to members of selection committees regarding OTM-R principles, responsible research assessment, the prevention of unconscious bias, and the evaluation of diversified, interdisciplinary, international, or non-linear scientific paths.	coherence with the University Statute, the Code of Ethics and Conduct, the Gender Equality Plan, the Positive Action Plan, and institutional inclusion policies. Overall, Unife features a formally regulated selection system based on public and comparative procedures, consistent with the national regulatory framework and the general principles of the European Charter for Researchers and open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment.

Status

12. CAREER PROGRESSION

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
+/- almost but not fully i...	<p>Even within a framework of formalized career advancement procedures, there emerges a need to make the recognition of the diversity of researchers' contributions more explicit and systematic, in coherence with the principles of responsible research assessment. Specifically, the questionnaire results indicate that a significant proportion of respondents do not know or do not believe that mobility is adequately valued within selection and career advancement processes. It is therefore advisable to strengthen the recognition of geographic, international, intersectoral, interdisciplinary, interorganizational, and virtual mobility experiences, including in cases of non-linear or multi-professional paths. Furthermore, it would be useful to make contributions such as data, software, models, protocols, patents, Open Science activities, Third Mission, public engagement, entrepreneurship, knowledge valorization, supervision, mentoring, scientific leadership, national and international collaboration, administrative activities, and societal services more visible within evaluation and progression criteria. A further area for improvement concerns training and awareness-raising on authorship and the correct attribution of scientific contributions, particularly for early-career researchers. It would be appropriate to promote greater awareness regarding the rights and responsibilities connected to co-authorship, co-invention, independent</p>	<p>The career advancement of researchers at the University of Ferrara follows national legislation and internal University regulations. The primary reference is Article 24 of Law no. 240/2010, as amended by Decree-Law (D.L.) no. 36/2022, which redefined the path for access and progression in academic careers. Under the previous system, two types of fixed-term researchers were provided for: RTD-A, with a three-year contract for research, supplementary teaching, and student service activities, extendable only once for two years but without automatic progression toward the role of Associate Professor; and RTD-B, with a three-year contract aimed at direct appointment to the role of Associate Professor, subject to obtaining the National Scientific Qualification (ASN) and a positive evaluation of the teaching and scientific activity carried out. Since 2022, Decree-Law no. 36/2022 has introduced the figure of the tenure-track fixed-term researcher (ricercatore a tempo determinato in tenure track – RTT), featuring a six-year fixed-term contract and a final evaluation for access to the role of Associate Professor. The reform aims to streamline the academic path, increase contractual stability, and progressively phase out the RTD-A and RTD-B positions. Unife promotes academic growth paths through the procedures provided for by national legislation. Over the last three years, through procedures pursuant to Article 24, paragraph 5, of Law no. 240/2010, 3 Associate Professors were appointed in 2023, 51 Associate Professors in 2024, and 13 Associate Professors from January to June 2025. As of the date considered, 9</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
	<p>publication of results, and the recognition of individual contributions. Finally, it remains appropriate to enhance the transparency and accessibility of information on career paths, evaluation criteria, and progression opportunities, with particular attention to R1–R2 researchers, non-linear paths, and gender or disciplinary differences that may impact professional advancement.</p>	<p>procedures under Article 24, paragraph 5, are also still ongoing. Furthermore, the University is committed to the progressive alignment with the principles of responsible research assessment, also through its adherence to the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and CoARA, which promote the recognition of a diversity of research outputs, activities, and contributions beyond scientific publications alone. Overall, Unife possesses a career advancement system regulated by national legislation, with structured paths for transition toward higher academic roles, particularly for tenure-track figures and for researchers meeting the requirements provided for by law.</p>

PILLAR 3 - WORKING CONDITIONS AND PRACTICES

Status

13. WORKING CONDITIONS, FUNDING AND SALARIES

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
+/- almost but not fully i...	<p>Significant heterogeneity is observed in the protections granted to PhD students, grant holders, research fellows, research contract holders, fixed-term researchers, and permanent staff. This differentiation stems primarily from the national regulatory framework and the distinct legal nature of the employment relationships, rather than from discretionary choices by the University. A specific critical issue, attributable to current national legislation, concerns research grants (borse di ricerca) pursuant to Article 18, paragraph 5, of Law no. 240/2010, which do not provide for social security contributions or access to pension, sickness, or maternity benefits. The University's scope of action, therefore, chiefly concerns improving information and guidance, and, where possible, limiting the use of such contractual forms. Furthermore, the questionnaire results highlight an area for attention regarding awareness of working conditions: approximately 46% of respondents state they do not know whether the University ensures adequate working conditions for researchers. This figure suggests not necessarily an absence of measures,</p>	<p>The University of Ferrara regulates the working conditions of professors, researchers, and the various figures involved in research activities in compliance with national legislation and internal University regulations. The University promotes a working environment based on health and safety protection, personal dignity, equal opportunities, inclusion, organizational well-being, and work-life balance. For professors and research staff, the reference framework is defined by national university legislation, specifically Law no. 240/2010 and its subsequent amendments and additions. For contractual personnel, working conditions are also governed by the National Collective Labour Agreement (CCNL) for the Education and Research sector and by supplementary collective bargaining. Unife features dedicated structures, services, and procedures for workplace health and safety, risk prevention, health surveillance, mandatory safety training, and emergency management, in coherence with Legislative Decree (D.Lgs.) no. 81/2008. The University has also established the role of Coordinator for the integration of people with disabilities (Responsabile dei processi di inserimento delle persone con disabilità), provided for by Article 39-ter of Legislative Decree no. 165/2001, with the task of favoring the effective integration of people with disabilities into the working environment. The economic, social security, fiscal, and welfare conditions of researchers vary according to their legal status and contract type. For PhD students, the scholarship amount is established at the ministerial level. The scholarship is exempt from personal income tax (IRPEF) and entails enrollment in the INPS Separate Management (Gestione Separata), providing access to pension benefits, unemployment allowance, and sickness and maternity benefits within the limits established by legislation. Protection against accidents and occupational diseases is also</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
	<p>but rather a lack of widespread knowledge concerning the available instruments, protections, and services. There remains, therefore, a need to strengthen the awareness and accessibility of information regarding working conditions across the various categories of researchers, particularly PhD students, research fellows, grant holders, research contract holders, fixed-term researchers, and international staff. Information relating to rights, duties, protections, safety, leaves, permits, maternity, sickness, mobility, welfare, psychological support, taxation, social security, and reporting channels is currently distributed across different documents, web pages, and offices. It would therefore be advisable to enhance its accessibility through more integrated, concise, and easily consultable information tools, also available in English. A further area for improvement involves the activation of supplementary healthcare welfare instruments for teaching and research staff. Although a regulatory framework exists that allows state universities to allocate resources to forms of supplementary healthcare assistance, pursuant to Article 26, paragraph 8, of</p>	<p>provided through the University's enrollment in the INAIL management on behalf of the State. For research grants (<i>borse di ricerca</i>) pursuant to Article 18, paragraph 5, of Law no. 240/2010, the amount is not set by national legislation but by University guidelines. These grants are exempt from IRPEF but do not provide for social security contributions; consequently, the grant period does not grant access to pension, sickness, or maternity benefits, nor is it redeemable for pension purposes. For research fellows (<i>assegnisti di ricerca</i>), pursuant to Article 22 of Law no. 240/2010 under the previous text, the minimum amount of the fellowship is established by national legislation, inclusive of social security contributions paid by the holder. The fellowships are exempt from IRPEF and require enrollment in the INPS Separate Management. Compared to PhD students, enhanced maternity protection is provided, with the University supplementing the INPS allowance up to the full amount of the fellowship. For research contracts (<i>contratti di ricerca</i>), governed by Article 22 of Law no. 240/2010 under the text currently in force, national collective bargaining defines the minimum and maximum compensation amounts. Research contract holders are enrolled in the State Employees' Pension Fund (CTPS) of INPS, the severance pay management, and the Credit Fund (Fondo Credito) for access to subsidized credit benefits. Furthermore, unemployment contributions are paid, and sickness and maternity benefits are ensured by the University according to the provisions applicable to employment relationships. The University is currently seeking clarification regarding the possibility of enrolling research contract holders in the relevant supplementary occupational pension scheme. For fixed-term researchers, remuneration is fixed by national legislation. The salary adjustment mechanism provided for by Article 24, paragraph 1, of Law no. 448/1998 contributes to ensuring the adjustment of economic treatments. The tenure-track path,</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
	<p>Decree-Law no. 13/2023 and Ministerial Decree no. 1300/2023, this measure has not yet been fully implemented or structured at the University level for teaching and research staff. It would also be useful to strengthen the periodic monitoring of organizational well-being and researchers' working conditions, with specific attention to workloads, the balance between research activities, teaching, and administrative duties, access to spaces and infrastructures, the inclusion of international staff, contractual precariousness, and the impact of working conditions on career progression. Finally, it is important to consolidate communication regarding existing support and protection channels—including the CUG (Single Guarantee Committee), the Confidential Counsellor, the Equality Council, the Inclusion Space (Spazio Inclusione), safety services, welfare, and psychological support—to ensure they are known and consistently utilized by the entire research community.</p>	<p>previously provided for Type-B researchers and now for RTTs, also represents an element of both economic and career attractiveness. The University informs researchers about applicable tax deductions and the benefits provided for by Article 44 of Decree-Law no. 78/2010 for the return of researchers and professors from abroad. For permanent researchers, Associate Professors, and Full Professors, the economic and social security treatment follows the national regulatory framework applicable to university personnel. These figures have access to the salary progression mechanisms provided for by law, including biennial salary increments subject to evaluation. In 2024, a University regulation also entered into force governing the reward system provided for by Article 9 of Law no. 240/2010, financially recognizing specific additional activities beyond ordinary duties. The University also takes into account recent regulatory provisions concerning welfare and supplementary health insurance for university staff. In particular, Article 26, paragraph 8, of Decree-Law no. 13/2023, as implemented by Ministerial Decree no. 1300/2023, provides for the possibility for state universities to allocate resources to supplementary healthcare forms in favor of teaching, research, and technical-administrative staff. This provision represents a potential instrument for strengthening working conditions and the well-being of the academic community. Regarding the organization of work, the management of researchers' hours is based on flexibility and autonomy, in coherence with national legislation and the specificities of research activities. For certain categories, institutions such as sick leave, maternity and paternity leave, parental leave, leave for study purposes, and leave pursuant to Law no. 104/1992 are provided. R3 and R4 researchers can also opt for full-time or defined-time regimes and utilize sabbatical leave, pursuant to Article 6 of Law no. 240/2010. The University promotes workplace well-being and the prevention of behaviors detrimental to</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
		<p>personal dignity through the Single Guarantee Committee (CUG), the Confidential Counsellor, the Equality Council, the University Ethics Committee, the Guarantee Committee, and the Inclusion Space (Spazio Inclusione). These bodies intervene, according to their respective competencies, in matters of equal opportunities, inclusion, prevention of discrimination, harassment, mobbing, protection of teaching and research freedoms, management of reports, and support for individuals experiencing situations of distress or criticality. Overall, Unife possesses a comprehensive regulatory and organizational framework to guarantee working conditions compliant with legislation, health and safety protection, organizational well-being, personal dignity, and social protection, despite the presence of significant differences among the various research contractual figures, which are largely determined by the national regulatory framework.</p>

Status

14. STABILITY OF EMPLOYMENT

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
<p>+/- almost but not fully i...</p>	<p>The stability of employment for researchers is conditioned by the national regulatory framework, which provides for fixed-term contracts, complex pre-role paths, and limited possibilities for automatic stabilization for many research figures. While unable to intervene autonomously regarding the main regulatory constraints that determine the structural precariousness of certain research positions, Unife can strengthen the guidance and support measures for the professional continuity of early-career researchers. Specifically, it is advisable to enhance specific career development, professional orientation, mentoring, transferable training, and career planning support services, focusing both on academic opportunities and on those external to the university. A further area for improvement concerns the need to make potential career paths following a PhD, post-doc, research contract, or other fixed-term positions clearer, more accessible, and more predictable. Structural improvement also requires a discussion at the university system</p>	<p>The stability of employment for researchers at the University of Ferrara is chiefly governed by the national regulatory framework, which defines the nature, duration, and limits of the various contract types available within the university system. Law no. 240/2010 establishes the rules regarding the duration of university contracts, providing minimum and maximum limits for fixed-term positions. Consequently, all contracts concluded by the University clearly indicate the expected duration for the position, in compliance with current legislation. Under the previous system, Type-A fixed-term researchers (RTD-A) held a three-year contract, extendable only once and for a maximum of two years. Upon expiration of the contract, the researcher could continue their academic path only by passing a new selection procedure—for instance, as a Type-B researcher or as an Associate Professor, provided they held the National Scientific Qualification (ASN). Conversely, Type-B fixed-term researchers (RTD-B) held a non-extendable three-year contract configured as a tenure-track path, with the possibility of a permanent appointment to the role of Associate Professor at the end of the three-year period, subject to obtaining the National Scientific Qualification and a positive evaluation of the activity carried out. Following the most recent regulatory amendments, a similar figure is represented by the tenure-track fixed-term researcher (RTT), who holds a contract with a duration of six years, which is neither extendable nor renewable. In this case as well, permanent stabilization is subject to meeting the requirements provided for by legislation and a positive evaluation for the purpose of appointment to the role of Associate Professor. Research contracts (contratti di ricerca), despite having a fixed duration and a maximum limit of five years, represent a more structured contractual form compared to research fellowships (assegnisti di ricerca)—which were abolished starting from January 2025—as they entail a subordinate</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
	<p>level. Unife can contribute to this discussion within the framework of the national debate on research careers and through the competent institutional venues, providing data, evidence, and proposals aimed at making researchers' paths more stable, transparent, and sustainable. There remains a need to ensure that researchers with fixed-term contracts, particularly in the early stages of their careers, are adequately integrated into research groups, receive duties consistent with their scientific development, and can benefit from working conditions, social protections, and professional growth opportunities that are as comparable as possible to those recognized in other career stages, within the limits allowed by current legislation.</p>	<p>employment relationship. However, this category does not in itself guarantee long-term stability. Law no. 79/2025 of June 5, 2025 introduced new figures, such as research assignments (incarichi di ricerca) and post-docs, with a duration ranging between one and three years, aiming to widen access modalities to the research world and involve young graduates and PhD holders. While these instruments may offer new entry opportunities, they also contribute to making the academic path more complex and potentially more fragmented. Regarding the PhD (Dottorato di ricerca), it is a third-cycle educational path regulated by Ministerial Decree (D.M.) no. 226 of December 14, 2021. The ordinary duration is 36 months and does not involve an employment contract, but rather the payment of a scholarship, which is increased for periods spent abroad and accompanied by a budget allocated for research activities. National legislation does not provide for permanent stabilization upon completion of the path. Despite these structural limits, Unife promotes initiatives aimed at fostering the employability and professional continuity of its PhD students and young researchers. The University provides transferable training paths common to all PhD programs, aimed at the acquisition of skills applicable both within the academic context and the production system, and periodically organizes matching events with businesses to enhance the PhD path. According to the 2024 AlmaLaurea survey, 96.1% of Unife PhD graduates are stably employed one year after obtaining their degree, a figure over four percentage points higher than the national average. Overall, Unife operates within a national regulatory framework that strictly regulates the duration, nature, and stabilization possibilities of the various research figures. The University guarantees compliance with the contractual limits provided for by law and implements training and</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
		guidance measures aimed at fostering employability, professional transition, and career development for early-career researchers.

Status

15. CONTRACTUAL AND LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
+/- almost but not fully i...	<p>Despite the existence of a structured regulatory framework, there emerges a need to strengthen the consistent awareness of contractual, legal, and professional obligations across all categories of researchers. Specifically, there is a need to enhance information and training activities regarding intellectual and industrial property, safety, privacy, cybersecurity, data management, the use of IT resources, and obligations related to funded projects. A further area for improvement concerns the availability of relevant documentation in English as well, in order to guarantee full accessibility for international researchers. Following the update of the Regulations on IT Resources, it is also advisable to prepare operational guidelines and</p>	<p>At Unife, the legal and contractual obligations of researchers are established by national legislation, in particular by Law no. 240/2010 and, limited to the position of tenure-track fixed-term researcher, by the CCNL (National Collective Labour Agreement) for the University/Education and Research sector, and are outlined in the University's internal regulations. These obligations include compliance with the individual employment contract, the proper management of research activities, transparency, scientific integrity, and adherence to regulations concerning intellectual property and safety. Researchers may utilize research equipment and facilities in compliance with national health and safety legislation, including Legislative Decree (D.Lgs.) no. 626/1994, Interministerial Decree (D.I.) no. 363/1998, and Legislative Decree no. 81/2008. Obligations are communicated to researchers upon recruitment and are specified in their contracts, which refer to both national legislation and the University's internal regulations. Unife has long adopted its own internal regulations concerning the protection of industrial and intellectual property, recently updated on the basis of Law no. 102/2023. The University has communicated this update to all researchers. Furthermore, for several years, the Technology Transfer Office has organized a transferable course aimed at PhD students, which covers intellectual property rights, forms of protection, and methods for enhancing and commercializing research results. Safety and Security Field The University guarantees access to its facilities on the basis of adequate training, prevention measures, and activity tracking. To this end, in addition to strict compliance with the relevant legislation, Unife has developed two specific platforms. Sosia is an online application that maps all University premises from a safety perspective, tracking who has access to each room, the activities carried out there, the present risks, and the related prevention measures. Unifesicura, on the other hand, is a project that utilizes the University's e-learning platforms to deliver basic, advanced, and specific safety training based on the activities planned for each individual, whether they are a researcher, a technical-administrative staff</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
	<p>concise tools—such as checklists, factsheets, or integrated web pages—to facilitate their concrete application by the research community.</p>	<p>member, or a student. IT Field Recently, Unife updated its Regulations on IT Resources, defining principles and rules for the proper use of and secure access to IT tools and services. The regulations provide guidance on compliance with current legislation regarding data protection and confidentiality, recommended and permitted storage media, the protection of knowledge, and the use of IT resources within the specific context of scientific research. To support these obligations, the University's technical-administrative staff receives targeted and updated training on privacy legislation and cybersecurity aspects. Furthermore, IT technicians are present across the various facilities to support and guide researchers. A multi-level helpdesk service is active, and centralized IT services operate continuously to ensure that the services provided meet appropriate security requirements. For PhD students, obligations are established by national legislation, particularly by Ministerial Decree (D.M.) no. 226 of December 14, 2021, and by the University Regulations. Despite the absence of an employment contract—as Italian legislation classifies PhD students as students rather than workers—they are subject to specific rights and duties. This information is communicated upon enrollment through a handbook specially drafted in Italian and English, as well as through the publication of the relevant regulations on the dedicated PhD pages of the University portal. Regarding the protection of intellectual property, safety regulations, publication obligations, and the use of IT resources, the rules and tools already provided for researchers also apply to PhD students, insofar as they are compatible. Furthermore, training sessions on intellectual and industrial property, Open Access, and workplace safety are scheduled annually.</p>

Status

16. DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF RESULTS

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
+/- almost but not fully i...	<p>Although over 74% of participants in the internal survey believe that the University encourages its researchers to communicate, disseminate, and promote research results, there emerges a need to strengthen awareness of the tools and opportunities made available by Unife, many of which have been recently introduced or enhanced. It is therefore advisable to consolidate communication and training activities regarding SFERA, UnifeZen, Open Access, data management, intellectual property, the valorization of results, and Public Engagement. For the Third Mission, it also appears useful to strengthen the monitoring system, so as to enable a more precise analysis of the collected data and develop more targeted and effective citizen engagement actions.</p>	<p>Unife pursues the objective of the widest dissemination, accessibility, and valorization of research results through a set of regulations, policies, tools, and institutional initiatives. Specifically, research staff are required to deposit their publications in the SFERA institutional repository, in accordance with the provisions of the Regulations for the coordination and management of the University's institutional Archive of scientific production, Rectoral Decree (D.R.) no. 1197/2023 of 01/08/2023. The University has also adopted the University Policy on Open Science, Rectoral Decree (D.R.) no. 38/2024 of 11/01/2024, and provides the UnifeZen community for the repository and sharing of research data, which is governed by the relevant Curation Policy, Rectoral Decree (D.R.) no. 7/2024 of 03/01/2024. Open Access publishing is supported both through the CARE-CRUI agreements and through the Fund for the Incentive of Open Access, regulated by the University Regulation, Rectoral Decree (D.R.) no. 2143 of 7/11/2024. The valorization of results is further supported by the Regulations on industrial and intellectual property, which define the reward systems for researchers regarding the commercialization and use of research results, while recognizing their moral rights. The regulation also governs the ownership, protection, and exploitation of results, including in the presence of industrial partners. As a rule, legislation does not provide for joint ownership of results, unless the University expressly waives its rights following the mandatory evaluation phase. Unife also supports the dissemination of results to society through Public Engagement and Third Mission activities. For several years, the University has participated in the European Commission's European Researchers' Night project and annually finances—through a dedicated call addressed to Departments—projects aimed at making research accessible and understandable to a wide and diverse public. Within the ECOSISTER project, Unife is the leader of the Public Engagement Pillar in</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
		the innovation program for technology transfer and is committed to developing innovative territorial transformation paths that involve citizens and civil society organizations in the co-design of innovative actions and research projects.

PILLAR 4 -RESEARCH CAREERS AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Status

17. VALUING DIVERSE RESEARCH CAREERS

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
-/+ partially implemented	<p>Although Unife promotes mobility, collaboration with businesses and the Public Administration, industrial doctorates, interdisciplinary training, the Third Mission, and knowledge transfer, these experiences are not yet fully and systematically recognized within researchers' assessment, selection, and career advancement paths. This critical issue is partly due to the national framework, in which activities such as intersectoral mobility, collaboration with external entities, technology transfer, entrepreneurship, public engagement, Open Science, supervision, mentoring, and research valorization are not always given adequate weight within evaluation and progression mechanisms. Therefore, insofar as it falls within the University's competence, it is advisable to strengthen the recognition of a diversity of experiences and contributions, making the skills acquired through mobility, collaboration with businesses, public bodies, and local organizations, participation in applied projects, Third Mission activities, scientific communication, technology transfer, and interaction with society more visible and documentable. Furthermore, it would be useful to improve communication to researchers, particularly at the R1–R2 stages, regarding how these experiences can contribute to the development of their professional profile and to</p>	<p>Unife recognizes the importance of enhancing researchers' careers through initiatives that promote mobility, collaboration with external entities, the development of transferable skills, the Third Mission, and knowledge transfer. These dimensions are also highlighted within the University's strategic planning, which identifies the valorization of research, interaction with the territory, and collaboration with businesses, public bodies, and other social actors as qualifying elements of researchers' professional paths. For PhD students, the University provides various international mobility opportunities, financed through the PhD scholarship top-up, individual research budgets, competitive calls on dedicated resources—such as Erasmus+, the Fondo Giovani (Youth Fund), and other funding managed by the IUSS Ferrara 1391 Doctoral School—as well as additional specific funds. In certain programs, international mobility is mandatory. Furthermore, Unife awards the Doctor Europaeus / European Doctorate to PhD students who meet the established requirements, including completing a research period abroad at European institutions, the evaluation of the thesis by reviewers belonging to European universities or research bodies, the presence of international members on the final examination committee, and the use of a language other than Italian for part of the thesis or defense. This recognition enhances the international dimension of the doctoral path and contributes to the employability of the degree within the European context. Intersectoral and intranational mobility is promoted through agreements with public and private entities for the implementation of joint research paths, internships, activities at external organizations, reimbursement of mission costs,</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
	<p>the building of career paths also outside academia. This would allow for a greater valorization of non-linear paths, intersectoral experiences, and transferable skills, in coherence with European principles for the professional development of researchers. Given that the full recognition of these experiences within assessment and career progression paths also depends on the national framework, Unife could commit to promoting these principles within institutional tables and national discussion venues, contributing to the valorization of mobility, intersectoral collaboration, the Third Mission, technology transfer, Open Science, public engagement, and non-linear professional paths as qualifying elements of research careers.</p>	<p>and forms of tutoring and dual supervision. These experiences contribute to the development of scientific, organizational, interpersonal, and professional skills applicable both within the academic context and in other sectors. Unife has also utilized PON and PNRR funds to recruit researchers and PhD students with the obligation to carry out research and training periods within companies. Resources are allocated annually to the co-financing of PhD scholarships in collaboration with businesses, featuring co-designed educational paths and stays in companies and/or the Public Administration for periods ranging between 12 and 18 months. Industrial Doctorates and Higher Apprenticeship Doctorates (Dottorati in Alto Apprendistato) have also been activated, in accordance with current legislation. Multi-, inter-, and intradisciplinary training, as well as Third Mission, technology transfer, and public engagement activities, form an integral part of the activities promoted by the Doctoral School and the University. Overall, Unife fosters experiences that broaden the professional profile of researchers, enhancing the relationship between research, training, businesses, the Public Administration, the local territory, and civil society.</p>

Status

18. CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND ADVICE

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
+/- almost but not fully i...	<p>Despite the presence of initiatives supporting professional guidance, there emerges a need to make these tools more systematic, continuous, and accessible to all categories of researchers, not only to PhD students. Specifically, it would be appropriate to strengthen a structured career development strategy addressed to researchers at different stages of their careers and regardless of their contract type, including mentoring, individual guidance, support in defining career plans, information on opportunities inside and outside academia, and the valorization of the skills acquired. It is also useful to increase the visibility of already existing initiatives—such as PhD Skills Maps, MSCA opportunities, international mobility, and collaborations with visiting researchers—to ensure they are more widely and consistently known and utilized by the research community. A further area for improvement concerns the strengthening of links with businesses, public bodies, local organizations, and international networks, in order to offer researchers, particularly at the R1–R2 stages, a clearer understanding of potential professional trajectories and the skills required in contexts other than academia.</p>	<p>Unife promotes the professional development and guidance of researchers, with a particular focus on early-career stages. Young researchers are paired with scientific supervisors who support them in defining research objectives, developing skills, and building their professional paths. The University also encourages participation in competitive calls, including the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), which finance research projects, international mobility, and training paths in other countries, sectors, or disciplines, thereby contributing to the enhancement of researchers' scientific and transferable skills. From an internationalization perspective, Unife promotes international exchanges of professors and researchers and regulates the admission and stay within its facilities of scholars and experts of high scientific profile from other universities or institutions. These collaborations—which include figures such as visiting professors, visiting researchers, and visiting fellows—aim to enhance the quality of research and teaching and to strengthen the University's international network. For PhD students, as researchers in training, Unife organizes initiatives aimed at developing transferable skills useful for professional integration. In particular, the PhD Skills Maps path was created to foster awareness of the skills possessed and to guide their use for professional development purposes. This path also involves drafting individual career plans as a tool for motivation, self-assessment, and orientation regarding job opportunities consistent with the profile of individual PhD students.</p>

Status

19. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
+/- almost but not fully i...	<p>Unife supports the professional development of researchers at different stages of their careers, from the PhD to more advanced roles, through opportunities for training, mobility, participation in research projects, and access to competitive national and European funds. For early-career researchers, particularly research contract holders and RTDs, the University promotes opportunities for scientific, methodological, and transferable updating, also through internal training activities, webinars, e-learning, and support for participating in conferences and dissemination initiatives. Pursuant to Article 22 of Law no. 240/2010 as amended, research contract holders are granted the possibility, subject to authorization, to carry out research periods abroad. For absences exceeding 30 consecutive days, authorization is granted by the Rector, subject to the favorable opinion of the Department. Three months prior to the expiration of the contract, the holder is required to draft a report on the activity carried out, countersigned by the research supervisor and accompanied by publications, works in progress, patents, or other results useful for evaluating the activities conducted, also for the purposes of a potential renewal. For experimental and clinical medical sciences, the possibility to conduct clinical care activity (attività assistenziale) is also provided, according to the established modalities and subject to an agreement with the reference healthcare structures. For PhD students, in coherence with Ministerial Decree (D.M.) no. 226/2021, Article 4, letter f), Unife offers training and research initiation paths also aimed at acquiring transferable skills, which are useful both for scientific activity and for integration into the labor market. The IUSS Ferrara 1391 Doctoral School offers an annual training catalog structured into three areas: cognitive, interpersonal and communication,</p>	<p>The questionnaire results indicate that over 50% of respondents do not know or do not believe they have an adequate training plan, nor sufficiently structured opportunities for the development of transferable skills. This datum suggests the need to make already existing training opportunities more visible, coordinated, and accessible. It is therefore advisable to strengthen a more systematic continuous professional development strategy addressed to all categories of researchers, not only to PhD students, including recurring training paths, individual development plans, mentoring, career guidance, and tools to valorize the skills acquired. A further critical element concerns the balance between teaching, research, and training: approximately 60% of respondents do not know or believe that teaching workloads are not fully compatible with conducting research activities. It would therefore be useful to monitor more systematically the impact of teaching and administrative workloads on the time available for research, training, and professional development. Finally, it appears appropriate to improve the communication of available initiatives, including through an integrated information</p>

Status

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
	<p>digital and research, enterprise and career development. PhD students must acquire at least 20 credits within these activities. Furthermore, the Doctoral School organizes the PhD Week each year—a week dedicated to the doctorate and PhD students, featuring career guidance initiatives, meetings with businesses, and discussion opportunities addressed to students and young researchers. Overall, the University provides various continuous professional development opportunities, combining formal and informal training, individual and collective activities, scientific updating, transferable skills, mobility, and interaction with the world outside academic research.</p>	<p>point or a single mapping of training opportunities, so as to foster wider and more consistent participation by researchers at different stages of their careers.</p>

Status

20. SUPERVISION AND MENTORING

Implementation	GAP / Implementation impediments	Initiatives undertaken/new proposals
++ fully implemented	No structural critical issues emerge regarding the principle	<p>At Unife, the role of the supervisor or tutor is provided for early-career researchers and, in particular, for research contract holders pursuant to Article 22 of Law no. 240/2010, within individual contracts and internal University regulations. The supervisor usually coincides with the scientific supervisor of the research project and is selected from among the permanent teaching staff. The supervisor is tasked with guiding the researcher in developing scientific activities, defining objectives, monitoring project progress, and participating in competitive calls and projects. This figure thus constitutes a scientific and organizational reference point for the researcher, fostering integration into the research group and the progressive development of professional autonomy. For PhD students, the University Regulations for the PhD program provide that the Academic Board (Collegio dei Docenti) of each course appoints a supervisor/tutor. PhD students are required to report regularly on the progress of their research activity and to submit an annual report to the Academic Board for the purpose of admission to the following year or to the final thesis defense. Full and Associate Professors hold an autonomous academic role and perform guidance, supervision, and training functions for younger researchers. Overall, Unife thus features a formally established supervision system for PhD students and early-career researchers, based on the role of the tutor, the scientific supervisor, and the Doctoral Academic Boards.</p>