

## TEMPLATE 4: ACTION PLAN

**Case number:** 2020AM531432

**Name Organisation under review:** Yerevan State Medical University

**Organisation's contact details:** 2 Koryun street, Yerevan, 0025, e-mail: [science@ysmu.am](mailto:science@ysmu.am)

**SUBMISSION DATE:** 13 JANUARY, 2023

### 1. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

<b>STAFF &amp; STUDENTS</b>	<b>FTE</b>
<i>Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research</i>	463.3
<i>Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)</i>	0
<i>Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation)</i>	0
<i>Of whom are women</i>	266.75
<i>Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor.</i>	74.4
<i>Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level</i>	314
<i>Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level</i>	36.5
<i>Total number of students (if relevant)</i>	8000
<i>Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)</i>	1325.7
<b>RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)</b>	€ (Exchange rate – 425 AMD as of January, 2022)
<i>Total annual organisational budget</i>	32,000,000
<i>Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)</i>	385,810.117
<i>Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)</i>	1,088,000
<i>Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research</i>	0
<b>ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)</b>	
<p>Yerevan State Medical University after Mkhitar Heratsi (YSMU) is a state non-commercial foundation. Its establishment dates back to the early 1900s. Today YSMU is the only state institution in Armenia to train physicians and biomedical research staff. The University education, research and clinical activities are being organized in 7 faculties, 106 academic departments, 2 in-patient and 6 out-patient clinics, Scientific Research Center, “COBRAIN” Scientific-Educational Center, and Simulation Center. YSMU employs approximately 3000 academic and non-academic staff and there are 8000 students of which more than 1100 are international. It has an exclusive role in the region as an academic institution hosting international students from more than 40 countries.</p>	

## 2. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CURRENT PRACTICE:

Thematic heading of the Charter and Code	STRENGTHS and WEAKNESSES
Ethical and professional aspects	<p><b><u>STRENGTHS</u></b></p> <p>YSMU has relevant mechanisms in place for fulfilling the ethical and professional aspects in research. Through the Ethics Committee the implementation of fundamental ethical principles appropriate to the biomedical research as well as to their profession are being successfully coordinated. Researchers respect the recognised ethical principles related to their research and the corresponding procedures are being strongly followed and monitored.</p> <p>The University website is a dynamic source of information for researchers on the institutional strategic goals as well as regulations governing the administrative, teaching, and research environment. It also serves as an interactive platform for researchers to be informed on their obligations to submit reports depicting the results of their research work. The performance of PhD students is annually checked and evaluated by an attestation mechanism, meanwhile the performance of postdoctoral researchers is assessed by and remuneration mechanism is based on 3 key indicators: publications in IF journals (remuneration is calculated by the impact of the journal, role and contribution of the researcher), research projects (initiated by the researchers as a Principal Investigator) and participation in conferences (with key-note presentations).</p> <p><b><u>WEAKNESSES</u></b></p> <p>Although thoroughly recognized, researchers' freedom to think/act/choose is limited to the line where financial problems arise in terms of capacity to implement the research in the scope defined. The University fails to adopt relevant mechanisms for allocating certain funds for research from own budget due to its teaching-oriented character and scarcity of funds. This greatly influences the overall impact of research on the international level. Sometimes researchers lack enthusiasm as they are sometimes not relevantly remunerated and have to ensure key conditions for research by their own efforts. In order to be able to implement original research we lack corresponding software as well. YSMU has no experience or income from industry: commercialization of research outcomes is not implemented. Studies are mainly based on fundamental research and their outcome is not easily commercialized. These factors impede the process of engaging the public into research and the culture to make results accessible to</p>

	the public still needs to be developed.
Recruitment and selection	<p><b><u>STRENGTHS</u></b></p> <p>The University applies clearly specified entry and admission standards of PhD students. The call for applications for PhD positions is relevantly advertised through the University website as well as through the most widely read newspapers.</p> <p>The admission is carried out both on full-time and part-time basis, both paid and free of charge. Admission committees are formed by the order of the Rector for organizing PhD study admission. At the same time professional examination committees are formed for taking the major exam of PhD study admission. 3-5 specialists with scientific degree or academic title in the given professional field are included in the committee.</p> <p>The whole admission procedure with clearly set deadlines is thoroughly introduced in the website of the University.</p> <p><b><u>WEAKNESSES</u></b></p> <p>Research staff recruitment and HR strategies are not fully implemented within the University.</p> <p>There are no permanent research positions at YSMU except those that are available in frames of grant projects. Research-only staff is considerably low as compared to teaching-related staff. The academic staff as a rule combines research and teaching duties due to the fact that orientation has been prone towards education.</p> <p>This implies that specific procedures for the recruitment and selection of researchers are not applied. Correspondingly, research positions are not advertised in the website of the University and it is, in fact, out of the scope of the activities of the Career Center.</p>
Working conditions	<p><b><u>STRENGTHS</u></b></p> <p>There is a well-established research culture and mechanisms for conducting research activities. Approximately 100 departments are functioning within the University of which the majority is doing research together with academic activities. There is also Scientific-Research Center with 3 laboratories which provide the departments with necessary equipment and materials for carrying out experiments. Research is mainly funded by the state budget through grant projects and research infrastructure basic funding program. In recent years YSMU has been implementing 2 Horizon2020 projects (COBRAIN, SCAUT) which are greatly impacting the involvement of young and senior researchers in state-of-the-art research activities. Owing to the EU and WB funding project the “COBRAIN” Scientific-Educational Center was established within the University where a new research environment is being developed in the contest of promoting neuroscience research.</p>

	<p><b><u>WEAKNESSES</u></b></p> <p>The funds allocated to research by the University and the Government are not sufficient for developing certain fields of research in terms of purchasing equipment and materials and providing sufficient wages. This is possible only in cases of obtaining major funding from EU framework programs or other. Not all research groups are capable of applying for funding from international funders. For this reason, some priority research directions do not perform actively and remain invisible in the international landscape of research. Given the reason of being a teaching-oriented institution, YSMU academic staff is mainly engaged in teaching and less time is allocated to research activities.</p>
Training and development	<p><b><u>STRENGTHS</u></b></p> <p>Through the approved education program, PhD students attend lessons on soft skills and research related professions and get credits according to their performance at lessons as well as participation in knowledge checking exams.</p> <p>Supervisors and PhD students have legally binding relations with the University. As soon as the research topic and the candidacy of the supervisor is confirmed by the Scientific-Coordination Council a trilateral contract between the University Rector, the supervisor and the researcher is signed which helps to smoothly regulate the relationships as well as to recognize the responsibilities and the rights of each of the party.</p> <p><b><u>WEAKNESSES</u></b></p> <p>Professional development opportunities are not limited to formal continuous professional development courses. Attractive content of education is provided also through non-formal ways of disseminating professional knowledge: conferences, congresses, etc. The participation of researchers in such events is encouraged, however not regularly supported by the University. Thus, the frequent participation in international events of disseminating professional knowledge is not affordable for all researchers.</p>

### 3. ACTIONS

The Action Plan and HRS4R strategy must be published on an easily accessible location of the organisation's website.

\*URL: [https://ysmu.am/en/page\\_list/hr\\_excellence\\_research/#sthash.kNuDXe7G.dpbs](https://ysmu.am/en/page_list/hr_excellence_research/#sthash.kNuDXe7G.dpbs)

<b>Proposed ACTIONS</b>	<b>GAP Principle(s)</b>	<b>Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)</b>	<b>Responsible Unit</b>	<b>Indicator(s) / Target(s)</b>
<i>Free text -100 words max</i>	<i>Retrieved from the GAP Analysis</i>			
Develop a system for giving credits to international cooperation and applications for grants. Calculate these credits in the attestation and qualification process and consider them while estimating their research performance.	<b>1. Research freedom</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter, 2024	Research management unit	Refined practical guideline for "Annual attestation of research staff" procedure (1 guideline)
Revise and update the documents applied in the ethics procedures	<b>2. Ethical principles</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter, 2025	Ethics Committee	2 documents revised 3 documents revised: Ethics Committee Regulation, Certificate Forms, Drug Characteristics Form
Obtaining plagiarism checking tool	<b>3. Professional responsibility</b>	2nd quarter, 2023	Research management unit	1 Plagiarism checking software functioning in 2 languages (Armenian and English)
Restructuring the "Research" webpage of YSMU	<b>4. Professional attitude</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter, 2023	Research management unit Department of IT technologies and communication	Improved content of the "Research" webpage, restructuring and prioritizing pages of research internationalization processes
Organization of seminars for potential researchers.	<b>5. Contractual and legal obligations</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter, 2023	Department of Scientific Personnel Training and Planning	3 Seminar programmes directed at introduction to the contractual and legal obligations, compulsory documentation awaiting the researchers if recruited
Improving the functionality of the institutional repository	<b>6. Accountability</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter, 2023	Research management unit	Assigned personnel (2 specialists from the research unit)

of open research outputs.			Department of IT technologies and communication  Library	for teaching researchers to run individual accounts in the repository
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Obtaining memory storages for research groups.	<b>7. Good practice in research</b>	2nd quarter, 2023	Research management unit Department of Information Technologies and Communication	Protected research data in the institutional repository (DSpace)
Article writing seminars conducted by involving international experts.  In frames of HORIZON2020 COBRAIN project we will develop an action plan for improving academia-industry relations. Technology transfer office will be established within the University.	<b>8. Dissemination, exploitation of results</b>  <b>31. Intellectual Property Rights</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter, 2023	Research management unit Department of Foreign Languages "COBRAIN" Scientific-Education Center	YSMU technology transfer model, regulation for Knowledge and Technology Transfer Office which will make part of the COBRAIN Scientific-Education Center for Fundamental Brain Research as the Office will be functioning in the structure of the Center.  <i>Approved "Action Plan 2023-2025"</i>
In cooperation with the non-government sector meetings with target groups will be organized in order to get used to communicating research results in a plain language.  The annual report template for research activities will be updated: we will require writing an abstract for the lay public for each research project.	<b>9. Public engagement</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> quarter, 2024	Research management unit Department of Public Affairs	Increased number of researchers (8 researchers of different levels) able to speak about their achievements in a language that can be understood by the public Raised public awareness on current research projects and their results
Building the institutional gender equality plan	<b>10. Non discrimination</b> <b>27. Gender balance</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter, 2024	Research management unit	Approved "Gender equality Plan" for YSMU
To update the indicators of qualifications for positions by including research-related KPIs.	<b>11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter, 2025	Research management unit Department of Human	Improved evaluation system

<p>Developing mechanism for sending the researchers with unimproved research performance to participate in the open competition of the same position they hold.</p> <p>Official address to international partners to act as independent experts in selection committees.</p>			Resource Management	
<p>Adoption of YSMU research OTM-R policy</p>	<p><b>12. Recruitment</b>  <b>13. Recruitment (Code)</b>  <b>15. Transparency (Code)</b>  <b>16. Judging merit (Code)</b>  <b>17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code)</b>  <b>29. Value of mobility</b>  <b>18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)</b>  <b>19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)</b>  <b>21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code)</b>  <b>24. Working conditions</b>  <b>25. Stability and permanence of employment</b>  <b>26. Funding and salaries</b>  <b>30. Access to career advice</b></p>	<p>4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 2025</p>	<p>Research management unit  Department of Human Resource Management</p>	<p>Approved OTM-R policy on recruitment of researchers to complement the whole HR policy of YSMU.</p>
<p>To update the regulation of forming selection committees in a way to be able to involve representatives from the job market.</p>	<p><b>14. Selection (Code)</b></p>	<p>3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, 2024</p>	<p>Research management unit</p>	<p>Updated list of Science Coordination Council and/or Expert committees by adding 3 members who represent or whose position is related with the job market in the biomedical field</p>
<p>Update the researchers'</p>	<p><b>20. Seniority (Code)</b></p>	<p>3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, 2027</p>	<p>Research management</p>	<p>Updated list of researcher's</p>



classification description in accordance with European standards and submit to the Scientific-Research Council for confirmation.			unit Department of Human Resource Management	classifications and description of research positions
Supported by the HORIZON2020 COBRAIN and World Bank projects YSMU will establish Brain Research Excellence Center to serve as a new research environment for the new generation of researchers.	<b>23. Research environment</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter, 2026	Research management unit	State-of-the-art research environment – 1 Center with educational and research components
Appointment of responsible staff for running the EURAXESS YSMU portal.  Cooperation with the Career Center in terms of giving access to data on research positions.	<b>28. Career development</b>  <b>22. Recognition of the profession</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter, 2023	Research management unit  Department of International relations	Active and proper advertisement of research positions and other information in the YSMU portal of Euraxess by at least 2 staff members
The institutional policies on Open Science will be revised to cover also the issues of co-authorship.	<b>32. Co-authorship</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter, 2025	Research management unit  Law department	2 approved documents  1. “Strategy on Open Science”  “Action Plan for promoting Open Science principles”
Train the trainer seminars for researchers who also have teaching load.	<b>33. Teaching</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter, 2024	Research management unit  Education management unit	Annual train the trainer seminars
Assigning an ombudsman at the University who will investigate individuals' complaints against the University by ensuring their confidentiality.	<b>34. Complains/ appeals</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter, 2027	Research management unit  Law department	Regulation for the human rights defense within the University
Proposing international partners and visiting professors to act as international experts in the Scientific-	<b>35. Participation in decision-making bodies</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter, 2024	Research management unit  Department of	Updated list of Scientific-Coordination Council members by involving at least 3 international

Coordination Council.			International Relations	experts
Refining regulatory documents and the trilateral contract form by ensuring structured relations with the supervisors.	<b>36. Relation with supervisors</b> <b>37. Supervision and managerial duties</b> <b>40. Supervision</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter, 2026	Research management unit  Law department	New regulator document on research supervision  2 documents revised
Approving mechanism for organizing, encouraging and supporting international/local training of researchers	<b>38. Continuing Professional Development</b> <b>39. Access to research training and continuous development</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter, 2027	Research management unit  Department of international affairs	Doubled number of trained researchers  Budget allocation for trainings (up to 20% of the total budget allocated to research)

The establishment of an Open Recruitment Policy is a key element in the HRS4R strategy. Please also indicate how your organisation will use the Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Toolkit and how you intend to implement/are implementing the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment. Although there may be some overlap with a range of actions listed above, please provide a short commentary demonstrating this implementation. If the case, please make the link between the OTM-R checklist and the overall action plan.

Over the recent years YSMU has been taking quality improvement measures in education and research as well as recruitment of staff. This implies that, overall, elements of open, transparent and merit-based standards are respected in the University. However, it should be noted that there is no OTM-R policy adopted at YSMU. By embarking upon the HRS4R process we recognise the importance of such policy and we intend to develop such above all the actions mentioned in the AP in order to ensure comprehensive implementation of open recruitment processes. By adopting the ORM-R policy, the University will recognize the urgency to develop the recruitment process for applicants especially from around the world: firstly documents related to the recruitment process will be translated into English. Also, the University EURAXESS page will be used for posting vacancies in research.

A dedicated webpage on the YSMU website ([https://ysmu.am/hy/page\\_list/gitakan\\_kadrer/#sthash.7LfYZsqF.dpbs](https://ysmu.am/hy/page_list/gitakan_kadrer/#sthash.7LfYZsqF.dpbs)) contains information on the recruitment of PhD students and independent researchers. All regulations, practical guidelines as well as examination questionnaires are openly available for applicants. Additionally, the webpage of the Career Center advertises basically administrative or clinical vacancies. The Research Management Unit will propose a cooperation agenda with the Career Center and it will enrich its database with PhD and independent researchers' positions as well.

If your organisation already has a recruitment strategy that implements the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment, please provide the web link where this strategy can be found on your organisation's website:

YSMU hasn't yet developed a recruitment strategy that implements the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment.

#### 4. IMPLEMENTATION

General overview of the expected implementation process:

Adhering to the University strategy on increasing international visibility of research, YSMU has adopted a comprehensive strategy for strengthening its research profile. Among the activities leading YSMU to achieve its vision is endorsing the 40 principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers which means that the University is committed to developing the HR strategy for researchers and is willing to undergo all the subsequent cycles via the HRS4R process. The proper implementation of the process will ensure efficient relations between researchers and employers or funders which will lead them to successful performance in generating, transferring, sharing and disseminating knowledge and technological development.

For the implementation of the subsequent cycles of the HRS4R process the Science Coordination Council of YSMU appoints the Committee overseeing the process and the Working Group preparing the application documentation. The Research Management Unit, the HRS4R Work Group as well as the Steering Committee overseeing the HRS4R process will continue being responsible for the implementation of the proposed Action Plan. The AP will become a routine task for all the entities mentioned above. The whole process will be supervised by the Vice-Rector for Science and the tasks will be distributed among corresponding departments but the activities will be implemented with the inclusion of different stakeholder groups. The Scientific-Coordination Council of YSMU will keep an eye on the quality and relevancy of the actions as compared with the action plan and the implementation of the 40 HRS4R principles. Issues that may need to be addressed by experts, will be forwarded to the Scientific-Coordination Council in order to undergo thorough discussion.

Although some of the 40 principles are already in place, the HRS4R process will help adopt a more comprehensive approach to improving the HR issues in research. Overall, the proposed actions of this Action Plan represent the main objectives of the University. However, this should be regarded as a live document that can be revised and some actions can be modified/removed/added in order to ensure that they derive from the vision of the actors and authorities and comply with the current needs of the stakeholder groups.

***How will you ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?***

In compliance with the general accountability principles, the Vice-Rector for Science will call a Committee meeting at least annually. During the meeting the responsible staff will report on the qualitative and quantitative indicators of the results of the research activities carried out at the University based on the Action Plan. This report will also be included in the general report on research activities of YSMU which the University Rector calls regularly on the agenda of the Scientific Council of the University. Each reporting time will involve also the task of revising and updating the Action Plan for the coming period based on the priorities defined by the current University strategies and policies.

***How will you monitor progress (timeline)?***

The Steering Committee together with the Work Group will be entitled to assess the current situation against the specific principles. It will also propose a set of actions to improve/develop the relevant processes. In accordance with its own Action Plan, the Committee will continue implementing/overseeing the proposed actions and updating the original Action Plan ***annually/upon assignment***. Upon necessity, the Committee will suggest to change the delivery time of certain actions and/or involve more departments and staff in the Working Group to manage the timely and proper fulfillment of the actions. The activities of the Committee will be coordinated by the Vice-Rector for Science, as main responsible authority of the field.

On the level of the Working group the first step to monitoring the progress of our plan is creating a detailed timeline of upcoming actions at the beginning of each trimester with a schedule for regular progress check-ins. After each check-in it would be effective to analyze the situation and suggest to the Steering Committee to make relevant changes in the actions/goals.

***How will you measure progress (indicators) given the next assessment?***

The progress will be measured through compiling evidence documentation for each action. In view of this, the actions will be more precisely and properly planned and implemented. Measuring our progress will also help to identify how to adjust our plan of actions, which may raise the efficacy and/or speed up the progression of the actions. In addition, the documentation process will serve as effective tool for measuring indicators.

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

Checklist	*Detailed description and duly justification
How will the implementation committee and/or steering group regularly oversee progress?	The progress of the Action Plan and the implementation of HRS4R will be overseen by the Scientific-Research Council which acts as the only decision-making body in research-related issues. The coordinator of the project will continuously report on the situation during the meetings of the Council organized on a monthly basis / or upon urgency or necessity. It is worth mentioning that the Head of the Council is at the same time the Vice-Rector for Science. Expert Committees adjunct to the Council will give expert advice and will contribute to fulfilling the activities as assigned by the given Action Plan.
How do you intend to involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?	The meetings of Scientific-Research Council are open to the whole staff of the University and students as well. In addition, all stakeholders have representation in the Council who make their voice heard and vote for the best approach they take. This implies that all stakeholders will be directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of the Action Plan and the HRS4R process.
How do you proceed with the alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R? Make sure the HRS4R is recognized in the organisation's research strategy, as the overarching HR policy.	Being the highest decision-making body, the Council can make proposals to the University Rector and higher bodies/boards to make relevant amendments and/or changes in institutional strategies and regulatory documents. However, by endorsing the 40 principles of the Charter and Code, we already express our commitment to start the procedure and undergo all the subsequent cycles of the implementation of these principles in our institution.
How will you ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?	The comparison of research performance indicators before and after the HRS4R process initiated at YSMU will show to what extent the proposed actions are implemented.
How will you monitor progress (timeline)?	The monitoring of the progress will be undertaken by the Expert Committees that function within the Scientific-Coordination Council as assigned to them by the functioning regulatory documents.

How will you measure progress (indicators) in view of the next assessment?	The analysis of the annual research reports will give a clear picture of the shifts of indicators which are defined to be increased by the proposed Action Plan.
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Additional remarks/comments about the proposed implementation process:

There are no additional remarks or comments.