

**Gap analysis
Strengths and Weaknesses/
University of Bordeaux**

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Preamble

The Gap Analysis is one of the four documents required by the European Commission for the attribution of the “HR Excellence in Research” award. It enables institutions engaged in this process to compare their current practices with the recommendations set out in the **European Charter for Researchers**. As such, it constitutes an essential and structuring document that underpins the entire HRS4R process. In practical terms, this analysis seeks to answer two key questions: “*Where do we stand?*” (current state) and “*Where do we want to go?*” (target state).

The Gap Analysis provides each candidate institution with the opportunity to establish a precise diagnosis of its strengths and shortcomings, to identify its current needs, and to determine the strategic orientations required to address them.

The University of Bordeaux has ensured that its analysis is exhaustive by adopting an **inclusive and participatory approach** involving all relevant stakeholders. The working groups established for this purpose brought together researchers, professional experts, governance representatives and the various consultative bodies. This comprehensive approach made it possible to draw conclusions grounded both in day-to-day experience and in the expertise of administrative services and institutional leadership.

The present document summarises the main conclusions of this in-depth diagnostic exercise. In line with the **four pillars of the European Charter for Researchers** and its **twenty principles**, it presents the strengths and weaknesses of the University of Bordeaux with regard to European recommendations.

Pillar 1 – Ethics, integrity, gender and open science

Strengths

As a public institution for higher education, research, and innovation, the University of Bordeaux ensures, by virtue of its legal status, the academic freedom of its research staff. It is also committed to upholding the highest ethical standards in the conduct of research activities.

This commitment is anchored in a national legal and regulatory framework, including: the decision of the French Constitutional Council No. 83-165 DC of 20 January 1984 enshrining academic freedom, the French Charter of Research Ethics, and the doctoral oath on scientific integrity.

Building on these foundations, the university has cultivated a strong institutional culture grounded in academic freedom and scientific integrity. This is evidenced by the establishment of structured mechanisms such as: a Research Ethics Committee, the appointment of Ethics and Whistleblowing Officer and a Research Integrity Officer and the implementation of a dedicated support mechanism for researchers at risk or in distress.

This commitment is operationally supported by designated Mission Officers (i.e. the Gender and Diversity Mission Officer, the Disability Mission Officer) and by dedicated structures, including a listening, monitoring, and reporting unit. They contribute to maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all researchers.

In 2021, the different institutional efforts were formally recognised by the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research through the award of the Sustainable Development and Social Responsibility (DDRS) label.

The university further affirms its commitment to responsible research practices through its ambitious Open Science policy. With 77% of its scientific publications available in open access (compared to the national average of 70%), it has developed and implemented a comprehensive institutional roadmap, supported by a dedicated Open Science Mission Officer and targeted training for researchers. In 2022, this engagement was acknowledged with the awarding of the “Science with and for Society” label by the same ministry.

Finally, the university actively promotes academic mobility at both European and international levels through schemes such as Erasmus+, the ENLIGHT network, and national mechanisms such as secondments and research leave. Mobility, in all its forms, is regarded as a key lever for developing skills and enriching researchers’ career paths.

Weaknesses

Despite the strength of the institutional framework supporting this pillar, several gaps have been identified:

Training on ethics and scientific integrity remains mandatory only for doctoral candidates. As such, these essential principles are not disseminated uniformly across the broader research community.

There remains a lack of awareness regarding certain institutional mechanisms among researchers. In particular, the role of the listening, monitoring, and reporting unit, which plays a key function in addressing discrimination, harassment, and violence, is not yet fully recognised or utilised.

A disconnect remains between the university's ambitious strategic roadmaps (open science, environmental and societal transitions) and their actual uptake by researchers. This results in low visibility of these actions within laboratories and a clear need to translate policy ambitions into concrete, operational measures.

Although academic mobility is strongly promoted, the systematic evaluation of mobility experiences is not yet fully developed. Moreover, the integration of mobility into researchers' evaluation and career advancement mechanisms remains partial and would benefit from further structuring and formalisation.

Pillar 2: Researchers Assessment, Recruitment and Progression

Strengths

For tenured researchers and doctoral candidates, the University of Bordeaux is fully committed to implementing Open, Transparent, and Merit-based (OTM-R) procedures in recruitment, selection, and career progression. This commitment is firmly grounded in national regulatory frameworks, particularly Articles L952-6 to L952-6-3 of the French Education Code and Decree No. 84-431 of 6 June 1984, which govern the status of academic staff.

These regulations ensure a rigorous, structured, and transparent recruitment process, which includes:

a mandatory national qualification prior to application, a comprehensive review of applications, and oral interviews conducted by a selection committee formed in accordance with strict rules, including gender parity and balanced representation of internal and external members.

All tenured research positions are published on the national "Galaxie/Odyssée" portal, and are automatically relayed on EURAXESS, ensuring wide and equitable visibility of job opportunities.

Regarding career progression, academic files are assessed by the relevant section of the National Council of Universities (CNU) as well as a local committee. This evaluation adopts a holistic approach, considering: the quality of scientific output, pedagogical engagement, capacity for innovation, and involvement in academic life.

Beyond this national framework, the University of Bordeaux has developed additional tools and measures to enhance transparency and effectiveness, including: a Recruitment Charter, a Guide for Selection Committees, a centralized institutional

platform for publishing job offers (BEETWEEN), and awareness-raising webinars on OTM-R principles, with a focus on bias and good recruitment practices.

In 2023, the University of Bordeaux joined the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) by signing the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment. This agreement promotes a qualitative, peer-reviewed approach, complemented by reasonable use of quantitative indicators. The appointment of a CoARA representative within the university reflects a strong institutional will to embed these principles into evaluation practices over the long term.

Weaknesses

The main weakness identified under this pillar concerns the situation of contract-based researchers. This category, not covered by national regulatory frameworks, remains insufficiently integrated into institutional mechanisms for recruitment, evaluation, and career development.

Although 100% of tenured positions are publicly advertised, only 19% of contract-based research posts benefit from official publication. The composition of selection committees for these contractual positions, unlike those for permanent positions, varies widely and is largely dependent on the practices of individual laboratories, lacking institutional standardisation.

In addition, awareness of OTM-R principles remains partial: only a portion of those involved in recruiting contract researchers are effectively trained or informed on relevant good practices.

With regard to career progression, researchers hired on fixed-term contracts (often within the scope of externally funded projects) face limited prospects for structured evaluation or tenure-track opportunities.

More broadly, the university would benefit from formalising and publicly communicating its OTM-R strategy, especially by improving visibility around the principles governing evaluation and career development. It would also be appropriate to implement a regular monitoring and evaluation mechanism to ensure effective application of this strategy.

Finally, while the signing of the **Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment** marks a significant step forward, the dissemination and operational implementation of its recommendations within researchers' evaluation processes remain limited and require further institutional action.

Pillar 3: Working Conditions and Practices

Strengths

In line with applicable legal and regulatory frameworks (including the French Labour Code, the General Civil Service Code, and the statutes governing academic staff), the University of Bordeaux strives to provide researchers with equitable working conditions that are respectful of their missions.

With 22 sites and campuses, the university offers its research community a diverse range of infrastructures, including specialized laboratories, libraries, and collaborative workspaces, essential assets for conducting high-quality research.

Committed to promoting work-life balance, the institution has implemented a variety of flexible working arrangements such as part-time work, remote work, and parental leave. These measures contribute to a more adaptable and responsive working environment.

In terms of health, safety, and well-being at work, the university conducts regular training and awareness campaigns. These efforts are reinforced by a network of prevention officers based in laboratories, who play a key role in implementing preventive measures and providing support on site.

The University of Bordeaux's statutes also guarantee researchers' representation within both decision-making and consultative bodies, ensuring their active participation in institutional governance.

Regarding employment stability, tenured researchers benefit from secure positions, appropriate remuneration, and structured career development support at the institutional level. Additional mechanisms aim to safeguard early-career researchers, such as junior professorships (enabling a progressive pathway to tenure) and doctoral contracts for students following a PhD program.

To ensure that researchers are well informed of their legal and contractual obligations, the university provides targeted training on topics such as copyright, patents, intellectual property, and scientific publishing. This support is backed by robust legal expertise, particularly through the Data Protection Officer (DPO), Mr. Xavier Daverat, and the Legal Affairs Department, both of whom uphold regulatory compliance in research activities.

With regard to the valorization and dissemination of research outputs, researchers benefit from well-structured support for open-access publication and the transfer of research results. Thanks to various public outreach initiatives (such as *Fête de la Science* and Open Days) and proactive institutional backing, the university has achieved a 77% open-access publication rate, surpassing the national average.

Incentive schemes, including the research incentive bonus, patent-related rewards, and dedicated support for innovation and entrepreneurship, further encourage the dissemination and practical application of research results.

Weaknesses

Despite these achievements, several areas for improvement remain regarding the working environment and conditions:

Some shortcomings have been identified, particularly in: the availability and quality of technical equipment, the adequacy of workspaces, the accessibility of digital collaboration tools and the existence of secure platforms for storing and sharing research data.

Employment instability is also a matter of concern, particularly for specific categories of researchers. Notably, nearly 30% of PhD candidates do not receive funding for the full duration of their doctoral studies.

While Decree No. 2021-1450 of 4 November 2021 has improved the legal status of R2-level researchers (postdoctoral researchers), its implementation within the institution remains incomplete, particularly with regard to continuing training and skills development.

Long-term career prospects for contract researchers, especially those hired under fixed-term project-based contracts continue to be limited.

More broadly, the dissemination of training and awareness initiatives (whether related to health, safety, or regulatory obligations) remains uneven and would benefit from greater structure and coordination.

Finally, the visibility and integration of institutional mechanisms for research valorization need to be strengthened, to ensure researchers are better informed and equipped to leverage these tools effectively.

Pillar 4: Research Careers and Talent Development

Strengths

As part of its human resources policy, the University of Bordeaux has implemented several measures to foster talent and support the development of researchers' careers. This proactive approach is built on a structured training offer, the promotion of diverse career pathways, and dedicated services to support professional development.

Drawing on a multi-year continuous training framework available to all staff, the university offers researchers a training program aimed at acquiring and enhancing a broad range of skills. These include scientific, pedagogical, and transversal competencies such as management, leadership, project management, and communication.

In alignment with national legislation, particularly Article L.123-3 of the French Education Code and with a view to broadening and diversifying career paths, the University of Bordeaux encourages both linear and non-linear career trajectories tailored to the diversity of researcher profiles and aspirations. This ambition is reflected in the deployment of several support structures, including the Career Support Service (*CAPP*), and programs promoting innovation, entrepreneurship, and research valorization.

For early-career researchers (R1 and R2), mentorship by experienced researchers (R3 and R4) is supported by a normative framework, including the transitioning Labs Charter, the doctoral schools' framework document distributed at the time of PhD enrolment, and the internal regulations of the doctoral schools. To enhance mentoring responsibilities, targeted training sessions and supervision bonuses are

offered, promoting engagement and good mentoring practices. These efforts have fostered the development of numerous informal mentoring initiatives within research units.

Weaknesses

The main weakness identified in this pillar is the lack of an explicit, institution-wide strategy specifically dedicated to the career development of researchers. Although many mechanisms exist, they remain embedded within the university's broader human resources strategy and do not constitute a coherent, clearly visible, and coordinated framework tailored to the specific needs of the research community.

This absence is particularly evident in the training offer, which, although rich and diverse in content, lacks a structured and researcher-specific training plan. As a result, questions arise regarding the coherence, relevance, and alignment of the training pathways with the actual career trajectories and expectations of researchers.

A similar issue applies to career guidance and support. In the absence of a clearly defined and recognizable policy, the initiatives deployed remain fragmented, poorly promoted, and insufficiently embraced by the researchers themselves. This limits their effectiveness, as many researchers do not take full advantage of existing support mechanisms due to a lack of visibility or tailored guidance.

Overall, there is a strong need for greater coordination and structuring of actions related to scientific career development and diversity. This includes both the strengthening of existing programs and their better dissemination to ensure broader uptake and enhanced perceived value among the research community.

Finally, with regard to mentoring of early-career researchers, while several informal initiatives are well established within laboratories, the university would benefit from formalizing an institutional mentoring framework. This should include clearly defined principles, specific roles, and structured support to further embed and strengthen mentorship and knowledge transfer practices.