

Human Resources Strategy for Researchers

Action Plan

LUT University

Version history

Action plan version	Validity	Approved by LUT	HRS4R label granted
Action plan I	2013 – 2015	Oct 2013	Nov 2013
Action plan II	2016 – 2018	Seb 2015	Nov 2015
Action plan III	2019 – 2021	Nov 2018	
Action Plan III	2019 – 2021	Sep 2019 revised	

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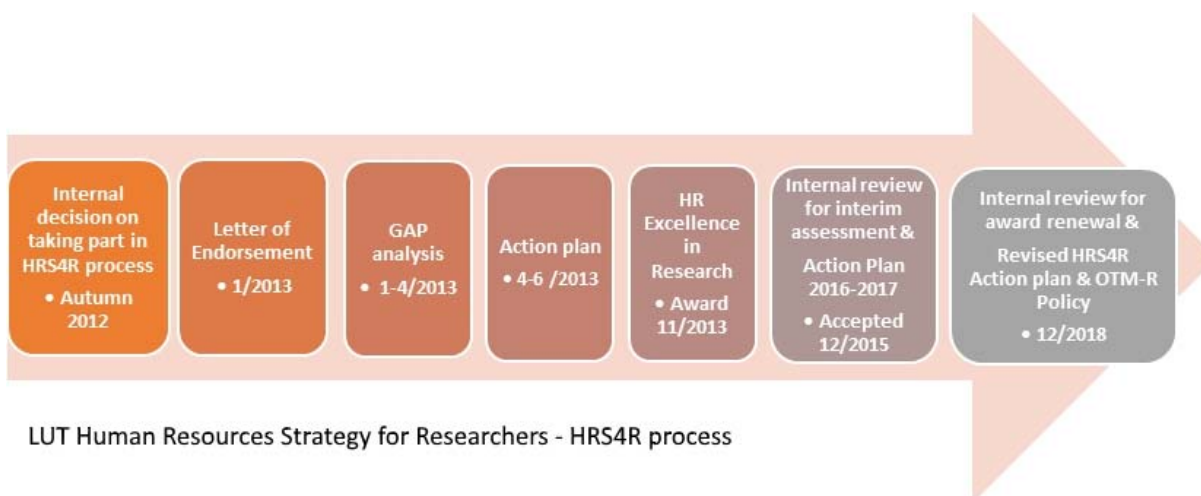
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1. Introduction

Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology LUT applied the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) Label in the 4th cohort in 2013. The label was granted on the 6th of November 2013 based on the university's Action Plan to improve researchers' employment relationship, working conditions and research environment. Since then, LUT has actively and systematically monitored the development and defined new targets to improve its functions, as documented in this paper. This paper compiles all the actions, targets and implementation of previous action plans made since the HRS4R process at LUT started in 2013 and defines new actions for years 2019-2021.

Although, LUT HR policy is in accordance with the Charter and Code in many respects, and similarly, the Finnish national legislation and collective agreement for universities set high criteria on university employers, the HR strategy for Researchers has highlighted some aspects in the researchers' employment relationship which to take better into account at LUT. Since receiving the label, developing human resource issues at LUT has become more important at the university level. The development work is an on-going process and it is not limited only to the work done within the HRS4R, but in general, improving the performance and well-being of all employees. European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers give a justified framework to monitor the status of university's HR policy and procedures and reveal the development targets.

During the years, LUT has committed to the HRS4R process, the university has increasingly benefited from the support the process provides for the continuous development of HR policy and procedures of institutions. This is proven by the risen ambition level of LUT's Action Plans and increased internal co-operation between different units contributing to researchers' working conditions at the university. LUT expects the HRS4R external review and site visit in 2019 to give new insights to continuous improvement of the university as a high-quality working environment for researchers.



2. Implementation and monitoring of HRS4R Strategy @ LUT

The implementation of the HR Excellence principles at the university and the university specific HRS4R Action Plans are monitored by the steering committee of quality and environmental management system of LUT.

At the operational level, the HRS4R working group coordinates the whole process, monitors the progress of actions and reports and discusses on the progress and implementation to the steering group and university management.

The commitment to the HRS4R objectives has been ensured by integrating actions into the university's strategic management and development objectives, thus they are included in developing the university's basic processes. The strong connection between LUT strategic action plans and HRS4R action plans ensures the resource allocation and commitment to implementation.

Responsibility of implementation of each action are defined and distributed to several organizational units at LUT. They work together with the relevant internal and external stakeholders to implement the actions. They take care of information delivery, communication and co-operation with the stakeholders involved.

Numerous feedback mechanisms used at LUT, e.g. surveys and questionnaires, ensure that the opinions and suggestions by researchers, as well as other employees, are heard and taken into account. In addition, researchers can influence the decisions and definitions of policies while they are represented in the different decision making bodies of LUT, like Academic Councils, Human Resource Committee, University Board and Collegiate, Steering Committee of LUT Doctoral School.

3. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practices by internal review 2018

For the internal review in 2018, strengths and weaknesses of current practices were analysed and compared with principles of four thematic areas of the Charter and Code. The HRS4R working group organized four separate discussion sessions for researchers in each three schools of LUT and for administrative personnel in charge of implementing actions to discuss the current practices. The results of the discussion were introduced to the steering committee of HRS4R.

The strengths and weaknesses described in this document are based both the discussion and feedback collected from different recent questionnaires and surveys. The many of the weaknesses revealed in the discussions have been transferred into new actions.

3.1. Ethical and professional aspects

Strengths:

LUT has had a 'LUT Code of Conduct' since the year 2011. LUT Code of Conduct describes the manner in which the university establishes ethical and responsible conduct in all decisions within its authority regarding the university or its employees. All new employees are instructed and expected to familiarize themselves with the code of conduct at the beginning of their employment.

Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which was conducted at LUT the first time in 2012, has given valuable feedback on LUT's research activities, resources and facilities. RAE's observations have affected on and directed the university's activities in many ways, e.g. in recruitment and research ethics. Similar guiding feedback is expected to receive from the next Research and Impact Assessment (RIA) too, which will be conducted in the year 2019.

The awareness of research ethics issues among researchers has increased since the efforts and resourcing during the past few years. Thanks to the resourcing, guidelines on good scientific practice, ethical review and procedure of handling misconduct are now in place, and misconducts are very rare.

Contractual and legal obligations, like IPR, in externally funded research projects are well taken care of by LUT Research Services and the legal counsels: researchers are advised in contractual issues and research contracts are checked by legal counsels.

LUT will continue investing resources and supporting researchers in Open Science procedures. For example, LUT has an Open Science Policy and guidelines on publishing. Since 2018, all articles published by LUT researchers are expected to be available openly.

Weaknesses:

Small resources limit the full implementation of the guidelines of research ethics, as the implementation requires continuous following and securing that all researchers, including new ones, are aware, understand and act according to the guidelines.

In order to strengthen the dissemination of research results, LUT has to further develop the Open Science procedures including data management, parallel publishing and IPR management, and use of social media in science communication.

Even though LUT has quite comprehensive feedback mechanisms, LUT does not utilize the feedback from exiting employees who might have valuable comments and ideas how to develop a course of actions.

3.2. Recruitment and selection

Strengths:

Recruitment and selection processes have developed substantially since submitting the first HRS4R Action Plan. The tenure track system and criteria of advancement and length of appointments in tenure track and non-tenure track have been implemented since 2015.

The open, international calls of applicants are used to fill the most of the open academic positions and all tenure track positions.

More modern tools have been taken into use to facilitate and speed up recruitment process and practices.

The OTM-R principles are embedded already quite well in the existing recruitment policy and processes. All requirement decisions, both non-tenure and tenure track, in all four stages of the researcher career, are based on the competence and merits of applicants, and not only academic merits, but other merits relevant to the position are taken into account too.

The OTM-R Policy of LUT has been published on webpage <https://www.lut.fi/web/en/get-to-know-us/come-to-work-for-us/hr-excellence-in-research>

Weaknesses:

LUT has not very actively developed the employer brand. Improving the employer brand and communication would attract and encourage prominent candidates to apply for the open positions.

The duration of recruitment and selection process is still rather long, especially from the point of view of applicants to the tenure track positions. Prolonged processes increase the risk of losing the interest of the prominent candidates.

In order to retain openness and quality in recruitment of talented doctoral students requires balancing between open, international calls and in-house recruitment of the best graduates from LUT's Master's degree programmes. LUT is seeking the best methods and ways of recruiting to achieve the balance.

3.3. Working conditions

Strengths:

The Finnish labour law and the Collective Agreement for Universities set the framework on university employers within to operate. Fundamentally, in respect of working conditions defined in Charter and Code, the working conditions of researchers are of good quality and well organized at LUT.

The employees have many ways to influence their work and working conditions. The feedback mechanisms, for example, are numerous and systematic at LUT. The employees have many possibilities to give feedback and assess working conditions, well-being activities, and services and support available for them. For example, LUT participates regularly in Great Place to Work – a trust index survey and the culture audit in order to obtain indications on what and how to improve the working conditions and well-being in the workplace.

One of the major employee benefits, which the employees greatly appreciate at LUT, are flexible working hours and remote working possibilities, which both are based on the trust between the employer and employees. Digital and online tools and systems enable working from other places than the primary place of work.

Another major advancement in working conditions has been the permanence and stability of employment. The number of short, temporary work contracts has decreased. For example, when hiring a new junior researcher aiming to a doctoral degree, the employment is provided 1+3 or 2+2 years, assuming that the funding is secured for the whole four-year term of employment and the student's progress in studies and research is according to targets.

Weaknesses:

The career services and career development of researches is a development target for the coming years. LUT does not have organized career services for researchers to help and guide young researchers planning their career after the doctoral degree, nor specific career development strategies for researchers. Usually the supervisors do career advising of doctoral students.

The mobility periods are prerequisite in some external funding instruments and vital part of researches' career advancement. Despite offering researchers the possibility for mobility, especially during their doctoral training period, researcher mobility has not increased as desired, mainly due to the lack of available supporting funding for mobility periods abroad.

3.4. Training and development

Strengths:

The guidelines and criteria of a four-stage researcher career support and guide the professional development of researchers aiming to advance in the academic career. In addition, the annual de-

velopment discussions between the employee and the supervisors set targets for researcher's development and training, but also enhance the relationship between the supervisor and the researcher.

LUT has a personnel training plan, which is updated annually. The plan contains the in-house personnel training and courses, of which the most target to develop generic skills needed in work and which are open to all university staff. More focused staff training has been offered recently in digitalization in education and pedagogy.

One example of new training offerings created during HRS4R process is the course of Supervision of the doctoral thesis and dissertation, meant for doctoral students' supervisors. The course gets good feedback and is now organized regularly. Also, the courses on grant writing and project management for doctoral students have a long history in LUT.

Weaknesses:

Despite the recent improvements in the orientation of new employees, we have noticed the senior researchers would benefit more on personalized orientation which would support their multiple role as supervisors and research managers.

LUT researchers have found it challenging to apply for international research funding. Even though researchers have been supported by LUT Research Services through the complexity of funding terms and requirements, more intensive support on applying international competed research funding is needed to provide. Expertise in international funding applications has been identified as one of the development targets at LUT.

4. Action Plans

LUT has prepared three Action plans since 2013 and the latest being the Action Plan III for 2019-2021. Two first action plans are separate documents each and can be found on LUT's HRS4R webpage. This revised Action Plan however contains the summaries of two first Action plans and the newest for years 2019-2021.

The responsibility of implementation of each action is defined and shared to different organizational units at LUT. The HRS4R working group coordinates the overall implementation of HRS4R strategy and reports to the steering committee. If the working group acknowledges any discrepancy in the implementation, the issue will be discussed with the people responsible for actions and in the committee meetings, if necessary.

HRS4R working group regularly monitors the progress of implementation of planned actions and documents the findings in the working groups' own digital workplace. People in charge of implementing the actions are regularly contacted by the working group members and information on the current state of implementation is shared.

The progress is measured by the targets / indicators set in the action plans. The progress on each action will be checked from different sources and documented on a shared template at least once a year by the working group members.

4.1. Action Plan I for 2013-2015

The actions selected for the first HRS4R Action Plan were based on the findings of thorough GAP analysis done in the initial phase in 2012. The three most critical development targets were selected in to the action plan: 1) recruitment in order to develop the transparency and openness of recruitment practices, 2) the orientation of new employees (induction) in order to improve the new employees' understanding about institutional regulations, practices and employee benefits concerning working conditions and 3) complaints/appeals in order to provide better feedback mechanism tools for employees to influence their work and working conditions.

The implementation of the actions was assessed internally at the end of 2015, when the first internal review was submitted. The responsibilities, scheduling, indicators, measures and current status by each action are summarized in the table below. All the actions were completed by the internal assessment in the autumn 2015. The details of the assessment of actions are documented in the second Action Plan, which is available on LUT's HRS4R webpage.

Table 1. Action Plan I for 2013-2015

ACTIONS 2013-2015	GAP Principle	TIMING	RESPONSIBLE UNIT	INDICATOR(S)/TARGET(S)	CURRENT STATUS
Internal instructions of recruitment	Recruitment Recruitment (Code)	Spring semester 2014	HR, Quality System Manager	<u>Target:</u> To standardize LUT recruitment processes: e.g. to publish new instructions for recruitment on LUT intranet and deliver them to recruiting managers, and to implement tenure track system in research positions <u>Indicator:</u> Similar recruitment processes are used in all units, tenure track system is in place.	Completed
Recruitment criteria	Selection (Code) Judging merit (Code)	Autumn semester 2014	Tenure Track Committee, Quality System Manager	<u>Target:</u> Selection to tenure track positions and advancement in tenure track are based on defined recruitment and advancement criteria. <u>Indicator:</u> Tenure track recruitment and advancement criteria published on LUT intranet and in open position advertisements	Completed
Recruitment process and communications	Recruitment (Code) Transparency (Code)	Autumn semester 2013	HR	<u>Target:</u> To renew recruitment process and applicant communications; e.g. to publish open research positions internationally, to use an electronic recruitment system to facilitate applicant communication. <u>Indicator:</u> Number of research positions published in EURAX-ESS, number of international applicants	Completed

To renew orientation (initiation / induction) of new employees	Working conditions	Starting from autumn semester 2013	HR	<u>Target:</u> New orientation routines and schedules implemented <u>Indicator:</u> Number of participants in orientation sessions, feedback of participants	Completed
Development discussions	Evaluation/ appraisal systems	Year 2014-2015	HR Development Director	<u>Target:</u> To increase the amount of development discussions between employees and supervisors/managers and constructive feedback <u>Indicator:</u> Number of documented development discussions in HR system	Completed
Work safety trustee: to collect and publish coherent information on work safety trustees on intranet	Complains / appeals	Autumn semester 2014	HR, Work Safety Trustee, Quality System Manager, Intra Team	<u>Target:</u> To enhance the awareness of services of work safety trustees <u>Indicator:</u> Feedback from employees	Completed
Feedback channel	Complains / appeals	Autumn semester 2014	HR, Quality System Manager, Intra Team	<u>Target:</u> A working feedback channel available on intranet, open feedback channel and process in use <u>Indicator:</u> Number of feedback received and replied monthly	Completed

4.2. Action Plan II for 2016-2018

The HRS4R Action Plan II for 2016-2018, summarized in the table below, was done in the autumn 2015. The actions selected for the second action plan derived from the university level strategic action plans which were just renewed before the internal assessment and revision of the HRS4R Action Plan. The action plan included 12 actions concentrating in six gap principles: good practice in science, dissemination, exploitation of results, funding and salaries, supervision and managerial duties, evaluation/appraisal systems, and teaching.

Most of the actions were completed by the internal assessment executed in the autumn 2018, but there were some actions still in progress, and one action which the university management decided to postpone till 2019. Some of the actions still in progress has been extended to the next HRS4R Action Plan III. All the actions in progress will be monitored as part of continuing HRS4R process.

Table 2. Action Plan II for 2016-2018

ACTIONS 2016-2018	GAP PRINCIPLE(S)	TIMING	RESPONSIBLE UNIT	INDICATOR(S) / TARGET (S)	CURRENT STATUS
Commitment to Open Science	Good practice in research Dissemination, exploitation of results	Spring semester 2016	Performance Guidance unit and Information Services, Academic library, researchers	<u>Target:</u> To provide instructions and support services to researchers according to LUT's rector's decision on commitment to open science and open access publications <u>Indicator:</u> Instructions available on LUT webpages, support service personnel nominated to help researchers	Completed Actions of Open Science to be continued in years 2019-2021
Visibility of research results in social media	Dissemination, exploitation of results	Autumn semester 2015 →	Media Services, researchers	<u>Target:</u> To provide instructions and training for researchers on communicating about research activities and results on social media <u>Indicator:</u> Instructions available on LUT intranet, one training session organized for researchers	Extended Action continues in the next Action Plan 2019-2021
To renew the policy of remuneration of active publishers	Funding and salaries	Spring semester 2016 →	LUT Management	<u>Target:</u> To increase the quantity and quality of research publications <u>Indicator:</u> Number and impact of research publications	Completed
Support for innovations and commercialization	Dissemination, exploitation of results	Spring semester 2016 →	Green Campus Open, School of Engineering Science (Entrepreneurial university)	<u>Target:</u> To be the first university in Finland to qualify the OECD criteria for entrepreneurial university. Implementation of EU's HEInnovative tool and criteria of OECD, arrange courses/training on entrepreneurship. <u>Indicator:</u> OECD's HEInnovative assessment	In progress Action continues further
Improving managerial and leadership skills	Supervision and managerial duties	Spring semester 2016	HR	<u>Target:</u> To provide orientation and mentoring for new supervisors <u>Indicator:</u> Reports of Great Place to Work -surveys, and 360 degree assessment	In progress Mentoring available by request from 2018, orientation of new supervisors under development
Renewal of leadership training	Supervision and managerial duties	Autumn semester 2016	HR	<u>Target:</u> To renew the leadership training scheme <u>Indicator:</u> Feedback on the supervisor training program	In progress Leadership training replaced by

					coaching programme for supervisors
Guidance training for doctoral students' supervisors	Supervision and managerial duties	Autumn semester 2016	LUT Doctoral School, Research services, HR	<p><u>Target:</u> To arrange regularly guidance training for doctoral students' supervisors</p> <p><u>Indicator:</u> Feedback on guidance and supervision given by doctoral students, feedback on training sessions from participants</p>	Completed
Introduce an evaluation matrix for assessment of performance of teaching staff	Evaluation / appraisal systems	Autumn semester 2015	HR, Heads of academic units, supervisors of academic staff	<p><u>Target:</u> To support development of teaching skills and competences of teaching staff.</p> <p><u>Indicator:</u> New instructions published and applied in career advancement of teaching staff</p>	Completed
Evaluation of LUT research activities (RAE)	Evaluation / appraisal systems	Autumn semester 2017	Vice president of research	<p><u>Target:</u> To support the strategic management and development of LUT research activities.</p> <p><u>Indicator:</u> Quality and impact (external research funding, citations and publications) of LUT research activities</p>	In progress RAE (RIA) exercise postponed till 2019
Systematized utilization of the feedback on external funding applications	Evaluation / appraisal systems	Spring semester 2016 →	Research Services (previously Pre-grant Services)	<p><u>Target:</u> To increase the number of successful funding applications</p> <p><u>Indicator:</u> Amount of external research funding</p>	Completed
Renewal of university pedagogy training	Teaching	Autumn semester 2015	Vice president of education, Student services	<p><u>Target:</u> To develop pedagogical skills of teaching staff</p> <p><u>Indicator:</u> Students' course feedback, participants' feedback from training, number of participants in trainings</p>	Completed
Implementing product management to all degree programs	Teaching	Spring semester 2016 →	Vice president of education	<p><u>Target:</u> To improve the quality and attractiveness of degree education</p> <p><u>Indicator:</u> Degree programme development demonstrated by input, process and output indicators</p>	Completed

4.3. Action Plan III for 2019-2021

The Action Plan III for 2019-21 was approved by LUT administration in November 13th 2018. It includes eleven actions addressing to thirteen different gap principles: dissemination, exploitation of results, professional responsibility, public engagement, accountability, evaluation/ appraisal systems, co-authorship, transparency, career development, access to career advice, value of mobility, access to research training and continuous development, and supervision. The focus of actions is on strengthening the research impact of LUT and career development of researchers.

The new actions are integral with LUT's strategic management, thus they are included in developing the university's basic processes. The strong connection between LUT strategic action plans, which were under the mid-term evaluation and updated in the spring 2018, and HRS4R action plans ensures the resource allocation and commitment to implementation. Analysis of strength and weaknesses of current practices gave valuable information and helped defining the new actions.

Responsibility of implementation of actions are distributed to several organizational units at LUT working together with the relevant internal and external stakeholders. HRS4R working group will monitor the progress of implementation regularly together with the people or units in charge of actions. The aim is to extend the composition of working group with representatives of people responsible for each thematic group of principles and with researchers. The HRS4R working group continues reporting the progress to the HRS4R steering committee, which role is also to define the broader targets for the HRS4R strategy.

The table 3 below summarizes the actions for 2019-2021, action specific targets and indicators, responsibilities, timing and the respective principle in Charter & Code for Researchers.

Table 3. Action Plan III for 2019-2021

PLANNED ACTIONS 2019-2020	GAP PRINCIPLE(S)	TIMING	RESPONSIBLE UNIT	INDICATOR(S) / TARGET(S)	CURRENT STATUS
Supporting science communication of researchers	Dissemination, exploitation of results	Autumn semester 2019	Communication & Marketing, researchers	<u>Target:</u> To increase the impact of LUT research <u>Indicator:</u> Visibility of LUT's researchers' activities in traditional and social media monitored by LUT Media Services	New action
Strengthening the implementation of Open Science procedures by informing, guiding and supporting researchers	Professional responsibility, Public engagement	Spring semester 2019	Academic library, research services, researchers	<u>Target:</u> To receive the highest maturity level of openness in the activities of research organizations by 2020 <u>Indicator:</u> Evaluation of openness in the activities of research organizations by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture	New action
Development of research data management: tools, procedures and instructions on managing and opening research data	Accountability	Spring semester 2019	Academic library, ICT-services, researchers	<u>Target:</u> To increase number of stored datasets and openly published research data <u>Indicator:</u> Number of openly published research data in various	New action

				services monitored by LUT Academic Library	
Development of automated process for parallel publishing: tools, procedures and instructions	Dissemination, exploitation of results	Spring semester 2019	Academic library, ICT-services, researchers	<u>Target:</u> To increase amount of open access publications by increasing number of parallel published research publications <u>Indicator:</u> Number of parallel published research publications	New action
Developing exit interview procedure of leaving staff: to receive new type of feedback and utilize it in developing working conditions	Evaluation/appraisal systems	Spring semester 2019	Management services	<u>Target:</u> Majority of exiting employees fill the exit questionnaire <u>Indicator:</u> Number of responses of exiting employees	New action
Revision and developing of LUT website of recruitment and marketing and communication of employer brand	Transparency (Code)	Autumn semester 2020	HR unit and Media services	<u>Target:</u> To improve LUT employer brand and recruitment communication <u>Indicator:</u> Number of applicants in open research positions	New action
To create mentoring programme for doctoral students	Career development	Spring semester 2019	LUT Doctoral School	<u>Target:</u> To support the career development and employability of doctoral students <u>Indicator:</u> Number of active mentor-actor pairs starting per year, and feedback from mentors and actors	New action
To develop an online course in career planning for doctoral students (Find Your Career self-study platform)	Career development, Access to career advice	Spring semester 2020	Study services	<u>Target:</u> To support career and employability skills of doctoral students <u>Indicator:</u> Employment rate and quality of employment of graduate doctoral students. Number of doctoral students employed by industry.	New action
To create action plans for international strategic partnerships to promote research and teaching co-operation, co-authoring and staff mobility	Career development, Value of mobility, Co-authorship	Spring semester 2020	Management services	<u>Target:</u> To increase internationalization and research impact of LUT <u>Indicator:</u> Mobility of incoming and outgoing researchers and teachers to/from strategic partners, co-authored publications, degree programmes with strategic partners	New action
To support the most suitable researchers applying highly valued competed research funding	Access to research training and continuous development	Spring semester 2020	Research services	<u>Target:</u> To increase the number of successful funding applications <u>Indicator:</u> Evidence on systematic support delivered (trained	New action

				personnel), amount of highly valued competed research funding	
To provide personalized orientation and coaching to supervisors	Supervision	Spring semester 2020	Dean/Head of department, HR services, Management services	<p><u>Target:</u> To increase employees' satisfaction on leadership and management of work</p> <p><u>Indicator:</u> Employees' satisfaction indicators of Great Place to Work surveys</p>	New action