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UNIVERSITY OF SALAMANCA

Researcher Career Development Plan



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH (HRS4R)

UNIVERSITY OF SALAMANCA-VICE-RECTORATE FOR RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF SALAMANCA

Researcher Career Development Plan

Institutional Strategy aligned with the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)

1. Document Objectives

This framework document on Researcher Career Options falls within the commitments made by the University of Salamanca (USAL) by virtue of obtaining and maintaining the European HR Excellence in Research (HRS4R) quality seal. Its fundamental objective is to structure and disseminate in a transparent and comprehensive manner the pathways, opportunities, and support mechanisms available to research personnel at each stage of their professional career. This strategy defines a common framework of action applicable both within academic structures and USAL's own and joint research centers, as well as in cross-sectoral transfer environments. The aim is to guide research talent beyond the initial predoctoral and postdoctoral stages, providing tools for self-assessment, transversal training, and guidance towards both the public and business sectors, in accordance with the statutes and regulatory framework governing Teaching and Research Staff (PDI).

2. The Start of the Research Career

After obtaining a bachelor's degree, engineering degree, or architecture degree, it is possible to advance towards research through master's degree studies. These programs aim to provide students with advanced training—whether specialized or multidisciplinary—oriented towards academic or professional specialization, as well as initiation into research activity.

Formal entry into a research career at the University of Salamanca is thus implemented through research-oriented postgraduate degrees (Official University Master's Degrees) and, definitively, through access to third-cycle studies regulated by Royal Decree 99/2011. Successful completion of these studies leads to obtaining the corresponding official master's degree, which may qualify the holder to undertake a doctoral thesis and, consequently, obtain a Ph.D. (Doctorate).

The updated academic offer can be consulted on the USAL Master's Degrees website ([Másteres USAL](#)), either through a full list or categorized by fields of knowledge, double degrees, or bilingual programs taught in English.

Once the master's degree is completed, the next step in the research career is pursuing a Ph.D. This constitutes the third cycle of official university studies and is oriented towards developing skills and abilities related to quality scientific research. Doctoral studies are

organized into programs, and training is not based on traditional courses, but on training activities specifically designed for acquiring these competencies.

3. The Doctoral School: *Studii Salamantini*

The management and excellence core of this initial stage resides in USAL's Doctoral School "*Studii Salamantini*" ([Escuela de Doctorado "*Studii Salamantini*" de la USAL](#)). This institution is entrusted with organizing the activities of doctoral programs and ensuring the transversal training of doctoral candidates, guaranteeing their integration into national and international research networks.

The academic offering of doctoral courses ([oferta académica de los cursos de doctorado](#)) is divided into thematic areas:

- Arts and Humanities
- Sciences
- Health Sciences
- Social and Legal Sciences
- Engineering and Architecture
- Multidisciplinary Programs

To carry out its scientific functions, the Doctoral School coordinates a diversified offer across multiple branches of knowledge in line with the historical and consolidated trajectory of the University of Salamanca. Status as a doctoral candidate is obtained after formalizing admission and annual enrollment in one of its programs, at which point a line of research is assigned, directed, and supervised by a tutor and a thesis supervisor under the good practice commitments of the HRS4R logo.

4. Researcher Profiles in the Institutional Framework (R1 to R4)

In alignment with the European Commission and the principles of the European Charter for Researchers, the University of Salamanca adopts the standard classification of research profiles structured into four broad competency levels. This framework describes the skills required and expected at each level, regardless of the researcher's contract type or legal status (Contracted or Tenured/Civil Servant PDI):

- **R1: First Stage Researcher:** Researchers in their initial training period conducting scientific activities under direct academic supervision, oriented towards obtaining a Ph.D. or with equivalent experience.
- **R2: Recognised Researcher:** Ph.D. holders or equivalent who, having reached initial maturity, require consolidation of their competencies. They have not yet established full independence or systematic autonomous funding attraction.
- **R3: Established Researcher:** Ph.D. holders capable of developing independent research projects systematically. They demonstrate proven capacity to attract economic resources, direct doctoral theses, and coordinate working groups or scientific projects.
- **R4: Leading Researcher:** Internationally recognized benchmark researchers unanimously acknowledged by their peers. They exercise indisputable scientific leadership, structure and direct large teams, define strategic visions of knowledge, and mobilize high-impact competitive funding.

European Profile	Necessary Skills	Desirable Skills
R1 (First Stage)	Systematic understanding of a field of study. Ability to obtain and analyze data under supervised guidance. Basic scientific communication skills before peers	Development of international networking skills. Ability to propose initial research hypotheses critically.
R2 (Recognised Researcher)	Ability to manage research autonomously with minimal supervision. Contribution to innovation through impactful publications or patents. Ability to explain research and its value to society.	Predocctoral personnel leadership capabilities. Clear focus on exploiting results towards the industrial or socioeconomic framework.

European Profile	Necessary Skills	Desirable Skills
R3 (Consolidated Researcher)	Proven scientific reputation based on excellence. Ability to identify methodological lines and problems autonomously. Formal leadership of teams and projects.	Strong cross-sectoral collaboration. Sustained experience in attracting resources from international competitive calls.
R4 (Leading)	Demonstrated leadership and influence in their field of knowledge. Long-term strategic vision of the scientific agenda. High-impact bibliometric or technological output and leadership on international committees.	Ability to foster creative and diverse work environments, driving complex institutional mentoring programs.

5. Research Career Funding (Career Path - FECYT)

A key aspect when planning a research career is funding. On the one hand, various public and private organizations offer grants for predoctoral and postdoctoral contracts at national and regional levels. Additionally, multiple calls cover postdoctoral stages. To facilitate awareness and access, FECYT (Fundación Española para la Ciencia y la Tecnología) has spent several years gathering and disseminating information regarding available funding opportunities for different stages of the research career. Under the title Researcher career path in Spain, it periodically updates a document accessible via link ([enlace](#)).

In addition to national options, this document includes regional funding opportunities, which in Castilla y León consist of:

Call	Stage	Description	Link
Predoctoral Grants (Consejería de Educación)	Predoctoral	Periodic competitive calls, co-financed by ESF+.	https://www.tramitacastillayleon.jcyl.es/web/jcyl/AdministracionElectronica/es/Plantilla100Detalle/1251181050732/Ayuda012/1285500157360/Propuesta
Hiring Support Technical Personnel	R&D Support	Funding for technical staff for research projects and groups	https://www.tramitacastillayleon.jcyl.es/web/jcyl/AdministracionElectronica/es/Plantilla100Detalle/1251181050732/Ayuda012/1285644439785/Propuesta
Research Project Grants	All	Funding for scientific projects in universities and centers.	https://www.educa.jcyl.es/universidad/es/servicio-investigacion-cientifica/ayudas-subsenciones-investigacion/pi-2025-subsenciones-programa-apoyo-proyectos-investigacion

Call	Stage	Description	Link
Andrés Laguna Programme (Junior)	Postdoctoral	Contracts up to 3 years for Ph.D. holders aimed at talent attraction and return.	https://www.educa.jcyl.es/universidad/en/servicio-investigacion-cientifica/ayudas-subsenciones-investigacion/ayudas-destinadas-financiar

			incorporacion-talento-investiga
Andrés Laguna Programme(annual calls)	Postdoctoral	Funding for researchers with significant financial endowment.	https://www.tramitacastillayleon.jcyl.es/web/jcyl/AdministracionElectronica/es/Plantilla100Detalle/1251181050732/Ayuda012/1285587731572/Propuesta
Postdoctoral contracts linked to regional projects	Postdoctoral		https://www.educa.jcyl.es/universidad/pt/servicio-investigacion-cientifica/ayudas-subvenciones-investigacion/pi-2025-subvenciones-programa-apoyo-proyectos-investigacion

6. Career Funding and USAL's Own Research Programs

The viability and stabilization of a scientific career depend on competitive public and private funding channels (international, national, and regional). However, to articulate these stages, the University of Salamanca features a direct financial support structure managed through the Research Management Agency.

USAL's Own Research Programs constitute the strategic instrument of institutional scientific policy, structurally divided into the following main lines of action: <https://investigacion.usal.es/es/investigacion/programas-propios>.

USAL Own Programmes	Description and Strategic Objectives
Program I: Group Funding	Aimed at strengthening and consolidating the structures of USAL Recognized Research Groups (GIR), funding operating expenses and support for research activity.

USAL Own Programmes	Description and Strategic Objectives
Programme II: Postdoctoral Contracts	Grants aimed at recruiting researchers with a PhD to carry out research projects in departments or institutes at USAL, serving as a stepping stone towards permanent employment. Programas Propios Portal de investigación Contracts type IIa: Postdoctoral contracts for researchers who have recently completed their PhDs (currently under review) Programas Propios Portal de investigación Contracts type IIb: Postdoctoral contracts linked to the assessment or award of the R3 certificate Programas Propios Portal de investigación Contracts type IIc: Postdoctoral bridging contracts designed to facilitate the transition to permanent posts for researchers on postdoctoral contracts. Programas Propios Portal de investigación Contracts Type IId: Postdoctoral contracts of excellence Programas Propios Portal de investigación
Programme III: Predoctoral Contracts	Competitive call for applications for pre-doctoral contracts linked to doctoral programmes at the ‘<i>Studii Salamantini</i>’ School, promoting the completion of doctoral theses on a full-time basis. Programas Propios Portal de investigación
Talent Retention Programme, Salamanca City Council–University of Salamanca: Employment contracts with local businesses	Competitive call for applications for Industrial PhD programmes in collaboration with local companies. Launch: October 2026

USAL Own Programmes	Description and Strategic Objectives
Programme IV: Mobility	Funding to support placements at prestigious overseas research centres, facilitating the inclusion of an 'international' designation on doctoral degrees and the internationalisation of R2 and R3 staff. Programas Propios Portal de investigación
Programme V: Dissemination of Results	Funding intended to cover the costs associated with publishing in high-impact, indexed scientific journals and attending leading international conferences. Programas Propios Portal de investigación

7. Professional Career Options

After beginning their research journey, many early-stage researchers successfully develop solid, promising careers outside academia. This section analyzes the professional fields these profiles enter and the skills most in demand.

What job opportunities exist outside academia for research personnel?

Euraxess, the European Commission network providing a single point of entry that gathers information about various jobs researchers pursue, associated skills, and relevant aspects across Europe and beyond, allows clearer identification of career alternatives and entry requirements. Complete online information covers sectors such as:

- Agricultural sector Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- Consulting
- Finance
- Higher Education
- Healthcare
- Information Technology

- Legal Sector Manufacturing Industry
- Media
- Mining and Energy
- Pharmaceutical Industry & Life Sciences Public Administration
- Transport and Logistics

This spectrum reflects the high transferability of research competencies across diverse non-academic contexts.

What skills do employers value?

Researchers often perceive that their skills are not recognized in the labor market. Evidence shows the opposite: research-developed skills are highly appreciated.

According to Euraxess, top valued skills include:

- Problem-solving skills
- Technical and specialized knowledge
- Research competencies
- Communication skills
- Creativity
- Organization and time management
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Innovation
- Project management
- Emotional intelligence

Additional key skills include adaptability to change, critical thinking applied to non-academic contexts, data-driven decision-making, and continuous learning in dynamic environments.

Key Recommendations

According to Euraxess, key guidelines for career planning include:

- **Explore non-academic opportunities:** A wide range of options may better match individual skills.
- **Maintain research identity:** Many individuals continue research outside academia, retaining fully applicable skills.

- **Take active career management:** Professional development requires personal initiative.
- **Recognize skill value:** Effectively communicate acquired capabilities to potential employers.

Further key considerations for transition:

- **Build a clear professional narrative:** Tailor resumes to highlight transferable skills beyond scientific publications.
- **Networking:** Building professional connections outside academia is crucial for accessing job opportunities.
- **Strategic complementary training:** Acquiring extra skills (e.g., business management, applied data analysis, programming, digital skills) eases sector transitions.
- **Market awareness:** Understanding sector trends and position requirements helps focus job searches.
- **Practical experience outside academia:** Internships, corporate collaborations, or interdisciplinary projects improve employability.

8. The Career Plan

Developing a scientific career trajectory requires careful long-term planning and grounded reflection. Support tools available to help structure a career plan include:

[Talent Development Suite \(TDS\)](#): Designed for individual career development planning. Focuses on constructing a personal vision for the future (professionally and personally) rather than assessing skills. Targeted at postdocs who completed their Ph.D. in the last 1–3 years, though usable anytime autonomously without professional advising.

[Career Orientation tool](#): A global set of resources helping define key career priorities, manage skills/knowledge development, explore career pathways, and outline actionable development plans.

9. Structure and Access of Teaching and Research Staff (PDI)

Academic and scientific careers at USAL are articulated through two distinct personnel regimes, under current university legislation (LOSU) and internal regulations:

A. Contracted Teaching and Research Staff Section

Regulates access under temporary or permanent labor contracts. Includes basic progression figures:

- **Assistant Professor (*Ayudante Doctor*):** Temporary labor contract aimed at pedagogical and research refinement for early-stage Ph.D. holders. Prior accreditation is no longer required as of April 2023.
- **Permanent Labor Professor (*Profesor Permanente Laboral*):** Indefinite contract providing stability to consolidated researchers choosing the contractual track.
- **Specific Research Roles:** Contractual models under excellence programs (e.g., Access Contracts to the Spanish Science System, Distinguished Researchers, and beneficiaries of competitive programs like Ramón y Cajal, Juan de la Cierva, or MSCA actions).

B. Tenured/Civil Servant Teaching and Research Staff Section

Encompasses state teaching corps integrated into university administration, conferring permanent civil servant status:

- **Associate Professor (*Titular de Universidad - TU*):** Civil servant body certifying full teaching and research maturity and independence (Profile R3). Requires passing national ANECA accreditation and public competitive examination.
- **Full Professor (*Catedrático de Universidad - CU*):** Highest academic rank, denoting consolidated leadership, extensive teaching, and internationally audited research prestige (Profile R4).

OTM-R Principle (Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment): All recruitment processes across both Contracted and Tenured PDI sections strictly follow publicity, transparency, merit, and capacity principles promoted by USAL's HRS4R strategy.

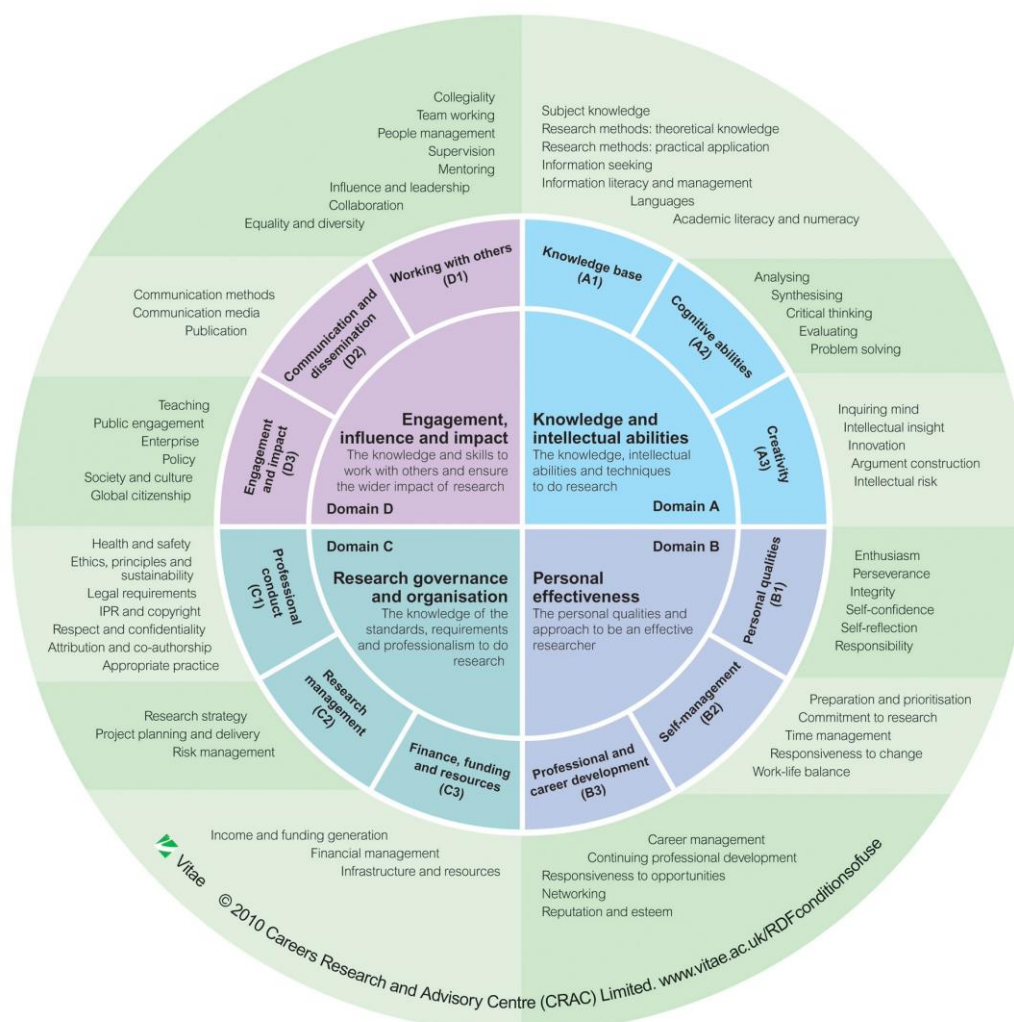
10. Strategic Career Planning and Competency Tools

Para optimizar la transición entre los perfiles institucionales y fomentar la empleabilidad tanto dentro de la universidad como en el mercado laboral intersectorial, se insta al personal investigador a utilizar marcos formales de planificación de competencias profesionales:

1. **ResearchComp (European Competence Framework for Researchers):** Developed by the European Commission, mapping essential transversal competencies across 7 core areas: cognitive abilities, conducting research, research management, advanced tool usage, social impact, collaborative working, and self-management.

2. **Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF):** Comprehensive model organizing skills into 4 main domains:

- *Domain A:* Knowledge and intellectual abilities.
- *Domain B:* Personal effectiveness.
- *Domain C:* Research governance and organization.
- *Domain D:* Engagement, influence, and impact.



Euraxess also offers the [REFLEX](#) professional development tool, designed to help institutions and researchers via structured training modules covering mobility, networking, career support, academic skills, and enterprise interaction.

Its aim is to help research institutions, researchers and research support professionals facilitate the career development process, based on a framework that identifies the key areas of development and provides examples of activities that can be implemented to support researchers across all these areas. The tool is accompanied by a comprehensive user guide and a training model framework covering:

- **Mobility:** how to support researchers in moving freely and easily, including dual careers and cultural, legal and language-related aspects.
- **Networking:** how to facilitate the integration and development of professional contacts through interdisciplinary collaborations, mentoring, alumni associations, etc.
- **Professional support:** through career development tools and resources, such as career advisers, career coordinators and funding opportunities.
- **Academic and professional development skills:** providing training in transferable skills such as communication, management, planning and leadership.
- **Interaction with businesses:** providing information on business needs and how companies operate, as well as knowledge and skills useful for entrepreneurship.

3. Institutional Mentoring & Stabilization Strategies:

The University of Salamanca implements specific mentoring schemes to support early-stage (R1) and recognised (R2) researchers through the guidance and support of established researchers (R3 and R4). These actions are coordinated through the scientific committees of the Doctoral School, the Vice-Rectorate for Research, and specific programmes linked to the HRS4R Award, ensuring an open, equitable and globally excellent research environment.

11. Research Career Development at USAL

Research career development at USAL integrates strategic institutional programs and training actions aimed at continuous improvement, talent attraction/retention, quality enhancement, and internationalization. Key tools and action lines include:

Within this framework, the University of Salamanca has developed a range of actions and tools:

- **University research and knowledge transfer programmes:** The University of Salamanca promotes specific programmes aimed at strengthening research activity, fostering knowledge generation and promoting the transfer of research results to society. These initiatives contribute to the development of research groups, the strengthening of strategic research areas and the consolidation of scientific excellence.

<https://investigacion.usal.es/es/investigacion/programas-propios>

<https://transferencia.usal.es/programas/#programas-propios>

- **Stabilisation and promotion of academic and research staff:** The University has established mechanisms to support the consolidation of research careers and the promotion of academic staff, including the creation and transformation of positions. These measures aim to support stable academic careers and retain talent within the institution.

<https://usal.es/estabilizacion-y-promocion-del-pdi-laboral-dotacion-y-transformacion-de-plazas>

- **Teaching training and innovation:** Through the University Institute of Educational Sciences (IUCE), the University offers a comprehensive training programme for academic and research staff. These activities cover pedagogical updating as well as the development of teaching, methodological and digital skills, supporting the continuous improvement of academic practice.

<https://iuce.usal.es/formacion/>

- **Continuing education and professional development:** The University of Salamanca offers a structured range of continuing education opportunities aimed at updating professional skills, developing specialised expertise and enhancing employability. This includes continuing education programmes across different fields of knowledge.

<https://formacionpermanente.usal.es/>

- **University micro-credentials:** The University has introduced short, certified learning pathways that enable researchers to acquire specific skills in a flexible and stackable

way. These micro-credentials are designed to respond to specific qualification and professional development needs throughout academic and research careers.

<https://formacionpermanente.usal.es/microcredenciales-universitarias/>

Overall, these initiatives form an institutional ecosystem aimed at supporting the professional development of researchers, facilitating career planning, enhancing skills and supporting career progression within the higher education and research system.

12. Directory of Resources and Institutional Reference Links

For detailed information on current regulations, active calls for applications and administrative procedures relating to research careers at the University of Salamanca, the following official channels are available:

Institutional Portal / Service	Official Reference Access
Official website of the University of Salamanca	https://usal.es/
Research Management Agency (Own Programmes)	https://investigacion.usal.es/es/investigacion/programas-propios
Contractual Teaching and Research Staff Section	https://usal.es/seccion-de-personal-docente-e-investigador-contratado
Teaching and Research Staff Section	https://usal.es/seccion-de-personal-docente-e-investigador-funcionario
Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R Logo)	https://hrs4r.usal.es/
‘ <i>Studii Salamantini</i> ’ Doctoral School (The School)	https://doctorado.usal.es/