

# RESEARCHERS SURVEY – MAIN RESULTS

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**Survey Report**  
Iscte

**Edition**  
GEQS| Studies, Quality and Sustainability Office

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## Framework

As part of the InCITIES project, Iscte adhered, in September 2023, to the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, subscribing to its 40 principles and thus formalizing the commitment to recognize and value the importance of research activities in the institution. These principles are integrated on four Pillars: Ethical and Professional Aspects, Recruitment and Selection, Working Conditions and Social Security and Training and Development<sup>1</sup>.

Following this adhesion, Iscte began its application for Human Resources Excellence in Research (HR Excellence in Research), awarded to organizations that, after an internal assessment (Gap Analysis) regarding compliance with the 40 principles, define a set of actions (Action Plan) to improve its practices in the four areas mentioned.

In this context, and characterized as a continuous and evolutionary process, several initiatives are underway, with a view to improving the processes of recruiting researchers, based on the principles of an Open, Transparent and Merit-Based (OTM-R) policy, and the working conditions of researchers who carry out activities in Iscte' Research Units.

The Researchers' Survey (2024) was one of the first initiatives and aimed to diagnose the current situation at Iscte, with a view to creating a stimulating work environment that is favorable to the production, transfer and sharing of knowledge, as well as to the professional development of researchers.

In this sense, the research results helped not only to evaluate the practices already implemented, but also to create mechanisms to encourage the improvement of conditions for the development of research activities in aspects such as professional ethics, career, working conditions and environment, support for research activities, equality and non-discrimination, recruitment and dissemination of research results. All these improvements will be considered when developing the Gap Analysis and respective Action Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, please see: <https://www.iscte-iul.pt/conteudos/research/2621/hr-excellence-in-research>

## Sample Characterization

The survey was available for response between May 14th and 31st, of 2024, and two versions were published, one in Portuguese and other in English.

124 researchers participated, which corresponds to 22,1% of the universe.

The sample included researchers with different contractual frameworks, from researchers at level R1 (PhD student/first stage researcher: researchers who carry out research under supervision and who have not yet obtained a doctoral degree), R2 (Post-Docs/Recognized researcher: researchers with a doctorate who are not yet fully independent in terms of their ability to develop their own research, attract funding or lead a research group), R3 (Established researcher: doctoral researchers who have reached a level of independence in their ability to develop their own research, attract funding or lead a research group) and R4 (Leading researcher: researchers with a doctorate who are recognized by their peers as reference figures in their research domain).

Regarding their characterization, 57% of the respondents are women, 74% are Portuguese, 40% have between 40 and 49 years old, 48% are R1 level researchers, 44% are full-time research fellows, 58% have been carrying out research activities for less than five years, 34% have never carried out research activities at another host institution besides Iscte and 34% are researchers at the Center for Research and Studies in Sociology (CIES-Iscte) <sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup>Infographic with the sociodemographic characterization of the sample available at: <https://www.iscte-iul.pt/conteudos/research/2621/hr-excellence-in-research> (Point 3 - Launch of the Iscte Researchers Survey).

## Results

The design of the survey was a result of a careful adaptation and adjustment of Iscte's research reality to the four pillars that support the Charter & Code, ensuring that the structure of the survey was aligned with its fundamental principles. In this sense, the elaboration of the questions met these four themes, with a structured logic in questions of positioning regarding statements (opinion scale) and suggestions for improvement actions (adequacy scale), as well as open-ended questions, where researchers had the opportunity to express themselves, in free text fields, on the various subjects.

The following analysis is the result of this distinction between four axes, with two graphs having been created, one with the averages of the opinion questions, and the other with the averages of the questions relating to the suggestion of improvement actions.

In the Analysis by Dimension section, a preliminary analysis is carried out, highlighting the opinion questions that had fewer positive evaluations, with results below the average for each axis, as well as the action proposals that had results above the midpoint of the adequacy scale (3).

### Analysis by Axis – Opinion Questions

Regarding opinion questions, researchers had the opportunity to position themselves, in relation to a set of topics, in each dimension of analysis, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 corresponds to “completely disagree” and 5 to “completely agree”.

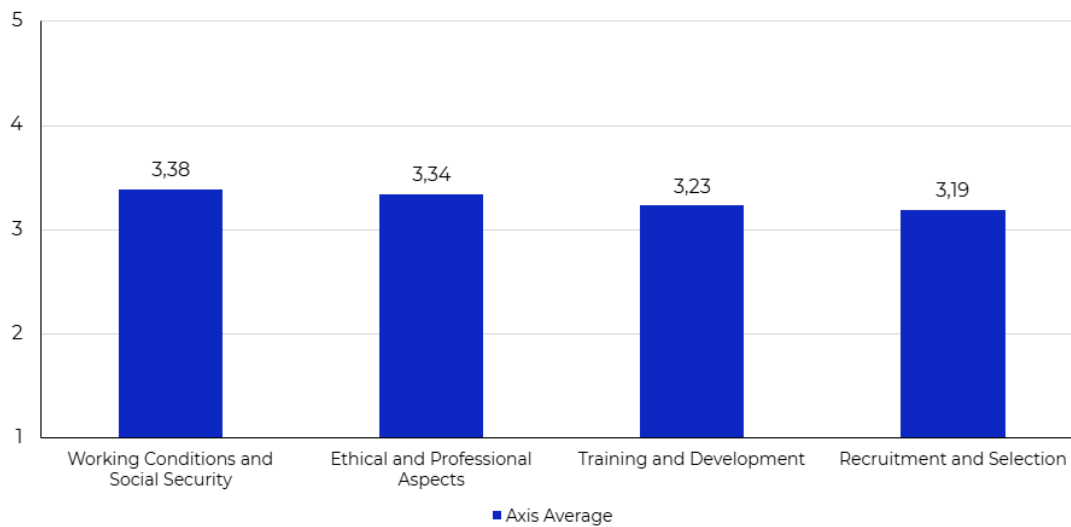
According to Graph 1, it is possible to understand that the researchers' opinions are not characterized by being very distinct, with no significant differences between the axes. After analyzing the average values, it is concluded that the Working Conditions and Social Security dimension is the one with the highest value ( $A=3,38^3$ ), characterizing itself as the aspect best evaluated by researchers.

On the other hand, the Recruitment and Selection dimension is the one that receives the lowest evaluations ( $A=3,19$ ).

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<sup>3</sup> “A” represents the word “Average”.

Graph 1 – Average of Opinion Questions by Axis



### Analysis by Axis – Proposal Actions Questions

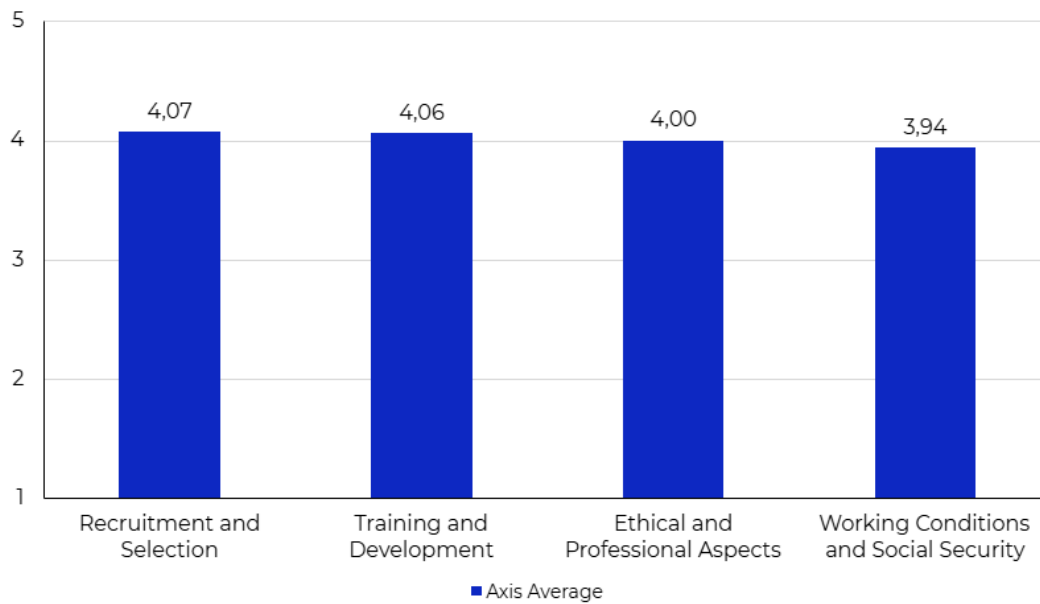
Regarding the second component of the survey, researchers were able to assess the suitability of a set of 23 proposed actions, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “completely inadequate” and 5 “completely adequate”.

Analyzing Graph 2 it is possible to conclude that the suggested actions were well evaluated by the researchers, being of good suitability (average equal to or greater than 4 in three of the four axes).

Considering also the content of Graph 1, it is possible to conclude that there was a proportional relationship between what the researchers considered to be the points to improve (assigning lower values in the opinion questions) and the proposed improvement actions (assigning higher values in the action suggestions questions).

In this regard, the dimensions that were least well classified in the previous graph, such as Recruitment and Selection and Training and Development, are those whose proposed actions were best evaluated by researchers.

Graph 2 – Average of Action Proposal Questions by Axis



### Analysis by Dimension

Next, we present the dimensions that are associated with each of the axes, in particular the parameters with results below the average of the respective axis and the identification of the proposed actions and initiatives that concentrated an evaluation above the midpoint of the scale. These results will be considered in the diagnostic exercise (Gap Analysis) to be carried out by the HR Excellence in Research Working Group, as well as in the definition of the Action Plan to be implemented.

It should be noted that open questions were not included in this report but were the subject of a detailed analysis.



## **1.1. Ethical Conduct in Research and Good Practices (Ethical and Professional Aspects Axis)**

In this dimension, the two parameters below the mean value of the axis (A=3,34) are as follows:

- I feel very familiar with Iscte's Research Data Management and Sharing Policy (A=3,06).
- I am well informed about the channels I can use to make complaints and propose improvement measures (A=2,55).

The proposed actions and initiatives with results above the midpoint of the scale (A≥3) are as follows:

- Creation of a digital form/checklist to ensure compliance with the Code of Research Ethics, when registering the subjects of theses and dissertations and/or research projects (A=4,08).
- Establishing a position of Ombudsperson of Research to guarantee rights and duties in the practice of research activity (A=3,88).
- Carrying out training and awareness-raising activities for researchers on the issues of ethics and conduct in research and Iscte's Research Data Management and Open Science Policy (A=3,87).

## **1.2. Career and Professional Development (Training and Development Axis)**

In this dimension, the two parameters below the mean value of the axis (A=3,23) are as follows:

- Iscte encourages mobility experiences geographical and/or intersectoral [note: intersectoral mobility refers to professional mobility between academia, public administration, companies, NGO, Private Social Solidarity Institutions, etc.] (A=3,16).
- Iscte values that researchers gain teaching experience (A=3,13).

The proposed actions and initiatives with results above the midpoint of the scale ( $A \geq 3$ ) are as follows:

- Include researchers, beside teachers, as supervisors of dissertations and theses ( $A=4,34$ ).
- Provide advisory services on research funding and internationalization strategies ( $A=4,29$ ).
- Create a training program in teaching, management, and mentoring skills as part of researchers' professional development ( $A=4,12$ ).
- Provide a catalog and organize public sessions to present potential supervisors and research topics to students in all master and PhD. Programs ( $A=4,03$ ).
- Provide a mentoring service for the career development of researchers ( $A=3,89$ ).
- Offer mentoring training and promote meetings to share experiences between mentors ( $A=3,87$ ).

### **1.3. Working Conditions and Environment (Working Conditions and Social Security Axis)**

In this dimension, the two parameters below the mean value of the axis ( $A=3,38$ ) are as follows:

- Iscte offers the adequate infrastructure to carry out research activities ( $A=3,35$ ).
- In most days, I manage to reconcile my professional life with my family/personal life ( $A=3,25$ ).

The proposed actions and initiatives with results above the midpoint of the scale ( $A \geq 3$ ) are as follows:

- Inform about the flexibilization tools regarding the research conditions ( $A=4,02$ ).
- Establish an annual survey on the organizational climate/working conditions ( $A=4,02$ ).
- Provide a welcome manual for researchers ( $A=3,92$ ).

#### **1.4. Support for Research Activities (Ethical and Professional Aspects Axis)**

In this dimension, the two parameters below the mean value of the axis (A=3,34) are as follows:

- Iscte's research policy is strategically geared towards boosting interdisciplinarity and the internationalization of its activities (A=3,23).
- Iscte has an appropriate policy to promote excellence in research (A=3,07).

The proposed actions and initiatives with results above the midpoint of the scale (A≥3) are as follows:

- Providing information on Iscte's research support tools (A=4,31).
- Providing information on Iscte's policy to promote excellence in research (A=4,02).

#### **1.5. Equality and non-discrimination (Working Conditions and Social Security Axis)**

In this dimension, the parameter below the mean value of the axis (A=3,38) was as follows:

- I am very familiar with Iscte's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan (A=2,64).

The proposed actions and initiatives with results above the midpoint of the scale (A≥3) are as follows:

- Training and awareness-raising activities on moral and sexual harassment (A=4,07).
- Training and awareness-raising sessions on inequalities and discrimination (A=3,98).
- Review of Iscte's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan (A=3,81).

## **1.6. Recruitment Policy (Recruitment and Selection Axis)**

In this dimension, the three parameters below the mean value of the axis (A=3,19) are as follows:

- Iscte's recruitment policy is open (A=3,09).
- Iscte's recruitment policy is based on merit (A=3,02).
- Iscte's recruitment policy is transparent (A=2,91).

The proposed actions and initiatives with results above the midpoint of the scale (A≥3) are as follows:

- Draw up a booklet to support the activities of selection panels, including good recruitment practices aimed at equality, diversity and inclusion and recognizing diverse career paths (A=4,12).
- Implement a procedure to monitor compliance with the principles of the Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) policy (OTM-R) (A=4,12).
- Ensure that the composition of selection panels is gender balanced (A=4,08).

## **1.7. Dissemination of Research Results/Knowledge Transfer (Ethical and Professional Aspects Axis)**

In this dimension, the parameter below the mean value of the axis (A=3,34) is as follows:

- I am very familiar with the tools used to measure the social impact of research and assess its impact on public policies (A=2,89).

The proposed actions and initiatives with results above the midpoint of the scale (A≥3) are as follows:

- Establishing a responsible person for science communication in each research unit to connect with university’s Communication Office (A=4,20).
- Dissemination of tools to measure the social impact of research activities (A=4,14).
- Create workshops/training sessions on science communication (A=4,01).

## Other Relevant Results

In addition to the answers to the questions mentioned above, it is also important to highlight some of the results obtained in other areas, that are expected to have a considerable impact on the preparation of the Action Plan, more specifically, in improvement actions that focus on the development of skills or the use and/or usefulness of the various research support tools available at Iscte.

In relation to the development of skills, it is important to highlight the areas of training that researchers stated needed further development, highlighting project management (82% of researchers indicated this to be a relevant area), ethics and good practices in research (79%), scientific writing for publishing articles (77%) and team management/people management (73%).

Table 1 – Interest in Training Areas (%)<sup>4</sup>

Training Area	n	Yes (%)
Project management	114	82
Ethics and good research practice	110	79
Writing for publication	116	77
Team management/people management	109	73
Communication skills	115	69
Bibliographic reference management tools	112	47
Other(s)	34	62

<sup>4</sup>Question 7: “For each of the following training areas, indicate those that are of interest to you.”

Regarding research support tools, it was found that six of the nine types of tools presented have a usage rate of less than 50%, so that a greater in-depth knowledge of these tools is considered appropriate.

Table 2 – Use of Research Support Tools (%)<sup>5</sup>

Support Tool	n	Yes (%)
International databases of bibliographic references and citation indexes - Scopus and/or Web of Science	120	92
b-on - Online library of knowledge	117	71
Tools for collecting, simulating, processing and analyzing data analysis on campus - AMOS, Eviews, Intel, Matlab, MAXQDA, Qualtrics, R-software, SPSS, Stata	118	70
Search for national and international funding opportunities - Research Connect	108	45
Repository for depositing and sharing research data - Zenodo	113	39
Impact of research on policy - Search index of policy documents, guidelines, think tank publications and working papers - Overton	105	14
Capacity building tools - The Carpentries, Online Learning, Security Recommendations and Protection of Private Data	109	9
Tools for creating data management plans - ARGOS / OpenDMP / DMPOnline	109	6
Research data anonymization tools - Amnesia / DataTags / Zingtree / ARX/ Data Anonymization Tool	110	6

<sup>5</sup>Q13 – Which of the following research support tools do you use?