Developing Academic Career Paths

A Case Study

Who can primarily benefit from this case study?
This anonymised case study serves as inspiration for anyone involved in introducing or redesigning diversified career paths—such as HR Business Partners, Policy Advisors, and School leaders responsible for shaping or finalising career path policy.

In which context is this case study useful?
The case study is most useful when a School is developing diversified career paths for the first time, but it can also guide the review or improvement of existing structures.

Erasmus University Rotterdam
Making Minds Matter

Introduction

About this case study

This case study describes the process of developing diversified career pahts. The case study is based on the process of one of EUR's Schools, the process of this School is developed in collaboration with the Recognition & Rewards (R&R) team.

The case study consists of three phases: "Phase 1 Career Framework", "Phase 2 Performace Criteria" and "Phase 3 Promotion Criteria". The process in this case study is presented in a comprehensive and elaborate version. Depending on your context and needs you might select some steps to follow and exclude other steps. Each step describes the aim and setup, the stakeholders involved and the materials that were used. In addition, we provide a few reflective questions that help you reflect on the needs for your own process.

Diversified Career Paths - other tools

The R&R team has developed various tools for implementing the R&R principles. Amongst which "Academic Career Paths A Journey from Planning to Evaluation". This journey describes the four phases of developing diversified career pahts, from planning to evaluation. In this case study we refer to the steps of the journey tool, to clarify how this linear journey can in practice be a more iterative process. The icons on the top right visualise to which step of the journey this activity belongs.

Visit the **R&R Toolbox** for more tools.

- Tool: **Academic Career Paths: A Journey from Planning to Evaluation**
- Tool: **Academic Career Paths: A Design Workshop**

A stepwise overview

This case study is divided into three phases with 11 steps in total. Phase 1 focuses on the development of a framework for diversified career paths at all levels. Phase 2 aims to discuss the performance criteria within these profiles. Whereas phase 3 discusses the promotion criteria and implementation processes.

Click on the steps to explore the steps in detail!

Phase 1
Career Framework

1 Elevate session

2 Project proposal & co-design prep

3 Co-design sessions

4 Career framework

5 Infromation session

Phase 2
Performance Criteria

6 Mini elevate session

7 Project Proposal & session prep

8 Expert group sessions

9 Working group sessions *

10 Information session *

Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

11 ....*

* At the time of writing this case study, the School had not yet carried out this step.

Phase 1
Career Framework

Phase 1 **Career Framework**

1. Elevate Session

Aim and setup

To kickoff the project, the School organised an elevate session focused on exploring ambitions, challenges, and conditions for the start of the Recognition & Rewards (R&R) project Diversified Career Paths at the School. The project is kicked off with an open discussion about the "elephants in the room"—symbolized by using a stuffed elephant that participants can hold while sharing—to identify unspoken tensions and concerns.

In small groups, participants worked through three exercises:
1. **Why** are we doing this? What's our **shared ambition**?
2. What **challenges** and **success factors** do we foresee?
3. What **pre-set conditions** are needed for co-design sessions?

The goal is to create a shared foundation for starting the project and the bottom up co-design sessions.

Stakeholders involved

Management team, academic department directors, director of engagement, program director, HR Business Partner, D&I Officer, senior policy advisor.

Materials

- Symbolic Tool
    Stuffed elephant to represent "elephants in the room" and prompt for candid sharing
- Slides supporting the session
    Introduction: Aim of the session & R&R background
    Elevate: Why & challenges and pre-set conditions
    Next steps

Reflective Questions
- *In what way would you use an elevate session with a stuffed elephant in your School?*
- *How would you tackle content-related input combined with worries and dilemmas that this project raises?*
- *Did you use similar methods to 'elevate' a project? What are your experiences? Or if you would use it; what would you expect? What would you consider as challenging?*
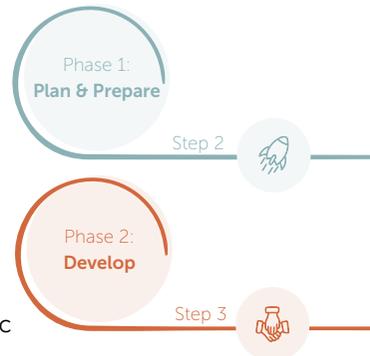
Phase 1
Career Framework

Phase 2
Performance Criteria

Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

2. Project proposal & co-design prep

Aim and setup

After the kick-off of the project through the elevate session the project team worked on the following two activities;
1. Writing the **project proposal** and approval of the proposal by the management of the School.
2. **Prepare the co-design sessions.** Clarifying concepts of admin/management/service/leadership and types of activities that are considered engagement + role of interdisciplinary research.

Stakeholders involved

1. **Project proposal:** Management team, academic department directors, director of engagement, program director, HR Business Partner, D&I Officer, Senior policy advisor, School Council
2. **Prepare the co-design sessions:** EUR R&R team, Director of Engagement, HR Business Partner, Management Team, Department Directors

Materials

- A written project proposal.
  Introduction, Background of R&R, Ambitions, Goals of the project, Approach, Involvement of relevant stakeholders, Project timeline, Project deliverables, Scope, Budget.
- Create a page on your School's intranet to post updates

Extra materials

Consider utilising the following tools for inspiration regarding academic activites, competences and impactful careers. These materials could also serve as a source of inspiration during the co-design sessions.

- Tool: Fostering Impactful Careers: A Tool for Reflection
- Tool: Impact Activities Catalogue
- Tool: Impact Competences Catalogue
- Tool: Academic Activities Catalogue

Reflective Questions
- *What would be the most important things to settle considering pre requisites for the co-design sessions?*
- *What support do you envision faculties need for this phase? What support could you give to them?*

Phase 1
Career Framework

Phase 2
Performance Criteria

Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

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3. Co-design sessions

Aim and setup

A bottom-up approach involving staff at all academic levels through five interactive sessions. These sessions aim to gather input on career paths and promotion opportunities, which will inform the first draft of the new framework. Staff involvement was ensured through 5 extensive co-design sessions of 3 hours each.

Stakeholders involved

All interested academic staff, sessions are organized per level. 40 academic staff members actively participated.

Participants per co-design session:
1. Lecturers
2. Associate professors
3. Assistant professors group 1
4. Assistant professors group 2
5. Full professors

Materials

The co-design sessions were supported by the R&R team. Based on these sessions a workshop format is developed and available within our toolbox. On the next page the activities within the session are summarised.

- A page on your School's intranet to share updates
    It can be recommended to inform your staff about the co-design sessions via email and intranet.
- **Tool:** **Academic Career Paths: A Design Workshop:**
    Introduction cards
    Competence & Task matrix
    Career stage cards
    Printable profile cards
    Parking spot card

    Slides to support the session
    A Facilitator Manual with timetable

Reflective Questions
- *How would a bottom-up session be organised in your School?*
- *How would you or would you not split the participants into various groups per career phase?*
- *What is important to focus on during these sessions when involving academics for certian faculties?*

Phase 1
Career Framework

Phase 2
Performance Criteria

Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

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3. Co-design sessions

Each session consisted of three main steps:

Step 1. Introduce the session

Using **obstacle & opportunity cards** on which participants can write their worries.

*

Step 2. Design the framworks

In small groups paricipants explore the **competence & task matrix**. This serves as an inspiration to fill the profiles.

*

Design the **profile cards per career level** using stickers. Fill the **framework sheet** by sticking finished profiles with the right career level.

*

Note concerns on the **parking spot** card.

*

Step 3. Share & Reflect

During the plenary, the groups present their designed framework to the other groups.
Dot voting, let each participant vote on their most preferred framework. Reflect on the frameworks and improve them as desired.

***All the materials are downloadable via this link:*
Tool: <u>Academic Career Paths: A Design Workshop</u>

Reflective Questions
- *What steps in this process would you also use?*
- *What steps would you leave out?*
- *What would you add?*

Phase 1
Career Framework

Phase 2
Performance Criteria

Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

4. Career framework

Aim and setup

The frameworks designed by academic staff in the 5 co-design sessions were used to draft the career framewok. The result was a framework of 11 profiles within 4 domains; **Research, Research Engagement, Education and Management & Leadership.**

The process of developing the Career Profiles framework consisted of the following three steps:
1. **First proposal** for framework of diversified career profiles at all levels
2. **Second draft** integrating feedback received on first proposal
3. **Final version** framework of diversified career profiles at all levels

Stakeholders involved per session

1. **First proposal:** Management Team extended, department directors, HR BP, D&I Officer, School Council
2. **Second draft:** Management Team extended, department directors, HR BP, D&I Officer, School Council
3. **Final version:** Management Team extended, department directors, HR BP, D&I Officer, School Council (for approval personnel section)

Materials

The Framework was presented in a document consisting of several chapters:
> *The background of the project, The approach, Presenting the new framework for differentiated career profiles, The general principles of the framework, A visual overview of the framework, The profiles described per career level, The role of lecturers and senior lectures positions, Appendices with materials used during the sessions*

Reflective Questions
- *How would you decide which feedback to act on, when dealing with conflicting views?*
- *What would you take over from this framework? What would you do differently?*

Phase 1
Career Framework

Phase 2
Performance Criteria

Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

5. Information session

Aim and setup

Phase 1 was closed off with an information session for all staff members. All the information was published on the School's website, to be updated with the next steps following.

The aim of the information session was to update all staff members and identify upcoming challenges. The session consisted of a brief overview of the project aim, process and outcomes. Sharing the Career Profiles Framework and accommodated information within the final document presenting the 11 profiles.

Stakeholders involved per session

All academic staff, project owners

Materials

- Slides to present the new framework
  Aim of this project, Approach, Principles, Framework, Next Steps
- The document presenting the career framework
  as described in step 4, materials
- A Intranet update on your Schools page
  We recommend to also inform your staff about the output of phase 1 and next steps via email and intranet.

Reflective Questions
- *How would you ensure to inform staff and other stakeholders on the process of developing diversified career paths?*
- *What are important factors for a succesfull information session according to you?*

Phase 1
Career Framework

Phase 2
Performance Criteria

Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

Phase 2
Performance Criteria

6. Mini Elevate Session

Aim and setup

A mini Elevate session was organised to kick-off phase 2. In this mini elevate session the following questions were aimed to be answered:
1. Which **requirements** do we select (per domain)?
2. Which **boundaries** do we set (per domain)?
3. Proposed **participants**; Expert groups & working group, who needs to be in the expert groups or the working group

Stakeholders involved per session

Management Team, Department Directors, Director of Engagement, Program Director, HR and D&I Officer
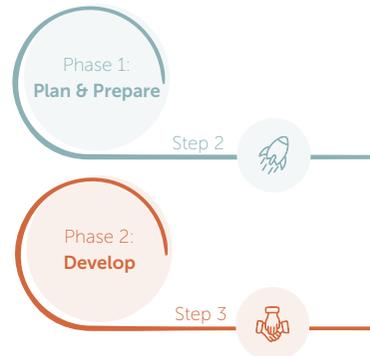
Materials

• Slides to support the session
  Aim of phase 2, Approach, Requirements, Boundaries, Participants Expert groups, next steps

Reflective Questions
• *How would this Elevate session be different from the session in Phase 1?*
• *Which elephants in the room could you expect in this phase of the project?*

Phase 1
Career Framework

Phase 2
Performance Criteria

Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

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7. Project proposal & session preparation

Aim and setup

1. Deliver a project proposal for phase 2
2. Set up the Expert Groups, Working Group and the international sounding board
3. Collecting information from peer institutions (Dutch + international) for benchmarking, these materials are also used as homework and reading materials for the Expert Groups

In this phase of the project several groups and sessions were organized. The visual on the right highlights the structure of the project organization.
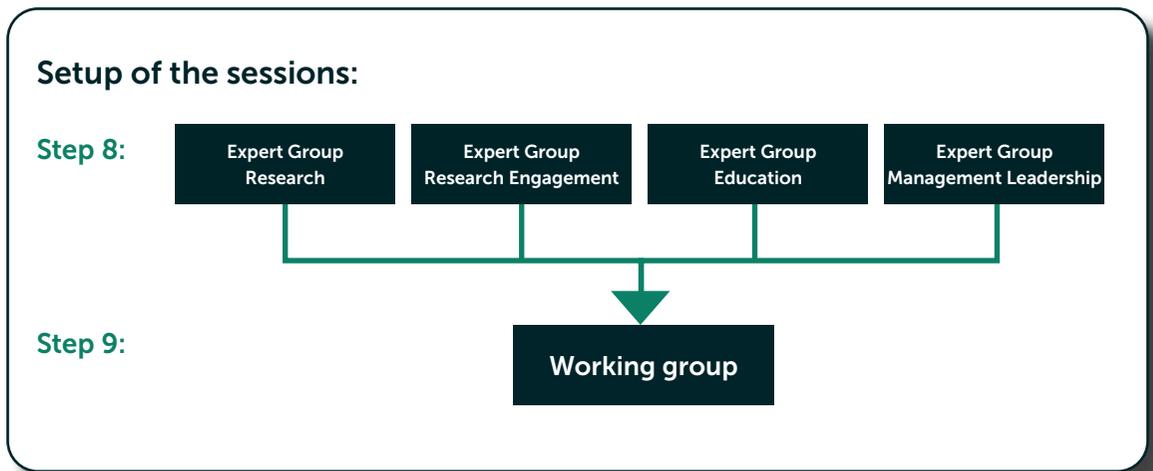
Stakeholders involved per session

1. Discussed with Management Team, Directors, HR BP, D&I Officer, School Council
2. Management Team, Directors, HR BP, D&I Officer, central R&R team, The Council for the Appointments and Promotions (CBBA) members, selected academic and professional support staff, Senior Policy Advisor
3. HR BP, Senior Policy Advisor

Reflective Questions
- *How would you structure your project proposal for discussing promotion criteria for the career profiles?*

Materials

- A written project proposal for phase 2
  Introduction, Background of R&R and phase 1, Ambitions, Goals of the project, Approach, Explanation of Expert Groups; working group; international sounding board, involvement of relevant stakeholders, Project timeline, Project deliverables, Scope, Budget.
- Materials for the Expert Group sessions
  Teams environments (general & per expert group), Miro boards to collect the restults per session & to share homework assignments, the parking spot card from the co-design session was reused. The framework was printed and cut per profile card to visualise the profile & percentages

Setup of the sessions:

Step 8:	Expert Group Research	Expert Group Research Engagement	Expert Group Education	Expert Group Management Leadership

Step 9:	Working group

Phase 1
Career Framework

Phase 2
Performance Criteria

Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

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8. Expert group sessions

Aim and setup

The four sessions were designed to be as efficient as possible. Therefore, online environments in Teams and Miro (see screenshot) were set up to enable continued progress between sessions and to support work on the homework assignments. The goal of the sessions was to develop performance criteria for the career paths. On the next page, we describe in more detail what each session entailed.

After session 3 an extra Management Team meeting was scheduled to reallign further guidelines for the expert groups and on some concerns raised in session 3.

Stakeholders involved per session

1. All expert groups
2. Management Team & Department Directors

Materials

- Teams environment
  General teams environment and Teams environment per Expert Group
  Reading materials per expert group
- Slides to introduce the session & explain the activities
- Materials for the sessions
  Post its & pens, Brown paper worksheets, Parking spot cards
- Miro boards per expert group
  To display Materials & results of session
  The Homework for next session
  Tool: Adaptable Miro Board Password: STEP8case

Extra materials

Consider utilising the following tools for inspiration regarding academic activites, competences and impactful careers. These materials could also serve as a source of inspiration during the co-design sessions.

- **Tool:** Fostering Impactful Careers: A Tool for Reflection
- **Tool:** Impact Activities Catalogue
- **Tool:** Impact Competences Catalogue
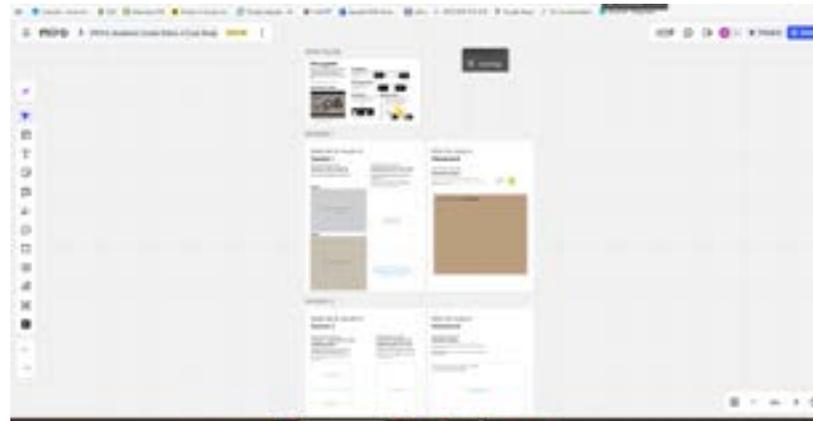- **Tool:** Academic Activities Catalogue

Image of the miro board environment

Reflective Questions
- *What would be important for your University within this phase?*
- *How would you setup the sessions?*

Phase 1
Career Framework

Phase 2
Performance Criteria

Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

8. Expert group sessions - overview

Session 1 (4x) - Expert Groups
Define Acivities, Output and Skills for the domain

- Goal: Identify key activities, outputs, and quality indicators for the domain.
- Focus: Broad understanding of the domain—no distinction yet by profile or career level.

   *Prep: Reading material
   Activity #1 Mind mapping: What tasks, skills, competences & output do we think of for this domain?
   Activity #2: Measuring quality: How can we measury quality for these tasks, skills, competences & output?
   Homework: Output of session in miro; use post its to add insights and validate with other colleagues.*

Session 2 (4x) - Expert Groups
Develop draft criteria per profile: 'fill' the framework

- Goal: Draft criteria per profile and academic level.
- Focus: Build a first version of the framework for each profile.

   *Prep: Review and comment on a shared Miro board with tasks, competences, and outputs.
   Acitivity #1 Expectations across profiles and levels: Sheets per profile, participants add post its from the validated mindmap and add new.
   Activity #2 Feasibility and ambition group discussion: how feasible is this and are we ambitious enough or too ambitious?
   Homework: Prepare a presentation for the joint session.*

Session 3 (1x) - All EGs & Working group
Expert groups present current status & collect feedback

- Goal: Share progress and gather cross-group feedback.
- Focus: Present draft criteria, highlight principles and open questions, collect input from other groups.

   *Presentation: each group presents their progress so far
   Dicussion: questions from other Expert Group & Working Group
   Next steps.*

Management Team meeting
Reallign on further guidelines to the expert groups and concerns

- Goal: Align on key concerns and strategic choices.
- Topics:
   *Clarify the Research vs. Research Engagement profile
   Discuss profile distribution and financial implications
   Define interdisciplinary work and engagement activities
   Reaffirm commitment to the project's goals and principles*

Session (4x) - Expert Groups
The expert groups deliver their final advice to the working group

- Goal: Deliver final advice to the Working Group.
- Focus: Deliver the final advice Address gaps (e.g., valuing work outside academia) Finalize criteria for all profiles and levels
   *A document containing;
   A list with general remarks;
   table with the criteria for the focus domain (e.g. education criteria for the education profiles for each level);
   A table with criteria for this domain for the other profiles (e.g. education criteria for the other profiles for each level);
   Uncertainties or focus areas for the working group;
   Other remarks or requests*

Phase 1
Career Framework

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Performance Criteria

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Promotion Criteria

9. Working group sessions*

* At the time of writing this case study, the School had not yet carried out this step.

Aim and setup

The working group receives the advice and information from the expert groups and creates a first draft of performance criteria per differentiated career profile. Revisions may be requested from the expert groups.

1. Kickoff meeting + introduction of Miro environment.
2. Homework Miro boards: in the miro board the advices of the Expert Groups are put together to fill the 11 profiles. The Working Group members are asked to provide feedback on these draft profiles using reflective questions (see in the Materials section or in the Miro board).
3. Several working group sessions
4. International sounding board; Approach participants of international sounding board for feedback on second draft (feedback on first draft is integrated)
5. Draft; Present third draft integrating feedback received on first proposal and including input from Sounding Board
6. Final draft; Present final draft of expectations within the profiles

Stakeholders involved per session

Working group members: selected academic and professional support staff, D&I Officer, Council for Appointments and Promotions chairman, selected Management Team members and Directors, Senior Policy Advisor

> **Reflective Questions**
> - *How would you organise the working group sessions to ensure all advice and information are taken into account?*
> - *Who would you involve in this phase?*

Phase 1
Career Framework

Phase 2
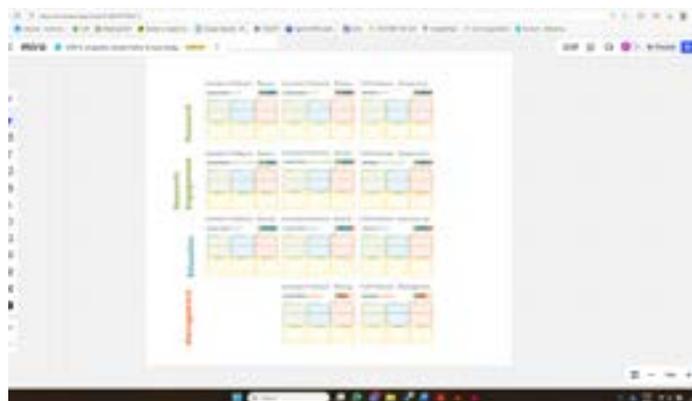**Performance Criteria**

Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

Image of the miro board environment

Materials

- Final draft advice document per Expert Group
- A Miro board capturing the content of all the Expert Groups work merged into the profiles

> Tool: Adaptable miro board Password: STEP9case
> *All members of the expert group were asked to give their feedback on the miro boards. This input was used to discuss in the meetings. To ensure unbiased and independent feedback, we suggest giving each participant their own Miro board.*
> ***Reflective quesitons used:***
> *Do I recognize this profile? Could this profile fit ESE? Is this profile ambitious enough? Or too ambitious? Would myself or a colleague be able to develop themselves within this profile? Are the profiles distinct enough? Are the profiles equally challenging? How to evaluate the quality of engagement?*

10. Information session*

* At the time of writing this case study, the School had not yet carried out this step.

Aim and setup

An information session for all staff members. The aim of the information session was to update all staff members on the final product delivered within this project and communicate next steps.

Also all the information will be published on the School's website, to be updated with the different steps.

Stakeholders involved per session

All academic staff and project owners

Materials

- Slides to present the Performance Criteria for the framework
    Aim of this project, Approach, Performance Criteria, Next Steps
- The document presenting the Performance Criteria for the framework
    The background of the project, The approach, Presenting Performance Criteria, General principles per framework, A visual overview of the Criteria, Appendices with materials used during the sessions, The next steps.
- A Intranet update on your Schools page
    We recommend to also inform your staff about the output of phase 2 and next steps via email and intranet.

> **Reflective Questions**
> - *What do you think is important to communicate during the information session?*
> - *What other forms of communication would be relevant to you?*

Phase 1
Career Framework

Phase 2
Performance Criteria

Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

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Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

11. Promotion criteria phase 3*

* At the time of writing this case study, the School had not yet carried out this step.

Phase 2:
Develop

Step 3,4,5

Phase 3:
**Implement &
Communicate**

Step 6&7

Aim and setup

The aim of phase 3 is to discuss the promotion cirteria for horizontal and vertical career development linked to the performance criteria developed in phase 2.

The exact process of phase 3 is still to be determined.

Stakeholders involved per session

In close collaboration with the Council for the Appointments and Promotions (CBBA)

Materials

To be determined.

Reflective Questions
- *What is important according to you when discussing the promotion criteria and horizontal and vertical career development?*
- *How would you tackle the process of implementation?*

Phase 1
Career Framework

Phase 2
Performance Criteria

Phase 3
Promotion Criteria

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References and resources

Miro boards

- Adaptable Miro Board Password: STEP8case

- Adaptable miro board Password: STEP9case

List of suggested tools:

- Academic Career Paths: A Journey from Planning to Evaluation

- Academic Career Paths: A Design Workshop

- Fostering Impactful Careers: A Tool for Reflection

- Impact Activities Catalogue

- Impact Competences Catalogue

- Academic Activities Catalogue

Toolboxes

- R&R Toolbox for more tools.
- Impact Toolbox

Colophon

This case study was developed by the Recognition & Rewards team. This case study describes the process of developing diversified career pahts. The proces consists of three phases: Phase 1 development of a career framework, Phase 2 performace criteria and Phase 3 promotion criteria. The process in this case study is presented in a comprehensive and elaborate version. Depending on your context and needs you might select some steps to follow and exclude other steps. The case study is based on the process of one of EUR's Schools, the process of this School is developed in collaboration with the Recognition & Rewards team.

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