INTRODUCTION

Since 2010, when the human resources area strategy was drawn up and the seal of excellence obtained, IMDEA Agua has been working to carry out the actions proposed in the Action Plan defined at that time. IMDEA Agua is a young and dynamic institute which has undergone notable growth in the last two years, involving an ongoing process of adaptation to these changes. Now, in September 2012, the Institute has its own staff of 37 people, in addition to 17 other actively linked members from other research centres, making a total of 54 people, twice as many as on the same date in 2010 (25 people).

STEP 4: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Phase 4 began with a meeting of the current working group to assess the situation and propose how to approach it. Due to the increased team numbers compared to 2010 and members leaving the work group (WG-C&C), the addition of new members was considered. Then, an e-mail was sent out to all IMDEA Agua personnel, including associate researchers (main stakeholders) and those engaged in internships or placements in the Institute. The e-mail contained information on phase 4 and the proposal to carry it out.

The decision was taken to hold meetings of no more than 4 people, with several objectives:

- To provide information on IMDEA Agua’s participation in the C&C process (especially aimed at new staff) and the interest and benefits involved.
- To discuss the progress of the Action Plan anticipated in 2010, evaluate the improvements made and propose new actions.

The C&C principles analysed were:

- **Ethical and professional aspects**
  - Professional attitude
  - Accountability
  - Good practice in research
  - Evaluation/appraisal systems

- **Recruitment**
  - Transparency
- Seniority

*Working conditions and social security*
- Working conditions
- Funding and salaries
- Complaints/appeals
- Participation in decision-making bodies

*Training*
- Supervision and managerial duties
- Supervision
- Access to research training and continuous development

- To deal with queries related with the process and the Institute structure.

The meetings, which were organised in a dynamic and informal manner, set out from a brief and concise introduction (more detailed for those who requested it) to IMDEA Agua’s participation in the process, the interest and benefits derived, the current situation (phase 4) and what the meeting was intended to achieve (determining the degree of satisfaction, receiving feedback and clearing up doubts and queries). They then proceeded to analyse each principle to be evaluated, examining the actions carried out to date, assessing the degree of satisfaction of both in-house and associated staff, and taking on board feedback on new ideas and improvement proposals.

The meetings had no set format or order but were adapted as each session developed, allowing greater emphasis on the aspects of most interest to participants. During discussions, other C&C-related issues emerged, not included in the previous plan of action but also analysed.

Some meetings were not held face-to-face but by videoconference to facilitate the participation of those outside the centre.

The WG-C&C pooled the results and drew up a new action plan for 2012-2014.

**OUTCOMES**

A total of 16 meetings were held (3 by videoconference) with 47 people taking part (87% participation), comprising 97% of the total centre staff and 76% of the associates, in addition to 2 researchers who were on assignment in IMDEA Agua when the self-assessment took place.

Annex I includes a table summarising the self-assessment outcomes, stating the principles to be evaluated (which were proposed for the 2010-2012 period), the evidence present in IMDEA Agua (adding the new actions available), planned activities (2010-2012), the “who”
and the "when" (adapted from the following period 2012-2014) and improvement proposals (Action Plan 2012-2014).

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The format used for the meetings encouraged the participation of a large number of people, with most participants viewing the approach as: dynamic, allowing interaction with other colleagues; more “friendly” than the questionnaire; useful, making it easy to resolve any queries arising on the spot; open, allowing the inclusion of the points arousing most interest in each person, and even others not initially considered. In general, it may be considered a good way to receive and transmit information, which will surely be used in the following stages.

In terms of the improvement proposals scheduled, the overall satisfaction was considered high, with highly valued aspects such as: enhancing the information channels and repositories (intranet, internal newsletters); setting out standards and procedures (defined in protocols and procedures that help, for example, to know the mechanisms to be followed when providing suitable justification to funding bodies, which constitutes appropriate accountability); the improvements carried out in IT (computing) issues (security, greater storage capacity and connection speeds), data protection or workplace risk prevention; research infrastructures have been enhanced, expanding the equipment facilities; collaboration initiatives with other bodies have been extended and research staff incorporated to reinforce scientific lines and, especially, to support the mentoring of investigators in the early stages of their research career.

Nevertheless, there still remains room for improvement in several areas, such as: ongoing work on information channels (adapting intranet contents); IT improvements (maintenance, incompatibilities, remote access, laboratory management, etc); updating and defining new protocols (intellectual property); encouraging information sharing between management and research groups and among the same, to foster greater collaboration with a view to finding synergies; and assuring the supervision tasks of the mentors.
ANNEX 1. ASSESSMENT OF ACTION PLAN DESIGNED AND IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS:
ACTION PLAN 2012-2014

Note: Blue lettering indicates changes with respect to 2010: updates to the current body of evidence in the institute, adaptations, assessment of progress of scheduled actions and indicators and the new action plan proposed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles to improve and definition</th>
<th>Current rules and practices in IMDEA Agua (updates)</th>
<th>Actions Planned 2010-2012</th>
<th>Who / When (adaptations)</th>
<th>Progress of Actions Scheduled for 2010-2012 (indicators)</th>
<th>New Actions proposed 2012-2014</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. Professional attitude</strong></td>
<td>Researchers should be familiar with the strategic goals governing their research environment and funding mechanisms, and should seek all necessary approvals before starting their research or accessing the resources provided. They should inform their employers, funders or supervisor when their research project is delayed, redefined or completed, or give notice if it is to be terminated earlier or suspended for whatever reason.</td>
<td>Periodic technical and economic reports to funding bodies</td>
<td>Setting out procedures for periodic reports on incidents and progress Who: Management, Line Supervisors and other researchers When: Ongoing process</td>
<td>IMPROVED (procedures, protocols, templates)</td>
<td>- Greater involvement of centre and researchers: meetings; reports; feedback</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Periodic technical and economic reports to funding bodies Protocols and procedures in place for internal validations, to facilitate timely justification to funding bodies</td>
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<td>- Ongoing management system enhancement and automation</td>
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<td><strong>6. Accountability</strong></td>
<td>The Institute is subject to mandatory accountability and must carry out an annual audit.</td>
<td>Standardising the drafting of annual reports on activities and execution level for projects where all the people involved</td>
<td>Who: Management When: A few weeks prior to approval of the activity report and annual accountancy and some weeks before IMPROVED (Analytical accounting rollout initiated)</td>
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<td>- Ongoing work on cost accounting system implementation</td>
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<td>- Improving internal information</td>
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<td>- Improving diffusion outside the Institute</td>
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<td>- Enhancing the electronic transactions</td>
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efficient use of taxpayers’ money. Consequently, they should adhere to the principles of sound, transparent and efficient financial management and cooperate with any authorised audits of their research, whether undertaken by their employers/funders or by ethics committees.

Methods of collection and analysis, the outputs and, where applicable, details of the data should be open to internal and external scrutiny, whenever necessary and as requested by the appropriate authorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Good practice in research</th>
<th>Take part</th>
<th>The annual action plan’s approval by the Foundation Board of Trustees</th>
<th>System</th>
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<td>Researchers should at all times adopt safe working practices, in line with national legislation, including taking the necessary precautions for health and safety and for recovery from information technology disasters, e.g. by preparing proper back-up strategies. They should also be familiar with the current national legal requirements regarding data protection and confidentiality protection requirements, and undertake the necessary steps to fulfil them at all times.</td>
<td>Organising Workplace Safety training sessions Performing a biannual IT audit and improving security conditions, establishing keys and access levels.</td>
<td>Who: Management, WRP Manager, Laboratories Supervisor and outsourced companies responsible for execution When: Short-term and medium-term</td>
<td>Achieved (Audits, protocols, agreement and various IT improvements)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workplace Risk Prevention (WRP) monitoring IT (computing) enhancements Adaptations in compliance with Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) Safety in laboratories Scientific DB access system (Madero network)</td>
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<tr>
<th>11. Evaluation/appraisal systems</th>
<th>Creating a permanent information collection system</th>
<th>Executive and Management process</th>
<th>Achieved (Intranet: monitoring and filing system for personal files summarising outcomes)</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Employers and/or funders should introduce for all researchers, including senior researchers, evaluation/appraisal systems for assessing their professional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation and assessment conducted by the Board and the Scientific Committee, composed of</td>
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| | - IT: ongoing enhancement of IT services |
| | - Laboratories: protocols |
| | - Archive: Updating information on availability of access to scientific DBs. Informing new staff about conditions for use of library/archive and databases |
| | - Encouraging awareness of good saving practices |

| | - Setting up an individual motivation system to enhance commitment of researchers, e.g. personal files summarising outcomes |
| | - Information: ensuring that new staff are |
performance on a regular basis and in a transparent manner by an independent (and, in the case of senior researchers, preferably international) committee.

| 15. Transparency | Candidates should be informed, prior to the selection, about the recruitment process and the selection criteria, the number of available positions and the career development prospects. They should also be informed after the selection process about the strengths and weaknesses of their applications. | Candidates are informed of the evaluation process, rating criteria, recruitment conditions, remuneration and possibilities of development within their professional career, someone being available to deal with any queries. After the selection process, every candidate is personally informed about the evaluation results via e-mail.

| Information on qualification regulations | **Who:** Executive and Management **When:** Ongoing process |

| 20. Seniority | The levels of qualifications required should be in line with the needs of the position and not be set as a barrier to entry. Recognition and evaluation of qualifications should focus on judging the achievements of the person rather than his/her circumstances or the reputation of the institution where the qualifications were gained. As professional qualifications may be gained at an early stage of a long career, the pattern of lifelong professional development should | The goals achieved will be rated notwithstanding other conditioning factors.

| To maintain the evaluation criterion, acknowledging the pattern of lifelong professional development. To reflect this issue in tenders. | **Who:** Executive and Evaluation Committee **When:** Ongoing process |

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| reports delivered) | aware of this principle; periodic meetings; feedback |

| IMPROVED | - Including the agreement governing the institution in tenders
- Informing new employees of their total involvement in working groups and different activities of the Centre |

| ACHIEVED | No new actions scheduled |
### Working Conditions
Employers and/or funders should ensure that the working conditions for researchers, including for disabled researchers, provide where appropriate the flexibility deemed essential for successful research performance in accordance with existing national legislation and with national or sectoral collective-bargaining agreements. They should aim to provide working conditions which allow both women and men researchers to combine family and work, children and career. Particular attention should be paid, inter alia, to flexible working hours, part-time working, tele-working and sabbatical leave, as well as to the necessary financial and administrative provisions governing such arrangements.

**Rules:** An agreement is in place

**Who:** Executive Team

**When:** Ongoing process

**Implementation of the Workplace and Social Security regulation in force**

- Flexibility should be linked to a greater commitment by staff, who must be aware that they are forming part of a workgroup, with which they must coordinate.

### Funding and Salaries
Employers and/or funders of researchers should ensure that researchers enjoy fair and attractive conditions of funding and/or salaries with adequate and equitable social security provisions (including sickness and parental benefits, pension rights and unemployment benefits) in accordance with existing national legislation and with national or sectoral collective bargaining agreements. This must include researchers at all career stages including early-stage researchers, commensurate with their legal status, performance and level of qualifications and/or

**Researchers are entitled to all provisions of the Spanish Social Security.**

**Regulation:** Spanish regulation in force. *Current rules and practices in IMDEA Water* Researchers are entitled to all that anticipated in the Spanish Social Security system

**Who:** Executive Team and Management

**When:** Ongoing process

**To study the establishment of a productivity-based system of incentives, depending on economic availability**

- Information: creating personal folder on intranet to include documentation related with this principle; when economic conditions allow, assessing implantation of an incentive system and informing on availability or otherwise of incentives
| Responsibilities | The reason for the need to improve is the lack of information and protocol | More internal information | Who: Management  
When: Ongoing process | DELAYED |
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<tr>
<td><strong>Complaints/appeals</strong></td>
<td>Employers and/or funders of researchers should establish, in compliance with national rules and regulations, appropriate procedures, possibly in the form of an impartial (ombudsman-type) person to deal with complaints/appeals of researchers, including those concerning conflicts between supervisor(s) and early-stage researchers. Such procedures should provide all research staff with confidential and informal assistance in resolving work-related conflicts, disputes and grievances, with the aim of promoting fair and equitable treatment within the institution and improving the overall quality of the working environment.</td>
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**Under the legal structure of the Institute, the Board is ultimately responsible for decision making. Nevertheless, researchers may provide all kinds of information and suggestions to be transmitted to the Board.**

**Regulation:** Compliance with the Foundation Regulations, which do not include |

**Participation in decision-making bodies** | | | |
| Employers and/or funders of researchers should recognise it as wholly legitimate, and indeed desirable, that researchers be represented in the relevant information, consultation and decision-making bodies of the institutions for which they work, so as to protect and promote their individual and collective interests as professionals and to actively contribute to the workings of the institution. | Facilitating greater awareness of the Institution’s organisational structure and governance. | Who: Executive Team  
When: Ongoing process | IMPROVED |

**Regulation:** Facilitating greater awareness of the Institute’s organisational structure and governance.

**Who:** Management  
**When:** Ongoing process  
*Drawing up a document outlining procedure to follow (informal channel)  
Including an intranet mailbox (private) for complaints submission*  

**Who:** Executive Team  
**When:** Ongoing process  
*Creating a document (intranet) describing the Institute’s legal structure for information purposes  
Periodic meetings between Line Managers and the Executive*
<table>
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<tr>
<th>37. Supervision and managerial duties</th>
<th>Senior researchers should devote particular attention to their multi-faceted role as supervisors, mentors, career advisors, leaders, project coordinators, managers or science communicators. They should perform these tasks to the highest professional standards. With regard to their role as supervisors or mentors of researchers, senior researchers should build up a constructive and positive relationship with the early-stage researchers, in order to set the conditions for efficient transfer of knowledge and for the further successful development of the researchers’ careers.</th>
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<tr>
<td>40. Supervision</td>
<td>Employers and/or funders should ensure that a person is clearly identified to whom early-stage researchers can refer for the performance of their professional duties, and should inform the researchers accordingly. Such arrangements should clearly define that the proposed supervisors are sufficiently expert in supervising research, have the time, knowledge, experience, expertise and commitment to be able to offer the research trainee appropriate support and provide for the necessary progress and review procedures, as well as the participation in decision making bodies, is mandatory.</td>
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<td>To increase the number of doctors in the thematic areas where they are most needed and further new links with organisations. The incorporation of doctorate staff would reinforce team work and help in the tasks of tutoring and supervising new researchers.</td>
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</table>
| | Who: Executive and Line Supervisors  
When: Mid-term. Due to the current economic situation, no terms can be estimated  
IMPROVED  
(8 doctors incorporated, in addition to several associates from other centres) |
| | - Continuing to set up collaborations with researchers from other centres to increase the number of doctors and tutors. Improving follow-up and monitoring of supervision tasks  
- Greater commitment of tutors/mentors. Intragroup meetings will be encouraged  
- Periodic meetings with the Executive for managers to transmit their working proposals and commitments  
- After two years under contract, a meeting to be held with pre-doctoral researchers (and a designated committee). This will assess the supervisor’s progress and involvement |

There are tutors and research line managers.
### 39. Access to research training and continuous development

Employers and/or funders should ensure that all researchers at any stage of their career, regardless of their contractual situation, are given the opportunity for professional development and to improve their employability through access to measures for the continuing development of skills and competencies. Such measures should be regularly assessed for their accessibility, uptake and effectiveness in improving competencies, skills and employability.

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<tr>
<th>Ongoing training to be promoted and financed</th>
<th>Continuing to motivate staff and reporting on training opportunities. Continuing to value this aspect as important in the annual cost</th>
<th><strong>Who:</strong> Executive, Management and Line Supervisors. <strong>When:</strong> Ongoing process</th>
<th>IMPROVED (list of courses, seminars, conferences followed)</th>
</tr>
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- Ongoing encouragement and reporting on training activities for all staff (including technicians), although no specific funding system can be guaranteed in the short-term
- Continuing to include this type of information on the intranet
- Internal training provided by in-house staff skilled in specific topics of general interest

### 25. Stability and permanence of employment

Employers and/or funders should ensure that the performance of researchers is not undermined by instability of employment contracts, and should therefore commit themselves as far as possible to improving the stability of employment conditions for researchers, thus implementing and abiding by the principles and terms laid down in the EU Directive on Fixed-Term Work.

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<th>Who: Executive <strong>When:</strong> ongoing</th>
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- Reporting on the organisation’s intention to support the research career at the centre (in line with economic possibilities)

### 31. Intellectual Property Rights

Employers and/or funders should ensure that researchers at all career stages reap the benefits of the exploitation (if any) of their R&D results through legal protection and, in particular, through appropriate protection of Intellectual Property Rights, including copyrights. Policies and practices should specify what Rights belong to researchers.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>This item is embodied in accords with other entities and consortium agreements signed in the scope of public tenders</th>
<th>Who: Executive, Management, R+D+i Unit <strong>When:</strong> long-term</th>
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- Drafting the Intellectual Property rules and making them available on the intranet
and/or, where applicable, to their employers or other parties, including external commercial or industrial organisations, as possibly provided for funder specific collaboration agreements or other types of agreement.