Good Practices in the Selection and Recruitment of University of Barcelona Research Staff in Accordance with OTM-R Criteria

The HR strategy of the University of Barcelona

Approved by UB HRS4R Steering Committee in 1st July, 2024
GOOD PRACTICES IN THE SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT OF UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA RESEARCH STAFF IN ACCORDANCE WITH OTM-R CRITERIA
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1. PREAMBLE

At the University of Barcelona, we believe that good practices in the selection and recruitment of researchers are a crucial component in ensuring excellence in research and a successful future for the University. These good practices, in combination with the University’s own human resources quality policy, positive working conditions and a balanced, merit-based promotion and academic career strategy, add to the appeal of research careers at the University of Barcelona, thus guaranteeing the advancement of the institution as a whole. The University of Barcelona is committed to recruiting the best candidates for each position based on academic merit and in full compliance with all equality policies. The University aims to retain the talent it already has and attract talent from outside the institution, ensuring an inclusive and diverse workforce.

On 5 March 2013, the University of Barcelona signed the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, making a commitment to promote and improve the recruitment, working conditions and careers of academic and research staff. This commitment is reflected in the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers at the University of Barcelona (HRS4R), which in practice is implemented through the HRS4R Action Plan, containing actions that address specifically identified areas for improvement.

This document constitutes just one manifestation of the University of Barcelona’s Human Resources Strategy for Researchers and the HRS4R Action Plan, as it ensures compliance with good practices in the selection and recruitment of research staff. It guarantees open, transparent and merit-based criteria, in accordance with the principles of OTM-R, which is one of the cornerstones of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, and one of the top priorities of the European Research Area (ERA).

The initial version of this document has been revised as part of the constant process of updating and adapting the HRS4R Action Plan. This revision aims to continue to ensure both that the selection and recruitment of research staff is consistent with the principles of OTM-R and that the selection and recruitment procedures described in the corresponding regulations and calls for applications respond to the principles of competition, public advertising and merit, as described in Royal Legislative Decree 5/2015, of 30 October, which approves the consolidated text of the Basic Statute of Public Employees Act; Royal Decree 678/2023, of 18 July, which regulates national accreditation for access to university teaching bodies and the system of competitive exams for access to positions in these bodies; and Law 14/2011 of 1 June on science, technology and innovation, amended by Law 17/2022, of 5 September. In addition, the revision process guarantees that these procedures are in full compliance with the legislation on access to public employment in force at any given time.

The University of Barcelona, in a process coordinated by the Office of the Vice-Rector for Quality Policy, monitors the actions derived from the selection and recruitment processes and, if necessary, develops specific actions to improve them, which must be incorporated into the current HRS4R Action Plan.
2. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

The provisions set out in this document apply to the different stages in the selection and recruitment process for researchers at the University of Barcelona: vacancy announcements, the application process, candidate selection, and decision-making, appointment and hiring. Other stages in the life of research staff at the University of Barcelona (e.g., onboarding, establishment of working and employment conditions, career development, etc.) are beyond the scope of this document.

In accordance with Article 13 of Law 14/2011, of 1 June, on Science, Technology and Innovation, amended by Law 17/2022, research staff are defined as employees who have earned the degree required for each specific position and who are engaged in research activities. Furthermore, Organic Law 2/2023, of 22 March, on the University System, includes teaching and research staff who may be involved in research activities within its definition of research staff. It should be noted that Law 14/2011, as amended by Law 17/2022, makes explicit that not only research staff, but also technical and management staff involved in research activities, are encompassed by the term “research staff”. This is also consistent with the recommendations of the European Charter for Researchers.

Research staff also include people recruited through calls for predoctoral and postdoctoral researchers in the University’s own programmes, as well as researchers at the University as a result of hiring procedures for positions financed with external funding (projects or agreements), in accordance with the relevant calls for applications.

3. PURPOSE

The implementation of good practices in selection and recruitment processes ultimately aims to ensure that the best candidate is selected for each position, with full guarantees of equal opportunities and access. All phases of the recruitment of researchers at the University of Barcelona must follow the principles of OTM-R, in accordance with the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

4. PRINCIPLES AND COMMITMENTS

The selection and recruitment of researchers at the University of Barcelona is part of the career model based on current legislation. The procedures that outline the selection and recruitment of researchers follow the principles of public advertising, open competition, merit and capacity, transparency and accountability, while avoiding subjectivity and complying, in all cases, with the provisions made in law and with the stipulation of the funding bodies’ calls for applications. Selection and recruitment processes require the utmost commitment to upholding the above principles and the strictest respect for all relevant regulations in force.
In all research staff selection and recruitment processes, the University of Barcelona commits to adopting the following measures:

• To publicize calls for applications as well as decisions made in the selection process, in accordance with international standards and, in each case, determined in the terms and conditions of the call for applications and in accordance with current legislation.
• To unify the documentation required for selection procedures.
• To ensure transparency throughout the process.
• To guarantee equal opportunities in selection and recruitment.
• Not to discriminate on the grounds of gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, social origin, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation, language, disability, political opinions, or socio-economic status.
• To evaluate candidates on the basis of their merits.
• To comply strictly with regulations on the protection of personal data.
• To implement an effective and efficient selection process, favouring the simplicity of all procedures involved.
• To ensure that selection procedures are consistent with the conditions of the job vacancy, with selection committees chosen and trained specifically for that task.

The University of Barcelona will strive to abide by the abovementioned principles and commitments in all its selection and recruitment processes.

5. RECRUITMENT PROCESS

5.1. Advertising and applications

Advertising job vacancies

One of the goals of the University of Barcelona is to seek talent that brings innovation to teaching, research and knowledge transfer as a means of ensuring academic excellence. To this end, job vacancies and calls for applications must be publicized and advertised as widely as possible, in accordance with the best practices commonly accepted in the academic world, and reference must be made to both the institution’s OTM-R policy and principles and its equality policy.

The time between the publication of the job announcement or call for applications and the opening of the application period must be sufficient to meet the above-mentioned standards and to comply with legal requirements. Furthermore, applicants must have access to clear and transparent information about the entire recruitment process, including an indicative timetable and the selection criteria. Therefore:
• Job announcements and calls for applications must be advertised publicly on the University of Barcelona’s Electronic Office and on EURAXESS, and, optionally, in other similar international channels, while observing internationally established practices in each area of knowledge. In keeping with the principles of efficiency and transparency, job announcement must be concise and, at the same time, must refer to documents and links to online sources where candidates can find all relevant information about the vacancy.

• The profile sought for each research vacancy should be specifically identified using one of the four categories set out in the European Framework for Research Careers defining the different research profiles (R1 to R4).

• Job announcements should describe the pre-established selection procedure, and specific information should be included on the following aspects, among others:
  — Recruitment unit and contact information.
  — Job title and job specifications, number of posts available and starting date.
  — Selection criteria for candidates (including skills and professional experience) and the relative weight of each.
  — Working and salary conditions.
  — Prospects for career development.
  — Application procedure and deadline as well as a timetable outlining all of the stages of the recruitment process.

Administrative simplification

• Procedures should be streamlined to the greatest possible extent. The selection phases for recruitment are characterized by a criterion of trust, which prioritizes the use of a statement of responsibility to present merits and requirements. This does not affect the obligation to provide the requisite documentation when necessary, in accordance with current regulations. The University of Barcelona does not require the resubmission of required documents if the applicant has previously indicated that they are already in the University's possession. Documents that are clearly superfluous should also not be submitted.

• Procedures must not impose geographical, temporal, or other constraints that favour local candidates, unless the funding body's call for applications specifies otherwise.

• Priority should be given to the use of the electronic management of application procedures.

Right to information

Electronic and automated information procedures should be implemented to allow applicants access to information regarding the status of the selection process, and particularly to acknowledge the receipt of submitted documents.
5.2. Evaluation and selection

Composition of selection committees

- Selection committees make joint decisions. They are made up of at least three people, except in cases where another composition is stipulated by the regulations in force.
- Appointed members must declare any possible conflicts of interest, taking into account the applicable regulations, and may be required to withdraw if certain circumstances apply.
- Selection committees should strive to be gender balanced and diversified in composition, while also adhering to the requirements of specialization. Experts from non-academic institutions should be considered when appropriate and legally permissible.
- External members are required for R3 and R4 positions and recommended for R1 and R2 positions.

Review of application documents and applicant interviews

- All eligible applications submitted will be evaluated.
- Selection procedures may incorporate various phases, such as screening and shortlisting stages, when legally feasible, particularly in the event of a large number of applicants.
- It is advisable for the entire selection committee to participate in all stages of the selection process. If members of the committee share tasks at different stages of the process, that situation should be documented accordingly.
- If the process includes interviews, virtual or face-to-face interviews can be conducted simultaneously at different stages of the process, always in accordance with any and all legal requirements.
- Members of the Selection committees must treat as confidential all information to which they have access in the exercise of their functions, including personal data and any other information specifically pertaining to identified or identifiable natural persons.

Evaluation of applicant merit, impact and potential

- Applicant selection criteria focus on both the candidates’ past experience and future potential. The emphasis on one or the other may change according to the specific requirements of each position.
- Merits are assessed by dimensions (e.g., teaching, research, management, etc.) in keeping with the job description. For research staff, the competences recommended and required in the descriptors published by the European Framework for Research Careers for the different researcher profiles (from R1 to R4) should be considered.
- Candidate evaluation takes into account both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Aspects to be considered may include, among others, the candidate’s academic record; teaching experience; scientific output and research performance; ability to acquire funding; research team leadership
experience; international experience; generation of social impact; experience in scientific dissemination and knowledge transfer and exchange; leadership and management experiences, and level of achievement of personal competences.

- Breaks in research careers are not penalized and the added value that non-academic career paths can bring is also considered.

- Evaluations are undertaken in keeping with current gender policies and equality criteria.

- Letters of reference may be reviewed.

- To the extent legally possible, the confidentiality of letters of reference should be protected, in line with internationally established practices.

5.3. Decision and appointment

The final step is the decision and appointment stage, which includes informing the candidate of the outcome of the process and the mechanisms for appeals and complaints.

- All candidates are informed of the outcome of their application, preferably by electronic means.

- All candidates have the right to access the assessment of their application in accordance with the principles of transparency and data protection policy. It is advisable to include information on the strengths and weaknesses of candidates who have reached the last stage of the recruitment process.

- The final decision must indicate the procedure for lodging appeals and complaints.

- The use of the electronic management of all application procedures must be prioritized.