

OTM-R –Policy

Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment

Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) brings benefits to researchers, institutions and a country's research system. More specifically, OTM-R makes research careers more attractive, ensures equal opportunities for all candidates and facilitates mobility.

The focus of an OTM-R system should therefore be on ensuring that institutions always aim at recruiting the best person for the job and that all recruitment procedures are based on principles of equal opportunities for all candidates (including internal and external).

In 2018 INEB, IBMC and IPATIMUP (founding Institutes of i3S) adhered to the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

In 2020, IBMC and INEB submitted the application on 'HR Excellence in research' and in 2021, INEB – Instituto Nacional Engenharia Biomédica received the 'HR Excellence in research' award. The proposal reflects our commitment to continuously improve our human resource policies in line with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, notably our commitment to achieve fair and transparent recruitment and appraisal procedures.

These key EU documents establish the guidelines for European universities and institutions to improve the recruitment and working conditions of researchers, making research careers more attractive and accessible in Europe.

In order to promote the development of research excellence at i3S, it is essential to have a recruitment procedure of quality for researchers and to accompany them throughout their career. It is in that context and in line with the Code of Conduct for Researchers, that INEB, IBMC, Ipatimup and i3S are committed to ensuring that recruitment selection procedures are fair and completely transparent.

The recruitment and selection process at INEB, IBMC, Ipatimup and i3S is one of our Strengths. All our vacancies are posted on the institute website, EraCareers from June 2021 on Euraxess. Advertisements have a lot of information not only about the vacancy but also about legislation, and external links with useful information.

The institute has clear and transparent rules for the recruitment, for researchers at all levels (R1 to R4).

We stress out that the most important recruitment tool we use is a public advertisement, with specific methods and metrics of evaluation that we publish at our websites, Eracareers (the researcher's mobility portal in Portugal) and LinkedIn, Euraxess and other online tools, like Facebook and mailing lists. Sometimes, if the funding program demands it, we also publish the advertisements at a national or international journal.

There is total transparency in the selection of candidates, the merits they are judged on and the recognition of their qualifications.

The current regulations guarantee that there is no discrimination and include complaint mechanisms: after the selection process (that is public and of public knowledge) we publish the results and interested have ten working days to question the results. The tool is very easy and no administrative complex processes: an email is enough.

INEB, IBMC, IPATIMUP and i3S, promote equality policy, so no candidate can be privileged, benefited, impaired or private of any right or exempted of any duty on the basis, inter alia, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, economic status, education, social origin or condition, genetic heritage, reduced working capacity, disability, chronic disease, nationality, ethnic origin or race, place of origin, language, religion, political or ideological convictions and trade union membership.

INEB, IBMC, Ipatimup and i3S follow the national legislation for scientific employment (decree law 57/2016, that includes clear rules for the recruitment and evaluation of candidates) and for Fellowships (the national Research Fellowship Status and the mandatory translation for our own Fellowship Regulation, that is published online at the institutes websites (<https://www.ineb.up.pt/information-anddocuments>)).

Moreover, the Human Resources Department is permanently available for counselling the researchers involved in recruitment processes, and to check the administrative and legal issues of those processes, as well as all written documentation and interaction with the candidates.

The main stages in the recruitment process at INEB, IBMC, IPATIMUP and i3S, are:

a) Advertising and application phase

Following the principles of Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, all our advertisements for research positions are as concise as possible, nevertheless applicants are able to find information on:

- the organization
- applicable Legislation
- job title, number of available positions, specifications and starting date
- researcher career profiles (R1-R4) with the respective 'required' and 'desirable' competencies
- evaluation criteria and their respective 'weight'
- evaluation committee (names of the committee members)
- workplace, entitlements (salary, other benefits, etc.), type and duration of Contract
- application procedure, rules applied, opening date and deadline
- complaint and appeal periods and procedures
- reference to the institution's equal opportunities policy (e.g., positive discrimination, dual careers, etc.)
- reference to the institution's OTM-R policy

In order to guarantee transparency and good practices in the advertising phase, principal investigators (PIs) and research groups are provided with a standardized template for job advertising. They must fill out the mandatory fields containing the aforementioned job specifications and details. This process keeps the administrative burden for PIs and research groups to a minimum.

In order to reduce the administrative burden for applicants, applications are submitted online. Original documents and qualifications, if necessary, are only requested in the appointment phase. After submitting the application, applicants are notified that their application has been received.

b) Evaluation and selection phase

To guarantee that the best person for the job is recruited, the selection process must always be conducted in line with the principles of merit, ability, transparency, openness, equal opportunity and non-discrimination. In particular, candidates are to be evaluated without discrimination based on gender; nationality; ethnic or social background; disability; age; religion; sexual orientation; political opinions or their socioeconomic situation.

Additionally, interruptions and variations in a researcher's career (such as career breaks, sabbaticals, maternity or paternity leave, etc.) will not be penalized, as they are considered to be a natural facet of a researcher's professional evolution and, consequently, represent valuable contributions to their professional development in multidisciplinary contexts.

The members of the selection or evaluation committee are made public at the moment the call is opened. The committee will comprise at least three experts in the relevant knowledge areas whose academic qualifications are on a par with those required for the position on offer, or superior. Regarding the Researchers Positions the committee members are proposed to the Board of Directors by the group leader or the person in charge of the project. In these cases, the Board of Directors formally nominates the selection committee.

To safeguard objectivity, external experts often feature in evaluation and selection committees. The members of the selection committee should operate independently and must declare any conflict of interest.

All applications are pre-screened to check their eligibility.

The specific evaluation criteria to be used are included in the call for applications. The committee will take the applicant's academic record into account as a primary criterion, as well as score the information displayed in the CV considering the metrics and respective weights described on the advertisement.

Regarding the researchers positions the committee will also take into account that the evaluation is not only based on specific curricular metrics, but that the scientific and curricular career evaluation focuses on relevance, quality and up-to-datedness, namely of scientific, technological or cultural production in the last five years, deemed most relevant by the candidate; of research activities, applied or based on practical work developed and/or of knowledge extension and dissemination activities developed, namely under the scope of the promotion of culture and scientific practices.

Generally speaking, candidates are also commonly assessed through interview processes. The purpose of the interview is to further clarify the curricular elements presented and on researchers' recruitment process has a maximum ponderation of 10% of the final classification, as stated in national recruitment legislation for the recruitment of PhD's. The interview is not mandatory and is conducted by the evaluation committee. Alternatively, candidates to Senior Researcher or Group Leader (R3 and R4) positions can be invited to do a public presentation.

c) Appointment phase

Feedback

In line with the principle "Transparency" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, all applicants receive electronic notice at the end of each phase of the recruitment process.

We strongly recommend the jury to inform all applicants who were selected to the interview about the strengths and weaknesses of their application. Other applicants, who did not make it to the final stages, receive a standard mail informing them of the outcome.

All applicants are entitled to further feedback upon request, within ten working days of the release of the classification ranking.

Complaints mechanism

The institution has an established procedure to deal with complaints made by applicants who believe that they have been treated negligently, unfairly or incorrectly. This procedure is transparent and made public on the Announcements.

Actions to be developed

The implementation of the **Action Plan** will contribute substantially to our aspirations towards fully adopting the principles of The European Charter & Code for Researchers, namely regarding the improvement of the OTM-R practices:

- Introduction to the Charter Code for researchers at the Welcome Session at the institute that all new members must attend.
- To organize Workshops to PI and Group leaders regarding OTM-R practices, round tables exploring the meaning and implications of all principals, their importance and how to be assured to use them in all recruitment processes.
- Implementation of a quality control system for OTM-R. Make regular surveys on selected candidates and panel members as to the suitability to be part of that specific panel, as well as the difficulties or advantages experienced.
- A new tool for Advertising Job Openings. The purpose is to streamline the job posting process in order to gather all offers in one place, thus expediting the advertising process which, in turn, is expected to captivate more potential candidates. Intended result: a weekly job newsletter to be disseminated internally and, especially, in other institutions so as to expand the pool of candidates, both in quality and quantity. The procedure is to gather in a single document all Open Positions from i3S. It is paramount that opening and closing dates for application are highlighted. We will use a form-like spreadsheet, accessible by all HR managers so they can fill it in for every new Open Position. The run down for each Open Position in the document should be as follows: Employment type - Scientific area and/or sub-area - Length of employment/project - Relevant dates (application deadline, start date...) - Salary range (when deemed appropriate) - Links to original Open Positions texts in English and in Portuguese (when both versions exist),

each version in a separate file; The document may have three headers: New this week, Still open, Last Call (for Open Positions whose deadlines falls on that particular week). The full Open Position texts remain hosted on the institutes' websites. Each week, the Communication Unit will compile and disseminate the new, ongoing, and closing Open Positions. The channels for dissemination include: a) i3S website, under Job Opportunities. Information Systems and Technology Unit (ISTU) is setting up the system so that the information is published on the website as well.

- Creation of a dedicated structure to internally support the incoming researchers and their families, to deal with formal and informal reallocation requirements / social integration (legal affairs, schools, accommodation,)
- Building an area for FAQs at the Job Opportunities area in order to clarify doubts regarding the submission of applications.

On March 2021 INEB was granted the 'HR Excellence in research' award.