

Policy of the University of Macerata for the Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment of Researchers (OTM-R)

Background

At the end of 2014 the the European Commission granted the University of Macerata the 'HR - Excellence in Research' recognition following its commitment to implement a '*strategy*' aimed at actually fulfilling the principles outlined in the *European Charter for Researchers* and in the *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*. Since January 2015 this academic institution has been taking steps towards the effective realization of the *Charter*.

In the meeting of 25.10.2016 the Academic Senate decided the University of Macerata would support the 'Human Resources Strategy for Researchers' in line with European Commission provisions set out in the *Guidelines to the Implementation of the Strengthened Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)*¹.

In that meeting the Academic Senate entrusted the university Working Group named 'Excellence in Research' set up by means of Chancellor's Decrees Nos. 147/2013 and 352/2013 with the purpose of performing all action required to adapt the 'Strategy and Action Plan to Enhance the Role of Researchers' to the new practice. The task would be accomplished by drawing up an integrated proposal for a policy and action plan of the University of Macerata seeking to carry out researcher recruitment according to the principles of the '*Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment of Researchers (OTM-R)*'.

The document titled 'Report of the Working Group of the Steering Group of Human Resources Management under the European Research Area on Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment of Researchers'², which provides a definition of the OTMR-R research environment, is an essential and crucial part of the *European Charter for Researchers* and the *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*.

Presently, monitoring and analysing to what extent the *European Charter for Researchers* and the *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers* have been implemented are activities carried out by the University Delegate for the implementation of the principles set out in the *European Charter for Researchers*, aided by the International Research Office and by Department Delegates (members of the 'Excellence in Research' working group), as well as by the individual heads of the university units involved in recruiting and career enhancement (Heads of Department Research Offices, Academic Staff Office and National Research Office).

With regards to such organization, other university units are also involved:

- the Single Committee Ensuring Equal Opportunities and the Enhancement of Employees' Satisfaction, and Contrasting Discrimination (*Comitato unico di garanzia per le pari opportunità, la valorizzazione del benessere di chi lavora e contro le discriminazioni*) in charge of submitting proposals and providing advisory and auditing services on equal opportunities and the safeguard of employees' satisfaction, in line with existing national and European union regulation;
- the University Quality Unit (*Presidio di Qualità dell'Ateneo*) engaged in promoting, supervising and coordinating activities which ensure the Quality Assurance System (*Sistema di Assicurazione della Qualità*) performs effectively and homogeneously, in order to guarantee it operates at its best.

Introduction

According the European Commission expectations a policy drawing on OTM-R praises the benefits for researchers, institutions and national research systems ensuing from the adoption of an open, merit-based, transparent recruitment process. Specifically, the OTM-R policy seeks to make careers in research more attractive, to ensure equal opportunities in accessing a career in research, to

¹<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/useful-information/policy-library>

²https://cdn1.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/policy_library/otm-r-finaldoc_0.pdf

promote international and inter-sector mobility. The set of principles underpinning the OTM-R should overall guarantee quality improvement and increase cost-effectiveness of investment in research.

As outlined by the European Commission, the OTM-R policy is to be perfectly embedded in the university institution mission statement and vision in order for it to spread and produce a marked impact on all internal practices. In particular, the OTM-R process needs to be perfectly harmonized with human resources management policies so as to ensure that within the academic institution an enduring approach emerges which fosters the recruitment of the best people and the abolition of all discrimination, and which promotes equal opportunities.

In practical terms, opting for the OTM-R policy initially involves an internal audit based on a check-list. That is a self-assessment tool aimed at establishing to what extent existing practices comply with OTM-R and at identifying possible strategies for improvement.

The university 'Excellence in Research' Working Group has carried out a detailed and accurate analysis of all items in the check-list, both in departments and central offices, on behalf of the University of Macerata. With regards to each action it has suggested gauging its actual implementation at the University, as well as identifying actions to undertake in order to improve practices applied so far.

The outline below presents aspects that have been analyzed by means of the internal audit, as well as tangible implementation actions for the development of the OTM-R policy at the University of Macerata. The OTM-R Policy of the University of Macerata consists of such guidelines.

ACTIONS FOR THE OTM-R POLICY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MACERATA

1. Have we posted a version of our OTM-R policy online (in Italian and in English)?

The University of Macerata takes up this document as an internal guide setting out its OTM-R procedures and practices. The document is published on the official website of the university, both in Italian and in English.

2. Do we have an internal guide setting out clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of vacancies?

Currently there is no single document clearly outlining OTM-R procedures and practices at our institution. We have regulations for the most part based on existing national laws. Each document contains specific reference and links to the principles underpinning the *European Charter for Researchers*. Where feasible by law, we are committed to updating such regulations in order to make sure they are consistent with OTM-R principles. Moreover, as detailed under Item 3 below, we shall draw up a set of guidelines to post on our website for all those who may wish to be informed on the issue.

3. Is everyone involved in the process sufficiently trained in the area of OTM-R?

We plan to make use of multimedia technology (i.e.: Powerpoint or video introductions) to inform all those involved in the process, both at our institution and outside our institution, about our OTM-R policy.

In addition, the person in charge of each selection procedure is expected to ensure OTM-R principles are implemented, and to make clear mention of it in the selection minutes.

Ad-hoc guidelines shall also be drawn up for selection committees involved in recruitment.

4. Do we make (sufficient) use of e-recruitment tools?

E-recruitment tools are customarily used in the selection of PhD students (on line applications in the initial stage, and remote interviews conducted via video-conferencing mode in the second evaluation stage).

We are committed to improving procedures for the recruitment of academic staff, researchers and grant-winners, by including e-tools that enable on line applications in the initial stage, and by

introducing and regulating the possibility for remote interviews to be conducted via video-conferencing mode, adding details of such options in the public selection notice.

5. Do we have a quality control system for OTM-R in place?

The person in charge of each selection procedure ensures effective compliance with OTM-R principles.

The University Delegate for the implementation of the principles set out in the *European Charter for Researchers*, aided by the International Research Office draws up a yearly report outlining to what extent OTM-R principles are being realized. The report is submitted both to the Single Committee Ensuring Equal Opportunities and the Enhancement of Employees' Satisfaction, and Contrasting Discrimination, and to the University Quality Unit.

Candidates taking part in the recruitment process as well as third parties may point out any breach of rules by means of the internal complaints procedure at our institution³.

6. Does our current OTM-R policy encourage external candidates to apply?

Nowadays only part of selection processes are designed to encourage the participation of external candidates. For instance, the public selection notice issued by the *Collegio Matteo Ricci* addressing teaching staff from foreign institutions is published on the university website in English only, and on the EURAXESS website. In addition, public selection notices for the awarding of grants and for the recruitment of PhD students are drawn up in Italian and in English, and posted on our university websites, as well as on the websites of the Ministry of Education, University and Research, and of EURAXESS.

In order to further involve external candidates in recruitment at our institution, we are committed to improving our communication strategy, access to public selection notices and their serviceability. The following actions are thus required: links to on-going recruitment are to be included on our university website; the quality of the English translation of our university website needs to be raised; template settings of public selection notices are to be provided in Italian and in English.

7. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract researchers from abroad?

Advertising public notices for grant awards, the recruitment of PhD students and of researchers on the EURAXESS website is evidence of compliance with such policy.

8. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract underrepresented groups?

We are committed to improving our communication strategy with the aim of further involving members from underrepresented groups, and of surmounting discriminatory barriers. Indeed, our final goal is to overcome stereotypes similarly to what we already do through our inclusion and non-discriminatory policy at large as, for example, by eliminating architectural barriers for the benefit of students with disabilities and providing suitable technology on campus for students with sight-impairment.

Moreover, we undertake to include our non-discriminatory stance in the introductory section of all public recruitment notices, and to provide access to the content of all public selection notices. A PDF file of public selection notices shall be made available in audio version (in Italian and in English). Within the frame of our university project Inclusion 3.0, *ad hoc* workstations shall enhance access to information and students may use several types of devices and special technology (text-enlarging scanners, audio-adaptor programmes, suitable keyboards and mouse devices, and tso on) according to their needs. We shall make sure the equipment is easily available to members of all underrepresented groups, as well as guarantee that such technology is user-friendly.

9. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to provide attractive working conditions for researchers?

We undertake to draw up a questionnaire on organization satisfaction distributed to all researchers at regular intervals (once a year) with the purpose of monitoring their degree of satisfaction,

³<http://www.unimc.it/it/qualita/segnalazioni-e-reclami>

of security and the perceived quality of their working conditions.

The Single Committee Ensuring Equal Opportunities and the Enhancement of Employees' Satisfaction, and Contrasting Discrimination carries out such monitoring and provides a yearly report.

In order to guarantee services to our employees, we offer season-tickets for car parking and local and out-of-town public transportation, we issue public notices for the allocation of places in kindergarten, and provide housing services in flats and other private accommodation. In so far as financial resources allow, we are committed to offering such entitlements to:

(a) Visiting Scholars: They already enjoy several services such as free accommodation, an office on the relevant Department premises, reduced-price access to the university canteen, free access to laboratories and libraries, an introductory course to Italian;

(b) PhD Students: They enjoy all student services including an office on the relevant Department premises and if they are foreigners we also provide reduced-price accommodation.

10. Do we have means to monitor whether the most suitable researchers apply for vacancies at the University of Macerata?

National regulation on the public recruitment of academic staff and researchers sets out specific teaching and scientific requirements to be met by candidates. In any case, we undertake to draw up and distribute among selection committees a document on how to conduct the evaluation and to ensure requirements are appropriately assessed with regards to all candidates applying for each vacancy. The document consists in a check-list.

11. Do we have clear guidelines or templates (e.g., EURAXESS) for advertising available vacancies?

We are committed to realizing a template to advertise all vacancies, based on provisions set out in Section 4.4.1. of the 'Report of the Working Group of the Steering Group of Human Resources Management under the European Research Area on Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment of Researchers'⁴.

12. Do we include in the job advertisement references/links to all the elements foreseen in the relevant section of the toolkit?

In the public selection notice and/or on the relevant page on the university website advertising vacancies we undertake to include information that is consistent with elements foreseen in Section 4.4.1. of the 'Report of the Working Group of the Steering Group of Human Resources Management under the European Research Area on Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment of Researchers'.

13 Do we make full use of EURAXESS to ensure our research vacancies reach a wider audience?

Advertising public notices for the recruitment of PhD students, for filling other vacancies and the awarding of grants is posted on the EURAXESS website as set out under Item 7.

14. Do we make use of other job advertising tools?

Public selections for the recruitment of academic staff and researchers, and PhD students are published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, posted on the websites of the Ministry of Education, University and Research, and of EURAXESS, of our university and on our on-line notice-board.

Public selection notices for Visiting Professors are sent to the academic staff's mailing list with the request of spreading them among the relevant scientific community.

⁴ See the Section on 'Advertising and Application Stage' including a 'toolkit' drawing on the principles of the *European Researchers' Charter* (https://cdn1.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/policy_library/otm-r-finaldoc_0.pdf)

15. Do we keep the administrative burden to a minimum for the candidate?

We undertake to introduce an on-line application system in order to do away with paper applications and guarantee applications forms may be filled in and mainly sent on-line along with the relevant documents required.

16-17. Do we have clear rules governing the appointment of selection committees? Do we have clear rules concerning the composition of selection committees?

The university regulations contain clear and thorough rules for the appointment and composition of selection committees. Public selection notices include a link that enables candidates to familiarize themselves with the relevant sections of the university regulations.

18. Are selection committees sufficiently gender-balanced?

National regulations applicable to public employment establish that selection committees may not include less than 30% of the least represented sex group (Art. 5, Para. 1, L. (a), and Para 1-*bis* of Legislative Decree No. 165/2001 and following amendments).

We are committed to complying with such measure. The Single Committee Ensuring Equal Opportunities and the Enhancement of Employees' Satisfaction, and Contrasting Discrimination is in charge of checking such figures. If University Departments fail to do so while appointing selection committees, they must give reasons.

19. Do we have clear guidelines for selection committees which help to judge 'merit' in a way that leads to the best candidate being selected?

With regards to the selection of academic staff, our university regulations set out the criteria selection committees are to follow when evaluating candidates' qualifications and published papers. The recruitment of researchers relies on criteria laid down in Ministerial Decrees Nos. 242/2001 and 243/2011. We are committed to drawing up guidelines for our selection committees, clearly specifying criteria set out in the public selection notice and including a score grid.

20. Do we inform all applicants at the end of the selection process?

Within the frame of our action to introduce an on-line application system (see Item 12), we undertake to set up an automated system acknowledging receipt of candidate application, Notice to all candidates informing them the selection process has come to an end is by receipt of the Chancellor's Decree approving all official documents regarding the selection, which is also posted on the official university website.

21. Do we provide adequate feedback to interviewees?

The Academic Staff Office is in charge of publishing all documents regarding each phase of the selection on the university website: the public selection notice, the composition of the selection committee, the assessment criteria, the summons to candidates, the final selection minutes including evaluation score and documents approved. Therefore, candidates may access all information on the selection directly.

As far as PhD students are concerned, individual evaluation scoring is divulged to candidates who reach the final stage of the public selection; the automated system also sends a copy of the pre-assessment stage.

22. Do we have an appropriate complaints mechanism in place?

Our university website already includes a special section for complaints. We wish to extend such procedure also to all other issues concerning OTM-R.

We undertake to improve the visibility of instructions to access the complaints section.

In its yearly report the University Quality Unit provides details on its activities in connection with any complaint or grievance on part of staff or PhD students.

23. Do we have a system in place to assess whether OTM-R delivers on its objectives?

As specified under Item 5, the University Delegate for the implementation of the principles set out in the *European Charter for Researchers*, aided by the International Research Office draws up a yearly

report on the level of compliance with OTM-R principles. The report is submitted both to the Single Committee Ensuring Equal Opportunities and the Enhancement of Employees' Satisfaction, and Contrasting Discrimination, and to the University Quality Unit.

Taking into due consideration any remark made by the University Quality Unit and the Single Committee, the University Delegate provides a yearly report to the Academic Senate outlining to what extent the OTM-R policy has been implemented, pointing out problems that may have arisen and suggesting relevant measures for improvement.

The above mentioned yearly process of analysis and self-assessment is carried out on the grounds of data and information that personnel in charge of the recruitment process and of the technical/administrative units involved convey to the International Research Office on a regular basis.