University of Limerick

Policy for the Open, Transparent and Merit Based Recruitment of Researchers

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy sets out the University of Limerick's principles and procedures for implementing the revised 2023 *European Charter for Researchers* and the *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*, ensuring an open, transparent, inclusive, and merit-based recruitment process. The objective is to attract the best candidates, inclusive of all backgrounds, while promoting equal opportunities, career sustainability, and international mobility.

The University of Limerick's Culture Charter forms an important backdrop to all University policies and procedures. The Values and Behaviours outlined in the Culture Charter should guide how we act, interact and connect with one another in the challenges and successes of university life. The Values and Behaviours outlined in the Culture Charter should also guide how we interpret these policies and procedures.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 To whom does the policy apply?

This policy applies to all recruitment processes for research roles, including research assistants, postdoctoral researchers, research fellows, and senior research fellows, at the University of Limerick.

The inclusion of an individual's name on a grant or funding application does not confer an automatic right to employment. Any subsequent appointment remains subject to University of Limerick's recruitment policies and to the principles of open, transparent and merit-based recruitment.

1.2.2 In what situations does the policy apply?

This policy applies to all recruitment processes for researchers at University of Limerick.

This policy does not apply to fellowship-type awards from public funding bodies (e.g. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowships, Research Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowships, Research Ireland Pathway Programme etc).

This policy does not apply to researchers appointed under the Procedure for the Recruitment of Staff for Short Term Contracts (Contracts of less than 11 months duration).

1.2.3 Who is responsible for ensuring that the policy (and any associated procedure) is implemented and monitored?

The Human Resources Division is responsible for implementation. Principal Investigators/ Recruiting Managers play a key procedural role.

1.3 Definitions

1.3.1 Researchers

Individuals engaged in research activities, employed under the researcher career framework, including all career stages i.e. research assistants, postdoctoral researchers, research fellows, and senior research fellows. (R1 to R4 as defined by the European Commission).

1.3.2 Open, Transparent & Merit Based-Recruitment (OTM-R)

Open, Transparent, Merit-based Recruitment – a model promoting fairness, inclusivity, and career sustainability in accordance with the European Commission's recommendations and EU best practices. The three key principles are:

- Open: University of Limerick Research vacancies must be advertised openly and widely to ensure it reaches a wider pool of candidates.
- Transparent: the recruitment process must be simple and clear. External candidates must have access to the same information as internal candidates.
- Merit-based: selection for roles must be based on the researchers' merit. The selection panel must ensure the best possible candidate secures the position.

2 Context

2.1 Legal and Regulatory Context

Employment and Equality Legislation

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 provide a statutory basis for fair treatment in recruitment, prohibiting discrimination based on gender, age, race, disability, religion, and other protected characteristics. In the context of OTM-R, compliance with the Equality Acts ensures that recruitment processes are transparent, merit-based, and guided by a commitment to equality and diversity.

2023 European Charter for Researchers

This Charter outlines the rights and responsibilities of researchers and their employers, promoting principles that enhance the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers. In the context of OTM-R, it reinforces the importance of open and fair recruitment procedures, equal treatment of candidates, and career development support—regardless of personal background, nationality, or discipline.

Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

As a core element of the Charter, the Code sets specific standards for the recruitment process, including transparency in job postings, clear selection criteria, and the recognition of mobility and non-traditional career paths. These guidelines directly support OTM-R by promoting consistency, objectivity, and equity in candidate assessment and selection.

HR Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)

The HRS4R is a voluntary framework that enables research institutions to align their HR policies with the principles of the Charter and Code. Institutions engaging in HRS4R commit to continuous improvement in recruitment practices, using OTM-R checklists and self-assessments to track progress. This strategy ensures that recruitment processes remain transparent, competitive, and merit-based while fostering a supportive working environment for researchers at all career stages.

2.2 Other Context

2.2.1 University of Limerick Institutional Context

UL's OTM-R policy works in conjunction with UL's other human resource strategies/policies (e.g. UL's Researcher Development Programme, Research Contract Management Policy) to improve the working conditions of researchers at the University and attract researchers from abroad. All these policies are therefore complementary and form part of UL's overall strategy to increase its level of quality, improve its reputation (and therefore attractiveness) and pursuit of excellence as well as enhance researchers' careers and mobility.

3 Policy Statements

3.1 Principles for Open, Transparent and Merit Based Recruitment of Researchers

3.1.1 **Adherence to the 2023 Charter & Code:**
UL applies the updated Charter principles, including responsible research, open science, and researcher well-being.

3.1.2 **Merit-Based Assessment:**
Assessment criteria are aligned with the job profile and consider not only academic excellence but also broader competencies such as collaboration, societal impact, and open science contributions.

3.1.3 **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion:**
Recruitment actively fosters gender balance, accessibility, and underrepresented groups in line with UL's EDI strategy.

3.1.4 **International and Intersectoral Mobility:**
UL encourages diverse career pathways and values experience outside academia, including industry, policy, and civic engagement.

3.1.5 **Transparency and Feedback:**
Clear criteria and fair processes are used throughout, and applicants may request feedback at any stage.

3.1.6 **Career Sustainability**:

Recruitment practices promote long-term development and recognition of all researchers

- **Merit-Based Selection**: Candidates are assessed solely on their qualifications and experience relevant to the role.
- **Equality and Diversity**: The university is dedicated to promoting an inclusive culture and values diversity, ensuring that recruitment decisions are free from unlawful discrimination.
- **Transparent Procedures**: Clear guidelines are provided for advertising, selection, and appointment processes to maintain consistency and fairness as outlined in the University of Limerick Recruitment Policy.

4 Related Procedures for Researcher Recruitment

4.1 Open Recruitment

- All roles are advertised through appropriate national and international channels (e.g. EURAXESS).
- Job advertisements include role expectations, qualifications, work conditions, benefits, and career prospects
- Inclusive language and flexible conditions are applied to attract a diverse candidate pool.

4.2 Selection

- Selection boards meet UL's requirements for selection board composition in line with UL Policy for the Recruitment of Staff
- Structured interviews and scoring systems are used based on pre-agreed criteria.
- Conflicts of interest are disclosed and managed.
- Remote or hybrid interviews are supported for research positions (fixed term or specified purpose employment contracts) to enable broader participation.

4.3 Merit-Based Evaluation

- Evaluation reflects a broad understanding of merit, including interdisciplinary experience, non-academic achievements, and collaborative contributions.
- Use of narrative CVs is encouraged
- Only essential documents are requested during application; administrative burdens are minimised.
- Transparency and traceability of the process are ensured through e-recruitment tools.

5 Related Documents

UL Policy for the Recruitment of Staff

Research Staff Role Profiles

UL Researcher Career Development Programme

Irish Universities Association Researcher Career Framework

European Charter & Code for Researchers

Research Contract Management Policy

Procedure for the Recruitment of Staff for Short Term Contracts (Contracts of less than 11 months duration)