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Policy	OPEN, TRANSPARENT AND MERIT-BASED RECRUITMENT OF RESEARCHERS
Responsible	Scientific Director
Process team	General Manager Achucarro Internal Selection Committees International Scientific Advisory Committee
Version and date	1.0 -- October 2016

Foreword

Achucarro Basque Center for Neuroscience (ACHUCARRO) is a research institution established in 2012 in the Basque euro-region (Spain).

The main strategic objective of ACHUCARRO is to contribute to the development of a socially and economically sustainable Society. To do this we strive to perform world-class research in the study of neuron-glia biology in the normal and pathological brain. This research focus will allow us to contribute to the training of future generations of neuroscientists and be an active partner in the dissemination of the human knowledge about the brain.

ACHUCARRO strives to be a reference centre in our area of research by designing, developing, continuously improving and achieving excellent results, in all our activities.

The Board of Trustees of ACHUCARRO endorsed the “European Charter & Code for Researchers” at the establishment process of the centre. During the first semester of 2013, Achucarro underwent the Internal Analysis process of the "HR Strategy for Researchers" (HRS4R), and designed an Action Plan (2013). As a consequent of this, in September 2013, Achucarro was awarded the "HR Excellence in Research" logo and recognition of the EU. At the end of 2015, Achucarro underwent a self-assessment process for reviewing and following-up the implementation of the Action Plan designed in 2013 towards the continuous improvement of our talent recruitment, retention and recognition of careers.

See: <http://www.achucarro.org/hrs4r>

As a coherent result of our path in this field, and motivated by our participation in the 4th cohort of organisations involved in the HRS4R strategy, we define this OTM-R policy, as an improvement of our recruitment procedures designed and developed within our management model.

Regarding the process or procedure of deploying this policy, we also keep the compromise of following the equality principles that must ensure the correct application of the principles of the policy, such as balanced gender representation in groups, Committees; guidelines to assess merits; etc.

Objectives

The aim of this document is to define a policy and methodology for continuously improve our process for talent attraction (recruit scientific personnel).

ACHUCARRO is convinced that by ensuring that the best person for the job is recruited, open, transparent and merit-based recruitment of researchers (and in general for all our staff) improves the effectiveness of our organisation and thus, our regional and national research systems, by guaranteeing equality, especially for under-represented groups, and boosts trans and international co-operation. This in turn promotes optimal circulation of scientific knowledge.

Disclaimer

ACHUCARRO is a Centre of Excellence of the Basque Government (BERC Programme). This programme establishes that BERC centres must be able to attract excellent scientists and develop competitive research projects.

The Strategic Plan of ACHUCARRO for the 2014-2017 period have determined that all (or at least most of the) research personnel that joins the centre must be funded by public and private competitive calls, as a way to ensure that the best profiles, assessed by external and totally independent panels have selected them.

This is stated publicly in our website: <http://www.achucarro.org/job-offers>

Nevertheless, as an operating organisation we use to receive applications from people willing to join our centre, so we sometimes have to undergo an internal preselection or support process, to foster the best profiles in each case.

With this approach, in most of the cases, we don't control the whole or at least, the final part of the selection process, so we rely on the OTM-R policies of the funding organisations, such as Governments, Ministries, Agencies, etc.

Scope

The research personnel in ACHUCARRO is grouped or divided into Research Groups. Some of the recruitment processes are launched by the needs of the groups and others by the research strategy of the centre, to cover specific positions, areas or expertise.

Each group has one (or two) Group Leaders that most of the times act as Principal Investigators of the projects of the group. Then, groups can have experienced researchers (senior staff or postdoctoral, non-permanent staff), PhD students of candidates, and laboratory technicians. The groups in ACHUCARRO currently have different stages of maturation so the size and structure of each group is different.

Provided all of the above, the scope of this policy covers the recruitment procedures to incorporate the following profiles:

EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS WITHOUT EXPERIENCE

Professional category: Research Assistants, PhD candidates

Expected duration of contract: Up to 56 months

Requirements:

- Resident in the Basque Country, or willing to move to the region
- **University and Masters' degree in an area related to the research programme of the centre**
- Excellent marks in undergraduate studies (more than 7.5 out of 10)
- Willingness to apply for PhD scholarships

Internal evaluation panel:

- General Manager,
- PhD selection head (**currently Dr. M^a Victoria Sanchez**), or
- each Group Leader, if he/she manages the funding source for the contract

EXPERIENCED RESEARCHERS, POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

Professional category: Research Assistants, PhD candidates

Expected duration of contract: Up to 56 months

Requirements:

- A PhD degree, from a known academic institution, in an area related to the research programme of the centre
- A research plan aligned with the strategic objectives of the centre
- Some evidence of a successful or promising career path is desirable: publications, **awards,...**
- Ideally, support or recommendation letter(s) from previous employers or colleagues

Internal evaluation panel:

- Scientific Director
- Group Leader(s) of the group/areas involved
- General Manager

SENIOR RESEARCHERS AND GROUP LEADERS

Professional category: Senior Researcher

Expected duration of contract: Tenure-track

Requirements:

- Demonstrated research experience in an area related to the research programme of the centre
- A research plan aligned with the strategic objectives of the centre
- Clear and solid evidences of a successful and promising career path: publications, **awards**,...
- Ideally, support or recommendation letter(s) from previous employers or colleagues

Internal evaluation panel:

- Scientific Director
- ISAC – International Scientific Advisory Committee
- Other advisors, if needed: Group Leader(s) of the group/areas involved

Selection process

1. LAUNCHING THE POSITION

All the recruitment processes in ACHUCARRO start by the identification of (a) a weakness of our organisation in terms of expertise or professional profile, or (b) the publication of a competitive call in which ACHUCARRO is an eligible host institution.

In both cases, we check if it is supported by our strategy and if we count with the infrastructure (economic resources, workspace, etc.) to successfully host the person(s).

2. PUBLICATION

We publish all the positions we call. All our recruitment processes are open.

The media for this publication is:

- Achucarro Website, and our social networks (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Euraxess portal
- ScienceCareers.eu portal
- Bizkaia Talent recruitment portal
- **Mailing list of the area's societies, networks, etc.**

In some occasion (that may also occur in the future), we have also published advertisements of certain positions in specialised media, like FENS, SfN, NatureJobs, for trying to reach a wider audience.

In the case of early career researchers and PhD candidates, the contact with them uses to be at the **Masters' courses in which all the Group Leaders and most of the senior researchers participate**, since this is a perfect way to meet the interests of both parties, and have a first direct contact with each other. Nevertheless, we also receive spontaneous applications from other institutions and Masters' programmes.

3. EVALUATION

The type of evaluation depends on the type of position. We have already mentioned the composition of Committees or stakeholders involved in the processes.

For Early stage researchers and PhD candidates:

- General Manager,
- PhD selection head, or
- each Group Leader, if he/she manages the funding source for the contract

For experienced researchers and postdoctoral fellowships:

- Scientific Director
- Group Leader(s) of the group/areas involved
- General Manager

And for senior staff and future group leader applications:

- Scientific Director
- ISAC – International Scientific Advisory Committee
- Other advisors, if needed: Group Leader(s) of the group/areas involved

In the case of external calls, where the role of Achucarro is to promote or support the application of candidates that compete with other candidates of other institutions, these Committees just perform a pre-selection of candidates.

In the case of having different candidates, that have passed the same call (Ramon y Cajal fellowships, Ikerbasque,...) that are willing to join Achucarro, if the internal committees don't reach an agreement, the ISAC can be contacted for advice.

All the members of the Committee we appoint have experience in the evaluation and assessment of applications, both internal and external (for instance, evaluating for funding agencies). All of them are also aware of the HRS4R and OTM-R principles, and as we mentioned in the Foreword, we also follow de equal opportunities and gender-issues and adequate experience to deploy the policy.

4. CONTRACT NEGOTIATION AND WELCOMING

In the one hand, in all or most of the cases, the salary scales of the different profiles are set in our system, by the scholarship funding bodies, or the research contract funding scheme, so there is no much space for salary negotiation. What we usually negotiate is the resources that ACHUCARRO can provide for the future plans of the person.

In the other hand, in our experience, a crucial stage in the process of attracting and recruiting a person is the welcome process. Invest time in training the person to our work environment is fundamental for a faster and more successful work experience and development, so we have a specific procedure on this, that varies depending on the career stage and the origin of the person. Basque or Spanish nationals need less support and training that foreigners.

5. CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT, SATISFACTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF PERFORMANCE

ACHUCARRO is a **Research Performance Organisation (RPO)**, but also a **Researchers' Training Organisation**, partner of the University, according to our Mission, set by the Board of Trustees.

This means that the Direction of the centre actively involves in the orientation and advisory of the career path of the younger members of the centre.

This also means that each person is the leader of her/his career, in two directions: (a) Her/his performance will determine the duration of her/his appointment; and (b) researchers in the **training stage of their careers won't have a permanent position or won't** we eligible for tenure-track career paths.

Scientific careers and professional working in our sector know that our jobs are systematically subject to assessment and performance evaluation. People and contracts funded by public bodies have their specific periodic evaluations of assess the success of people/projects.

Most of the assessment procedures that our personnel has to follow is related to the institutional of funding body requirements they assume. So the role of ACHUCARRO is those cases limits to the advisory guidelines for career paths that we give.

Additionally, ACHUCARRO is a Centre of Excellence, so the appointed groups and researchers are requested to reach a performance that is, at least, over the mean of our area, in our environment. In case a person or group is unable to systematically achieve the minimum level of exigence, he/she/they could eventually invited to leave the centre. In general terms, this measure would **mean that the people involved would "return" just to** the University affiliation and location (spaces/resources).