

Dependence	E-03 PEOPLE > 01 Scientific talent attraction and management
Policy	<b>OPEN, TRANSPARENT AND MERIT-BASED RECRUITMENT OF RESEARCHERS</b>
Responsible	Scientific Directorate
Process team	General Manager Steering Board meeting Internal Selection panels International Scientific Advisory Committee
Version and date	3.0 – October 2023

## 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. We keep developing the principles of these recommendations periodically and intermingling the improvement actions identified in the scope of HRS4R in our management and strategy.

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

As a coherent result of our path in this field, and motivated by our participation in the 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

**ACHUCARRO commits with the principles of scientific assessment established by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and more recently with CoARA (<https://coara.eu/>). See Annex 1 to check the 10 commitments established by CoARA.**

## 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.

All the Strategic Plans of ACHUCARRO until the date have set that the main scheme to recruit research personnel are the externally funded public and private grants. One the reasons for this decision is based on the request of the BERC Programme, that requires a high-degree of success in this kind of calls. The other, related to the first is the economic sustainability and future viability of the centre.

The research staff at ACHUCARRO is fully aware that although internally we want to establish a current form of evaluation (based on DORA, CoARA) appropriate to the organizational culture that we intend to establish, the global scientific system is still stuck, in many cases, in older and more consolidated visions (impact-factors, number of papers, etc.), for what we always try to navigate between *these two oceans*.

Considering these premises, ACHUCARRO is open and willing to receive applications from researchers in all the stages of the career willing to join us. For that, we perform an internal assessment, based in the guidelines in this very procedure.

## Scope

The research personnel in ACHUCARRO is appointed in the Research Groups (or laboratories). 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 Group Leader and can have Senior personnel that could be Principal Investigator in projects. This policy allows the development shared leadership dynamics and the joint development of careers. Research groups can have experienced researchers (other senior staff or postdoctoral, non-permanent staff), Predoctoral researchers, Interns or undergraduate students 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 the above, the scope of this policy covers the recruitment procedures to incorporate the following profiles:

NOTICE:  
Check the guidelines for evaluation on the next section of this document

### **EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS WITHOUT EXPERIENCE**

Professional category: Research Assistants, Predoctoral researchers

Expected duration of contract: Up to 48 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:

- Future supervisor of researcher in training.
- Panel appointed based on the profile of the call/applicant, according to the guidelines in this procedure.

### **EXPERIENCED RESEARCHERS, POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS**

Professional category: Research Assistants, Research Associates, Postdoctoral researchers

Expected duration of contract: Up to 60 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 promising career path is desirable: i.e. publication(s) as first author, awards.
- Ideally, support or recommendation letter(s) from previous employers or colleagues

Internal evaluation panel:

- Group Leader(s) of the group/areas involved
- Panel appointed based on the profile of the call/applicant, according to the guidelines in this procedure.

## **SENIOR RESEARCHERS AND GROUP LEADERS**

Professional category: Senior Researcher, Group Leader

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
- Solid evidences of a successful career path: publications as last author, awards, patents.
- Ideally, support or recommendation letter(s) from previous employers or colleagues

Internal evaluation panel:

- Scientific Director
- General Manager – secretary of the panel
- Panel appointed based on the profile of the call/applicant, according to the guidelines in this procedure.
- Members of the ISAC – International Scientific Advisory Committee

## 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

ACHUCARRO is committed with the publication of all the vacancies.

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 Predoctoral researchers, 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

All the staff participating in the assessment panels appointed for each call or applicant profile must state, according to our Ethic and Conduct Code that they will follow the principles laid down in the internal rules, guidelines and procedures of ACHUCARRO, in particular the principles of the [European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers](#) and this OTM-R policy

ACHUCARRO is committed with Equal opportunities, so all the selection panels and processes must ensure that gender balance is ensured within the evaluators.

If some people has any complaint about any matter during a selection process, this can be communicated to the Directorate of ACHUCARRO, in person, or using the anonymous suggestion box available on our website: <https://www.achucarro.org/contact/>

### 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 than 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 be 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 to 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 be 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).

## Annex 1: The Commitments of CoARA

1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research.
2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.
3. Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication-based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index.
4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment.
5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to
6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes.
7. Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use.
8. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition.
9. Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments
10. Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research.