

# Ca' Foscari University of Venice - OTM-R Policy:

## Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers

### Preamble

In 2015, Ca' Foscari University of Venice launched a formal procedure to adopt the principles of the "European Charter for Researchers" and the "Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers" by submitting a Commitment statement to the European Commission. Many of those principles were already applied by the University, and this previous commitment allowed further improvement.

We started the first stage of the **Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) project**, resulted in the presentation of the GAP Analysis and the Action Plan to the European Commission. These two documents allowed analysing the levels of variance compared to the European Charter for Researchers in terms of University regulations and procedures and detecting the actions to put in place to eliminate such variance.

In 2017, the European Commission approved the actions undertaken and recognised the "HR - Excellence in Research" award to Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

Following the first two years, this recognition was confirmed by the European Commission in August 2019 based on two self-assessment documents:

- the Internal Review used by the University to evaluate the progress of the actions included in the Action Plan;
- the OTM-R Checklist analysed the target acquisition level for open, transparent and merit-based recruitment and the actions to be carried out to improve said procedures.

### Introduction

According to the European Commission, an **Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R) Policy** should lead to implementing an open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment procedure to benefit researchers, institutions, and the national research system.

The OTM-R Policy aims to make the researcher's career more attractive, ensure equal access opportunities, and provide broader international and intersectoral mobility.

The OTM-R Policy is designed to make sure that the University has a constant drive to recruit the best candidates without discrimination.

**The aspects analysed by the OTM-R Checklist and the practical actions constituting the OTM-R Policy of Ca' Foscari University of Venice are reported below.**

#### 1. Have we published a version of our OTM-R Policy online (in the national language and English)?

This Document constitutes the University OTM-R Policy, and it is published on the institutional website in the section dedicated to the [HRS4R](#) project.

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

In line with the national regulations, we comply with several recruiting rules which vary according to the job position and are published on the University website. The existence of different regulations may hinder the implementation of the OTM-R Policy. Therefore, we should improve the clarity of procedures and practices to achieve the strategic objective of simplifying the abovementioned procedures at all levels (including at a regulatory level).

To provide explicit references and support foreign researchers, we created the Working in research page <https://www.unive.it/pag/28008/>, which offers relevant information on the classification used by the Italian recruiting system. This page provides researchers with clear indications on the recruiting procedures, also based on their career. The page will be updated with a scheme to allow faster comparison between the Italian and EU classification systems.

Moreover, as provided under the Action Plan, we will publish the English version of any relevant regulations for researchers.

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

The current calls for application expressly refer to the HRS4R principles.

Those directly involved in the process (i.e. call Selection Board members) will receive specific guidelines for the assessment procedure, in line with the OTM-R principles.

Moreover, all our staff will be informed about the Policy and provided specific information on the training activities for newly hired researchers.

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

Candidates can only submit the applications for Researchers (R1-R4), technical and administrative staff, and technologists online.

All the assessment operations carried out by the Selection Boards, including the interview with the single candidate, can also be performed online, in line with the principle of public access.

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

We are currently not equipped with a specific quality check tool for the OTM-R Policy.

The new University Strategic Plan will include guidelines that will serve as a basis to develop this system.

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

We fully comply with this OTM-R policy criterion. All the calls (R1-R4), with an English version, are published on different websites: University, Ministry of University, "Gazzetta Ufficiale" Journal, and Euraxess websites.

The calls for the Ph.D. courses (R1) are published on the following dedicated platforms:

- ALMALAUREA.IT <https://www.almalaurea.it/>,
- MASTERSTUDIES.COM <https://www.masterstudies.com/>
- ACADEMICS.COM <https://www.academics.com/>

And other portals/social networks of the University.

In some specific cases, the calls for Researchers (R2), are also published on the University LinkedIn account <https://it.linkedin.com/> or by means of posts.

The calls for the recruitment of fixed term researchers, assistant, and permanent Professors (R2-R4) are also published on international platforms:

- Academic Position <https://academicpositions.com/>
- UNIVERSITY POSITION <https://www.universitypositions.eu/>
- JOBS.AC.UK <https://www.jobs.ac.uk/>
- CHRONICLE, VITAE <https://chroniclevitae.com/>

Moreover, the Departments can publish the calls on other specific websites.

Moreover, it should be noted that, yearly, at least 20% of the resources allocated for the recruitment of Professors and researchers is bound by law to the recruitment of staff external to the University, and that the Ca' Foscari University brought this share to 30%.

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

This is one of the guiding principles stated under the University Strategic Plan.

To promote research and attract the best international researchers, in 2018 and 2019 we invested in a new initiative: [SPIN - Supporting Principal INvestigators](#), aimed at attracting the proposals of exceptional talents to finance research projects of up to 24 months in all the scientific areas offered by Ca' Foscari.

Between 2018 and 2019, we published 2 international calls and allocated EUR 1,200,000 and EUR 600,000 respectively for the SPIN initiative.

In 2020, after the end of SPIN, the University launched a new action with a 50% co-financing rate from the European Commission: the ["GLOBAL AT VENICE - Research and Training for Global Challenges" project](#) for the recruitment of 15 Marie Curie Cofund Fellowships, equal to a total amount of EUR 2.3 Million.

Ca' Foscari also activated a specific "Brain Gain Program" supported by a Selection and Recruitment Board, also through direct assignment, for the ERC winners such as assistant Professors (R3) and ordinary Professors (R4). Our University tops the list of Italian Universities with the highest number of Marie Skłodowska Curie research grants awarded. In 2020, the University awarded 31 grants, thus confirming its first place in Italy – held since 2014 - and setting a new record at a European level by ranking 4<sup>o</sup>. Ca' Foscari was also the first Italian University to adopt the

2015 Legislative Decree that enables Universities to be awarded the three-year MSCA Global Fellowships through direct assignment. Some of the winners were recruited as full "tenure track" researchers (namely, after 3 years in research, the researchers awarded become R2 assistant Professors).

We also hire the winners of the "Rita Levi Montalcini" programme as "tenure track" researchers (R2).

Moreover, we advertise several calls on Euraxess and publish international calls for researchers.

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

Article 1 ("Equality") of Ca' Foscari's Code of Ethics and Conduct states the following:

1. The University is committed to guaranteeing equal treatment and protection to anyone against direct or indirect discrimination related to religion, gender, sexual orientation, the exercise of freedom of conscience, opinion, speech, physical appearance, language, ethnic origins, belonging to national minorities, citizenship, social, personal and health conditions, pregnancy, family choices, and age.
2. The University considers any discriminatory act and attitude intolerable. It, therefore, adopts appropriate strategies to prevent and stop discriminatory behaviour - including sexual harassment - exhibited by any member of the Ca' Foscari Community.
3. The University is committed to supporting all initiatives to protect and enhance disadvantaged categories and promote their inclusion in places of study and work.

Moreover, all national and University regulations are in line to reduce any discriminatory behaviour.

The adoption of a Gender Equality Plan is currently in progress.

#### **9. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to provide attractive working conditions for researchers? (see the *brain gain* page <https://www.unive.it/pag/15535/> )**

Starting from 2011, we steadily increased the number of ERC and Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowship projects by recruiting 14 ERC Principal Investigators and 134 Marie Curie fellows. 7 Marie Curie Individual Global Fellows were hired as tenure track researchers (R2) and 14 ERC grant winners were employed as Professors (R3 and R4). Ca' Foscari is the first hosting institution in Italy and the fourth at a European level for distributing Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowships, accounting for 31 new fellowships granted in 2020. Moreover, the University also hired 7 winners of the Rita Levi Montalcini call as permanent researchers (R2).

Our University obtained the "Family Audit" certification for its staff policies. This certification recognises and certifies the actions undertaken to increase the staff's wellbeing.

These actions include innovative and remote working solutions and integrated healthcare insurance within the Welfare Plan, including researchers to the extent permitted by law. For example:

- Chance to subscribe to the integrated healthcare University policy at a preferential price, with the possibility to extend the Policy to partners, spouses and children, including by paying the overall amount in instalments;
- Discounted tariffs and payment in instalments to cover public transportation expenses to go to work;
- Courses of Italian language and culture for foreign researchers and their families – subscription fees covered by the University;
- Specific training for research project design and management (financing programmes, project design and project management tools, tools for the enhancement and use of research findings, etc.);
- Opportunity to access tax advice to submit the Form 730 at a preferential price;
- Possibility to enrol children in kindergartens and summer schools at a discounted price;
- Possibility to enrol in the University Welfare Plan providing discounts and promotions on goods and services.

#### **10. Do we have means to monitor whether the most suitable researchers apply?**

The Selection Boards use specific checklists in line with the recruiting regulations and laws, ensuring the highest objectivity in assessment procedures. The applicants are also invited to submit a motivational letter to present their scientific objectives and attitudinal features.

Educational and scientific activities are subject to constant assessment under the applicable law (art. 6 p. 7 L. 240/2010).

Recruiting regulations for Administrative and Technical Staff and Technologists provide the boards to be composed of experts in staff management and/or selection.

#### **11. Do we have clear guidelines or templates (i.e. EURAXESS) for advertising positions?**

We adopted specific guidelines and formats for any selection procedures.

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

The calls for different job positions and their dedicated University website pages provide all the information envisaged under Chapter 4.4 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"*, given that they are in line with the Italian regulations and laws.

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

We have been publishing the calls for researchers R1-R4 on Euraxess since 2011 (100% of the calls).

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

We commit to sponsoring the calls as much as possible. In addition to the websites of the University, Ministry of Education and University (MUR), "Gazzetta Ufficiale" Journal and Euraxess, the calls are also available on the following websites:

- <https://academicpositions.com/>
- <https://www.universitypositions.eu/>
- <https://www.jobs.ac.uk/>
- <https://chroniclevitae.com/>

Moreover, the Departments can decide to sponsor the calls for application on other websites.

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

We require applicants to comply with the regulations envisaged by the Italian law exclusively. Moreover, all the processes should be carried out online through the portal available on the University's website.

Additionally, no contributions are provided to participate in the selection for researchers. At the same time, the technical and administrative staff and technologists are required to pay a contribution (currently equal to EUR 10), mainly aimed at selecting truly motivated applicants and reducing the number of unfinalised applications.

Fellows/doctoral candidates/ research fellows are not required to pay a contribution.

#### **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 set specific rules for the appointment and composition of the Selection Board Members; said regulations are expressly reported in the calls and available on the University website.

After the appointment, all information related to the Selection Board Members is provided on the University website.

#### **18. Are the Selection Boards sufficiently gender-balanced?**

According to the national public procurement regulations on technical and administrative staff, the Boards should be gender-balanced, providing at least 30% members of the less represented gender (art. 57, p. 1, let. a) and p.1-*bis*, Legislative Decree 165/2001 and subsequent amendments and integrations).

Gender equality and the fight against discrimination are two fundamental principles stated under the University Bylaws and Ethical and Conduct Code. The procedural Regulations to appoint first and second-level full Professors and those in place for the selection of fixed-term Researchers fully comply with these two principles. The Departments are also provided with specific recommendations on gender equality during the appointment proposals for the Selection Board members.

The above stated principles are not provided instead in the PhD, fellowships and scholarship regulations, which will be amended during 2022.

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

As specified in the University Regulations, the Selection Boards should detect the best candidate. To do so, they should use defined national and international selection criteria to identify scientific excellence objectively.

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

We publish all final documents regarding the selection procedures R1-R4 on our institutional website. Moreover, the research fellows selected through SPIN (SPIN - Supporting Principal INvestigators) or "GLOBAL\_AT\_VENICE - Research and Training for Global Challenges" calls receive the reports drafted by external evaluators.

**21. Do we provide adequate feedback to interviewees?**

Assessment criteria and methods, as well as assessment outcomes, are published on our official website. All information related to the call can be accessed online by all candidates.

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

All necessary information to submit a complaint is provided on the call page and specified in the final documents of the selection procedure.

All those involved, including candidates, are entitled to access the documents that have not been published on the University website based on the "Regulation for the right to documentary, civil and general access to information". [<https://www.unive.it/pag/31477/?L=0>]

In addition to the previous, our whistleblowing system [<https://www.unive.it/pag/19460/>] was extended to include all collaborators, students and people who want to report unlawful events and behaviours.

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

The adoption of a regular audit system will be included under the quality check system (item 5).