

UNIVERSITAS STUDIORUM FLUMINENSIS
UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA

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**OPEN, TRANSPARENT, AND MERIT-BASED RECRUITMENT
(OTM-R) POLICY**

Rijeka, February 2024

Pursuant to Article 34, Paragraph 1 of the Statute of the University of Rijeka (CLASS: 030-01/23-01/05, Reg.No.: 2170-137-01-23-2, dated October 2, 2023), and in line with the proposal of the Operational Group for Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R), the University of Rijeka Senate at its 92nd session held on February 20, 2024, passed the following

OPEN, TRANSPARENT, AND MERIT-BASED RECRUITMENT POLICY (OTM-R)

1. Introduction

The University of Rijeka is the first university in Croatia and one of the first ten in Europe to have signed [The European Charter for Researchers and The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers](#), thus accepting the initiative of the European Commission, which in 2005 adopted these documents to increase employability and promote careers in research as vital to economic growth, employment, and the setting up of a European Research Area (ERA). We were, what is more, the first to sign the Charter for participation in the European Commission's Group for Human Resources Strategy Implementation.

By signing the above-mentioned charters, we have committed ourselves to implementing these documents at the University of Rijeka, a strategic goal outlined in the University of Rijeka Strategy. The *Human Resource Strategy for Researchers* project was adopted at the University's Senate session in October 2009, while the survey report, internal analysis, and activity report ([Human Resources Strategy for Researchers – HRS4R](#)) were adopted at the Senate's session in June 2010. In July 2010, the University of Rijeka received formal recognition from the European Commission and the 'HR Excellence in Research' logo.

Thanks to the study visit and encouraging evaluation by the HRS4R renewal committee, the University of Rijeka deepened and more strongly implemented its HRS4R policy in 2019. In this process, we created the initial proposal of an Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment policy (hereinafter referred to as OTM-R), as a result of comprehensive research and study of the existing Croatian legal framework and practices, as well as a comparison with the standards and requirements of the European Union derived from the EU guidelines for the Human Resources Strategy for researchers (hereinafter referred to as HRS4R), OTM-R guidelines (EU 2015), examples of good practice at universities in EU member states, and relevant EU regulations. The proposal was adopted by the University of Rijeka Senate (hereinafter: the University) at its 48th session held on December 22, 2020. Therefore, in accordance with the EU guidelines for HRS4R, intending to achieve transparency concerning all current and potential employees as well as all those interested in the University's recruitment policy, the OTM-R policy of the University was made publicly available on the University's website.

A comprehensive analysis of employees' opinions (GAP analysis) conducted in 2023 showed that the University has made significant strides and progress in terms of open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R). Hence, in line with the significant progress of EU policies, the policies and activities of the University of Rijeka are herewith updated and aligned with the currently valid practices and standards at the national and European levels, outlining the efforts and results achieved so far, establishing clear, understandable, and transparent criteria and procedures for all recruitment, and emphasizing further development plan of the University of Rijeka in the field of OTM-R. The document therefore contains key criteria for the development policy of the University of Rijeka on OTM-R.

Indeed, in accordance with the *Code of Conduct for Researchers*, the University of Rijeka is committed to ensuring that recruitment and selection procedures are equal, fair, and transparent. Furthermore, in line with the Higher Education and Scientific Activity Act (October 2022) and the [Guidelines for additional criteria for the selection of scientific-teaching, artistic-teaching, teaching, associate, and professional positions of teachers at the University of Rijeka and its constituents](#) (adopted by the UNIRI Senate in September 2023), the researchers' merit should be measured not only by their publications and results achieved in research, but also by a wider range of evaluation criteria, including a wide array of academic knowledge and skills, skills and norms of academic and institutional behaviour and personal qualities, knowledge and skills of the candidate.

With this in mind, and in light of the EU's standards on open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R), and considering the current policies of other universities across the EU, this document emphasizes general principles and requirements set forth by the *European Charter for Researchers*. The key criteria of equality, fairness, and transparency are placed at the heart of the recruitment process. At the University of Rijeka, this process includes three main stages:

- advertisement and application to advertised positions;
- evaluation of applicants and the selection of the candidate most qualified for the position;
- appointment of the selected candidate to the position at the University of Rijeka.

All three stages are based on the following fundamental principles:

- **OPENNESS** of the advertisement of vacant positions to enable the greatest possible influx of applicants;
- **TRANSPARENCY** of the selection procedure, from the very beginning of the application process as well as during the selection process, with the information on the process always publicly available to all interested in applying;
- **MERIT-BASED**: the selection process must be carried out per clearly established criteria and always remain merit-based.

2. Equality, fairness, and transparency of recruitment at the University of Rijeka

In line with the fundamental general principles and requirements of *the European Charter for Researchers* and in accordance with the OTM-R checklist, the University of Rijeka ensures principles of equality, fairness, and transparency in all stages of the recruitment process. In all strategic documents, measures, and policies of the University of Rijeka, available on the UNIRI website (section '[Diversity and Inclusivity](#)'), emphasis is placed on anti-discrimination, ensuring equal opportunities and support mechanisms for all vulnerable and underrepresented groups. These require all recruitment stages to reflect the principles outlined above.

The University of Rijeka guarantees a system of open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) based on clear and transparent rules in all stages of the recruitment process, as well as by publishing on the internet the OTM-R policy along with its guidelines and criteria outlined below, in Croatian and English. In this manner, as well as by introducing several particularly incentivizing, publicly available, and transparent measures, the University encourages external candidates and foreign researchers to apply and fosters their recruitment.

3. The key stages in the process of recruitment at the University of Rijeka

3.1. Advertisement and application

Advertising and calls for application

This stage is aligned with the fundamental criteria from the OTM-R checklist. It incorporates clear guidelines and deploys EURAXESS and other publicly available electronic tools for advertising vacant positions. This fosters a broader availability and transparency concerning the general public.

The University of Rijeka, as a public university, is obliged to advertise tenders for research positions through official and public channels, in accordance with the prescribed conditions and criteria of the Croatian legal framework, which establish the obligation to publish public tenders in the [Croatian Official Gazette \(Narodne novine\)](#) and on the official websites of the University constituents. This applies to all public employees in scientific-teaching, artistic-teaching, teaching, collaborative, and professional positions, but also those candidates employed on research contracts funded by projects. In addition, all the calls for vacant positions at the University of Rijeka are available on the relevant [centralized website](#) of the University. The University constituents that issue calls for positions add the job adverts in the centralized repository of UNIRI for advertising positions. All the calls for jobs at the University of Rijeka are also advertised in English through the EURAXESS job portal ([Euraxess Rijeka](#)).

The University constituents may also publish the calls in daily newspapers. To further increase the number of applicants most qualified for individual positions, the University constituents may, where appropriate and feasible, use additional measures to promote openings. For instance, they may disseminate the relevant calls through alumni networks. However, the use of these additional advertising measures cannot replace the other forms of advertisement outlined above nor can they be used to predetermine the outcome of a call.

The calls for vacant positions should as a rule include the following details:

1. Full name of the University and the respective scientific/artistic-teaching constituent,
2. Job description, position specifications, and, if possible, starting date,
3. Researcher career profiles (specified in accordance with the R1-R4 nomenclature),
4. Selection criteria, including legally defined criteria and, when applicable, knowledge and professional experience,
5. Number of vacant positions,
6. Conditions and workplace, type of contract, and rights and benefits with an indication of approximate gross salary (i.e. the position according to valid collective agreements with associated position coefficients),
7. Professional development opportunities and career development prospects,
8. Under the law, the call must be open for a minimum of 30 days from the date of publication of the call. However, it is recommended that the call be open for longer, ideally two (2) months from the date of publication, including non-working days and holidays, except when this is not possible for practical reasons.
9. Information on the selection procedure and contact details.
10. If applicable, the call may include possible fiscal advantages, distribution of teaching/research/ administration load associated with the position, and any rights specific to individual categories of employees (such as doctoral students and their privileges regarding accommodation, university canteen, etc.).
11. If applicable, the call should encourage positive discrimination in the form of incentive measures for the recruitment of underrepresented and vulnerable groups.

Application procedure

To facilitate the application process, the University maintains, [on the webpage where positions are advertised](#), an updated list of links to documents in Croatian and English concerning the following: institutional and national legal requirements relevant for the vacant job positions (e.g. national and institutional regulations concerning career advancement) and equal opportunities policies (e.g., positive discrimination, dual careers, etc.).

As the University is strongly committed to internationalization and seeks to increase the number of candidates applying from abroad, it is necessary to translate into English and publish all documents relevant to interested applicants (strategies, relevant normative and policy documents adopted by the University, and the constituent recruiting new personnel).

To reduce the administrative burden for applicants, e-administration tools and processes are used whenever possible, and all applications should be submitted in electronic form. Original documents and qualifications are only requested in the appointment phase, while copies of original documents, with a self-certification on the veracity of the information in the application, may be provided in previous phases of the procedure. Applicants will be notified via email about receipt of the application submission and informed about the schedule of the selection process. If any additional submissions or corrections to the application are necessary, the applicants should be notified of the issue and be given an appropriate deadline to meet these demands.

3.2. Evaluation and selection in recruitment

Transparency, equality, inclusion, and merit

UNIRI is committed to keeping the criteria associated with job positions as inclusive as possible considering the legal and job requirements.

To recruit the best candidate, the selection process must be fair, transparent, and respect the candidate's merits and abilities based on the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination in terms of gender, citizenship, ethnic or social background, disability, age, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs or socio-economic situation. For the same reason, the selection procedure considers objectively justified career breaks, e.g. maternity and parental leaves.

Positions at the University and its constituents are also open to candidates who do not possess a satisfactory level of competence in the Croatian language but possess a satisfactory level of competence in the English language. The level of language competence is determined solely concerning the requirements of the vacant position in question. Given the strong commitment to internationalization, whenever it is feasible and compatible with the law, the University of Rijeka supports the use of English for internal communication between teaching, research, and administrative staff and students.

Evaluation committees and selection criteria

In line with the OTM-R checklist, all recruitment processes should abide by the following rules for the composition and the appointment of evaluation committees. The size and composition of each committee should be determined in accordance with the profile and type of contract or post on offer. The committee will comprise at least three (3) experts in the relevant knowledge areas and fields whose academic qualifications are on par with or superior to those required for the position in question. The committee members are appointed by the competent institution within the University (faculty, department, etc.), taking into account gender equality and transparency in the appointment, and especially the competencies of the members, and following the UNIRI Senate's [Recommendation for improving gender balance in appointments](#).

To ensure objectivity and independence of the recruitment process, evaluation committees usually include external experts. The University recommends that, as a rule, expert committees have the majority of members employed at reputable universities different from the one at which the selection is conducted, preferably from abroad. Ideally, each committee member submits an individual report which, with a reasoned opinion in writing, assesses whether the applicant meets the legal criteria, the National criteria for selection to a scientific-teaching, artistic-teaching, scientific and teaching position at the university, and additional criteria aligned with the Guidelines for additional criteria for selection to scientific-teaching, artistic-teaching, teaching, associate and professional positions of teachers at the University of Rijeka and its constituents. Based on the individual reports of all committee members, the Chair of the committee prepares a final collective report that is sent to the Senate, i.e. the faculty/academic/department committee.

The committee should possess the relevant experience, qualifications, and skills required to effectively assess candidates. They should operate independently, must declare any conflict of interest, and their decisions should be impartial and based on evidence rather than on personal preference. Each member of the committee must confirm that they are cognizant of the [University of Rijeka Code of Ethics](#), especially the sections on conflicts of interest, and must sign a statement of lack of any conflict of interest. The evaluation committee must be objective, independent, and transparent in the evaluation of applications and the selection of candidates, guiding its work on the fundamental OTM-R criteria and principles.

In line with the requirements of the OTM-R checklist, the committee performing the selection and appointment process must apply the selection criteria that have been transparently included in the application and the call for applications. Guiding itself by the principle of merit, the committee shall primarily consider the applicant's record of academic and other professional achievements relevant to the position. These criteria typically include the candidate's research curriculum vitae, professional experience, and specific training related to the position, taking into account the applicant's academic knowledge and skills, skills and norms of academic and institutional behaviour, and personal qualities, knowledge, and skills. To foster a more thorough evaluation of a candidate's achievements and competencies, the University of Rijeka recommends the use of interviews or research talks whenever it is possible. The interviews may be conducted online or onsite.

If there are subsequently significant changes or delays to this process, all applicants should be duly and timely informed by e-mail. If interviews are used in the recruitment process, it is necessary to leave enough time so that all candidates can organize themselves and adequately prepare for the interview. Furthermore, all applicants should be informed about the tentative content of the upcoming interview, so that they know in advance what will be the content of the evaluation.

The University recommends that the candidate's level of achievement is not only evaluated quantitatively but that it is increasingly evaluated qualitatively by classifying achievements into basic, intermediate, advanced, and expert levels, whereby no candidate for the position is expected to fulfil all evaluation elements nor the same level of achievement in all evaluation elements. The selection committee should be involved in all stages of the evaluation of applications and selection, the outcome of which is to inform the candidates.

Appointment and the complaints mechanism

The final scores obtained by each candidate in the evaluation and appointment process will also be made available to the candidates in the internal repository of the University of Rijeka and will be delivered to the candidates themselves. By providing the candidates with information on the outcome of the recruitment process and the reasoning behind it, the University reinforces a selection based on merit, as well as transparency and fairness.

The University of Rijeka has a reliable and transparent complaint procedure in place for applicants who believe they have been treated unfairly or inappropriately. In accordance with the relevant institutional rules and national legislation, a candidate may complain to the competent body of the institution that decided on the appointment. All information necessary to file a complaint/objection, as well as the deadlines and any other formalities that need to be met must be publicly available in the application process. Again, this fosters transparency and fairness in the recruitment process. The competent body will objectively address all the complaints of the candidate.

4. Contact

The University of Rijeka recognizes the importance of continuous improvement and updating of its recruitment procedures and human resources strategy. For all questions, ambiguities, or suggestions related to the OTM-R policy of the University of Rijeka, please contact us at HRS4R@uniri.hr.

5. Bibliographical references

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