Open, Transparent and Merit based Recruitment of Researchers

OTM-R Policy by BCAM

Contents

0. Background

Aiming to strengthen the Basque Science and Technology System, BCAM was created in September 2008 by the Basque Government through Ikerbasque, the Basque Foundation for Science. The University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) and Innobasque (Basque Innovation Agency) joined BCAM as founding members and the Biscay Regional Government joined later as an institutional member. Petronor Innovacion S.L joined in 2017 as an industrial partner.

BCAM is part of the BERC (Basque Excellence Research Centres) network. Located in the Basque Country, it benefits from a long industrial tradition, and is linked with the French Atlantic corridor, a region of excellence tradition in Applied Mathematics, being the coordinator of the TRANSMATH UPV/EHU – U. Bourdeaux transborder joint research lab.

Mission

BCAM is a **world-class research centre on Applied Mathematics** created with the support of the Basque Government and the University of the Basque Country, which aims to strengthen the Basque science and technology system, by interdisciplinary research in the frontiers of mathematics, talented scientists' training and attraction, so the excellence of our results are recognized by the Society.

Vision

Focus on **interdisciplinary research** in the frontiers of mathematics, **attraction and training** of talented scientists, **development of new numerical and simulation methods**, interaction with industry, health and social institutions, and promotion of scientific and technological advances worldwide. BCAM aims to **generate synergies among different stakeholders** working on mathematical research so as to become the reference at a national and international level in Applied Mathematics.

Figure 1. BCAM mission and vision

Starting in 2008 with three Professors and one Research Line and, up to June 2021, with 125 Researchers (Professors, Post-doc fellows, PhD Students, Research Technicians), and a high number of visiting fellows and internships, supported by an administrative staff team (12 members), integrating people from more than 25 different countries. The Centre has accomplished a long and intense path, full of high-quality scientific activities and hard work, while keeping as a young centre where the average age of researchers is lower than 35.

Researchers, and especially young researchers, are the main assets of a knowledge-intensive center like BCAM. The **BCAM strategy for attracting and retaining talented researchers was established in 2008 and reflects the commitment to excellence, openness, flexibility, pan-European focus, ethical awareness and ethical and human values**. Ever its founding, BCAM is committed to using open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices concerning research positions.

1. Objective

The main goal of this document is to **define the OTM-R policy**, reviewing the recruitment procedure in line with the principles and requirements established by the European Commission on what an OTM-R system shall consist of. Below is the process that has been undertaken for the implementation of the OTM-R, the proper execution implies an important challenge, thus, it is relevant to mention the steps that have been followed in the elaboration of OTM-R policy.

01 Requirement to implement the OTM-R

02 Reviewing the current recruitment procedure

03 Identify and detect the improvements needed to comply with the principles defined in the OTM-R

04 Drawing up the OTM-R policy

In this regard, it is worth noting that open, transparent and merit-based recruitment **(OTM-R) guarantees recruitment of the best person for the job, ensures equal opportunities and access for all, makes it easier to develop an international portfolio and enhances the attractiveness of research careers**.

Moreover, OTM-R is a mainstay of the European Charter for Researcher and in particular of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, where a set of general principles and guidelines which specifies the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as of employers and/or funders of researchers are defined.

2. OTM-R Policy

Considering that researchers are the main assets of a knowledge-intensive centre, BCAM has been working on the definition of the most suitable policies to support researchers' work aligned with the European Human Resources Strategy for Researchers. The BCAM HR Strategy for attracting talented researchers is based on excellence, openness, flexibility, pan-European focus, ethical awareness and ethical and human values. In this sense, in 2016, BCAM received the HR Excellence in Research Award (HRS4R). This recognition by the European Commission identifies the universities and institutions that generate and support the existence of a stimulating and favourable environment for research work by adapting their human resources policies to the 40 principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

Additionally, in 2019, BCAM successfully passed its first Internal Review of the HR award, which measures the progress and quality of the actions carried out. One of the actions of the HR award, the Open Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R), has a direct impact in the recruitment of new researchers. The OTM-R, makes research careers more attractive, ensures equal opportunities for all candidates and facilitates mobility.

The OTM-R policy is formulated with the aim of dealing with the reality and particularities of the situation of staff researchers in a way that is coherent with the general approaches adopted for the scientific community. The elaboration of the OTM-R policy is transversal and really acts as an effective tool in conjunction with other human resource strategies.

During these last years, the selection process that has been followed, guarantees equal opportunities for all candidates, and always including the promotion of gender balance. All vacancies go through the following predefined process:

1. **Describing the job description:** To fulfil the requirements of the OTM-R and to ensure transparency and good practice in the phase of elaboration of the profile of the required vacancy, BCAM has a standardised template indicating the data that must be completed to publish a job offer. The template not only serves as a tool to ensure quality, control and transparency in the advertising process, but also minimises the administrative load for PIs and research groups.

   The required data for a completed job description is as follow:
   - Organisation and recruiting unit
   - Job tittle, specifications and estimated starting date
   - Required competencies
   - Selection criteria, including knowledge and professional experience
   - Number of available positions
   - Working conditions
   - Application procedure and deadline
   - Contact details

2. **Advertising the post:** The job offers are published on BCAM´s website and on different platforms that favour the dissemination of it, such as Euraxess, AMS or Ikerbasque. The whole recruitment processes up to assignment of

researchers to positions is run via BCAM portal and in fully transparent to avoid discriminating against candidates based on their geographical location.

3. **Screening phase:** After receiving the applications, the Evaluation Committee is responsible for evaluating and selecting the person who will become part of BCAM according to the defined evaluation process.

As a general rule, the Evaluation Committee considers different criteria for the evaluation, that consist on the relevant background of the applicant, qualifications and skills needed to effectively assess candidates. The specific evaluation criteria that will be used are included in the corresponding call.

The mentioned evaluation process meets the requirement defined by OTM-R, and to guarantee that the best person for the job is recruited, the selection process must always be conducted in line with the principles of merit, ability, transparency, openness, equal opportunity and non-discrimination.

4. **Interview phase:** After the evaluation of the candidates by means of the written material provided, the committee (at least two evaluators) will interview at least the three best evaluated candidates.

Moreover, this evaluation is always done without discrimination based on gender; nationality; ethnic or social background; disability; age; religion; sexual orientation; political opinions or their socioeconomic situation. Additionally, interruptions and variations in a researcher's career (such as career breaks, sabbaticals, maternity or paternity leave, etc.) will not be penalised, as they are considered to be a natural facet of a researcher's professional evolution and, consequently, represent valuable contributions to their professional development in multidisciplinary contexts.

After the interviews, the committee will elaborate an **Evaluation Report** containing:
- The name of at least three candidates.
- The rank of these candidates.
- The evaluation report template will be sent to the evaluators when the call closes.

The Evaluation Committee have 2 weeks to send the Evaluation Report to the Scientific Director, General Manager and Recruitment Team.

5. **Appointment phase:** All the candidates who took part in the interview phase will be contacted by e-mail to confirm the outcome of the recruitment process. Throughout the recruitment process, candidates are able to contact Recruitment Team (recruitment@bcamath.org) if they want to enquire about the status of the recruitment process. Moreover, BCAM has a solid and transparent complaints procedure in place for applicants who believe they have been treated unfairly or inappropriately.

6. **Contract proposal:** Once BCAM has a candidate for the position, the General Manager sends the offer in order to inform him/her of the conditions of the vacancy. This proposal includes the information about the position offered, conditions and starting date. Once the contract is signed, Recruitment Team request the necessary documentation/information to formalize the contract.

As the last step, BCAM is continuously seeking to increase its level of attractiveness. Hence, BCAM will revise and analyse the recruitment procedure yearly to improve the process and the quality of the same under principles and requirements defined in the OTM-R.