

BCAM OTM-R Policy

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1. General considerations

1.1. Background

BCAM -Basque Center for Applied Mathematics, is a research center of excellence that promotes research in applied mathematics through an interdisciplinary approach. Founded in 2008 by the Basque Government in collaboration with Ikerbasque, the center is located in the heart of Bilbao and was born with the aim of strengthening the Basque Science and Technology System. Since then, its network of alliances has expanded significantly, incorporating the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), Innobasque (Basque Innovation Agency), the Provincial Council of Bizkaia, Petronor Innovation, and the City Council of Bilbao. Currently, BCAM is part of the BERC (Basque Excellence Research Centers) network, which brings together the most outstanding research centers in the Basque Country.

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Since its beginnings, the Center has come a long and intense way, full of high-quality scientific activities and hard work, while remaining faithful to its principles. Researchers, and especially young researchers, are the main asset of a knowledge-intensive center like BCAM. BCAM's strategy to attract and retain talented researchers was established in 2008 and reflects a commitment to excellence, openness, flexibility, a pan-European approach, ethical awareness and ethical and human values. Since its founding, BCAM has been committed to using open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices for research positions.

1.2. Objective

The main goal of this document is to explain the BCAM's policy and methodology for the attraction, retention and motivation of talented researchers defining 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, the OTM-R is one of the pillars of the European Charter for Researchers and, in particular, of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, which defines a set of general principles and guidelines specifying the roles, responsibilities and rights of researchers, as well as of researchers' employers and/or funders, with which BCAM is fully aligned, ensuring:

- **Recruitment:** BCAM's hiring procedures are open, efficient, transparent, supportive, and internationally comparable with other analog institutions. Also, these procedures are always tailored to the type of positions advertised, adapting them to category, call or knowledge field.
- **Selection:** BCAM's selection committees are always adapted to the knowledge field, bringing in professionals that are aligned with the requirements of the call.

- **Transparency:** Candidates are always informed of the recruitment process and the selection criteria, and the career development prospects. This information is available in BCAM's job offers site and the communication with the Recruitment team is permanent.
- **Judging merit:** The selection process takes into consideration the whole range of experience of the candidates, judging merit always qualitatively as well as quantitatively.
- **Variations in the chronological order of CVs:** BCAM takes into consideration career breaks or variations in the chronological order of CVs, making sure that they are not penalized and evaluating them as potentially valuable contributions to the professional development of researchers, and therefore, to BCAM.
- **Recognition of mobility experience:** BCAM considers any kind of mobility experience, whether it is national or international, as a valuable contribution to the professional development of a candidate.
- **Recognition of qualifications:** BCAM makes sure to provide appropriate assessment and evaluation of academic and professional qualifications.
- **Seniority:** When filling a position, both the Recruitment team and the selection committee thoroughly check that the levels of qualifications required are in line with the needs of the position. Also, this evaluation is always focused on the achievements of the researcher.
- **Postdoctoral appointments:** BCAM established Clear rules and explicit guidelines for the recruitment and appointment of postdoctoral researchers.

1.3. Equality in the hiring Process.

On the one hand, BCAM is committed to guaranteeing equal access to employment for all potential candidates, implementing a human resources policy based on principles of equality, non-discrimination and respect for the dignity of employees.

This policy applies to the current staff, as well as to future job applicants, with no discrimination of any kind in their selection and hiring, whether for reasons of gender, race, religion, disability, marital status, age,

ideology, pregnancy, identity or place of residence, among others. This principle will inspire the entire HR policy in relation to recruitment, the receipt of CVs, the screening or selection of candidates, job interviews, the setting of schedules, and the establishment of the particular conditions to which the contract will be subject.

In this way, the selection process will be carried out following objective criteria of merit, experience, knowledge and ability, according to the characteristics and needs of each position offered. All candidates will have the same opportunities and the final hiring will be made according to the aptitude and adaptation of the employee to the position. The working conditions will be established without any type of discrimination, and there will be no discriminatory differences between employees and future recruits. Employees undertake to facilitate the incorporation and integration of new recruits into the workforce, helping as far as possible their adaptation and training and respecting in all cases the principle of equal access and non-discrimination mentioned above.

2.BCAM's selection and recruitment policy

Considering that researchers are the main assets of a knowledge-intensive center, 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 favorable environment for research work by adapting their human resources policies to the 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.

For this reason, the aim of this document is to explain the BCAM's policy and methodology for the attraction of talented researchers and, therefore, this guide sets out the procedure for the evaluation and selection of candidates in the BCAM selection process and contains the guidelines and evaluation criteria to be followed when scoring a selection process.

BCAM firmly believe that in order to ensure that we recruit the best candidate and therefore improve the effectiveness of our organization, our processes must be open, transparent, fair, efficient and of high quality.

BCAM has established that the following principles should govern all assessment processes for the Center:

- **TRANSPARENCY:** Information on the basic principles governing the proposal evaluation and selection process and the procedures followed for this purpose are available to applicants, evaluators and the general public.
- **EQUITY:** Proposals are evaluated solely on their merits in relation to the evaluation criteria explicitly defined for each phase of the process:
 - ✓ Academic background
 - ✓ Technical and professional competencies
 - ✓ Motivation
 - ✓ Skills and knowledge

All Proposals are treated equally and according to the same evaluation criteria, and are subject to an evaluation process carried out by independent expert evaluators, promoting non-discrimination on

grounds of race, colour, age, sex, marital status, ideology, political opinions, nationality, religion, sexual orientation or any other personal, physical or social condition among its professionals.

- **EFFICIENCY:** the process of evaluation of the Proposals is carried out with thoroughness and rigour in compliance with the stipulated procedures. Timeliness in meeting the established deadlines, all of which are known to the Project Managers, is of paramount importance. The system has been designed to allow evaluators sufficient time to carry out their scoring to a high standard.
- **QUALITY:** To ensure that evaluators perform their duties properly, with scientific excellence, competence and assessing the researcher's potential, they are appointed according to their area of expertise.
- **MERIT AND ABILITY:** applications will be assessed based on the principles of merit and ability. To this end, the best possible match between the candidate's profile and the profile of the position offered is sought through a combination of a detailed analysis of the CV and interviews, by means of which evidence is sought, proof of the candidate's competencies, as well as contrasting their previous professional experience.

The scope of the OTM-R policy at BCAM covers the recruitment procedures to incorporate the following profiles:

❖ **Early Stage Researchers (R1)**

- ✓ Professional category: PhD students.
- ✓ Requirements: bachelor's and master's degree studies; eligibility for PhD scholarships; motivation by a BCAM research field;

❖ **Experienced researchers (R2)**

- ✓ Professional category: Postdoctoral researchers.

- ✓ Requirements: PhD degree in an area related to the center's research programme; research interest aligned with the center's strategic objectives; qualitative evaluation carried by competent experts, support or letters of recommendation from previous employers or colleagues.

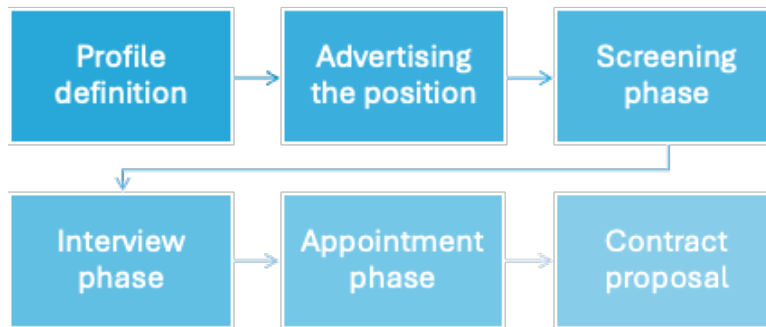
❖ **Established Researcher/Group Leaders (R3-R4)**

- ✓ Professional category: Senior Researchers.
- ✓ Requirements: proven research experience in an area related to the research programme of the center; research interest aligned with the strategic goals of the center; qualitative evaluation carried by competent experts, support or recommendation letters from previous employers or colleagues.

3. BCAM Recruitment Process

The OTM-R policy is formulated with the aim of dealing with the reality and particularities of the situation of 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:



3.1 Profile definition:

To fulfil the requirements of the OTM-R, BCAM has a standardized job profile which describes some aspects of the job, a template indicating the data that must be completed to publish a job offer. Prior to the publication of the job advertisement, the project office has analyzed the availability of funds to ensure that the position has the funds to ensure recruitment.

The required data for a completed job description is as follow:

- ✓ Organisation and recruiting unit.
- ✓ Job tittle, specifications and estimated starting date.
- ✓ Required and desirable skills.
- ✓ Selection criteria, including knowledge and professional experience.
- ✓ Number of available positions.
- ✓ Working conditions.
- ✓ Workpklace.
- ✓ Application procedure and deadline.
- ✓ Contact details.

In addition, in order to be more creative and eye-catching, we have considerably reduced the wording of the job offers, highlighting the most important points in order to make the publications more user-

friendly. We have agreed in the HR Strategy for Researchers committee on the structure of the offer and have added links to our website.

3.2 Advertising the position:

We have also analyzed the different publication sources we use and the network of job portals we use so that by segmenting the job offers, we can better reach the profiles we are looking for and position better our center in the network.

Job offers are published through the BCAM website: Join us, and on the EURAXESS website. To increase its visibility, to reach the maximum number of potential candidates, we also use other recruitment tools on different platforms that favor the dissemination, such as: AMS, Ikerbasque, Linkedin, Bizkaia Talent, specific websites of universities, EMS, SEMA, IAMP, SEIO, etc. among others. The entire recruitment processes up to the assignment of researchers to the positions is carried out through the BCAM portal and in a totally transparent way to avoid discrimination of candidates based on their geographical location.



Figure 3. Job advertising platforms

A number of benefits that we are currently offering to all our employees are posted on our website, such as flexible hours, relocation support for researchers and families or the possibility of free language training for those who will be employed by our Research Centre, among others. From the People Area we provide information and guidance on housing and rental apartments in the city,

support in finding schools for their children, as well as full assistance throughout the immigration process and administrative formalities.

The requested documents when a candidate sends us their application through our website are submission of their data (Personal details, the detailed CV, motivation letter/research interests and add at least two reference contacts to send us two recommendation letters (when needed), all in English. The candidate will receive a confirmation email. Regarding reference letters, the person who gave the reference will receive an email with instructions to upload their letters. Therefore, the administrative burden is kept to a minimum.

The required application documents are a CV, a letter of interest, two letters of recommendation (for the Research Technician position these are desirable and not mandatory) and a statement of past and proposed future research, as can be seen in the image below:

In resume, these are the files that will be available from each applicant:

Profile	Interest letter	CV	RM1	RM2	Research statement	Academic records
Research Technician (R1)	M	M	Op	Op	Op	Op
PhD Student (R2)	M	M	Op	Op	NR	M
Postdoc Fellow (R3)	M	M	M	M	M	NR
Senior Researcher (R4)	M	M	NR	NR	NR	NR

RM: Recommendation Letter

M: Mandatory

Op.: Optional

NR: Not required

3.3 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. The Evaluation Committee is constituted for each selection process. It will always be composed by a Principal

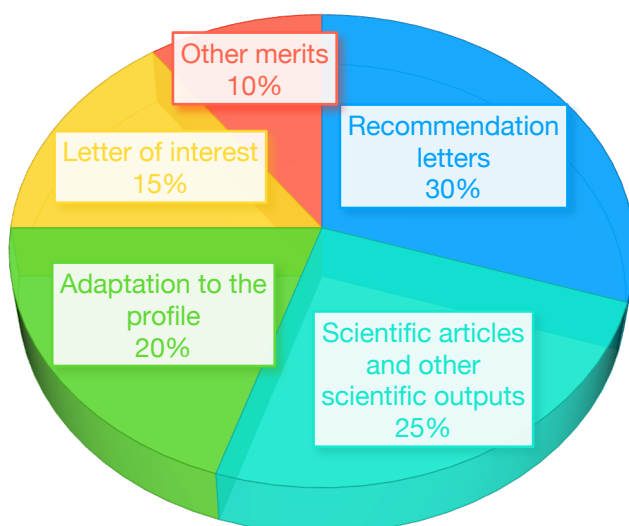
Investigator or Research line leader, and as second evaluator, which is assigned by the Scientific Director and the Center Manager, to a Research line leader or an experienced Researcher, with a deep experience in the area of knowledge and the required technical skills necessary for that profile.

In all the cases, the members of the Evaluation Committees are experts in the field, with broad professional experience and know-how, highly qualified, and able to speak different languages.

The Evaluation Committee considers different criteria for the evaluation:

Title of the evaluation criteria	Maximum points
Recommendation letters	30
Scientific articles and other scientific outputs	25
Adaptation to the profile	20
Letter of interest	15
Other merits	10
Total maximum points	100

EVALUATION CRITERIA



The criterion for the recruitment of researchers is based on their experience but also on their future potential. All the merits are judged qualitatively and quantitatively and during the interview the committee analyses without penalty their career path, career breaks and life-long professional development. In the same way the Evaluation Committee adequately explores the variations in the CV of the candidates during interviews.

The mentioned evaluation process meets the requirement defined by OTM-R. applications received, provided that they meet the requirements of each call. Only the candidates received by the website should be evaluated.

All the members of BCAM who are involved in our internal recruitment processes have experience in the evaluation and assessment of applications, both internal and external (for instance, evaluating for funding agencies). All of them have received specific training on HRS4R and OTM-R principles.

3.4 Interview phase

We always inform those candidates who have conducted an interview about the status of their candidacy. We have implemented a new recruitment tool that allows us to give instant feedback to the candidates about the state of the process and their application. All those candidates who are summoned to an interview have the possibility to take part through any online tool such as Skype or Microsoft Teams.

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. This evaluation is always done keeping the Gender Balance and the OTM-R, which ensures that the selection is made avoiding any conflict of interest. Likewise, The Recruitment Committee, once assigned, signs a document certifying that there is no conflict of interest.

After the interviews, the committee will close the Consensus Report containing:

- ✓ The final result of each candidate: evaluation, proposed to be hired, on reserve list, and proposed to be rejected.
- ✓ The candidate proposed to be hired.
- ✓ The candidate or candidates on reserve list
- ✓ The motivated reasons for choosing the candidate (it must be clear)
- ✓ The signatures of the evaluators.

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

The assessment of candidates' merits by the committee shall consider not only their training, experience, and research potential, but also their creativity and level of independence. Scientific trajectories shall be assessed comprehensively and beyond the number of publications and bibliometric indices, considering aspects such as teaching experience, supervisory tasks performed, experience in scientific transfer and management, or awareness-raising activities conducted. International mobility and multidisciplinary will be considered as positive values in a research career.

3.5 Appointment phase

All the candidates who took part in the selection process 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 if they want to enquire about:

- ✓ Technical problems with the platform
- ✓ The status of the recruitment process.
- ✓ Decision on selected candidates.
- ✓ Feedback on the process to all participants

All candidates who have applied for the process are informed about the steps of the process and their status. Once the recruitment process is closed, all candidates receive an email notification.

We have an email address in case applicants want to submit a complaint or suggestion and also for those who want us to remove their data from our database.

3.6 Formalisation of the Job Offer

Once BCAM has a candidate for the position, the General Manager sends the offer in order to inform them of the conditions of the vacancy. This job offer includes the information about the position published and evaluated, conditions and starting date.

Once the offer is signed, Recruitment Team inform them about the process that must be followed to prepare the required documents for the contract. For any candidate who is coming to live in Spain, they make the process to obtain the work permit for them and their direct family and give support to administrative tasks to settle in Bilbao.

3.7 Finalization of the Recruitment Process:

All records are kept at the web-based tool.

A quality check is performed right after the job position is completed.

4. Policy review process

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.

In this process the following bodies will participate directly:

- ✓ BCAM Recruitment
- ✓ HRS4R Working Group
- ✓ HR Logo Committee

5. Complaint channel

BCAM has a robust and transparent complaint procedure for applicants who feel they have been treated unfairly or inappropriately. This reporting channel is made available to informants who work in the private or public sector and who have obtained information about violations in a work or professional context, in the terms provided for in article 3 of Law 2/2023, of 20 February, regulating the protection of individuals who report regulatory violations and violations against corruption.

In addition, if they feel that their complaint has not been handled properly through the standard channels, they can submit a complaint to the center.