

Vall d' Hebron Institute of Research: Recruitment Policy

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Introduction

This Recruitment Policy serves as a baseline for best practice in the recruitment and selection of staff and to ensure that those involved in the recruitment process conduct it fairly, free from bias and discrimination.

This policy has been created in accordance with the principles of the "[Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers](#)" promoted by the European Commission under the "[Human Resource Strategy for Researchers](#)" (HRS4R) and specifically its Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers: [OTM-R, Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers](#). These principles, with which VHIR is formally committed, ensure that the selection processes are open and transparent, that the candidates are selected using objective and comparable criteria, taking into account meritocracy and respecting equal treatment and opportunities. This policy is also in line with current legislation relating to employment, equality, diversity, and data protection.

Vall d'Hebron Institute of Research embraces Equality and Diversity and we bind these values through our Equal Opportunity Plan. This plan ensures equal opportunity in recruitment, hiring, training, and management for all staff within the organization. Furthermore, it aims to strengthen the relationship between all staff, which represents the main asset of the institution.

We uphold to our motto "Today's research, tomorrow's health". In more than 20 years Vall d'Hebron Institute of Research has achieved leadership in biomedical research among hospitals in our country. We want the research of Vall d'Hebron to transform; creating an impact on both health and quality of life of patients and society, generating social and economic wealth in a responsible and sustainable way, and becoming a global benchmark for new health ecosystems. This success depends on our team. For this reason, it is among our main goals to recruit exceptional individuals to ensure this success and provide the best service to society.

Finally, this policy should be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure its content is regularly up to date and compliant with the law and best practices.

Scope

The recruitment and selection procedure, as well as the policy on which it is based, applies to all VHIR staff vacancies. The recruitment and selection of trainees is not considered in this document.

Additional criteria and procedures in the recruitment and selection process may be applied or may differ when hiring group leaders or other researchers, including PhD Students within specific institutional calls or other competitive calls, although the same HRS4R principles will be applied. Specific procedures will be developed in this sense.

Legal Context

VHIR is committed to fulfilling the legislative requirements to promote equality of opportunity and diversity within the Institution. Dignity and Respect for Labor Policy will apply at all phases of recruitment and selection. This policy has been written in accordance with and complies with current national labor law and the Public Employment Act.

In all recruitment and selection processes the following principles will be respected and fulfilled:

- *OTM-R Code, Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers*
- Spanish Constitution
- Statute of Public Worker Act Law
- Workers' Act
- Law of Science
- Law of transparency
- Law of Data Protection
- New Equality Law (Effective Equality Law for Women and Men. July 17, 2015).
- VHIR Institutional Collective Agreement

Failing to comply by the principles stated in this policy is considered as a serious violation and will result in the enforcement of strict disciplinary measures based on the Institutional Collective Agreement.

Responsibilities

All staff involved in the recruitment and selection process should follow the principles and instructions described in this policy.

Head of Units / PIs are responsible for ensuring candidates meet the requirements of the job position (representing the ideal profile) and participate in the approval of processes.

The Human Resource Directorate supervises recruitment and selection processes are implemented correctly.

The Human Resource Department encompasses a variety of roles in the recruitment and selection process. These include but are not limited to:

- Procedure execution
- Meet the legal requirements of each selection process
- Guarantee compliance with the principles of publicity, equal treatment and opportunities between men and women, merit and ability in the selection processes carried out at VHIR.

- Ensure that VHIR selection processes are in line with the principles and requirements of HRS4R.
- Participate in the selection process: Reviewing / editing and publication of job descriptions, curriculum screening, candidate presentation, conducting in-person interviews, preparation / review of evaluation reports.
- Elaborate and keep a record of up-to-date documentation of all the recruitment processes carried out at VHIR.
- Provide guidance to Head of Units/Pis during the entire recruitment and selection process.

Recruiting

Identifying the need

Every recruitment process originates from the need to fill an existing vacant position or create a new vacancy.

To start the process, the Head of Unit / PI should issue a written request via email to HR. The HR department will verify sufficient information is available on the job characteristics and the requirements that the candidate must fulfill. In this sense, it will be based on the existing Job Description, VHIR's scientific career path document, the general and specific competences (see "Interview Guide") and any additional information that the Head of Unit / PI facilitates. Also, the HR department will verify labor conditions are adequate according to legal standards and current institutional context. In addition, it will be recommended to use as a reference the description of professional positions and profiles in the field of Research established by the "[European Framework for Research Careers](#)."

Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee should be constituted at the beginning of the recruitment process and recorded on the *Pre-Selection Report* document. The Committee should consist of a minimum of three members, one of whom will be the *spokesperson* in the recruiting process and will serve as the Group's Director. This will usually have to be the Head of the Unit/Directorate or the PI who is hiring or the person delegated by the PI. The Committee composition must remain the same for consistency and should possess adequate training in assessing and selecting candidates.

The Evaluation Committee will have to be made up of experts from different disciplines, competences and abilities. Members will have no conflict of interest and will make decisions based on verifiable evidence and not personal preference. The members of the Committee should have a balanced gender representation.

All members of the Evaluation Committee must know the Recruitment and Selection Policy. The Group Director is responsible for ensuring that the other members qualify to be part of the Committee. In case of

doubt on the part of the Group Director, you can consult the Head of Professional Development before formalizing the group.

The Evaluation Committee may have internal or external specialist advisers if deemed necessary.

Job descriptions and Job adverts

Having a clear and previously agreed job description is essential for successful recruitment. The job description ensures the PI/Head of Unit and HR are aligned and aware of the ideal profile needed. Also, this document serves as reference to measure performance. Furthermore, it provides the candidate with an overview of the responsibilities and the minimum requirements needed. Any criteria must be free from indirect or direct discrimination.

The standard VHIR Job Advert template describes the overall description of the vacancy, including:

- The Unit / Research Group / PI linked to the recruitment process.
- Position offered, specifications and start date of the employment relationship.
- Knowledge and professional or academic experience "required" and "desirable" (where applicable).
- Number of vacant positions
- Working conditions: type of contract, duration, weekly hours and salary. The salary must always be expressed in gross annual figures.
- General information on the selection process (approximate start and closing dates).
- Contact details: The candidates can apply from the VHIR website to the different job offers following the instructions described in the job advert. As a rule, CVs or documents including personal data in paper format will not be accepted.

Advertising

All vacancies will be published through the institutional website and depending on the profiles needed, vacancies may be also published on additional employment portals, specialized websites in the biomedical field and other relevant specialized fields. In addition, following the recommendations of the HRS4R, they will be published on the European portal, [EURAXESS](#).

Integrated into the institutional website, the organization has a secured Applicant Tracking System. This platform allows a structured and trackable system to monitor all recruitment processes. By default, all offers will be published for a minimum of 15 days, to ensure equal access is provided to all candidates. Furthermore, regulations of any employment portals will be adopted, as long as they meet the previously described principles.

All offers must include VHIR's commitment statement to the principles of the *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and Equality & Diversity principles established in the institution*.

Pre-Selection

Curriculum & First Contact Screening

The Professional Development Unit is responsible of the *Curriculum Screening* for the Structure Staff. However, given the high degree of specialization of scientific positions the PI in charge is responsible for this phase in the selection process for the Researcher Staff. In any case, the Evaluation Committee is responsible for the skills assessment and in-person/virtual interview phase.

In order to be able to pre-select the CVs, the Evaluation Committee will carry out the screening of the potential candidates. This is done based on the elimination requirements described in the *job advert* and the criteria set out in the *Pre-Selection Report*. This report will be completed by the PI/Head of Unit and it will list the required and desirable criteria with its respective scores. Also, it will be taken into account any criteria that can supplement, and/or add value or knowledge to the vacancy. Likewise, recognition of mobility, academic qualifications, decriminalization of chronological gaps, over qualification and postdoctoral accreditation should be taken into account (together with the rest of the principles established in the [OTM-R and HRS4R](#)).

Once a list of potential pre-selected profiles is defined, a first interview is conducted to verify the adequacy of each candidate and thus optimize the overall selection process. Once this first screening is completed, it is suggested to select a minimum of 3 and up to 6 (ideally) candidates pre-selected for the next phase. These candidates will be contacted to set up for an interview (face-to-face or video conference), taking into account the availability of the Evaluation Committee and the interested party. All other candidates will be notified of their status in the recruitment process.

Selection

Interviewing

This phase will allow the Evaluation Committee to both expand on the information of the vacancy and to deepen the knowledge of the candidate's training and experience, as well as to obtain information on aptitudes, capacities and abilities.

To ensure that the interviews are conducted using the appropriate methodology and lack any type of bias, the *Interview Guidelines* document should be used. Prior to virtual/face-to-face interviews, the Evaluation Committee will meet and review the candidate's profile and agree on the format and questions to ask during the interview (i.e. fit-to-role, competency-based, behavioral questions) and who in the Evaluation Committee will conduct each type of question.

During the virtual/face-to-face interviews, the Evaluation Committee should use the *Pre-Selection Report* document, which contains the criteria, required and desirable, for the position. In this document a final score is given to each candidate to measure fit to role and fit to institution based on the criteria already defined. The final feedback and evaluation of all candidates interviewed will be summarized here and properly stored for future reference.

Psychometric tests may be assigned before or after conducting face-to-face interviews to complement the final decision, but they won't be in any case the sole reason to discard a candidate.

In cases where proximity or mobility may prevent the face-to-face interview with the Evaluation Committee, video conferencing may be used.

Hiring decisions should be a result of a unanimous choice of the Evaluation Committee and always based on the Open, Transparent, Merit-based principles. Should the PIs decide to carry out the recruitment process independently, the Professional Development Unit will remain available to support in any of the recruitment and selection phases described.

In the event that the selection process is not resolved due to the lack of sufficient or adequate candidates, the position will be declared deserted and a new selection process can start again.

Open, Transparent, Merit-Based Recruitment

In compliance with the recommendations of the Open, Transparent, Merit-Based Recruitment Code all hiring will be made strictly on merit and suitability to the requirements of the job.

VHIR tracks and manages all recruitment processes through a secured Applicant Tracking System linked through the institutional website. This platform is open and accessible to all public and it provides detailed and transparent information about the vacancy. It also allows candidates to include any information to place themselves in the job offer while complying with GDPR regulation.

All candidates will be considered for the job without restrictions on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, disability, political opinion, social or economic status or any other type.

All interviews will follow the same methodology. All candidates will be asked a minimum set of standard questions and additional questions agreed by the Evaluation Committee, to avoid any bias.

In compliance with the transparency code, candidates must be informed about the status of the selection process, criteria, number of vacancies and professional development plan throughout the entire recruitment process and are entitled to request feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of their applications.

When selecting a finalist, the Evaluation Committee will use the *Pre-Selection Report* (including: interview feedbacks, the Evaluation Committee's comments, candidate scoring by selection criteria and final score) to evaluate the candidates interviewed, ultimately ensuring a fair and merit-based assessment across all candidates. In line with the *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*, judging merit will be based on previous and current experience, interview performance, motivation, and suitability to role.

Closing

Job Offer

All employment offers will be notified via phone call, when possible, followed by a written confirmation. The job offer should detail: the job title, team unit, responsibilities, and contractual terms. The new hire will be asked to confirm reception of the offer and send a provisional job acceptance. Upon acceptance of the job offer, a series of documentation from the new hire necessary to start the employment process will be requested. The new employee will be assigned to an HR technician who will manage the employment relation from that moment onward. All documentation related to the recruitment, selection and hiring process, will be kept confidential, securely stored, and retained for a minimum period of six months.

Any job offer will always be conditional on the validity of qualifications, references, identity and any other relevant checks. In case of knowingly withhold of information or false information given, the offer may be withdrawn or employment terminated. Before a final decision is made, HR should contact the individual to discuss any concerns raised.

Recruitment Analysis

Ideally, every 6-12 months Human Resources (in collaboration with PI/Head of Unit, when applicable) will evaluate the recruitment and selection process used and its effectiveness in selecting the right candidate.

The analysis should include a review of the following:

- Job Title and Job Description relevance and prevalence in the job market;
- Success of sources used to advertise;
- Effectiveness of interviewing methodology: format, scoring, and execution;
- Selection criteria & OTM-R adequate implementation.

References and Background Check

References represent a way of verifying the veracity of an individual's qualifications and track record. These can be checked by email or a phone call. References information and contact is available on the ATS application form completed by the candidate.

Ideally, background checks are verified with the most recent employer and/or with the last 2 years of employment. If this is not possible, employment checks will be done with at least two separate employers. References, ideally, will include a company stamp or letterhead together with the dates and job title held by the candidate in consideration.

Furthermore, it should be possible to demonstrate academic qualification during the screening call and once the candidate is selected all documents accrediting these qualifications should be requested and filled in the new hire's records.

If qualifications or minimum requirements cannot be proven or verified, the candidate might be disqualified and therefore discarded from the recruitment process.

Complaints Management

For any issues or complaints related to recruitment and/or selection, candidates are entitled to submit their concerns to the institution. The issues or complaint should be in writing and directed to the Head of

Professional Development within three months of the closing date of the offer. She/he will study the complaint and report it, with recommendations, to the Director of Human Resources, who will decide what action to take and will notify the person who made the complaint.

Complaints related to any other topic addressed to the institution, can be communicated through several channels available to the public: telephone, specific email address (atenciousuari@vhir.org), paper format, institutional website under “Help us to improve our service”.

Depending on the complaint topic, the communication will be referred to the appropriate responsible and keeping the Quality Department on the loop to ensure the issue is handled according to the respective principles. The detailed procedure can be found in the “Client Complaint Management Process” (VHIR-Q-PGR-006) official document.

Related Topics

Conflict of Interest

According to the institutional Conflict of Interest Policy, hiring family members, is only allowed when he/she joins a team unit different from the one the related VHIR staff works in. Meaning, two people that are related, up to second degree of consanguinity, cannot work within the same team unit. However, it is permitted to hire immediate family under any type of labor contract different from an indefinite one, as long as the two relatives do not work within the same team unit.

When hiring relatives or immediate family members, this requests should always be communicated first to the Labor Relation Unit (RRLI).

Furthermore, all staff involved in the recruitment and selection process should avoid participating in the recruitment and hiring decisions made on immediate family. This also includes being a member of the Evaluation Committee.

Partner Mobility and Insertion

Vall d'Hebron Institute of Research offers support in topics related to relocation and insertion to society to spouses or partners of its staff. This support may be given for insertion to the labor market, how to live in Barcelona, among others. All VHIR staff is free to request this type of assistance. This request should be directed to HR who will handle the process.