Internal OTM-R recruitment guide

Research staff and research support technical staff funded by projects, Article 60 LOSU contracts and agreements

This guide brings together in a single document the open, transparent and merit-based recruitment procedures and practices that the University of León applies to the selection of research staff and research support technical staff when the call is not governed by regulations of its own. It is addressed both to those who take part in the procedure and to those who apply.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK UNIVERSITY OF LEÓN — HRS4R

The University of León holds the HR Excellence in Research award. The principles set out here develop the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, and the University's HRS4R strategy.

Unofficial translation

This is an unofficial translation of the Spanish guide, which prevails in the event of any discrepancy. The forms, calls and decisions of the procedure are issued in Spanish, with an English version where the guide so provides.

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1. Purpose and scope

This guide sets out the open, transparent and merit-based recruitment procedures and practices — OTM-R — that the University of León applies to the recruitment of research staff and of technical staff supporting research.

Positions covered

Positions of research and technical staff funded by research projects, contracts and agreements under Article 60 of the Spanish University System Act, and any other position whose call is not governed by regulations or terms of its own.

Positions not covered

Positions whose selection has specific regulations fall outside this guide: competitions for academic staff, selection processes for technical, management and administrative staff, and predoctoral and postdoctoral fellowships under national or regional programmes, which are governed by the terms of their own calls. In all those cases the principles in section 2 apply, but the procedure is the one laid down by the relevant rules.

2. Principles governing selection

Every selection process within the scope of this guide is governed by the following principles, which the later sections put into practice.

- **Publicity.** Every position is advertised publicly, with sufficient notice and through an accessible medium, before the application period opens.
- **Transparency.** The call states in advance the requirements, the duties, the working conditions, the salary, the assessment scale to be applied and the composition of the Committee.
- **Merit and ability.** Selection is decided by comparing evidenced merits against a published assessment scale, and on no other consideration.
- **Equal treatment.** Applications are assessed without distinction as to gender, origin, age, disability or any other personal or social circumstance.
- **Impartiality.** Anyone with an interest that might compromise their objectivity withdraws from the assessment.
- **Proportionality.** Only the documents needed to evidence the requirements and the merits being assessed are requested.
- **Reasoned decisions.** Every exclusion, every score and every decision is reasoned in writing and made available to those concerned.
- **Right to be heard.** Applicants may object to the list of admitted and excluded applicants and to the award proposal before the procedure is closed.

> **From principles to practice**
>
> These principles are not left as a statement: each one becomes a step of the procedure that leaves a documentary record. Section 5 describes that path and section 17 lists the documents it produces.

3. Legal framework

In addition to the general rules on public employment and labour contracts, the procedure rests on:

- Organic Act 2/2023 on the University System, in particular Article 60, on the recruitment of staff for projects, contracts and agreements.
- Act 14/2011 on Science, Technology and Innovation, and its contractual arrangements for research staff.

- The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, and the University of León's HRS4R strategy.
- Act 39/2015 on Common Administrative Procedure and Act 40/2015 on the Legal Regime of the Public Sector, as regards time limits, notifications, abstention and challenge, and appeals.
- Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and Organic Act 3/2018, on personal data protection.
- The Statutes of the University of León and the decisions of its governing bodies on research and on equality.

4. Who takes part and what they answer for

The procedure divides responsibilities so that whoever proposes a position does not publish it, and whoever assesses does not decide.

Principal investigator

Proposes the position and defines the profile, the required qualification and the conditions. Sits on the Committee as Member 1 and leads the scoring. Does not decide on publication and does not issue the award decision.

Research Management Service

Reviews each proposal before it can be advertised: checks that the funding is correct, that the category matches the duties and that the profile is drafted with the necessary precision. It may return the proposal with reasons. It also acts as Secretary of the committees and handles dissemination on external portals.

Managing unit

Sets the final conditions in line with the salary tables in force, issues and processes the call, sends the file to the Committee, issues the minutes and the award proposal, prepares the decision and notifies the outcome to each applicant.

Selection Committee

Decides on admission and exclusion, settles objections, assesses merits against the scale and formulates the award proposal. Its composition and duties are set out in section 8.

Vice-Rectorate for Research and Knowledge Transfer

Chairs the committees, signs the documents of the procedure and issues the award decision, by delegation from the Rectorate.

5. The procedure, step by step

The whole process is handled through an online channel that records who did what and when, and which produces the documents of the file.

5.1 Proposing the position

The principal investigator submits the proposal on form 17.1, stating the contract, agreement or project funding the position and its budget reference, the category, the place of work, the proposed salary, the working hours and the schedule. They also draft three texts that pass verbatim into the annex to the call: the profile with the specific duties, the required qualification and the specific conditions.

They may propose a minimum score below which the position may be declared vacant, and must state whether the vacancy is also to be advertised on the Euraxess portal.

5.2 Prior review

The Research Management Service reviews the proposal and either approves it or returns it with reasons, which are communicated to the proposer. No position may be advertised without this review.

5.3 Call and publicity

The managing unit sets the final salary in line with the tables in force and the dates of the application period, and issues the call, which is published on the institutional website. The call states the requirements, the duties, the working conditions and the salary, the composition of the Committee, the applicable assessment scale and how to apply.

The application period is ten working days counted from the day after publication.

5.4 Submission of applications

Applications are submitted through the online form linked in the call itself, with no need for a digital certificate. Each submission generates a file number and a receipt listing the documents provided. While the period remains open a new application may be submitted, replacing the previous one.

5.5 Admission and exclusion

Once the period has closed, the file is sent to the Committee, which examines each application and decides on its admission. Exclusions are reasoned by reference to a closed list of grounds, which are published next to the name.

The provisional list is published and opens a five working day period for objections. Each excluded applicant receives an individual notice stating the ground and how to object. Once all objections have been settled with reasons, the final list is published.

5.6 Scoring

Before scoring, the Committee agrees whether an interview or test will be held and whether contributions unrelated to the duties will be assessed at a reduced value. Both decisions are recorded in the minutes.

Assessment is carried out against the published scale, section by section, and every score must be accompanied by an explanation of the fact that justifies it. Scoring is a matter for the Committee as a body; the principal investigator leads it.

5.7 Minutes, proposal and decision

The managing unit issues the minutes, recording the prior decisions, the scores and their reasons, and those attending the meeting. It then publishes the award proposal, with the applicant proposed, the reserves and the detailed scores of all admitted applicants. This publication opens a second period of five working days for objections.

Once these are settled, the Vice-Rectorate issues the award decision, stating the appeals available, and each applicant receives an individual notice of their situation and their score by section.

6. Publicity and dissemination of vacancies

The call is published on the institutional website before the application period opens, and remains accessible throughout the procedure together with the lists, the minutes, the proposal and the decision.

Where the proposal so states, the vacancy is also advertised on Euraxess, the European portal for researchers. Dissemination is the responsibility of the Research Management Service and must reproduce the same details and the same deadline as the published call.

> **Recommended practice**
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> Any research position of appreciable duration with European or national funding should be advertised on Euraxess. That is the practice the European Commission expects of an institution holding the HR Excellence in Research award.

7. Requirements, merits and assessment scales

The eligibility requirements are those laid down in the call, and must be met by the end of the application period. They must be strictly those needed to perform the duties: an unnecessary requirement restricts competition without justification.

Assessment is carried out under one of the two institutional scales, according to the category of the position:

- **Assessment scale for researchers (Group I).** One hundred points: seventy for merits — training, publications, projects, mobility and other merits — and thirty for the presentation and interview.
- **Unified scale for technical support staff (Groups I and III).** One hundred points: eighty for merits — academic and specific training, experience, specific merits and languages — and twenty for the interview or test.

If the Committee decides not to hold the interview, the merit score is rescaled so that the maximum remains one hundred, and the decision is recorded in the minutes.

> **Only what is claimed and evidenced is assessed**
>
> The Committee scores only the merits claimed in the application and evidenced by the documents submitted in time. A genuine merit that is not evidenced is not assessed, and the application form says so.

8. The Selection Committee

8.1 Composition and gender balance

A Committee is set up for each position advertised, made up of the Chair, which falls to the Vice-Rectorate for Research and Knowledge Transfer or a person appointed by it; three members, namely the principal investigator, the head of the department, institute or service to which they belong, and the head of another department with staff attached to the same faculty or school; and the Secretary, a civil servant of the Human Resources Service, with the right to speak but not to vote.

The composition respects gender parity through the balanced representation of women and men, wherever possible. Where this is not possible, the circumstance should be recorded.

8.2 Conflict of interest, abstention and challenge

Before examining the applications, each member of the Committee signs the declaration of absence of conflict of interest approved by the University, which is added to the file.

Anyone falling within one of the grounds for abstention laid down in Act 40/2015 must report it and withdraw from the procedure; their alternate takes their place. Applicants may bring a challenge on the same grounds.

Common grounds in this field are family relationship, supervision of a thesis or co-supervision of recent work, sustained co-authorship of publications, a relationship of service or dependence, and any personal interest in the outcome.

> **Why it matters so much**
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> Impartiality is, together with the publication of the assessment scale, what makes an award defensible. An abstention in good time costs an email; a challenge upheld afterwards may force the whole procedure to be repeated.

9. Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

The University guarantees equal opportunities in employment to all its staff and to applicants, without distinction as to gender, race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability or genetic characteristics. The statement appears in the application form itself.

In practice this means three things. The profile is drafted in neutral terms and describes duties, not personal traits. Career breaks owing to maternity, paternity, care of dependants or illness are not assessed negatively, and the Committee may take them into account when weighing output. And any applicant with a disability may request the adjustments they need in order to take part in the interview or test.

10. Languages and international applicants

The application form is available in Spanish and English. The language chosen when applying determines the language in which the applicant will receive the documents of the procedure and the individual notices.

The lists of admitted and excluded applicants, the award proposal and the decision are published in a bilingual version where applications have been submitted in English. In the event of any discrepancy, the Spanish version prevails.

Foreign qualifications require official recognition or a declaration of equivalence on the terms laid down in the call.

11. Information for applicants

Applicants receive, without having to ask:

- The receipt for their application, with a file number and a list of documents.
- Notice of their situation in the provisional list and, if excluded, the ground and the means to object.
- A final notice with their score broken down by section and their position in the resulting order.

In addition, the lists, the minutes, the proposal and the decision are public, so that any applicant can see the scores of all admitted applicants and the reasons for each of them.

12. Time limits and how they are counted

Time limits are counted in working days, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, in accordance with Act 39/2015. The applicable calendar is the national one, that of Castilla y León and the local one for León, together with any non-teaching days approved by the University.

- Submission of applications: ten working days from the day after publication.
- Objections to the provisional list: five working days.
- Objections to the award proposal: five working days.

The online form stops accepting submissions at the closing time, without exception. Anyone wishing to submit documents by another route may do so through the Electronic Register within the same period.

13. Personal data protection

The data collected is processed by the University of León as data controller, for the purpose of managing participation in the selection process, verifying the requirements and merits claimed and, where applicable, formalising the contract.

Full information is given in the application form itself, which obtains express consent. Files are kept for as long as is needed to complete the procedure and deal with objections or appeals, and thereafter in accordance with the University's records management rules.

Access to the documents of the applications is limited to those taking part in the procedure. Individual notices contain only the data of their addressee.

14. Traceability, filing and retention

Every step of the procedure is recorded with its author and date: the proposal and its review, the issue of the call, each application submitted, the admission decisions, the objections and how they were settled, each score with its reasons and who entered it, and the documents produced.

The documents of each position are kept in a file of their own, with the material submitted by each applicant arranged by section and the documents of the procedure in a specific folder.

> **What it is for**
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> Traceability is not a bureaucratic requirement: it is what makes it possible to answer an objection, an audit by the funding

body or an external assessment of the HR Excellence in Research award with records rather than recollections.

15. Objections and appeals

Within the procedure, applicants have two opportunities to object: against the provisional list of admitted and excluded applicants, and against the award proposal. Both are settled with reasons and the outcome is published.

The award decision may be appealed as stated in the decision itself, on the terms and within the time limits of Act 39/2015.

Independently of the above, anyone may write to the Vice-Rectorate for Research and Knowledge Transfer to ask for clarification on how the assessment scale was applied to their application.

16. Monitoring and continuous improvement

The Vice-Rectorate periodically reviews how the procedure and this guide are working. Useful indicators include the number of positions advertised and of applications per position, the proportion of vacancies advertised on Euraxess, the gender distribution of applicants, committees and successful candidates, the number of objections and their outcome, and the average time between publication and decision.

Suggestions for improvement may be sent to the Vice-Rectorate and will be considered when this guide is revised and in the periodic assessment of the HRS4R strategy.

17. Documents and forms of the procedure

The procedure produces and uses the following documents.

Document	Produced by	Where it is kept
Proposal for a call (form 17.1)	Principal investigator	File of the position
Call and its annex of positions	Managing unit	Institutional website
Application for admission (form 17.3)	Applicant	File of the position
Declaration of absence of conflict of interest	Committee members	File of the position
Provisional list of admitted and excluded applicants	Selection Committee	Institutional website
Objections and how they were settled	Applicant / Committee	File of the position
Final list of admitted and excluded applicants	Selection Committee	Institutional website
Minutes of the Committee	Managing unit	Institutional website
Award proposal	Managing unit	Institutional website
Award decision	Vice-Rectorate	Institutional website
Individual notices	Managing unit	Email to each applicant

This guide will be reviewed at least on the occasion of each assessment of the HRS4R strategy. Proposals for amendment may be sent to **vice.investigacion@unileon.es**.