

## **UCLL RECRUITMENT & SELECTION POLICY (OTM-R POLICY)**

### **Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)**

In October 2024, UC Leuven Limburg (UCLL) adopted a policy for an Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) process for researchers, in line with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The policy, which came into effect on October 15, 2024, aims to attract and retain highly qualified researchers by ensuring fair recruitment practices.

UCLL strives to be an innovative workplace where researchers can develop their full potential and build high-quality careers. This is the common foundation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) action plan. In 2024, the document 'Letter of Commitment for Researchers at UCLL' was signed by the HR Director and the Head of the Research & Expertise (R&E) department of UCLL, in line with the European Commission's Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for Recruitment.

### **Why are we doing this**

UCLL is among Belgium's most research-intensive universities of applied sciences, which has been acknowledged by the NVAO accreditation committee in spring 2024. One of the strategic priorities focuses on expanding and professionalizing research by creating a supportive research environment, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, engaging with regional businesses and citizens, enhancing its European research positioning, integrating teaching and research, and focusing on people and society in research inquiries.

Positioning highly qualified researchers who contribute to both research and teaching is a priority. International visibility and connectivity are vital. UCLL aims to be an inspiring source of knowledge transfer, contributing to an inclusive and progressive society. Central to all activities is a focus on people, valuing individual personalities, and promoting inclusion and diversity. UCLL fosters a culture of dialogue across disciplines and generations, promoting curiosity, creativity, and resourcefulness.

The policy's outlines aim to provide procedures for recruiting academic staff within Research, covering all employment contracts. It emphasizes adherence to the European Charter for Researchers, aiming to provide an excellent research environment and attract outstanding academics across career levels.

### **How do we ensure an Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment process**

UCLL strives for excellence in its HR processes, which includes the complete process of recruitment and selection. UCLL adopts an applicant-centred, inclusive, fair and high-quality approach, with the ultimate goal of selecting the best person for the job.

### *Definition of Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment:*

*The policy defines OTM-R recruitment based on criteria set by the European Research Area's Working Group of the Steering Group of Human Resources Management. Key elements include 1. clear and transparent selection procedures, 2. job advertisements, 3. consistency of qualifications with job requirements, 4. anti-discrimination measures, 5. minimal administrative burden for applicants, and 6. language policies sensitive to diversity.*

### Recruitment phase

Recruitment is conducted transparently and based on merit and documented through structured procedures. The OTM-R policy enhances these procedures by integrating internationalization strategies and ensuring equal opportunities.

Job advertisements are based on detailed job profiles, which outline necessary qualifications and competencies based on the Moving Minds DNA. These profiles form the basis for transparent recruitment, ensuring consistency with academic, social, and methodological competencies. UCLL uses standardized templates for job ads, emphasizing benefits, working conditions, and career development opportunities. Via CV Warehouse, vacancies are advertised on multiple channels to ensure broad reach and diversity in applications. UCLL aims to attract a large number of candidates and is committed to reach under-represented groups. Therefore, vacancies within research will be widely advertised in the future to an international audience. The aim is to publish all vacancies for researchers in English by assessing for each vacancy whether knowledge of Dutch is a strict (and immediate) requirement. Only if that is the case, a limited publication in Dutch is exceptionally allowed.

### Selection and evaluation phase

Selection committees manage recruitment transparently, ensuring adherence to legal requirements and focusing on the principles of merit. The university of applied sciences also promotes gender equality and diversity throughout its recruitment process: the committees, which include representatives for women's affairs, gender equality, and persons with disabilities, aim for equal gender representation. UCLL works with selection committees with a balanced and diverse composition (with regard to gender, background, domain of expertise, position level and other aspects), customized to the specific job vacancy. The recruitment process involves pre-selection based on transparent criteria, interviews, and additional selection methods if necessary. The goal is to select the most suitable candidate, ensuring fair and objective evaluation.

The use of an online application form, in which the fields for attachments and documents are set, ensures that every applicant will go through the same application procedure. In this way, we attempt to limit the administrative burden on applicants.

The different steps in the selection procedure are determined in a manner tailored to the vacancy specific and relevant selection criteria, using valid and reliable selection tools. Every applicant will go through the same selection procedure, but we are flexible in making reasonable adjustments, linked to specific job requirements.

As UCLL attaches a lot of importance to its Moving Minds values, additional standard job templates will be developed that can be used by the members of the selection committee as a basis, but which can be finetuned and completed depending on the specific job requirements. While we prioritize a competency-based approach, we also consider the potential of applicants.

UCLL provides training for the hiring managers on effective recruitment and selection practices as well as to mitigate bias. The multiple-eyes principle ensures that two independent perspectives are involved throughout the entire recruitment and selection process, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of each candidate's suitability by multiple individuals.

The selection committees are supported to conduct a (semi-)structured interview for which guidelines are available.

We consider it important to create a safe application context that allows space for two-way communication, so that applicants can also make a well-informed and well-founded choice for the UCLL.

### Appointment Phase

The higher education codex stipulates that an appointment must be justified. Within UCLL, we strive for equal treatment of all employees and this framework also serves to facilitate recruitment for research staff to be motivated.

The members of the selection committee are expected to base their decisions on their independent and objective observations, after which they discuss each applicant regarding their suitability for the proposed position. Once a candidate is selected, legal and procedural requirements for formal appointments are followed. This includes obtaining necessary approval from relevant committees, meaning all involved members of the selection committee for non-managerial jobs and additionally the approval of the executive team for managerial jobs within Research & Expertise. The appointment process ensures that all steps are legally compliant and transparent.

The organization is committed to timely and accurate communication with all applicants throughout the recruitment and selection process. Once a decision has been made regarding an applicant, whether at the conclusion of the entire selection procedure or at an earlier stage, it is communicated as soon as possible. The selection committee gives the applicant the opportunity to obtain constructive, development-oriented feedback on their application. Applicants that didn't pass the letter selection will receive a written answer with the possibility to request more detailed feedback. All candidates that had an interview will receive standard personal and verbal feedback on their application.

### Quality Assurance

Human Resources Management oversees recruitment processes, ensuring compliance with legal regulations and coordinating recruitment. Regular training for involved members guarantees the quality of the selection procedures. Recruitment processes are documented, regularly reviewed, and updated within UCLL's quality management system and accessible via the intranet. The OTM-R policy is also published on the University's website, providing guidance and transparency for internal and external stakeholders.

We plan to monitor certain data in this context, such as the total number of applicants, applicants from abroad, advertisements on Euraxess, ...

### **Literature and entry into force**

The policy draws on the 2024 report of the Working Group of the Steering Group of Human Resources Management under the European Research Area on OTM-R. It officially came into force on 15/10/2024 reinforcing UCLL's commitment to fair and effective recruitment of researchers.