

CRG Recruitment Policy

For Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers

Centre for Genomic Regulation

HR policy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background & Purpose

Effective recruitment and selection is central and crucial for the success of the Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG) and their staff. It depends on finding people with the necessary skills, expertise and qualifications to deliver the Institute's strategic objectives and the ability to make a positive contribution to the values and aims of the institute.

This Recruitment Policy is designed for the institute to aim to apply standards of best practice in the recruitment and selection of staff and that those involved in the recruitment process operate in a fair, open and equitable manner, free from bias and discrimination

This policy sets out the criteria and procedures for Open, Transparent and Merit based recruitment of staff, which as a top priority of the European Research Area (ERA), is one of the pillars of the European Charter for Researchers and in particular of the Code of Conduct for the recruitment of Researchers. This also takes account of current legislation relating to employment, equality and diversity, and data protection.

Directly linked to the *Recruitment Policy* is the *Research Career Policy for research staff*, approved by the Board of Trustees. The *CRG Research Career Policy* does not contemplate tenure track and establishes a maximum stay of 9 years at the institute for junior Group Leaders (with an initial contract of 5 years that is extensible to further 4 years after positive evaluation by the Scientific Advisory Board-SAB) and 5 years for postdocs and PhD students. Senior scientists and heads of Core Facilities have a rolling tenure contract and are evaluated by the Scientific Advisory Board-SAB, an ad hoc committee every 4 years. More information about the definition of the Research categories can be found in the *CRG Research Career Policy*.

CRG is committed to Equality and Diversity and implements an action plan with the objective to improve them through its Gender Equality Plan. In order to achieve this, awareness is also raised as part of this Policy. Therefore, the Selection Committees as well as Human Resources Department should be aware of the percentage of females throughout each recruitment process. The main stages to monitor are applications received, shortlisted, interviewed, offered, and hired. More details can be found in the *Libra Recruitment Handbook*.

1.2 Principles

The *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*¹ consists of a set of general principles and requirements, to be followed by all employees when recruiting staff. These are the following:

- Transparency
- Judging merit
- Variations in the chronological order of CV's
- Recognition of mobility experience
- Recognition of qualifications
- Seniority

1.3 Scope

This policy applies to the recruitment and selection of all staff within the CRG including permanent staff, staff on fixed term or temporary contracts. This excludes interns and collaborators.

Additional criteria and procedures in the Recruitment and Selection process may be applied or may differ when hiring Group Leaders, Heads of Core Facilities, postdocs within *COFUND* calls or other competitive calls and PhD Students, as they are being recruited within the CRG-wide PhD call.

¹ A detailed description of the principles and requirements can be found through the following link; [The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers](#)

1.4 Responsibilities

- Hiring Managers² are responsible for employing the best available people to fill vacancies. Recruiting and selecting staff should be done in accordance with the principles outlined in this document.
- The Human Resource Department is responsible for providing advice to Hiring Managers on good practice in recruitment and selection methods, and for monitoring the implementation of this procedure. The Human Resources Department will monitor the selection and appointment of staff and all documentation in accordance with the *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers* and the *Open Transparent and Merit-based* policy.
- Guidance on the Recruitment and Selection process is provided by Human Resources Department to Hiring Managers. Human Resources Department will take part in panel interviews where necessary.

2 Recruiting

2.1. Identifying the need

Given the professional mobility of the CRG faculty and research staff, recruiting is central for attracting the best talent.

- In order to work more efficiently and to help the Human Resources Department in planning, an annual hiring plan created for forecasting is recommended. Having a hiring plan avoids panic hiring and gives Human Resources Department the opportunity to help Hiring Managers in the selection of people with the right skills, in the right place, and at the right time. A hiring plan integrates the forecasting elements of each of the Human Resources Department functions that relate to talent-recruiting, retention, redeployment and leadership and employee development. The hiring plan is partly based on the information gathered at the end of each year when elaborating the budget for the different labs together with Human Resources Department, and the Principal Investigators.
- The annual hiring plan should be based on the budget/ funding available at the beginning of the financial year or award of new external projects.
- Prior to any recruitment, decisions are made by the Hiring Manager with the support of Human Resources Department, about the following:
 - Budget/ funding available (Internal and External)
 - Part Time/ Full Time
 - Permanent or temporary contract
 - Timescale and key days, including application closing date and interview dates
 - Advertising channels to be used
 - Interview format and Interview panel members
 - Required reference checks, and/or recommendation letters
 - Job advert

2.2. Job descriptions and Job adverts

Job descriptions are an important part of the recruitment and selection process. A job description ensures that Hiring Managers are clear about the nature of the job to be filled and that applicants/employees understand the objectives, duties and responsibilities of the job. It also provides a basis for measurement of job performance.

² "Hiring Manager" refers to the person who is authorised to select and hire staff for their team. It includes Group Leaders, Principal Investigators/Heads with funding to recruit for specific projects, Core Facility Heads, Administration Heads, Managing Director and Director. In addition, other positions can serve as Hiring Manager with the previous approval from their direct supervisor.

- All posts must have an up-to-date, comprehensive description of the job and reporting arrangements. This should include a summary of the job purpose, key responsibilities, the qualifications, skills, knowledge, experience, personal qualities and other requirements, which are needed to perform the identified duties.
- A job advert will be drawn up by the Hiring Manager, based on the job description and following the job advert template provided by the Human Resource Department. The Human Resources Department will provide guidance on how to fill this out.
- The advertisement will specify the job position by describing the following;
 - Position Title (must be Internationally understood and accepted)
 - Main purpose of the job
 - Responsibilities involved
 - Reporting line
 - Required experience and skills
 - Desirable experience and skills
 - Number of hours/ Part-time/ Full-time/ permanent/ temporary
 - Instructions on how to apply
 - Selection process and criteria used
- The required and desirable criteria will form a checklist against which applications can be objectively judged in order to draw up a shortlist.
- Any criteria must be free from indirect or direct discrimination.
- In drawing up the job description and conditions of service, the CRG will ensure that no job applicant receives less favourable treatment than another on the grounds of disability, gender, race, religion or belief, age, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, caring responsibilities or hours of work, and that no applicant is placed at a disadvantage unjustifiably by requirements or conditions which have a disproportionately adverse effect on a particular group. An even mix of terms that research has identified as being feminine or masculine should be used to create a balanced, unbiased job description.

2.3. Advertising

The main aim of an advertising strategy and campaign is to attract the best candidates in a competitive, transparent, timely and cost-effective way.

- Internal Advertising: All vacancies will be posted on the CRG website for at least two weeks, and additionally could be communicated internally per email. Posting of the job openings, calls, and programmes on CRG's website will reflect the commitment of CRG to a transparent policy.
- External Advertising: Wide advertising will be done to attract the best candidates. Depending on the nature of the opening and the recruitment strategy chosen, advertisements will be announced through specific media channels.
- Personal communication and direct approach to potential female candidates, as well as networks aiming to identify female candidates has been found to increase the possibility of hiring more women. Female Faculty or colleagues may contribute promising candidates and ask for their nominations.

3 Selecting

3.1. Applications and Shortlisting

- Applicants will complete the CRG's online application form and ensure that they reveal to the institute all relevant and required information in making their application.
- Applications received will be listed and securely stored in the internal Applicant Tracking System (ATS).

- In case external Recruitment Agencies are involved in the process, they will adhere to the same standards of submitting their applications and pre-employment screening and adherence to equality legislation as set out in this Policy.
- Shortlisting is the process whereby applicants are assessed by the Hiring Manager and/ or Human Resources Department, against the requirements of the role, in order to eliminate unsuitable candidates and identify those candidates who meet the criteria for further assessment. The Hiring Manager will then assess applications to determine who will be invited to interview.
- Shortlisting and interviewing must not be undertaken by one person in isolation. The selection of candidates must be done by at least three members, of which should be the Hiring Manager and Human Resources. Committees should include no less than one third of one gender in their members.
- Shortlisted candidates should receive regular updates on the status of their application from Human Resources Department with the information received from the Hiring Manager.
- A scoring system can be used to shortlist the applicants. In this case, the requirements of the role should be used as a checklist against which applicants' achievements and previous experience and motivation are assessed. Marks can be assigned for each requirement, which bases the selection on merit.
- Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an interview. Video conferencing is recommended as a pre-screening, prior to inviting candidates for a face-to-face interview.

3.2. Interview process

An interview is a two-way process for the CRG to test the suitability of the candidate, and for the candidate to decide whether the role and the CRG is attractive to them.

- In deciding the interview format, the Hiring Manager in collaboration with the Human Resources Department will consider the most appropriate way of testing the capacities and suitability of the candidate for the vacancy, such as, interview, practical test, discussion group, presentation.
- A set of questions will be agreed by the interview panel in advance and will be developed from the current job description for the post. The panel will seek to develop questions, which ask the candidates to give examples of their previous relevant experience.
- Human Resources Department will provide guidance on competency-based and behavioural interviewing and provide interview questions to ask during the process if needed.

3.3. Selection Committee/Interview Panel

- The composition of Selection Committees/ Panels³, when needed, should be confirmed at the start of the recruitment process to ensure all interviewers have the availability to be involved in short-listing and adequately prepare for the interviews. It is the role of the Hiring Manager or Chair to approve the interviewers.
- Selection Committees/Panels should bring together diverse expertise and competences and should have an adequate gender balance and, where appropriate and feasible, include members from different disciplines, including from other countries and with relevant experience to assess the candidate. Whenever possible, a wide range of selection practices should be used, such as assessments and face-to-face interviews.
- The Selection Committees/Panels should consist of at least three members, of which should be the Hiring Manager, the Human Resources and no less than one third of one gender.

³ "Selection committee/ Panel" refers to a group of three or more people involved in the assessment and selection process of candidates. A panel interview is typically conducted by individuals performing different functions within the institute and might include external panel members, whenever needed.

- As the Hiring Manager or Chair of the Panel you have a responsibility to ensure that the interview is carried out objectively, professionally, legally and in-line with CRG's Recruitment Policy. You are also required to lead the interviews and the feedback discussions at the end of the process.
- A Selection Committee/Panel may include an External Panel Member with related interests and expertise. The External Panel Member usually has the duty to serve as a full member of the panel.
- If the interviews are taking place over separate days, the panel composition must remain the same for consistency.
- Members of selection panels should be adequately trained in assessing and selecting candidates.
- Human Resources Department should also be involved in the Selection Committee/ Panel during the entire recruitment process.

3.4. Selection Process

- Decisions about successful candidates will be made through consensus by the Interview Panel on consideration of the responses to tasks and questions set, and will be based on the most suitable person for the job.
- Interviewers will treat each candidate equally by interviewing them based on the job requirements and prepared questions. All candidates should be asked the same questions (based on observations made on the candidates resume and motivation letter, additional questions can be asked), and only those that are relevant to the job. This structure is important, as it will reduce bias towards any of the candidates.
- Notes should be taken during the interview, through an interview evaluation form, by all members of the panel based on what the candidate says. Additionally, each member of the panel should assign a rating to the candidate's answer for every competency/ question. Immediately after the interview, the interview evaluation form should be filled in. This will be used by the panel to deliberate and discuss the candidate in order to come to an agreement. This makes the outcome objective, as it is done based on evidence and the panel must agree.
- The interview panel should be clear about how the decision was reached and documented through an interview evaluation form. This completed form has to be provided to Human Resources Department, pre-offering and will be included in the candidates Human Resources file. The information in the interview evaluation will be the base for further career development of the employee. Identified strengths can be used to help excel and areas of development should be identified and addressed for further training and coaching of the employee.
- Guidance can be sought from Human Resources Department and they will ensure that candidates are made aware of the structure of the process, and receive any necessary information, prior to attending the interview.

3.5. Transparency

- Candidates are informed, prior to the selection, about the recruitment process and the selection criteria, the number of available positions and the career development prospects. This information can be found on the job adverts or is provided by the Human Resources Department or the Hiring Manager through email or by telephone.
- Pre-selected candidates will be offered the possibility to receive more detailed feedback after the selection process about the strengths and weaknesses of their applications.
- Judging Merit: The criteria for selecting researchers is focused on both the candidates' past performance and their potential and motivation. In line with the principles "Judging merit" and "Seniority" of the *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*, the evaluation criteria should be consistent with the requirements of the position. We aim to make objective and evidence-based decisions.
- All appointments will be made strictly on merit and related to the requirements of the job.

3.6. Job Offer

- Any offer of employment will be made in writing by the Human Resources Department and the candidate will be asked to sign a copy as acceptance of the offer and return.
- Human Resources will confirm that the offer is provisional and conditional on the satisfactory outcome of the Qualifications, References, Identity and any other relevant checks. The offer may be withdrawn, or employment terminated, if it becomes apparent that the applicant knowingly withheld information, or provided false or misleading information.

3.7. Reference Check and Background Screening

- References enable checks on the accuracy of a prospective employee's previous employment and training history and provide assurance of an individual's qualifications, integrity and track record by email and if necessary to follow up with a phone call.
- Employment Checks require that references are obtained to cover at least three years of previous employment and/or training, ideally covering two separate employers (where possible), one of which should be from the applicant's current or most recent employer, making sure that the reference is provided by the direct supervisor at that time where an individual has been with one employer for five years or more, one reference may be sufficient.
- Any qualifications disclosed on the application form which is an essential or desirable criteria on the person specification must be checked. Human Resources Department will contact the awarding body directly, where possible, to confirm the applicant's attendance, course details and grade awarded. Applicants will be requested to provide qualification documentation to Human Resources Department.
- References will be requested using a standardised reference report form requiring a company stamp or letterhead as verification. References provided in writing should state as a minimum the employment dates and position held.
- An offer may be withdrawn where information provided within the reference brings to question the suitability of the applicant for the position. In this situation, Human Resources should contact the referee to discuss the concerns raised and where appropriate this should also be discussed with the applicant before a final decision is made.
- An offer may be withdrawn where it becomes evident that information cannot be provided by the applicant to prove either their identity, or essential qualifications. A reasonable period will be granted at the Human Resources Department's discretion for the applicant to provide the relevant documentary evidence before the offer is withdrawn.

4 Other related areas

4.1. Conflict of interest

We follow the provisions of the *CRG conflict of Interest Policy* and good practice by the ERC Conflict of Interest policy (*ERC Conflict of Interests, Scientific Misconduct and Ethical Issues*)

- To avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest, CRG staff involved in recruitment and selection should avoid interviewing and/or making hiring decisions on immediate family. If these circumstances arise then it is expected that the selection committee member will resign from the committee and the Hiring Manager will identify a replacement.
- Selection Committee members may also have a close personal relationship or other form of relationship, positive or negative, with one or more of the applicants for a position. In these circumstances, they should inform the Hiring Manager and other selection committee members prior to commencement of the short listing and interview processes.

- If the member of the Selection Committee feels that the relationship may make it difficult for her/him to apply the merit principle, or feels that her/his participation may compromise application of the merit principle, then the Selection Committee should decide whether it is appropriate for the Selection Committee Member to be part of the Selection Process.
- The Selection Committee may seek advice on this matter from the Human Resources Department, Director or the Managing Director. If the Selection Committee Member continues in the selection process, then her/his opinion should be canvassed last in any discussion to avoid any perception of them influencing the outcome.

4.2. Spouses and Partners

CRG aims to keep its hiring process free of any form of discrimination, while at the same time recognizes the increasing importance of accommodating dual career families and the importance of such accommodation in attracting faculty. Therefore, the spouse/partner of an employee may be offered a position at the CRG provided that the spouse/partner is fully qualified for the position (after examination by external experts) and provided that the spouse/partner is not given any preference for appointment by virtue of the relationship to the employee. It is however, recommended to avoid a direct or indirect reporting line⁴ between spouses and/or partners.

Employment of a spouse/partner in any position within the CRG can occur only with the approval of the Director and Head of Human Resources after the successful completion of a selection process as outlined above and based on requirements aligned to the position. Please note that the spouse/ partner is not allowed to take part in the selection process and can under no circumstances hire or approve any compensation action for his/her spouse or partner.

4.3. Retention of application documentation

All documentation related to the recruitment process, including interview documentation, will be retained for a minimum period of six months. The documentation will be retained and confidentially disposed by the Human Resource Department.

5 Implementation

5.1. Compliance

All CRG members are responsible for adhering to the principles and rules set out in this Policy. The CRG reserves the right to take appropriate action against any CRG member who does not comply with this Policy.

5.2. Monitoring and reviewing of policy

After each recruitment of an employee, the Hiring Manager together with Human Resources Department, will evaluate the recruitment and selection process used and its effectiveness in selecting the right candidate.

The following areas could be considered:

- Content and placement of the adverts
- Effectiveness of the scoring method
- Appropriateness of interview format

⁴ Direct Reporting describes a formal relationship between an employee and supervisor/leader that provides oversight and guidance to the employee in the execution of his/her work. This generally means that the supervisor/leader is directly responsible for assigning the employee work and managing their performance. Indirect Reporting describes a relationship between an employee and a secondary supervisor/leader that provides additional oversight and guidance to the employee in the execution of his/her work.



- Analyses of applicant's data

In addition, this policy and the practices of the CRG should be reviewed annually to ensure it remains up to date and compliant with the law and best practice.

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