

ULisboa – HR Excellence in Research

Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R) Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Lisbon (ULisboa) is an institution dedicated to education, research and innovation, committed to the creation, dissemination and societal impact of knowledge and culture. As one of Europe's leading research-intensive universities, ULisboa strives to provide an outstanding environment for study and work, attracting and retaining talented students, researchers, academic staff, and professional services staff from Portugal and around the world.

ULisboa's mission is built upon three mutually reinforcing pillars: **teaching, research and innovation, and knowledge transfer and societal engagement**. A common prerequisite for success across these domains is the ability to recruit, develop and retain highly qualified people. Beyond ensuring fair and effective recruitment and selection processes, ULisboa is committed to creating an environment in which talent can flourish through sustainable career pathways, continuous professional development, high-quality research and teaching conditions, and a supportive institutional culture.

These objectives are particularly important in an increasingly international and competitive higher education landscape. To remain attractive to outstanding researchers and academic staff, universities must not only offer working conditions comparable to those of the leading European and global institutions, but also adopt internationally recognised standards and best practices in research management and human resources.

The **European Charter for Researchers**, adopted by the European Commission on 18 December 2023, provides the reference framework for promoting attractive research careers and excellent working conditions. It establishes a set of principles concerning the rights and responsibilities of researchers, employers, funders and policy-makers, fostering research environments that support scientific excellence, professional development and the free circulation of knowledge.

Within this framework, the **HR Excellence in Research** award recognises institutions that have developed and implemented a strategic and continuous approach to improving their human resources policies for researchers. To obtain the award, institutions assess their practices against the 20 principles of the European Charter for Researchers, identify strengths and areas for improvement through a Gap Analysis, and implement a structured Action Plan. Compliance with these commitments is monitored through periodic reviews, including an interim assessment after 24 months and subsequent renewal cycles.

A central component of the HR Excellence in Research framework is the implementation of **Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R)** principles. This document presents ULisboa's OTM-R Policy, describing the University's commitment to fair, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices and the measures adopted to ensure that these principles are consistently applied across the institution.

2. RECRUITMENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

ULisboa is a public university comprising 19 Schools (Faculties and Institutes), which constitute its teaching and research units. Each School has its own governing bodies and enjoys a high degree of autonomy in statutory, scientific, pedagogical, cultural, administrative, financial and asset-related matters. While this autonomy is guaranteed by Portuguese law, all Schools operate within the legal framework governing public higher education institutions and are therefore subject to the general rules applicable to the Portuguese public administration.

Consequently, ULisboa and its Schools fully comply with the legal provisions regulating employment and human resources management in the public sector, particularly those applicable to public higher education institutions. This framework ensures compliance with many of the recruitment and employment principles enshrined in the **European Charter for Researchers**, while simultaneously imposing constraints on institutional autonomy, particularly regarding funding mechanisms, employment regimes and the flexibility of human resources management.

The main legislation governing employment and academic careers applicable to ULisboa, from the general legal framework to the sector-specific regulations, includes:

- Labour Code (Law No. 7/2009);
- General Law on Labour in Public Functions (Law No. 35/2014);
- Legal Framework for Higher Education Institutions (RJIES) (Law No. 62/2007, as amended by Law No. 32/2026 of 20 July);
- Statute of the University Teaching Career (ECDU) (Decree-Law No. 448/79, as subsequently amended, particularly by Decree-Law No. 205/2009 and Law No. 8/2010);
- Statute of the Scientific Research Career (ECIC) (Law No. 55/2025 of 28 April);
- Legal framework for the recruitment of PhD holders aimed at promoting scientific and technological employment across all fields of knowledge (Decree-Law No. 57/2016).

Although this legal framework establishes the general rules governing employment and recruitment, the autonomy granted to higher education institutions under the RJIES enables ULisboa to define its own institutional policies and procedures in several areas of human resources management. Within this scope, a number of strategic principles and institutional instruments guide recruitment, career development and people management across the University.

At the core of these policies lies a set of institutional values that underpin all human resources practices. These include academic freedom, respect for ethical standards and research integrity, merit, equality, diversity and non-discrimination, social responsibility, institutional citizenship, and the promotion of well-being.

These principles are further reflected in the **ULisboa Strategic Plan 2023–2027**, which identifies the development and valorisation of people as one of the University's strategic priorities. The Plan emphasises the importance of attracting, developing and retaining highly qualified academic, research, technical and administrative staff, while creating the conditions for sustainable careers, continuous professional development and high-quality working environments. It also highlights the need to strengthen internationalisation, promote organisational renewal and address situations of employment precariousness, taking into account institutional priorities and merit-based criteria.

To achieve these objectives, the Strategic Plan establishes several priority areas, objectives, performance indicators and targets directly related to human resources management. These include workforce renewal, talent attraction and retention, international recruitment, skills development, career progression and the promotion of well-being across the academic community.

The University's strategic orientation is supported by a comprehensive set of institutional regulations governing academic recruitment, career development and performance assessment. The main University-wide regulations include:

- General Regulation for Recruitment Procedures for Full, Associate and Assistant Professors at the University of Lisbon (Order No. 2307/2015);
- Regulation on employment regime and performance assessment during the probationary period for Full, Associate and Assistant Professors at the University of Lisbon (Order No. 15262/2015);
- Regulation on the Performance Assessment of Academic Staff at the University of Lisbon (Order No. 12292/2014);
- General Regulation for the Recruitment of Specially Appointed Academic Staff at the University of Lisbon (Order No. 14944/2013);
- General Regulation governing the Provision of Services by Academic Staff at the University of Lisbon (Order No. 14073/2015).

These institutional regulations are complemented by School-specific regulations, particularly those concerning academic performance assessment and other human resources procedures, which operate within the common legal and institutional framework established by ULisboa.

In areas where specific institutional regulations have not yet been adopted—for example, the recruitment of career researchers under the Scientific Research Career Statute—the applicable provisions of national legislation are complemented, whenever appropriate, by the procedures and principles already established for the recruitment of academic staff. This approach ensures consistency across recruitment processes while fully respecting the principles of **Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R)**.

3. RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

The recruitment procedures currently implemented at ULisboa are aligned with the University's strategic priorities and generally comply with the principles of **Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R)**. They are grounded in the applicable national legal framework and complemented by institutional regulations and practices that promote fairness, equal opportunities, transparency and merit throughout the recruitment process.

Open Recruitment

The principle of **openness** requires that recruitment opportunities at ULisboa be widely advertised and accessible to the widest possible pool of qualified candidates, including the international academic and research community.

This principle is embedded in the national legal framework governing recruitment in Portuguese public higher education institutions. In accordance with this legislation, recruitment procedures are, by definition, public and international (with the exception of internal promotion procedures), and all vacancy notices are subject to mandatory publication through the appropriate official channels.

Openness is further reinforced by ULisboa's institutional values and by the principles governing public administration, which require that all recruitment procedures fully respect the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Candidates are assessed exclusively on the basis of merit, irrespective of gender, nationality, ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, political opinion or any other protected characteristic.

The University's strategic priorities also promote openness in recruitment by emphasising:

- the regular renewal of the academic and research workforce through open recruitment procedures aligned with the strategic priorities of the University and its Schools, while taking into account long-term workforce planning and demographic renewal;
- the internationalisation of academic and research staff through the attraction and recruitment of highly qualified international candidates;
- the attraction, retention and development of a highly qualified workforce through strategic and sustainable recruitment policies, while progressively reducing employment precariousness across academic, research, and professional services careers.

These principles are reflected in the **General Regulations for Recruitment Procedures for Full, Associate and Assistant Professors at the University of Lisbon**, which establishes that recruitment competitions are international in scope. Each competition is opened in one or more clearly defined disciplinary areas, specified in the vacancy notice, linked to the strategic needs of the respective School, and previously authorised by the Rector.

To ensure maximum visibility, all recruitment opportunities for academic staff, researchers and professional services staff are published on the ULisboa website and on the websites of the respective Schools. In addition, vacancy notices are published in the *Diário da República* (Official Gazette), on the Portuguese Public Employment Portal (BEP), and, in the case of international academic and research positions, on the **EURAXESS** portal. Vacancy notices are published in Portuguese and, whenever appropriate, also in English to ensure accessibility to both national and international applicants.

In accordance with the applicable legislation, recruitment competitions for academic positions remain open for a minimum of **30 working days**, providing potential candidates with sufficient time to prepare and submit their applications while ensuring broad participation and fair competition.

Guidance: The Principle of Openness in Recruitment Processes

To ensure compliance with the principle of **Openness**, all recruitment procedures at ULisboa should meet the following requirements:

International scope

All recruitment competitions (with the exception of internal promotion procedures) must be open to the international academic and research community, enabling the widest possible pool of qualified candidates to apply.

Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

Recruitment procedures must fully comply with the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination. Candidates shall be assessed exclusively on the basis of merit, irrespective of gender, nationality, ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, political opinion, or any other protected characteristic.

Publication and visibility

All recruitment competitions must be widely publicised through the appropriate official channels, including the **Diário da República** (Official Gazette), the **Public Employment Portal (BEP)**, and, where applicable, the **EURAXESS** portal, as well as the websites of ULisboa and the respective School, thereby ensuring both national and international visibility.

Application period

The application period must be clearly specified in the vacancy notice. For academic positions, the period shall be no less than **30 working days**, providing potential candidates with adequate time to prepare and submit their applications.

Transparent Recruitment

The principle of **transparency** requires that every stage of the recruitment process be conducted in a clear, accessible and documented manner. This includes the publication of comprehensive information on the position to be filled, the selection criteria, the assessment procedures, and the outcome of the recruitment process.

Transparency is embedded in the Portuguese legal framework governing public recruitment and is further reinforced by ULisboa's institutional regulations and strategic commitment to **Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R)**.

The **General Regulations for Recruitment Procedures of Full, Associate and Assistant Professors at the University of Lisbon** establishes a comprehensive procedural framework governing recruitment. The same principles are applied, whenever appropriate, to the recruitment of career researchers. The Regulation defines the procedures for launching recruitment competitions, the structure and content of vacancy notices, the composition and operation of the Selection Panel, the assessment methodology, eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria, decision-making procedures, applicable deadlines, and the rules governing admission, merit assessment and final ranking of candidates.

A key instrument for ensuring transparency is the **vacancy notice**, which must be publicly disclosed and contain all relevant information concerning the recruitment process, ensuring that candidates understand the sequence of steps from application to final decision. In accordance with Article 8 of the Regulations, each vacancy notice must specify, among other elements:

- the number of positions available and the type of public employment contract to be offered;
- the academic or research position to be filled;
- the disciplinary or scientific area(s) of the position;
- the composition of the Selection Panel;
- the eligibility requirements;
- the academic qualifications required;
- the selection criteria, their respective weighting, and the evaluation methodology;
- the application procedure and submission deadline;
- the postal and/or electronic address for submitting applications;
- the documentation required for admission and evaluation, including the possibility of submitting such documents in a language other than Portuguese.

Transparency is also ensured throughout the evaluation phase. In accordance with Article 21 of the Regulation, formal minutes of each meeting of the Selection Panel must be prepared, recording a summary of the proceedings, the decisions taken, the votes cast by each member and the corresponding justification. Candidates shall have access to the full documentation relating to their application, while minutes shall only be made available to the candidates concerned by the respective deliberation, in accordance with applicable data protection requirements.

Candidates excluded during the assessment of absolute merit or not selected following the comparative evaluation are entitled to exercise their right to be heard before the final decision is rendered, ensuring procedural fairness and accountability. Whenever appeals are submitted, the Selection Panel re-examines the case, deliberates on the issues raised, and communicates its decision to the candidate concerned.

Following the completion of the recruitment procedure, all candidates, including those excluded on the basis of absolute merit, are formally notified of the formal approval of the final ranked list. The appointment resulting from the recruitment procedure is subsequently published through the legally required official channels, thereby ensuring full transparency of the outcome.

Guidance: The Principle of Transparency in Recruitment Processes

To ensure compliance with the principle of **Transparency**, all recruitment procedures at ULisboa should meet the following requirements:

Clear and comprehensive vacancy notices

All recruitment competitions must be publicly advertised through the appropriate official channels. Vacancy notices shall clearly specify the number of positions available, the type of employment relationship, the academic or research position, the disciplinary or scientific area(s), the composition of the Selection Panel, the eligibility requirements, the qualifications required, the evaluation criteria and their respective weightings, the application procedure and deadline, the documentation to be submitted, and, where applicable, the possibility of submitting applications electronically and/or in languages other than Portuguese.

Documented Selection Panel proceedings

Formal minutes of all meetings of the Selection Panel shall be prepared, recording a summary of the proceedings, the decisions taken, the votes cast by each member and the corresponding justification. Candidates shall have access to the full documentation relating to their application, while minutes shall only be made available to the candidates concerned by the respective deliberation, in accordance with applicable data protection requirements..

Right to be heard

Candidates excluded during the assessment of absolute merit or not selected following the comparative evaluation shall be granted the right to be heard before the final decision is adopted. Any appeals submitted shall be considered by the Selection Panel, whose decision shall be communicated to the candidate concerned.

Publication of recruitment outcomes

The formal approval of the final ranked list of candidates and the appointment resulting from the recruitment procedure shall be communicated and published, respectively, in accordance with the applicable legal and institutional requirements, ensuring full transparency of the outcome.

Merit-Based Recruitment

The principle of **merit-based selection** requires that recruitment decisions be based on a fair, rigorous and evidence-based assessment of candidates' qualifications, achievements, competences and potential.

In accordance with the applicable legal framework, as well as ULisboa's institutional values and strategic priorities, all recruitment procedures for academic staff, researchers and professional services staff are based exclusively on merit. Recruitment decisions must be free from

discrimination or any consideration unrelated to the professional qualifications and suitability of the candidates. All eligibility requirements and evaluation criteria must therefore be directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the position.

For academic and research positions, merit is understood in a broad and comprehensive manner, encompassing scientific excellence, teaching achievements, research experience, professional competences, leadership, academic service and other contributions relevant to the mission of the University. These criteria must be explicitly defined in the vacancy notice.

Following ULisboa's accession to the **Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)** in 2024, recruitment procedures have progressively incorporated the principles of responsible research assessment. Candidate evaluation therefore places greater emphasis on the quality, impact and integrity of research, while recognising the diversity of career paths and valuing contributions to open science, knowledge transfer and innovation, leadership, supervision, collaboration and other forms of academic and societal impact.

The **General Regulations for Recruitment Procedures of Full, Associate and Assistant Professors at the University of Lisbon** establishes the institutional framework governing merit assessment. The same principles are applied, whenever appropriate, to the recruitment of career researchers.

The vacancy notice must clearly specify the evaluation criteria and their respective weightings. Candidate assessment is carried out in two successive stages: **assessment of absolute merit** and **comparative assessment based on relative merit**.

According to Article 10 of the Regulation, admission on the basis of **absolute merit** requires candidates to demonstrate an overall academic and professional profile that, in the opinion of the Selection Panel, evidences scientific merit, research capacity and, where applicable, the value of the teaching activity already undertaken, compatible with the disciplinary area and appropriate to the academic rank of the position. Where specified in the vacancy notice, additional eligibility requirements must also be satisfied.

Candidates admitted on the basis of absolute merit proceed to the **comparative assessment based on relative merit**. In accordance with Article 11 of the Regulations, the Selection Panel carries out a reasoned evaluation of each candidate against the criteria established in the vacancy notice. These criteria normally cover scientific achievements, teaching performance (for academic positions), research activity, academic leadership, knowledge transfer and other contributions relevant to the University's mission. The respective weighting and the detailed specification of each criterion is defined in advance and published in the vacancy notice.

The evaluation is conducted by an independent **Selection Panel** proposed by the Scientific Council of the respective School. To ensure impartiality and scientific excellence, the majority of the panel members must belong to institutions external to ULisboa.

In accordance with Article 14 of the Regulation, Selection Panels are composed of professors, researchers or recognised experts of national or international standing, affiliated with Portuguese or foreign higher education institutions or research organisations. With the exception of competitions for Full Professor, panel members must hold an academic rank higher than that of the position being advertised. Panels comprise the Chair and between five and nine additional members, all with recognised expertise in the relevant scientific field, the majority of whom must be external to the University.

Guidance: The Principle of Merit-Based Selection in Recruitment Processes

To ensure compliance with the principle of **Merit-Based Selection**, all recruitment procedures at ULisboa should meet the following requirements:

Merit-based decisions

Recruitment decisions shall be based exclusively on candidates' qualifications, competences, achievements and potential. No decision shall be influenced by factors unrelated to the professional requirements of the position.

Clearly defined evaluation criteria

The vacancy notice shall specify the evaluation criteria and their respective weightings. These may include scientific achievements, research capacity, teaching performance, professional experience, academic leadership, knowledge transfer and innovation, research integrity, societal impact and other contributions relevant to the position, in line with the principles of responsible research assessment.

Structured two-stage evaluation

Candidate assessment shall comprise two successive stages: assessment of **absolute merit**, determining eligibility for the position, followed by a comparative assessment based on **relative merit** for the ranking of eligible candidates. Both stages shall be fully documented and supported by reasoned decisions.

Independent and qualified Selection Panel

The Selection Panel shall be proposed by the Scientific Council of the respective School and shall include recognised experts in the relevant scientific field. The majority of its members shall be external to ULisboa, ensuring independence, impartiality and scientific excellence throughout the evaluation process.

4. Final Remarks

The general principles and recruitment procedures adopted by ULisboa and its Schools comply with the applicable legal framework, are consistent with the practices of leading European and international universities, and broadly reflect the principles of the European Charter for Researchers, particularly those relating to OTM-R.

Nevertheless, ULisboa recognises that recruitment and selection policies and practices must evolve in response to institutional experience, changes in the legal and policy framework, and emerging international standards. Compliance with the OTM-R principles is therefore regarded as a process of continuous improvement rather than a static achievement.

To this end, recruitment practices and outcomes will be monitored on a regular basis through institutional indicators, stakeholder feedback and periodic reviews of policies and procedures. The University's Strategic Plan already establishes objectives, indicators and targets in several areas related to recruitment, career development and talent management, providing a framework for this ongoing assessment.

The information gathered through these monitoring activities will support the continuous refinement of ULisboa's OTM-R Policy and related procedures, strengthening transparency, fairness and excellence in recruitment, while fostering confidence in the University's human resources practices among the entire academic community.