

Policy for Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment of Researchers (OTM-R Policy) of the “Armenian State University of Economics” State Non-Commercial Organization

BACKGROUND

Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment of researchers (OTM-R) improves the effectiveness of national research systems, guarantees equality, promotes optimal circulation of scientific knowledge and boosts transnational and international cooperation, by ensuring that the best person for the job is recruited.

OTM-R is an important component of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) which supports research institutions and funding organizations to put the policies and principles of the Charter & Code into practice.

OTM-R represents the main pillar of the European Charter for Researchers and, obviously, the Code of Conduct for their recruitment, providing benefits to individual researchers, research performing organizations, research funders, and a country's research system.

More specifically, OTM-R makes research careers more attractive, ensures equal opportunities for all candidates and facilitates mobility. Overall, it may contribute to an increase in the cost-effectiveness of investments in research.

OTM-R implies gender awareness throughout the recruitment process within an institution, including (but not limited to) the promotion of gender balance within the respective committees.

OTM-R policy that encourages external applicants by:

- a) providing clear and transparent information on the whole selection process, including selection criteria and an indicative timetable;

- b) posting a clear and concise job advertisement with links to detailed information on,
for example, required competencies and duties, working conditions, entitlements, training opportunities, career development, gender equality policies, etc.;
- c) ensuring that the levels of qualifications and competencies required are in line with
the needs of the position and not set as a barrier to entry, e.g., too restrictive and/or requiring unnecessary qualifications;
- d) keeping the administrative burden for the candidate (proof of qualifications, translations, number of copies required, etc.) to a minimum.

OTM-R principles refer to ‘recruitment’, i.e. the procedures for filling a vacant position, and not to career progression, for which the procedures need anyway to be transparent and merit-based.

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Recruitment of Academic, including Research staff at the Armenian State University of Economics is regulated in accordance with the “Labor Code of the Republic of Armenia”, “Law of the Republic of Armenia on Education”, “Law of the Republic of Armenia on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education”, “Charter of "Armenian State University of Economics" State Non-Commercial Organization (hereinafter referred to as ASUE)”, “Armenian State University of Economics Strategic Plan for Scientific Research Activity Development 2020-2024”¹, “Procedure of Formation of Research Topics and Groups of the Armenian State University of Economics AMBERD Research Center and Involvement of Students and Postgraduates in the Latter”² “Regulation on Formation of the “Armenian State University of Economics” State Non-commercial Organization Academic Staff”³, “Regulation on Training and Certification of the ASUE Academic Staff”, and other internal legal acts.

OTM-R system ensures that the Armenian State University of Economics always aims at recruiting the best person for the job and that all recruitment procedures are based on principles of equal opportunities for all candidates (including internal and external).

¹ <https://asue.am/upload/files/documents/STRATEGIC-PLAN-FOR-SCIENTIFIC-RESEARCH-ACTIVITY-DEVELOPMENT-2020-2024.pdf>

² https://asue.am/upload/files/documents/AMBERD_RESEARCH-CENTER-PROCEDURE.pdf

³ <https://asue.am/upload/files/documents/regulation.pdf>

As a rule, recruitment should always be open. Reasons for recurring to other procedures should be made explicit and well justified, excluding possible manifestations of “academic nepotism”⁴.

Within the framework of OTM-R Policy ASUE assumes the responsibility that as an employer and/or funder it should establish recruitment procedures which are open, efficient, transparent, supportive and internationally comparable, as well as tailored to the type of positions advertised.

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERNAL OTM-R GUIDE

The rules and procedures for the recruitment need to be clear and explicit for all researcher positions. In this regard, it should be taken into account the classification of the European Framework for Research Careers which identifies four broad career profiles for researchers:

- R1 First Stage Researcher (up to the completion of PhD)**
- R2 Recognized Researcher (PhD holders or equivalent who are not yet fully independent)**
- R3 Established Researcher (researchers who have developed a level of independence)**
- R4 Leading Researcher (researchers leading their research area or field)**

According to the “Regulation on Formation of the “Armenian State University of Economics” State Non-commercial Organization Academic Staff”, ASUE Academic Staff includes the following positions: Professor, Associate Professor, Senior Lecturer, Lecturer and Assistant.

The correspondence of ASUE Staff categories to the R1-R4 career profiles of researchers is ambiguous and it largely depends on the research performance of the representatives of the academic staff. For instance, a professor can be referred to R3 or R4 career profiles, based on the research performance of the certain professor. The same is for other staff categories.

Classification of academic staff into research categories:

Career Profiles of Researchers	ASUE Staff Categories
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⁴ Informal practices which end up favoring incumbent candidates in selection procedures and may be detrimental to scientific productivity.

R1	First Stage Researcher (up to the completion of PhD)	Assistant PhD student
R2	Recognized Researcher (PhD holders or equivalent who are not yet fully independent)	Senior Lecturer Lecturer Assistant
R3	Established Researcher (researchers who have developed a level of independence)	Professor Associate Professor Senior Lecturer
R4	Leading Researcher (researchers leading their research area or field)	Professor

While the basic principles of openness, transparency and merit should apply to all positions, the procedures should be adapted according to the level, nature and type of position. The key point is to ensure that the various procedures or derogations are clear, objectively justified and transparent.

III. RECRUITMENT PROCESS DESCRIPTION

The recruitment of researchers at the Armenian State University of Economics (ASUE) falls into three categories:

- Academic staff (lecturers and university professors)
- Scientific staff (PhD students, post-doctoral researchers, permanent and temporary staff of the “AMBERD” Research Center and scientific-educational laboratories)
- Administrative or Technical staff who may be recruited for roles that support research work.

The recruitment section of the human resources (HR) department is responsible for part of the university’s recruitment process, particularly for teaching staff. The stated aim is to ensure that the procedure is professional and secure.

The “AMBERD” Research Center and scientific-educational laboratories themselves are responsible for recruiting scientific and technical staff, which is conducted based on the relevant criteria and procedures. Recruitment criteria and procedure for temporary staff involved in the scientific projects is described in the “Procedure of Formation of Research Topics and Groups of the Armenian State University of

Economics AMBERD Research Center and Involvement of Students and Postgraduates in the Latter”⁵.

PhD students are recruited by the relevant academic chairs. The selection process is coordinated by the Postgraduate Division of ASUE.

Despite the differences between categories, the procedure is uniform within each category, regardless of the type of recruitment (permanent or temporary).

The recruitment procedures, lists of required documents and their templates are available on the university’s official webpage for maximum transparency.

The recruitment process is divided into three phases:

- Advertising and application phase
- Evaluation and selection phase
- Appointment phase

a) Advertising and application phase

Job advertisement and description of requirements should be as concise as possible and include links to more detailed information online.

Applicants should be able to find information on:

- organization and recruiting unit
- job title, specifications and starting date
- number of available positions
- staff categories and/or researcher career profiles (R1-R4) with the respective “required” and “desirable” competencies
- selection criteria, including knowledge and professional experience (distinguishing the “required” and “desirable”)
- working conditions, workplace, entitlements (salary, other benefits, etc.), type of contract (permanent or temporary)
- professional development opportunities
- career development prospects
- a reference to the institution's OTM-R policy
- contact details

⁵ https://asue.am/upload/files/documents/AMBERD_RESEARCH-CENTER-PROCEDURE.pdf

Any exception to the above should be duly justified in the recruitment procedure.

The request for supporting documents should be strictly limited to those which are really needed in order to make a fair, transparent and merit-based selection of the applicants.

Transmission of supporting documents by electronic means is allowed.

All applicants should receive an (automated) e-mail acknowledging that their application has been received and providing them with further information on the recruitment process, indicating the next steps and including an indicative timetable (shortlisting or not, interview period, appointment date). If there are subsequently significant changes or delays to this process, all applicants should be duly and timely informed by (a standard) e-mail.

b) Evaluation and selection phase

The selection committees should be established for all staff positions and/or research profiles (R1-R4), though the size and composition of the committees may differ according to the profile and type of contract. The process to nominate and appoint the selection committee should be transparent and made public.

The selection committees should be independent, members should not have any conflict of interest and the decisions must be objective and evidence-based rather than based on personal preference.

An appropriate diversity of the composition of the committee should be achieved through consideration of the following elements:

- a minimum of 3 members;
- gender balance, e.g., not less than one third of one gender in the committee;
- inclusion of external expert(s) in committees (external meaning outside the institution) is encouraged;
- inclusion of experts from different sectors (public, private, academic, non-academic), where appropriate and feasible;
- the committee as a whole should have all the relevant experience, qualifications and competencies to assess the candidate.

The process may involve one or more steps, e.g., pre-screening to check eligibility, shortlisting of candidates for interviews, remote interviews by telephone, Skype, Zoom, Google meet or other way of online connection and face-to-face interviews.

While remote interviews may often be appropriate, in particular at the first interview stage, they should not altogether replace face-to-face interviews in cases where these are being conducted for internal candidates. All candidates should be treated equally and in the same way.

It is recommended that the same selection committee is involved in all steps to avoid different approaches. The process itself and its various steps should be transparent and made known to the applicants.

The criteria for selecting researchers should focus on both the candidates' past performance and their future potential. The emphasis is likely to change according to the profile of the post, e.g., when recruiting an R1 researcher, future potential is likely to outweigh past performance.

The evaluation criteria should be consistent with the requirements of the position as regards research, supervision or, for example, teaching competencies.

Merit should be judged qualitatively as well as quantitatively, focusing on results within a diversified career path, taking into account career breaks, lifelong professional development and the added value of non-research experience.

c) Appointment phase

All applicants should receive written or electronic notice at the end of the selection process, indicatively within one month and without any unnecessary delays, in line with the principle "Transparency" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

All applicants who were admitted to the interview need to be informed about the strengths and weaknesses of their application. Other applicants, who did not make it to the final stages, should receive a standard mail informing them of the outcome.

IV. PUBLISHING THE OTM-R POLICY

The OTM-R policy should be published in an easily accessible place on the institution's website and should address a minimum set of requirements while respecting institutional autonomy and diversity.

V. QUALITY CONTROL SYSTEM

ASUE establishes a quality control mechanism, including supervision of the whole recruitment process, which will be administered by the HR department.

The university will adopt some form of internal reporting for all phases of a recruitment process, e.g., a standard, reporting template that contains basic, important information.