



Staff Recruitment

Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R) at FH Münster

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FH MÜNSTER
University of Applied Sciences



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1. Preamble

This Policy provides information on the general recruitment principles at FH Münster. It applies to researchers as well as to technical and administrative staff, the focus being on the field of research.

Qualified employees are in great demand in the labour market. There is strong competition for this group of people not only within the higher education system, but also between higher education institutions (HEIs) and business enterprises. An institution's decision for or against an application is influenced by numerous factors besides the job profile. Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) plays a key role in this context. OTM-R ensures that (potential) applicants are fully informed of the vacant position, the selection procedure and the career development prospects involved.

In addition, OTM-R stands for equal opportunities and fair selection processes, where the decisive criteria are merit, aptitude and qualifications. Since the principle of selecting the best candidate applies in the civil service in accordance with Article 33(2) of the Basic Law (GG), a number of basic principles must be observed. After all, Article 33(2) GG states that every German shall be equally eligible for any public office according to his or her aptitude, qualifications and professional achievements¹⁾.

Additional criteria (including disability or gender aspects) may only be applied if no applicant has a lead over the others following a comparison of the criteria defined. For this reason, all applicants may demand a fair, correct and unbiased application procedure, which they may have reviewed by a court in case of doubt.

1) Within the meaning of Article 33(2) GG, the term "professional achievements" focuses on the work results produced when performing tasks as well as on expert knowledge and expertise. The term "qualifications" describes the characteristics that are generally of importance for employment, such as talent, general knowledge, experience of life, and general training. In the narrow sense, the term "aptitude" includes personality and characteristic attributes (see Federal Administrative Court (BVerwG), 28 October 2004 - 2 C 23.03).

The recruitment principles outlined in this document are part of a comprehensive HR Strategy at FH Münster. This strategy centres around the implementation of the *Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)*, which aims at realising the principles set out in the *European Charter for Researchers* and the *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*. In autumn 2015, FH Münster was one of the first Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Germany to receive the *HR Excellence in Research* award in recognition of its self-commitment to implementing these principles. In 2021, FH Münster was successfully recertified. As a result, FH Münster offers employees excellent framework conditions, transparent and fair selection procedures, a positive and stimulating working environment, as well as an interesting range of personal and professional development opportunities.

The aim of implementing the OTM-R system is to further improve recruitment procedures²⁾ at FH Münster. The intentions are as follows:

- Ensuring of open, transparent and merit-based recruitment throughout the university
- A simplified recruitment procedure from the standpoint of applicants
- Selection of the best candidate for a position
- Achievement of equal opportunities, gender equality, and diversity
- Promotion of internationalisation at FH Münster
- Increase in the attractiveness of FH Münster as an employer

2) The term "recruitment procedure" refers not only to appointment procedures for professorships and trainee professorships, but also to selection procedures for trainee professorships (without tenure track) and positions for academic staff and lecturers with specific duties.

2. Features and characteristics of OTM-R

Following the *Working Group of the Steering Group of Human Resources Management under the European Research Area (2015)*, recruitment procedures are open, transparent and merit-based when

- external and international candidates are encouraged to apply,
- potential applicants receive all relevant information about the advertised position or there is open access to such information³⁾,
- the administrative burden for candidates is minimised,
- the diversity and professionalism of the members of the selection committee adequately reflect the position⁴⁾,
- applicants are notified in good time of the recruitment procedure and the selection committee,
- a wide range of selection criteria⁵⁾ apply and are consistent with the requirements of the position,
- the selection committee is independent (see also Section 6) and makes an objective and evidence-based selection decision in favour of the best candidate,
- the selection committee or the university communicates transparently and openly with applicants.

3) Examples of such information include job requirements, career development prospects and organisational structure.

4) If necessary, also with external and international experts.

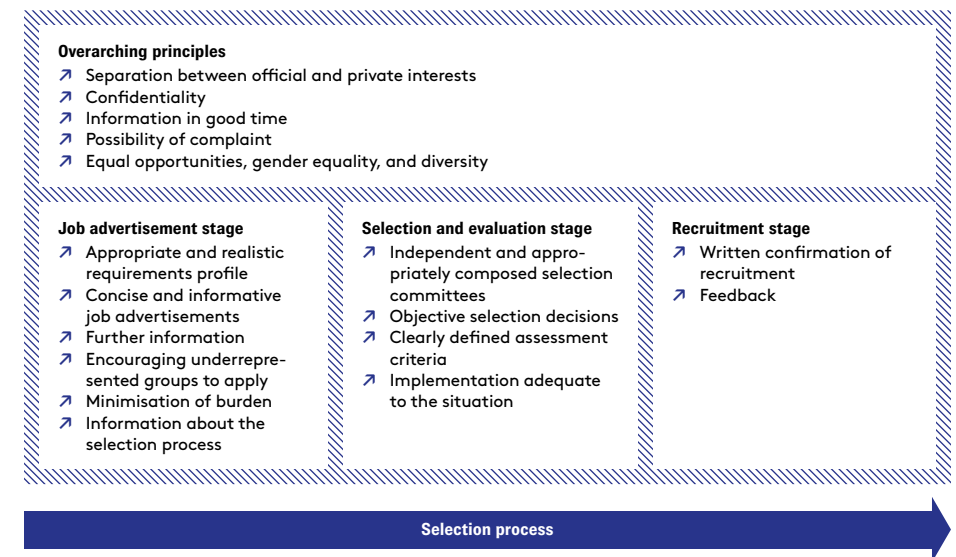
5) Besides expertise, this may also include professional experience as well as personal, social and methodological skills

3. Recruitment principles at FH Münster

We apply overarching principles to the planning and implementation of selection procedures. These are based primarily on the recommendations of the Working Group of the Steering Group of Human Resources Management under the European Research Area (2015) on OTM-R.

In order to implement these principles, we have added OTM-R aspects to existing *guidelines* for appointment and selection procedures at the appropriate places. Since these guidelines constitute an informative and planning basis for the relevant procedures, it is ensured that OTM-R principles are taken into account throughout the university. In the following, the basic principles are presented differentiated into “overarching principles” and the three stages: the “advertisement stage”, the “selection and evaluation stage” and the “recruitment stage”.

▼ **Figure 1**
Recruitment principles at FH Münster



3.1 Overarching principles

- Separation between official and private interests: In selection procedures, we draw a strict distinction between private and official interests. For this reason, all participants ascertain whether their private interests or those of their relatives, or also those of organisations with which they have links, could conflict with official interests. Any appearance of partiality must be avoided (see also Section 6). In a lawful and transparent procedure, no preferential treatment is given to applications from relatives⁶⁾ of university employees; no application for the recruitment of a relative as a university employee will be implemented unless the position was advertised beforehand. In addition, the intended recruitment may not result in an employee being made the superior of a relative.
- Confidentiality: We consider the confidential treatment of personal information to be a matter of course. We treat personal information with due care at all stages of the procedure. Application dossiers are deleted once the procedure has been completed.
- Information in good time: We notify applicants in good time of the current application status and of the next steps in the procedure. Interviews are scheduled 14 days in advance whenever possible, and we provide information about the selection committee in the letter of invitation. After deciding in favour of a particular candidate, we promptly notify all other applicants that they have not been considered for the position.
- Possibility of complaint: In all recruitment procedures, applicants have the possibility to express complaints about the procedure. In addition to technical aspects, this applies, in particular, to issues concerning “fairness” and “transparency”. A complaints form is available for this purpose on the Human Resources website. Complaints are examined, reported back to the relevant selection committee, and answered individually following an internal review.

6) Relatives are: fiancées and fiancés, spouses/life partners, direct relatives and in-laws, siblings and their children, siblings' spouses/life partners and siblings of spouses/life partners, parents' siblings, foster parents and foster children. The persons listed continue to be relatives even if the life partnership that establishes the tie no longer exists.

- Equal opportunities, gender equality, and diversity: From the design of job advertisements to the selection decision, equal opportunities, gender equality, and diversity are core values in our selection procedures. We formulate job advertisements in such a way that as many target groups as possible – some of whom have been underrepresented up to now (e.g. women, international staff) – feel addressed by them. In addition, in the future we will address these target groups directly through modern recruitment tools and offer them tailored development and counselling services. In order to implement equal rights for women, the central Equal Opportunities Officer is involved in all processes. She also advises the various university departments as well as external applicants with regard to gender-equitable implementation and perspectives. Another starting point in the selection process to promote diversity and gender equality at our university are workshops on the issue of „Unconscious Bias“.

3.2 The advertisement stage

- Appropriate and realistic requirements profile: The criteria defined in the requirements profile are consistent with the actual requirements of the position.
- Concise and informative job advertisements: Our job advertisements provide information about the core requirements relating to the vacancy. Depending on the job profile, not only expertise but also professional experience (e.g. leadership, acquisition of funding) as well as personal, social and methodological requirements are stipulated. We ensure that job advertisements are accessible not only to internal researchers, but also to external and international researchers.
- Further information: We provide information of relevance to potential applicants on our website. Such information includes, for example, career development prospects, training opportunities, support programmes, equality directives, appointment regulations and an equivalency table relating to career stages of the European Framework for Research Careers.

- Actively addressing underrepresented groups: These include, in particular, women, people with health conditions or impairments and people with an international background. These groups are essential for our performance as a university, which is why, in our advertisements, we explicitly encourage them to apply and also directly address them through newly hired recruiting specialists (active sourcing). In a bid to make FH Münster more appealing to international high potentials in the areas of research, education and administration, we also publish relevant detailed information in English or on international job portals whenever possible.
- Minimisation of burden: We minimise the administrative burden for applicants during the recruitment procedure. Requests are only made for information that is relevant for the respective selection decision and – in the case of international applicants – for essential translations. There is no need to enter the Curriculum Vitae manually.
- Information on the selection process: We inform applicants about the selection process in good time so that they can prepare themselves accordingly. For example, we provide information on the schedule, requirements, tasks and the selection committee.

3.3 The selection and evaluation stage

- Independent and appropriately composed selection committees: Selection committees are nominated and composed adequately for the job profile according to clear rules and following the principle of independence. When establishing committees, we take into consideration absolute and relative grounds for exclusion⁷⁾ and respect gender parity.
- Objective selection decisions: We take selection decisions factually, objectively and on the basis of a fair and transparent decision-making process with regard to merit, aptitude and qua-

7) Further information on absolute and relative grounds for exclusion is given in Section 6.

lifications. We will document the decisions until the recruitment process has been completed.

- Clearly defined assessment criteria: We determine merit, aptitude and qualifications on the basis of clearly defined criteria to ensure that the most appropriate person for the position can be selected during the selection procedure. Depending on the job profile, we take into consideration both past achievements and future potential. Gaps and chronological discrepancies in the Curriculum Vitae may represent an important stage of development towards diverse competencies in the context of the applicant's employment history. If the candidate demonstrates good aptitude otherwise, we clarify any ambiguities during the selection interview. The assessment criteria defined in advance – and prioritised where necessary – are binding for us and the starting point for the selection interview. During the selection interview, we only ask questions related to the vacant position and the associated characteristics; we refrain from asking any kind of gender-discriminatory questions (e.g. concerning family planning and the desire to have children).

← Table 1
Composition of appointment and selection committee

Appointment procedures	Selection procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 3–4 members from the group of professors ➤ 1 member from the group of academic staff ➤ 1 member from the group of students ➤ Equal Opportunities Officer ➤ 1 external member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 1–2 members from the group of professors ➤ 1–2 members from the group of academic staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Also invited, as circumstances require: Disabilities Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Also invited: Staff Council, Equal Opportunities Officer, Disabilities Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In addition: 2 external professorial assessors 	

- Implementation adequate to the situation: We also conduct selection procedures online if the situation requires it, e.g. due to applicants' place of residence or external circumstances (e.g. pandemics). In the process, we take into account the requirements for openness, transparency and fairness. If various digital formats are possible in a selection procedure, we make sure that

the same formats are used for all applicants. When assessing candidates, it must be ensured that the online format does not prove detrimental.

↘ Table 2
Examples of
assessment criteria

Examples of assessment criteria	
Appointment proced	Selection procedures
<p>Specific skills/attributes, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Specialised skills (depending on the area of teaching/research, e.g. business administration, engineering, social work) ➤ Professional experience (e.g. teaching, leadership, supervision of PhD students) ➤ Influence on society ➤ Experience in acquiring funding ➤ Research and innovation management ➤ Research achievements ➤ Internationality, mobility ➤ Teaching motivation ➤ Publications ➤ Others possible, depending on the job profile 	<p>Specific skills/attributes, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Specialised skills (depending on the field of activity; e.g. IT, labour law, finance, communication, academic programmes) ➤ Professional experience (e.g. leadership, project management, consultation, teaching) ➤ Administrative experience ➤ Experience in acquiring funding ➤ Research and innovation management ➤ Research achievements ➤ Internationality, mobility ➤ Teaching motivation ➤ Publications ➤ Others possible, depending on the job profile
<p>Overarching skills / attributes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Personal skills (e.g. self-motivation, readiness to embrace change, self-management, the ability to reflect) ➤ Social skills (e.g. communication skills, the ability to work in a team and handle conflict) ➤ Methodological skills (e.g. presentation techniques, information management, project management) 	

3.4 The recruitment stage

- Written confirmation of recruitment: Following a positive decision by the selection committee, we send successful applicants a written confirmation of recruitment. This written confirmation contains the cornerstones of the future employment relationship (e.g. collective wage aspects, leave entitlement, working hours) as well as the relevant contact persons.
- Feedback: Applicants who attended a selection interview but were not selected for the position are given verbal feedback via Human Resources.

4. Quality assurance

4.1 The recruitment procedure

In order to ensure that OTM-R principles are implemented throughout the university, every recruitment procedure is supported by a member of staff from Human Resources who is trained in OTM-R.

Participants from the schools and departments are prepared for the selection procedure in terms of OTM-R during basic preparatory measures (e.g. workshops) and consultations. Work aids and checklists ensure sustainable implementation. OTM-R principles are addressed in regular workshops for members of appointment committees.

In the event of positions that have been announced internationally, we ensure that people with adequate foreign language skills are represented on the appointment/selection committee.

4.2 The OTM-R system

A working group comprising individuals from different areas (e.g. Human Resources, Staff Council, Equal Opportunities Officer, Disabilities Officer) oversees and assures the quality of the OTM-R system. The working group meets regularly and reflects on the possibilities to improve the OTM-R system on the basis of various information (e.g. feedback). Looking to the future, an external assessment is another starting point for reflecting on the quality of the OTMR system and possibly improving it further.

By engaging in exchange with all actors involved, the specific stages of selection processes are also regularly reviewed, updated and further developed in the context of our university-wide, award-winning quality management system, which has been established for years. The structured stages of selection processes, applicable university-wide, which are stored in the FINDUS® process portal in the form of flow charts, create the basis for this. In so doing, Process Management acts as an independent, neutral entity, and is responsible for the quality of the process analysis.

5. Communication and public relations

Continuous public relations ensures that the issue is communicated and addressed throughout our university. This includes, in particular, the following instruments:

- Preparation of all participants at the start of a recruitment procedure (e.g. workshop, consultation, personal information)
- Inclusion of the issue in regular workshops for members of appointment committees
- Publication of this Policy on the FH Münster website
- Posting of work aids and guidelines on the FH Münster intranet
- Integration of relevant OTM-R documents into the university's process portal FINDUS®

6. Absolute and relative grounds for exclusion

6.1 Absolute grounds for exclusion

Absolute grounds for exclusion always result in the member of the selection committee or appointment committee concerned being excluded from any involvement.

Generally applicable grounds for exclusion in personnel selection procedures

If relatives of a university employee have applied, he or she may not be involved in the personnel selection procedure.

Grounds for exclusion also exist if the university employee performs paid work for the applicant, or is – or has within the last two years been – substantially engaged otherwise for the applicant. The same applies for the case that the applicant was or is employed by a university employee.

Additional absolute grounds for exclusion in appointment procedures

There are grounds for exclusion if dependencies exist between the applicant and a member of the appointment committee.

Such dependency exists

- if an academic staff member applies for an advertised professorship and the professor in whose area of teaching or research the applicant worked, following his or her instructions, is a member of the appointment committee. Employees directly reporting to and assisting the applicant shall also be excluded.
- There is also a dependent relationship in the case of academic supervisory relationships in doctoral examination procedures.
- Relationships of dependency existing more than five years previously are examined on a case-by-case basis.

6.2 Relative grounds for exclusion (apprehension of bias)

Generally applicable relative grounds for exclusion

Relative grounds for exclusion do not automatically lead to an exclusion of involvement. Rather, it must be examined on a case-by-case basis whether there are any facts that substantiate the apprehension that a decision or assessment may not be made in an unbiased, impartial or neutral manner. Impertinent or insulting statements within the procedure may likewise lead to the assumption of bias.

Additional relative grounds for exclusion in appointment procedures

A case-by-case assessment is required in the cases mentioned below: if between the applicant and a member of the appointment committee

- there is – or has been in the past five years – close academic cooperation, e.g. implementation of joint projects or joint publications,
- there is – or has been in the past five years – any other kind of close working relations (close colleagues),
- mutual assessments were made over the past five years,
- there is such a close connection, owing to the employment histories or an interpersonal acquaintanceship (even if this is based on various individual contacts), that complete impartiality cannot be ensured,
- or if secondary professional cooperation exists or existed, e.g. joint involvement in a club/association.

6.3 Assessors

The principles mentioned in point 6.2 apply accordingly for the relationship between members of the appointment committee and assessors.

6.4 Action taken in cases of exclusion of a person or apprehension of bias

All selection committees make sure that no persons are involved who must essentially be excluded from the procedure or for whom the apprehension of bias cannot be dispelled as the result of a case-by-case assessment.

Members must disclose any possible conflicts of interest without delay. Notification must always be given if a member and a candidate know each other privately or in an official capacity.

The committee rules on exclusion in appointment processes, or the Presidential Board in cases of doubt. In other personnel selection procedures, it is incumbent on Human Resources to decide, possibly after conferring with the President or the Chancellor.

7. Reference

Working Group of the Steering Group of Human Resources Management under the European Research Area (2015). *Report of the Working Group of the Steering Group of Human Resources Management under the European Research Area on Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers* – OTM-R. Electronic document.