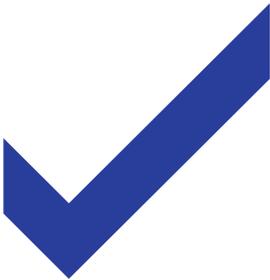




FH MÜNSTER  
University of Applied Sciences



# Staff Recruitment

Open, Transparent and Merit-based  
Recruitment (OTM-R) at  
Münster University of Applied Sciences



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# 1. Preamble

This Policy highlights the general recruitment principles at Münster University of Applied Sciences (MUAS). It applies to researchers<sup>1</sup> as well as to technical and administrative staff, the focus being on researchers.

There is a great demand for qualified researchers in the labour market. There is strong competition for this group of persons 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. In this context, open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) plays a central role. It ensures that (potential) applicants are fully informed of the vacant position, the recruitment 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 rules 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

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<sup>1</sup> In this document, the term "researchers" includes, in particular, professors, academic staff and lecturers with specific duties (including trainee professors).

achievements<sup>2</sup>. Additional criteria (and 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.

The OTM-R principles laid out in this document are part of a comprehensive HR strategy at MUAS. Among other things, 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, MUAS was one of the first HEIs in Germany to receive the *Human Resources Excellence in Research* award in recognition of its self-commitment to implementing these principles. As a result, MUAS offers researchers excellent framework conditions, transparent and fair recruitment procedures, a positive and stimulating working environment, as well as an interesting range of personal and professional development opportunities.

The aim of implementing an OTM-R system is to further improve recruitment procedures<sup>3</sup> at MUAS. In the process, the following intentions are pursued:

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<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> The term "recruitment procedure" refers not only to appointment procedures for professorships and trainee professorships (with tenure track) but also to selection procedures for trainee professorships (without tenure track) and positions for academic staff and lecturers with specific duties.

- 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
- Promotion of internationalisation at MUAS
- Increase in the attractiveness of MUAS as an employer

## 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

- not only internal researchers but also external researchers and researchers from abroad are encouraged to apply,
- potential applicants receive all relevant information about the advertised position or there is open access to such information<sup>4</sup>,
- the administrative burden is minimised for candidates,
- the diversity and professionalism of the members of the selection committee adequately reflect the position<sup>5</sup>,
- applicants are notified in good time of the recruitment procedure and the selection committee,

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<sup>4</sup> Examples of such information include the job requirements, career development prospects and the organisational structure.

<sup>5</sup> If necessary, also with external experts and experts from abroad.

- a wide range of selection criteria apply<sup>6</sup> 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 and the HEI communicates transparently and openly with applicants.

## 3. Basic principles of OTM-R at our University

We apply overarching principles to the planning and implementation of recruitment 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 *guides* for appointment and selection procedures at the appropriate places. Since guides constitute an informative and planning basis for the relevant procedures, it is ensured that OTM-R principles are taken into account throughout the HEI. The basic principles are presented differentiated into “overarching principles” and the three stages: the “job advertisement stage”, the “selection and evaluation stage” and the “recruitment stage”.

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<sup>6</sup> Besides expertise, this may also include professional experience as well as personal, social and methodological skills.

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### Overarching principles

- Separation between official and private interests
  - Confidentiality
  - Information in good time
  - Possibility of complaint
- 

### The job advertisement stage

- Appropriate and realistic requirements profile
  - Concise and informative job advertisements
  - Further information
  - Encouraging underrepresented groups to apply
  - Minimisation of burden
  - Information about the selection process
- 

### The selection and evaluation stage

- Independent and appropriately composed selection committees
  - Objective selection decisions
  - Clearly defined assessment criteria
- 

### The recruitment stage

- Written confirmation of recruitment
  - Feedback
- 

▲ *Table 1: OTM-R principles of our university*

## 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<sup>7</sup>, 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 relatives 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. Personal information is treated 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 well in advance. 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 topics concerning “fairness” and “transparency”. A complaints form is available for this purpose on the Human Resources website.

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<sup>7</sup> *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.*

Complaints are examined, reported back to the relevant selection committee, and answered individually following an internal review.

### 3.2 *The job 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 researchers and researchers from abroad.
- **Further information:** More detailed information of relevance to potential applicants is posted on our website. Such information includes, for example, career development prospects, training opportunities, scholarship programmes, equality directives, appointment regulations and an equivalency table relating to career stages of the European Framework for Research Careers.
- **Encouraging underrepresented groups to apply:** These include, in particular, women, people with disabilities and researchers from abroad. We specifically address such groups in our job advertisements. In a bid to make MUAS more appealing to researchers from abroad, we also publish relevant detailed information in English or in international jobs portals, where 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 applicants from abroad – for essential translations. There is no need to enter the Curriculum Vitae manually.
- **Information about the selection process:** We inform applicants about the selection process in good time, giving them sufficient time to prepare themselves accordingly. For example, we provide information about 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 exclusion<sup>8</sup> and pay attention to gender parity. As a rule, they are composed as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> Further information about absolute and relative grounds for exclusion is given in Section 6).

<b>Appointment procedures</b>	<b>Selection procedures</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 members from the group of professors</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 1 member from the group of academic staff</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 1 member from the group of students and</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 1 external person</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Equal Opportunities Officer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 members from the group of professors</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 members from the group of academic staff</li> </ul>
<p><i>Additionally invited, as required:</i> Disabilities Officer</p>	<p><i>Additionally invited:</i> Staff Council, Equal Opportunities Officer, Disabilities Officer</p>
<p><i>In addition:</i> 2 external assessors (professors)</p>	

▲ *Table 2: Composition of appointment and selection committees*

- Objective selection decisions:** We take selection decisions factually, objectively and on the basis of a fair and transparent basis for decisions with regard to merit, aptitude and qualifications.
- 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. We consider the predefined assessment criteria to be binding; they represent

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).

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

▲ *Table 3: Examples of assessment criteria*

### 3.4 *The recruitment stage*

- **Written confirmation of recruitment:** Following a positive decision by the selection committee and involvement of the relevant bodies, we send the 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 insurance

### 4.1 *The recruitment procedure*

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

Participants from schools and departments are prepared with regard to OTM-R during basic preparatory measures (e.g. workshops) and during consultations on the selection procedure. Work aids and checklists ensure sustainable implementation. The topic of OTM-R is broached in regular workshops for members of appointment committees.

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

## 4.2 *The OTM-R system*

A working group comprising persons from different areas (e.g. Human Resources, Staff Council) 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 OTM-R 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 at MUAS, 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 this connection, 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 topic is communicated and addressed throughout MUAS. 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 topic in regular workshops for members of appointment committees
- ❑ Publication of this Policy on the MUAS website
- ❑ Posting of work aids and guides on the MUAS intranet
- ❑ Integration of relevant OTM-R documents into the HEI's process portal FINDUS®

## 6. Absolute and relative grounds or 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 is in paid employment with the applicant or performs significant work for him or her otherwise or has worked for him or her in the past two years. 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 a dependence 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
- or if there is such a close connection in the employment histories that complete impartiality cannot be ensured.

## **6.3 Assessors**

The principles set out under 3. and 4. 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 must 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.

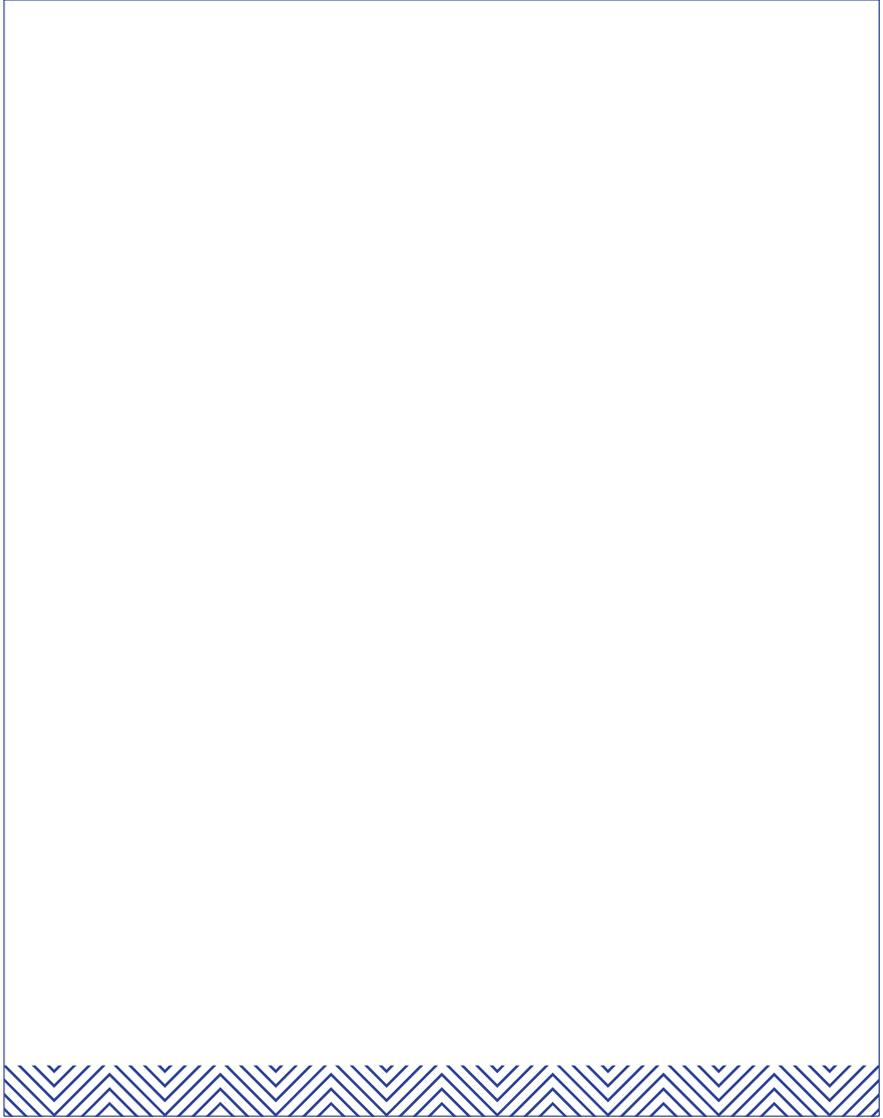
The committee rules on exclusion in appointment processes, or the Presidential Board in cases of doubt. In other personnel selection procedures, it is incumbent on Human Resources to decide, possibly after conferring with the President or the Chancellor.

# 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.

# Notes





# Imprint

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