OPEN, TRANSPARENT, AND MERIT-BASED RECRUITMENT POLICY (OTM-R 2026)

1. Introduction

Since 2010, the Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain) has adhered to the European principles defined by the **European Charter for Researchers** and the **Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers**,[1] as well as the **Euraxess initiative** and the **Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)**.[2]

This policy reflects UCLouvain's strong commitment to ensuring open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment procedures for researchers, in line with the values underpinning its staff policy: **respect and valorisation of individuals, inclusion and diversity, equity and clarity, competence and development, and engagement and responsibility**.

Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R) principles guide our actions to attract the best talent, promote international mobility, and guarantee high-level scientific and pedagogical quality. This policy serves as a single reference framework applicable to all entities within the university.

Thanks to continuous efforts over the past 15 years, UCLouvain has earned recognition from the European Commission for the quality of its staff policy dedicated to researchers (categories R1 to R4[3]), as demonstrated by the award of the **"HR Excellence in Research"** label.

HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

[1] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C_202301640.
[2] https://www.uclouvain.be/fr/recherche/euraxess.
[3] https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/career-development/researchers.

2. OTM-R Policy 2026: General Principles

UCLouvain ensures that its recruitment procedures are:

OPEN

UCLouvain positions itself as a leading research university, welcoming an increasing number of international researchers each year, characterised by diverse experiences, backgrounds, and cultures.

At UCLouvain, **academic freedom, scientific integrity, ethics, and professional responsibility** are fundamental principles.

Job offers are designed to clearly present the missions, criteria, and benefits associated with the position. They are published in **French and English** on recognised platforms to ensure international visibility. Applicants with specific needs are invited to communicate them to facilitate necessary accommodations.

Furthermore, UCLouvain recently co-authored a **guide to best practices in researcher recruitment**[4] as part of an interuniversity project. This guide serves as a concrete tool to support recruitment by:

- recommending broad dissemination of job offers;
- defining transparent and non-discriminatory selection criteria applicable to all applicants;
- structuring each stage of the recruitment process to ensure equity and openness.

These practices, strictly aligned with the **European Charter for Researchers** and the **Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers**, guarantee rigorous selection procedures.

[4] https://uclouvain.be/en/system/files/uclouvain_assetmanager/groups/cms-editors-uclouvain/Recherche/Documents/OTM-eR_E-book_EN%201.pdf.

TRANSPARENT

While recruitment modalities may vary depending on the category of researcher – **academic, temporary scientific staff, research logistics staff, grant holders, or assistants** – applicants are always informed, **prior to selection**, about the recruitment process and the selection criteria. Each procedure is conducted with **transparency, fairness, and a constant respect for individuals**.

The digitisation of the application process via the **SuccessFactors platform** ensures full traceability and optimal transparency: job descriptions, selection criteria, deadlines, and procedures are clearly communicated to applicants. The university is committed to the continuous improvement of its application process.

Selection committees are composed in a balanced manner, both in terms of **gender and expertise**. UCLouvain invests in training recruiters and hierarchical managers to:

- reinforce their mastery of OTM-R principles;
- raise awareness of unconscious biases (such as gender stereotypes, social or national origin biases, age biases, similarity biases, etc.);
- ensure compliance with European standards.

Additionally, the **Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan (GEDIP)**[5] complements these measures by promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the recruitment process. This contributes to a more **legible, fair, and respectful** environment for all and reinforces UCLouvain's institutional culture.

[5] https://www.uclouvain.be/fr/equite-diversite-inclusion/les-politiques-edi-de-luclouvain.

MERIT-BASED

Merit assessment[6] combines quantitative criteria (publications, scientific results) and qualitative criteria (teaching, supervision, knowledge transfer, societal engagement, or the use of narrative CVs).

The primary objective of UCLouvain's recruitment process is to identify the applicant with the required qualifications who aligns with the institution's values and can progress in the various dimensions of their role while contributing to the university's evolution.

The recruitment process is conducted with respect for the **rights and dignity** of individuals, without resorting to methods that could harm or undermine their integrity, particularly in the choice of questions or tone used. The information requested is limited to what is strictly necessary to assess professional skills and suitability for the position.

Special attention is given to career breaks and mobility experiences.

Finally, UCLouvain's commitment to **the CoARA Agreement**,[7] signed in October 2023, reinforces the central role of integrity and ethics in merit assessment. By joining this European initiative to reform research assessment practices, the university adopted a comprehensive approach to merit that goes beyond purely quantitative indicators to recognise the full range of a researcher's contributions.

CoARA promotes a more balanced evaluation, valuing:

- scientific quality;
- commitment to open science;
- responsible research conduct;
- active participation within the institution and society.

[6] The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers define merit as the consideration of a researcher's entire experience, including their overall potential, creativity, and degree of independence. This assessment is based on diverse activities such as teaching, supervision, teamwork, knowledge transfer, research management, innovation, and public engagement. Merit must be evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively, valuing outstanding achievements in a diversified professional career, rather than solely the number of publications.

[7] https://uclouvain.be/en/research/coara.

By integrating these principles, UCLouvain ensures decisions are based on authentic merit, fairness, transparency, and respect for ethical standards.

3. A Policy Aligned with the University's Strategic Plan and Staff Policy

UCLouvain's OTM-R policy is embedded in the vision and priorities defined by its strategic plan, entitled "Direction and Purpose". By ensuring open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment, the policy directly contributes to the plan's "Flourishing and Well-being" objective by providing a respectful, inclusive, and attractive working environment for talent.

It also aligns with the "Societal Responsibility" objective by promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, in accordance with the Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan (GEDIP) and the university's commitments to sustainable development.

The OTM-R policy is a strategic lever to enhance UCLouvain's international attractiveness and support its ambition to be a university of choice for researchers and staff.

Finally, the policy includes the implementation of the value pairs of the university's staff policy:[8]

- respect and valorisation of individuals through respectful and inclusive procedures;
- inclusion and diversity by promoting equal opportunities;
- equity and clarity through objective criteria and transparent communication;
- competence and development by supporting researchers in their careers;
- engagement and responsibility through the active involvement of stakeholders in upholding ethical principles.

[8] https://uclouvain.be/en/travailler/politique-du-personnel.

4. Conclusion

Through the **OTM-R Policy 2026**, UCLouvain reaffirms its strong commitment to ensuring an **exemplary recruitment environment**, aligned with the most demanding European standards. By ensuring that each procedure is **open, transparent, and merit-based**, the university equips itself to attract and retain **high-level researchers** capable of fully contributing to the scientific, pedagogical, and societal quality that characterises its mission.

The rigorous implementation of these principles is supported by:

- increased digitisation of processes;
- ongoing vigilance against biases;
- enhanced training for recruitment stakeholders.

This fosters a climate of **trust, equity, and integrity**. It also contributes to the university's **continuous improvement dynamic**, driven by the **GEDIP**, the **HRS4R Strategy**, and active participation in European initiatives such as **CoARA**.

By embedding the **value pairs of its staff policy** at the heart of its approach, UCLouvain reaffirms its commitment to building a **diverse, engaged, and innovative research community**. This policy is thus an **essential catalyst** for:

- supporting talent development;
- enhancing the university's international attractiveness;
- promoting high-quality, responsible, and sustainable research that serves society.

Contacts

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