Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers

The European Commission (EC) is committed to ensuring excellent working and research conditions in the European Research Area (ERA). Therefore, the EC published the European Charter for Researchers, and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers in 2005. The aim of the Charter and the Code of Conduct is the establishment of standards for employment conditions for researchers at universities in Europe.

Saarland University endorses the European Commission's efforts in improving recruitment procedures and career opportunities as well as working conditions for researchers at all career stages and expresses its full support of the implementation of the Charter and Code. We are committed to complying with the principles and achieving the objectives set out in these documents in order to contribute to the development of an open and sustainable labour market for researchers. In line with this central aim, Saarland University recognizes the importance of open, transparent, and merit-based recruiting processes. The OTM-R checklist records the current state of implementation of open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) procedures at Saarland University, which already cover many aspects of both Charter and Code. Based on this self-evaluation of the status quo, Saarland University will develop a strategy for the full implementation of the principles and requirements of open, transparent and merit-based recruitment, backed by the actions described in the action plan. The following sections outline the status quo which will be continuously re-evaluated and further developed in the future. Ultimately, we aim to support researchers in all scientific fields with the best possible framework: to attract and attain the best and most fitting applicants, to enable good practice in research and facilitate vocational and personal development.

The action plan as well as all other resources mentioned or linked in this document, will be continuously revised and updated during the implementation process of the HRS4R strategy. Some of the resources are currently available in the intranet or in German only.

1 Overall strategy and legal framework

The university's long-term guiding principles and strategic considerations are described in the University Development Plan. The main features have already been considered in the current published version and will serve as the basis for drawing up a longer-term development plan for the upcoming years until 2030.

One of the main duties of researchers at the university is to expand the frontiers of scientific knowledge, and they are free to use the available human and financial resources to investigate
relevant topics of their own choice within the effective ethical, legal, and regulatory as well as budgetary and infrastructural boundaries. Hence, freedom of science, research, and teaching is ensured for all researchers (R1-R4) according to German Basic Law (Art. 5 (3)). This is also in line with the new Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research signed in 2020 by the EU ministers in charge of research and confirmed at a Ministerial Conference on the European Research Area. In addition, Art. 5 of the Saarland Higher Education Institutions Act (SHSG) states that freedom of research in particular covers research questions, principles of methodology, and the evaluation and dissemination of research results. Saarland University’s strategical decisions and developmental plans as well as administrative regulations cater to this legal framework.

Related links:

2 Recruitment and Onboarding

2.1 Job advertisements

Templates for job advertisements for all staff groups are provided by the Human Resources Division to ensure that formal aspects such as the pay group, working time, main location of the employment, contract duration, information on career development opportunities, job description, job requirements, contact person, application deadline and address are included. The Human Resources Division also checks that the requirements and selection criteria are described clearly and that the advert matches the qualification needed for the vacant position. This ensures that the most suitable persons have the means to evaluate their fit to the position. In areas where women are underrepresented, job advertisements contain an explicit invitation for women to apply. Equally, applications of severely disabled persons are encouraged. Jobs are published via the University’s
website, EURAXESS, and additionally distributed via mailing lists, web portals and specialist journals to reach both national and international audiences.

Related links:

- Templates for job advertisements:

- Job advertisements / current vacancies:
  - Scientific Staff (DE/EN): [https://www.uni-saarland.de/en/administration/jobs/wissenschaftler.html](https://www.uni-saarland.de/en/administration/jobs/wissenschaftler.html)
  - Administrative and technical staff (DE): [https://www.uni-saarland.de/verwaltung/stellen/nichtwissenschaftler.html](https://www.uni-saarland.de/verwaltung/stellen/nichtwissenschaftler.html)
  - Online appointment portal for (Junior) Professors (DE/EN): [https://www.uni-saarland.de/en/administration/berufungen/online-berufungsportal.html](https://www.uni-saarland.de/en/administration/berufungen/online-berufungsportal.html)

2.2 Applications

Recruiting procedures for all career stages (R1-R4) are mainly conducted electronically (e-recruitment). Applicants are required to hand in only the essential documents for the respective position so that the administrative burden is kept to a minimum. An automatically generated confirmation of receipt is sent. They are informed about the next steps and about the status of the process by the recruitment unit and will receive a written acceptance or rejection after the selection process has been concluded.

There is an online-based application form for the recruitment of professors (R3/R4) requesting information about qualifications in research (e.g., publications, grants), teaching, management, supervision, networking, volunteer work, contribution to academic self-administration as well as patents and innovation activities or other achievements concerning the transfer or exploitation of research results.
Related links:

- Guidelines on application and recruitment processes:


2.3 Selection process

Selection committees must include a person from the academic staff representative council, the Equal Opportunity Officer and – in case of applications from severely disabled persons – the Representative for Severely Disabled Persons. They are obliged to protocol selection criteria, their weighting and how the selection process has been conducted.

The quality of selection processes, especially comprehensibility of the selection decision and the underlying criteria, is ensured by the selection committee and reviewed by the Human Resources Division and the academic staff representative council. The Equal Opportunity Officer also pays particular attention to ensuring that career breaks due to family commitments will not be evaluated negatively. During recruitment, severely disabled persons are given preference if they have the appropriate qualifications for the advertised position. In areas where women are underrepresented, female applicants with the same qualifications as male applicants are given priority.

For professorships (R3/R4), resources in terms of staff, research equipment, premises and financial resources are determined prior to publishing the job advertisement and are further negotiated during the appointment process based on the appointee’s concept for research and teaching. For the recruitment of professors, the Fundamental Principles and Rules Governing Saarland University specify the needed composition of selection committees. Committees must consist of a representative number of women, representatives of different university units and sectors, and external members. A general guide for appointment procedures is available, which is complemented by templates for several procedural steps.

To ensure a comprehensive assessment of junior professors’ and professors’ (R3/R4) qualification, a broad range of evaluation criteria, including research, teaching, supervision, management, networking, mobility, volunteer work, is applied in the evaluation process.
Relatd links:

  - Documents referring to the appointment procedure (R3/R4) (DE): [https://www.uni-saarland.de/verwaltung/berufungen/dokumente.html](https://www.uni-saarland.de/verwaltung/berufungen/dokumente.html)
- Classification in pay scale group (DE): [https://www.uni-saarland.de/dezernat/p/dienstleistungen/az/e/eingruppierung.html](https://www.uni-saarland.de/dezernat/p/dienstleistungen/az/e/eingruppierung.html)

2.4 Onboarding

As part of their onboarding, researchers and newly appointed professors receive advice and information about the most relevant aspects of the university’s organisational principles, regulations in research, teaching and administration as well as about relevant contact persons. There is an intranet Welcome Package with all information needed for the beginning of a new position available for all staff (R1–R4). In accordance with the needs and requirements of newly appointed professors (R3/R4), the university has put in place a dedicated Welcome Package which contains information on organisational and administrative aspects such as general information related to contractual and legal obligations of researchers as well as information on the official duties of professors. Every newly appointed professor (R3/R4) is informed at the earliest stage, before their official appointment, about the webpage containing all relevant information about processes and regulations at Saarland University. Immediately after their official appointment, professors are invited to an individual information meeting with the onboarding contact person, who is also available for ongoing service and help, to receive a tailored overview of the most important aspects of everyday administrative fundamentals and a list of contact persons for respective topics. Further information (e.g. on funding opportunities) is provided in meetings and individual briefings.

The university puts great emphasis on openness and a multidimensional perspective on the qualification profile of applicants, including mobility. When recruiting researchers from abroad the responsible departments (Human Resources Division, Department for Research Management and
Transfer, International Office) help with the international transfer of grants and social security provisions as well as country-specific administrative regulations.

Related links:

- Digital Welcome Package for newly appointed professors on the website of Saarland University (EN): https://www.uni-saarland.de/en/page/newlyappointed.html
- Digital Welcome package for new employees (Microsoft SharePoint I DE): https://unisaarlandde.sharepoint.com/sites/Willkommenspaket
  - Special section in the digital Welcome Package for newly appointed professors (Microsoft SharePoint I DE): https://unisaarlandde.sharepoint.com/sites/Willkommenspaket/SitePages/Neuberufene.aspx
  - Special section in the digital Welcome Package for managers (Microsoft SharePoint I DE): https://unisaarlandde.sharepoint.com/sites/Willkommenspaket/SitePages/F%C3%BChrungskr%C3%A4fte.aspx
- Welcome Center for information and help on the arrival for researchers from abroad (R1-R4) (EN): https://www.uni-saarland.de/en/global/welcome-center.html

2.5 Internationalisation strategy

The university is closely cooperating with the federal government and thus actively involved in the optimisation of study and labour law framework conditions for internationalisation and mobility based on federal and state regulations. Furthermore, thanks to its strategic partnerships and especially in the framework of its European University Alliance, Saarland University proactively contributes to this discourse on the European level. The university highly values international qualification profiles of applicants and aims at facilitating their employment process by providing all required documents in English language (or in French if required). When recruiting researchers from abroad the responsible departments (Human Resources Division, Research Management and Transfer Division) help with the international transfer of grants and social security provisions. Through active participation in international alliances (e.g. European University Alliance “Transform4Europe”, “University of the Greater Region”), international projects and international exchange programmes (e.g. Erasmus+, Horizon2020 ITNs), the university promotes international mobility of early-stage and advanced researchers. The Internationalization Committee of the Senate actively promotes the exchange of best practices in the field of internationalization at the university and supports international projects and initiatives through the dedicated internationalisation funds. To remove existing language barriers the initiative “Trilingual Campus” was launched in 2017 by the Internationalization Committee. The Trilingual Campus Initiative aims at making it easier for (research)
staff and students to participate in university life. This involves the translation of administrative documents, web content and information material from German into English and French by an established network of highly qualified translators. Furthermore, the university offers English-, French- and German-language courses for staff which will help both German and international researchers communicate, facilitate processes and share their scientific insights and outcomes.

Related links:
- Internationalization funds (DE): https://www.uni-saarland.de/international/profil/internationalisierung/fonds.html
- European university alliance Transform4Europe (EN): www.transform4europe.eu

3 Working environment

3.1 Ethical principles

All researchers (R1-R4) must adhere to ethical principles in their research. These might be laid out in national and international or internal guidelines (e.g. the Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice issued by the German Research Foundation) and further conditions imposed by funding institutions. The university's Ombudsperson, the Permanent Research Integrity Committee (both appointed by the University Board and the Senate), and the university-wide Committee for the Ethics of Security-Relevant Research are responsible for ensuring the adherence to these principles and monitoring research misconduct investigations. Additionally, an Animal Welfare Officer and Committee review ensure compliance with ethical principles in animal studies.

There are several other committees and review boards to ensure the adherence to ethical principles in all areas. In addition, ethical aspects of research carried out at the university are reviewed by external organisations, such as the Ethical Board of the Saarland Medical Association.
3.2 Equal Opportunities and Diversity Management

Saarland University has established a non-discrimination policy that is integrated in the Equal Opportunities Plan and the University Development Plan. In addition, the university has signed the German Diversity Charter issued by the non-profit organisation “Charta der Vielfalt e.V.”.

The Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management Unit as well as the Equal Opportunity Office are committed to promoting a research environment free from any discrimination. Current measures include, but are not limited to, advice and training on diversity and equality issues as well as support services for all underrepresented groups. In order to ensure the inclusion and equal treatment of persons with disabilities, the Representative for Severely Disabled Persons offers a variety of support services (e.g. accessibility of the workplace, consultation services for applicants and university staff) and is involved in all phases of the recruitment process of severely disabled applicants. The promotion of women’s careers is fostered by support programmes for female researchers, mentoring programmes as well as offers for female students in STEM fields.

In recent years, Saarland University has developed concepts for the implementation of gender equality standards in research, which have been recognized repeatedly by the German Research Foundation. In 2014, this institution distinguished Saarland university as best-practice example for its gender equality measures.
Related links:

- Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management Unit (EN): [https://www.uni-saarland.de/en/administration/diversity.html](https://www.uni-saarland.de/en/administration/diversity.html)
- Equal Opportunities Office (DE): [http://gleichstellung.uni-saarland.de/start/](http://gleichstellung.uni-saarland.de/start/)
- Discrimination free campus: [https://www.uni-saarland.de/en/administration/diversity/discriminationfree-campus.html](https://www.uni-saarland.de/en/administration/diversity/discriminationfree-campus.html)
- Representative for Severely Disabled Persons (DE): [https://www.uni-saarland.de/verwaltung/schwerbehinderte.html](https://www.uni-saarland.de/verwaltung/schwerbehinderte.html)

### 3.3 Legal affairs and data privacy

A legally binding confidentiality agreement is signed by every university member upon the start of their working contract. The university's Data Protection Officer makes sure members are aware of current laws and legislations concerning data privacy and serves as contact person for questions on the topic. The officer reviews internal data protection concepts on a regular basis and thereby ensures compliance in the university's cooperative ventures with other institutions. A document on the university's intellectual property (IP) policy encompasses the university's specific regulations on intellectual property, inventions, patents, copyright, unpatented materials, and distribution of revenues from exploitations of patents/inventions/unpatented materials. All researchers (R1-R4) can access information, training courses, individual and conflict counselling on IPR by legal experts from the Department for Research Management and Transfer or through Saarland Universities’ Patent Marketing Agency.
3.4 Occupational health and safety

A designated Occupational Safety Unit and Occupational Health Management are accessible to all employees, offering individual counselling, seminars, (e-learning) trainings, health days or weeks, information events, health coaching, etc. Various other services concerning occupational health and safety include an Occupational Medicine Service, a person responsible for radiation protection and safety officers in all units of the university to oversee the workplace conditions for ensuring the employees’ safety and health. Following and expanding the European Framework Directive on Safety and Health at Work, leaflets and regulations are provided for laboratory staff to ensure safety, especially in more hazardous working environments. There must be at least one first aider and one person who is trained as a fire protection assistant per unit. Respective courses are offered and funded by the university.

A fault reporting office is available 24/7 and serves as a central contact point. Information on available services of the department and contact persons can be found on the university’s website and are also provided in the digital Welcome Packages for new employees.

Related links:
- Occupational Safety Unit (DE): https://www.uni-saarland.de/verwaltung/arbeitsschutz.html
- Occupational Health Management (DE): https://www.uni-saarland.de/verwaltung/bgm.html
- Occupational Medicine Service (DE): https://www.uni-saarland.de/verwaltung/betriebsarzt.html

3.5 Open Access Policy

Saarland University has signed the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities. Depending on the type or form of academic work, an open access publication might be mandatory, e.g., via the open access repository of the university’s library. The library also consults researchers on funder policies and appropriate open access repositories for research data.
3.6 Staff representatives

There are two staff representative councils at Saarland University, one for academic staff and one for the administrative and technical staff. They offer general advice, support in matters with superiors or the university management, with contractual issues or conflict cases at the workplace.

Related links:
- Staff representatives (DE/EN): https://www.uni-saarland.de/en/intern/all/employees/staff-representatives.html

3.7 Work-Life Balance

Saarland University offers flexibility regarding working hours. In addition to offering part-time positions if job duties and tasks allow for it, many positions follow a flexitime model and offer remote (home office and mobile) working. This does not only facilitate the compatibility of professional and private life but is also intended to provide room for creativity.

The dual-career, childcare, and development programmes of the Equal Opportunities Office, the Representative for Severely Disabled Persons and a contact point for families through the audit “Family-Friendly University” as well as existing measures for Occupational Health Management and sport offers are also provided.

Related links:
- Rules regarding working time at Saarland University (DE): https://www.uni-saarland.de/dezernat/p/dienstleistungen/az/a/az.html
- Occupational Health Management (DE): https://www.uni-saarland.de/verwaltung/bgm.html
4 Professional and personal development

4.1 General commitment

The university has issued a “Programme for the Scientific Qualification, Personnel Development and Career Advancement of Academic Staff” where the characteristics of different phases of academic qualifications are described and principles to support their career development are established. All stages of research careers (R1-R4) are explicitly included in this concept.

Related Links


4.2 Training courses and other support measures

All researchers (R1-R4) can take part in training activities during their working hours. Annual appraisal interviews are recommended for all employed researchers to review qualification requirements and career development opportunities. Researchers of all career stages can participate in training courses on good scientific practice, publication strategies, bibliometric indices, patents, and scientific writing. Besides, they can choose from a broad range of transversal skill courses such as project management, communication, language skills, leadership, presentation skills etc., following the recommendations by the German Rectors’ Conference.

Various institutions at the university (e.g., the university’s Centre for Lifelong Learning, the Career Centre, the section for staff development within the Human Resources Division) offer training courses to R1-R3 researchers to prepare them for a career in academia or in other sectors. For doctoral (R1) researchers, training courses offered by the GradUS graduate programme focus on competences for their scientific work and on developing various transversal skills. For the group of postdoctoral and advanced researchers (R2-R3), the PROWIS programme offers courses on topics that are specific for this phase such as international research collaboration, the supervision of R1 researchers and application trainings for the future appointment as professors. The Centre for Lifelong Learning provides courses in higher education didactics that are open to all researchers who are active in teaching.
In addition to the offers made by Saarland University itself, researchers can apply for financial support in order to attend training courses by both national and international external providers. To do so, R1 and R2 researchers can refer to the “GradUS global” funding scheme, whereas more advanced researchers (R2-R3) can apply for funding in the “IQ-WISNA programme”. Via the “PROWIS Science Net”, additional funding for national and international networking can be provided in the future.

Related Links

- University Didactics Program (DE): https://www.uni-saarland.de/einrichtung/zell/arbeitsstelle-hochschuldidaktik.html
- Teach the teacher – Medical Didactics Training Program (DE): https://www.uniklinikum-saarland.de/de/lehre/dekanat/studiendekanat/teach_the_teacher/

4.3 Development of career perspectives

Career advice for R1 and R2 researchers is stated in the university's Guidelines on Career Development for Young Researchers. To promote the long-term appointment of R2/R3 researchers, the university offers professorships in the German “tenure-track” system, which means that a fixed-term professorship beginning with an evaluation phase of up to six years will be converted into a permanent professorship (R4) if the outcome of the evaluation is positive. In analogy, a similar
Tenure track system with an evaluation phase is available to R2/R3 researchers for a long-term management position in academic research for non-professorial career paths. As a means of continuing educational development, professors can take research leave, while members of all other staff groups can take educational leave.

Related Links

- Career Advice for R1/R2 (DE): [https://www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/upload/verwaltung/wisna/Leitlinien_Berufsberatung.pdf](https://www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/upload/verwaltung/wisna/Leitlinien_Berufsberatung.pdf)

- Guidelines for junior professors (DE): [https://www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/upload/verwaltung/fundstellen/Personalrechtl_Anglegenheiten/DB18_1216.pdf](https://www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/upload/verwaltung/fundstellen/Personalrechtl_Anglegenheiten/DB18_1216.pdf) and [https://www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/user_upload/verwaltung/berufungen/Rahmenordnung_W2TT-Professuren.pdf](https://www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/user_upload/verwaltung/berufungen/Rahmenordnung_W2TT-Professuren.pdf)

- Guidelines for Tenure Track System for non-professorial career paths in academic research (DE): [https://www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/upload/verwaltung/wisna/Leitlinien.pdf](https://www.uni-saarland.de/fileadmin/upload/verwaltung/wisna/Leitlinien.pdf)

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