

INSTITUTO DE ASTROFÍSICA DE CANARIAS-HR STRATEGY FOR THE SELECTION AND RECRUITEMENT OF RESEARCH STAFF - ACTION PLAN



Name Organisation under review: INSTITUTO DE ASTROFÍSICA DE CANARIAS - IAC

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Web link to published version of organisation's HR Strategy and Action Plan:

<http://www.iac.es/info.php?op1=26&op2=130&lang=en>

Please note: This HR Strategy is referred to Researchers only, and it doesn't cover the recruitment of technical or administrative staff at the IAC.

1. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary grant holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research	212
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)	59
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is the host organisation)	93
Of whom are women	58
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor.	75
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level	61
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level	76
Total number of students (if relevant)	
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)	385
RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organisational budget	27.686.690,00
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	14.626.620,00
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	9.937.720,00
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	3.122.350,00

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)

The Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias(IAC) is an international research centre in Spain which comprises:

The Instituto de Astrofísica, the headquarters, in La Laguna (Tenerife).

The Centro de Astrofísica, in the island of La Palma (CALP)

The Observatorio del Teide (OT), in Izaña (Tenerife).

The Observatorio del Roque de los Muchachos (ORM), in Garafía (La Palma).

The IAC is constituted administratively as a Public Consortium, created by statute in 1982, with involvement from the Spanish Government, the Government of the Canary Islands, the University of La Laguna and Spain's Science Research Council (CSIC).

2. NARRATIVE (MAX. 2 PAGES)

The IAC is a world-class research institution, and the largest astrophysics research centre in Spain. Based on a long-term partnership with the University of La Laguna, it also provides advanced training for graduate students, young researchers and highly skilled engineers. The IAC has a state-of-the-art Technology Division with infrastructure, equipment and technical staff, which allows us to maintain our instruments for astrophysical research, and also to participate in the most advanced instrumentation projects for the near future. Concerning the selection and recruitment of Researchers, the IAC aims to follow a Quality System, Open, Transparent and Merit-based, with a focus on Equality, trying to eliminate biases in the recruitment process, and to ensure the best candidate is hired for each opening.

Following standard methodologies, including a GAP Analysis, we have identified the strengths and weaknesses in our current policies and practices under the four theme headings of the European Charter and Code.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
RECRUITMENT	
E-recruitment tools are used in all calls.	The published version of our OTM-R policy online is only available in Spanish, and needs to be reworded.
A significant percentage of applicants come from abroad (60%) or institutions other than IAC (85%).	There is no internal guide setting clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of positions.
Open, Transparent and Merit-based System, with a focus on Equality, trying to eliminate biases in the selections process and to ensure the best candidates are recruited.	Even though there are training programmes for OTM-R, and some of the staff involved in the process has received training, not everyone involved has been properly trained.
Candidates are informed along the process about the different steps taken by the IAC and by the Selection Committee.	35% of the applicants are women; therefore, despite the system is focused on Equality, fewer women apply to our calls with respect to men. The number of female candidates decreases going up from R1 to R4. While for R1 the fraction of people recruited for each gender is ~50% this decreases to 10% for R4 positions.
The Selection Committees take into consideration the variations in the chronological order of the CVs of the applicants, although this is not explicitly stated in the calls.	Although during the process the candidates are informed of the steps being taken and of the documents published, they are not informed of the strengths and weaknesses of their applications.
The IAC recruitment system values the mobility and experience of the applicants, the number and quality of their publications, teaching, teamwork, knowledge transfer activity, management of research and innovation, and public outreach activities.	The candidates may not be completely aware of the legal aspects and requisites in the calls, since the web page does not include an English version of all legal documents.
The IAC recruitment system recognizes the importance of the development of a professional career; qualifications are not a barrier to entry. Only in the case of R1, academic qualifications have a large weight in the selection process.	Due to Spanish regulations for the Science and Technology system, and restrictions to the funding of the projects, many postdoctoral researchers are hired on short term consecutive contracts, and therefore continue for a long period as R2.
	No system of interviews is implemented during the selection process of researchers.
WORKING CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY	
The IAC does not discriminate against researchers in any way on the basis of gender, age, ethnic, national or social origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, disability, political opinion, social or economic condition.	Working from home is not allowed in the Spanish Administration.

The IAC provides support for the relocation process of researchers that start their contracts at the IAC.	The relocation allowance for researchers is limited to 2.000 Euros for travel and accommodation; sometimes this is insufficient to cover the relocation expenses of researchers with families.
The IAC does everything it can to ensure the stability of its researchers, within the framework of the Public System Regulations.	Legal Spanish Regulations for public employment are difficult for the permanence of the employment. The IAC does as much as possible to improve the stability of our researcher's employment, but it doesn't depend on our institution.
IAC tries to provide the most stimulating research environment, as well as the necessary resources and opportunities.	Limited information is provided about Intellectual Property Rights and co-authorship rules when researchers start their contract at the IAC.
Most of our researchers carry out teaching activities at the University of La Laguna (ULL), within the terms of the existing Agreement between the IAC and the ULL.	There is no ombudsman/woman for researchers at the IAC.
The IAC recognizes as professionals all researchers engaged in a research career (R1 to R4)	R1 researchers do not feel they are recognized as professionals, but rather considered as students.
	Due to the increase in the number of researchers over the last few years, there is a space problem in the Central building of the IAC: offices must be shared by two, three, or more researchers; in particular, for R1 personnel, offices are shared between 8 and 22 researchers.

ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS

The IAC encourages staff to focus on their research with freedom, within the appropriate legal and ethical framework and rules.	Limited information is provided about different funding opportunities is provided when researchers start their contract at the IAC.
The IAC promotes health and safety among researcher through the adoption of safe working practices; the IAC encourages researchers to become familiar with the current national legal requirements regarding data protection and confidentiality.	Limited information is provided about legal regulations and ethical principles when researchers start their contract at the IAC.
An evaluation/appraisal system is in place for researchers belonging to the R1 to R3 Groups, with the evaluation/appraisal being carried out on a yearly basis.	R4 are not evaluated on a yearly basis. The evaluation/appraisal systems in place are an external one from the Ministry (sexenios) and an internal one, which does evaluate productivity, but that needs to be improved.
The IAC supports researchers in their task of dissemination, exploitation, and communication of research results: the centre has a unit devoted to Scientific Communication, which depends directly from the IAC Director.	

TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The activities of R1-R3 researchers are monitored via annual reports; these are also used to identify possible weaknesses/problems related to the research project or to the researcher's relation with the supervisor.	R1 personnel feel that they do not have a way to communicate/address problems concerning the relationship with their supervisors.
The IAC has established a Mentorship Programme for pre- and post-doctoral researchers of the IAC Research and Graduate Students Division. Through this Program, the IAC seeks to contribute to the career development of the young researchers, providing guidance and help at times of confusion and insecurity about the professional future. The tutors are R3 and R4 researchers, unrelated to the R1-R2 research project, who have volunteered for assisting in resolving complaints or conflicts that may arise in the relationship of young researchers with their groups, or with other parties within the IAC.	Although there is a Mentorship Programme at the IAC, it has not been yet very effective in providing support and guidance to ensure the personal and professional development of researchers. R1 researchers are sometimes hesitant to make use of the Mentorship Programme. When problems arise between R1 and their supervisor, the steps to be taken for solving the issues are somewhat complicated.
	There is not enough training for coaching, teaching and management activities for researchers at IAC.

	Some of the R1 and R2 personnel are not proficient in English, and have not been sufficiently trained in giving presentations.
	The communication flow concerning funding opportunities/avenues and the various routes for proposing for PhD projects, Master Projects, etc. needs to be improved.

2. ACTIONS

Taking into consideration the gap- analysis and the overview of strengths and weaknesses, we propose the following actions to be implemented:

Title action	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
A1. Implementing interviews as part of the selection process	Summer 2018	HR Dept.	An increase in the percentage of job openings for which interviews are performed. At least 30% of the hiring processes will include interviews.
A.2. Informing candidates who request it about their strengths and weaknesses	Spring 2018	HR Dept.	Number of inquiries answered / Having all written inquiries from applicants answered within 2 weeks./The applicants are fully informed about the selection criteria.
A.3. Publishing an English translation of the official call for applications.	Summer 2018	HR Dept.	Translated document available on the IAC web, and linked to the job adverts./Every candidate will be completely informed about the terms of the call
A.4. Introducing a clearer explanation on how variations in the chronological order of the CVs are evaluated by the selection committees.	Summer 2018	HR Dept.	A short paragraph/few sentences will be added to adverts posted by the IAC./Information on how the chronological variations will be values will be available to every potential candidate.
A.5. Rewording and publishing a new version of our OTM-R policy online, including an English version.	Summer 2018	HR Dept.	Having this document available both in Spanish and English on the web site, together with the job postings.
A.6. Establishing an internal guide setting clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of positions.	December 2018	HR Dept.	Number of questions to the HR Recruitment Unit from the people involved in the process/Having this document available also on the intranet.
A.7. Establishing a training process on OTM-R for the Selection Committees.	Summer 2018	HR Dept.	Ensuring that at least the members of the Research Committee and Graduate Students Committee have received this kind of training.
A.8. Adding clear information to the calls about maternity/paternity leaves and gender balance.	Spring 2018	HR Dept.	A short paragraph/few sentences will be added to adverts posted by the IAC
A.9. Studying measures to increase the number of Women who apply.	December 2018	HR Dept.	To increase the number of Women applying to jobs at the IAC.
A.10. Increasing the amount of money in the relocation package for researchers that move to the IAC with dependent family members.	Spring 2018	HR Dept.	Increase of at least 25% in the maximum budget for relocation expenses.
A.11. Having the internal IAC page in English/Spanish.	Summer 2018	UC3 / SIC	Having all the information on job benefits and research facilities on the intranet available in English.
A.12. Establishing clear criteria that R3 fellows need to meet by their 4th	December 2018	IAC's Director's Board	Write a short document establishing these criteria and

<i>year, which - if met - would lead to the opening of a permanent position advertised with a profile reflecting the one of the R3 fellow.</i>			<i>having it available on the intranet. Number of permanent positions announced with a profile reflecting one from an R3 fellow</i>
A.13. <i>Improving our Mentorship Programme and the way it is communicated to the researchers</i>	Spring 2018	Research Division	<i>Including information on the program in the welcome package. 100% of R1 and R2 with a Mentor. Number of inquiries about the Programme</i>
A.14. <i>Explicitly mentioning in job calls that mobility will be positively valued in the selection process</i>	Summer 2018	HR Dept.	<i>A short paragraph/few sentences will be added to adverts posted by the IAC</i>
A. 15. <i>Organising annual meetings of the R3 Researchers with the Head of the Research Division (or IAC's Director) to monitor their professional development.</i>	Autumn 2018	Research Division	<i>100% of the R3 personnel has met with the Research leadership by 2019.</i>
A.16. <i>Providing enough information about the different funding mechanisms when researchers start their contract at the IAC; including such information both in the welcome package and on the intranet.</i>	Autumn 2018	Research Division	<i>Number of questions on the subject./ Including information on funding opportunities in the welcome package and the intranet. Imparting a yearly seminar to all researchers on this topic.</i>
A.17. <i>Providing enough information about the legal regulations, Intellectual Property Rights and Co-Authorship when researchers start their contract at the IAC.</i>	Autumn 2018	Research Division	<i>Include this information in the welcome package and the intranet.</i>
A.18. <i>Improving the training for teaching and coaching activities for R2-R4. Providing training on soft-skills, managing, presentation skills...</i>	December 2018	HR Dept.	<i>Organizing yearly courses on teaching, coaching techniques, soft-skills, managing and presentation skills; with a focus tuned to the career needs of R1-R2-R3 or R4. An increase in the quality of the research and the degree of satisfaction of researchers, measurable through the yearly reports.</i>
A.19. <i>Providing more information to R2 and R3 about the possibility of teaching at the ULL.</i>	December 2018	Graduate Students Division	<i>Writing this information on the intranet and updating it at the time new possibilities arise. Self-explanatory and self-contained emails sent to all research personnel about calls for submission of bachelor and master projects, as well as internships.</i>
A.20. <i>Creating the ombudsman/woman for Researchers at the IAC.</i>	Summer 2019	IAC's Director's Board	<i>Number of inquiries to the ombudsman/woman</i>
A.21. <i>Continuing with the steps to have a new building with around 50 new offices for researchers</i>	December 2019	IAC's Director's Board	<i>Having the building in place and operated by 2021</i>
A.22. <i>Establishing an internal evaluation/appraisal system for the group R4 and a new one for R3 at the</i>	December 2019	IAC's Director's Board	<i>Number of R4 to be evaluated every year / 100% of R3 to be evaluated every two years</i>

<i>end of the second year of their fellowship.</i>			
A.23. Introducing in the annual report a clear question about the relationship between R1 and R2 personnel with their supervisors.	December 2018	Research and Graduate Students Divisions	Number of “problems” detected with the Annual Report.
A.24 Streamlining the procedures in case a change of Supervisor is needed.	December 2018	Research and Graduate Students Divisions	Number of changes of supervisor per year
A.25. Improving the communication flow on funding opportunities/avenues, the various routes for PhD projects, Master Projects, etc.	December 2018	Research and Graduate Students Divisions	Number of complaints about information lacking on this topics.
A.26. Implementing an Annual Information Day on the Strategy for Recruitment with the Researchers to try to improve the communication on the process	December 2018	HR Dept.	Number of complaints about information lacking on the IAC’s HR Strategy

To implement the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment, the following actions will be undertaken too:

Actions addressing the implementation of Open, Transparent, Merit-Based Recruitment principles:

1.- Advertising and application phase.-

a) Actions to be taken for “Advertising the post”:

OTMR. 1.a.1. Compiling in our ads all the relevant information on the posts on professional development opportunities and career development prospects. These are not clearly addressed in our current adverts. Timing: Summer 2018. Responsible: HR Research Recruitment Unit

OTMR. 1.a.2. Publishing a new version of our OTM-R policy online in English, and include the link in the adverts. Timing: Summer 2018. Responsible: HR Research Recruitment Unit

OTMR. 1.a.3. To keep on publishing all our openings on EURAXESS, as well as in the rest of international platforms where we publish them now. Timing: Continuous. Responsible: HR Recruitment Unit

b) Actions to be taken for “Keeping the administrative burden to a minimum”: We follow this step already, and applicants do not have to provide original certificates during their applications. We always use a recruitment tool

<http://www.iac.es/jobs/research/>

<http://vivaldi.ll.iac.es/ensenanza/solicitudes/>

c) Actions to be taken for “Acknowledging receipt and providing additional information”: We follow this step already and applicants are duly informed at every step in the process.

2. Evaluation and Selection Phase.-

a) Actions to be taken for “Setting up Selection Committees”: We follow this practise already, and every selection Committee is publically appointed by the IAC’s Director’s Board, and announced in the official Call. Since these are Public Employment Calls, no members out of the Spanish Public System can be included in the committees.

OTMR. 2.a.1. Study the possibility of including external experts as referees during the process. Timing: Summer 2018. Responsible: HR Research Recruitment Unit

b) Actions to be taken for “Screening and interviewing”:

OTMR. 2.b.1. Including interviews in the selection process. Timing: Summer 2018. Responsible: HR Research Recruitment Unit.

c) Actions to be taken for “Assessing merit and future potential”: We follow these premises already, using and balancing a wide range of evaluation criteria, according to the position being advertised.

3. Appointment Phase.-

a) Actions to be taken for “Feedback”: We follow this step already, informing every candidate about the finalization of every step of the process, including the conclusion of the process.

OTMR. 3.a.1. Informing those candidates who request it about their strengths and weaknesses. Timing: Summer 2018. Responsible: HR Research Recruitment Unit

b) Actions to be taken for “Complaints mechanism”: We follow this step already, and as a public body there is a public and transparent mechanism for handling complaints.

4. IMPLEMENTATION (MAX. 1 PAGE)

The implementation process of this Action Plan will start as soon as we send it to the European Commission, and, as can be seen in the list of Actions, has a deadline of December 2019.

The IAC’s Director’s Board will designate an Implementation Committee, with representatives of all the Researchers Groups (R1-R4), the HR Recruitment Unit, and the Research and Graduate Students Division. The Implementation Committee will report to the IAC’s Director’s Board and the IAC’s Processes’ Group (a group of IAC staff who designs and follows the implementation of protocols for each and every standard process at the IAC, e.g. purchases, travel, etc.) will act as a steering group overseeing the improvements and progress on the selection and recruitment processes for Researchers.

As it was done during the GAP Analysis and the preparation of this Action Plan, Researchers will be involved, not only by taking part of the Implementation Committee, but through their participation on satisfaction surveys on specific items and actions, and with regular meetings with representatives of every group. In addition, informative sessions on the Subject will be programmed, e.g., as part of regular meetings of the Researchers at the IAC, to improve the participation on the implementation of the Plan.

The Actions will be included in the Annual Action Plan for the HR Recruitment Unit and for every Unit involved, and the alignment with the HRS4R will be published in our web page and in the IAC's Strategic Plans for next years.

Following the a standard strategy for new processes at the IAC, all the actions and improvements will be monitored by the “Grupo de Seguimiento y Mejora” (GSM-Monitoring and Improving Group) of the HR-Selection Process, and by the Processes' Group, and will be documented in the internal control system, compatible with the ISO9001 standard. That will help us prepare for internal and external reviews.