



## **OPEN, TRANSPARENT AND MERIT-BASED RECRUITMENT OF RESEARCHERS OTM-R POLICY**

### **Introduction**

Åbo Akademi University is an international workplace that recognizes and uses the knowledge and abilities of its employees and students.

Equality, gender equality, participation, health, career paths, flexibility and responsibility are self-evident aspects of a dynamic study and work environment.

Åbo Akademi University emphasizes openness, transparency, sustainability and quality in all its operations and strives to maintain a work community characterized by motivation, well-being and competence development for all staff. Career opportunities and professional development are therefore highly valued and supported through a diverse range of internal and external courses and programmes.

By implementing the European Commission's Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R), Åbo Akademi University is committed to continuously developing and maintaining a stimulating work environment for researchers, developing working conditions in a purposeful way, and giving special attention to the recruitment of new employees to the work community.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, recruitment processes at Åbo Akademi University are characterized by open, transparent and merit-based recruitment of researchers – OTM-R. In this way, the university contributes to an attractive, open and sustainable labor market for researchers within the European research field.

The process for recruiting researchers at Åbo Akademi University is briefly described below.

### **Recruitment procedure**

The basic principles for recruitment and employment procedures at the university and the general qualification requirements for a research position in different employment categories and at different career stages are specified in internal regulations and guidance documents, such as the Åbo Akademi University Regulations on Personnel (approved by the University Board).

The responsibility for decisions on recruitment and employment and associated decision-making powers has been further specified in the Rules on Responsibility and Delegation for Åbo Akademi University (approved by the Rector).

For responsible managers and employees who have a role in recruitment, a recruitment guide has been drawn up, which describes the various steps in a recruitment process and the recruitment group's responsibilities. The university's HR Specialists participate in and support all recruitment processes from advertising to employment decisions.

### **Advertising and application procedure**

Recruitment of researchers at Åbo Akademi University is a strategic focus area, which is based on the units' planning of activities and need for staff resources and competences.

The job description and the specific qualification requirements for an open position are based on the needs identified before the recruitment process begins.

The recruitment process at Åbo Akademi University is open, we advertise research positions on various national and international recruitment platforms. It is possible to apply for positions via an electronic web-based recruitment system and the application documents are submitted electronically. After submission of the application, the applicant receives a written confirmation.

The call for application includes the following information:

- The position and current tasks
- Recruiting unit and organization
- Starting date and length of employment, possible trial period
- Working time and duration
- Place of work
- Qualification requirements and assessment criteria
- Possible language proficiency requirements
- Information on salary level
- Instructions for appendices to the application
- Date of application deadline
- Contact information to persons who can provide additional information and other links to relevant information on the university's website.

The calls for application are written in Swedish and English. Other language versions may also be considered depending on the nature of the position.

The university provides instructions and models for how applicants should compile requested application documents and appendices and provides technical support for the submission of the application. Only such documentation that is needed for the assessment of applicants is requested and information such as language skills can be supplemented later unless it delays the recruitment process.

### **Preparing the recruitment process and assessment of applicants**

Recruitment committees are appointed at the university to be responsible for recruitment processes and to carry out a transparent, impartial, fair and equal

assessment of the applicants. The assessment is based on the assessment criteria and the weighting of competence that forms the basis for the job description in the call for applications.

The recruitment committee is appointed by the faculties' deans, and it also represents the faculty's subject competence within the research area. In the selection of members to a recruitment committee, priority is given to versatility, adequate experience and competence to assess the applicants for the current position. The composition and responsibility of the recruitment committees, and the recruitments for which recruitment committees are appointed, are stated in Åbo Akademi University Regulations on Personnel.

For the recruitment of professors and professors within the tenure track system (Associate Professor, level 2, Assistant Professor, level 1), an external expert procedure is applied. Independent experts in the scientific field are consulted to comment on the applicants' qualifications according to the instructions in Åbo Akademi University Regulations on Personnel and the provisions of the Universities Act regarding recruitment of professors.

The recruitment committee's assessment process consists of several elements, which are clearly communicated to the applicants. The review of the application documents and the relevant appendices is supplemented by interviews with the applicants or a selection of the applicants. Sometimes the applicant may also be given the opportunity to demonstrate his or her teaching skills. The recruitment committee documents its assessment and comparison of the applicants in relation to the job description and the requested qualifications. All applicants have the right to acquaint themselves with the assessment of their merits. The recruitment committee's memorandum, including justifications for proposals for employment, is public to the extent that it does not contain secret information according to the Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999). When recruiting professors, the statements of external experts are also communicated to the applicants.

### **Employment and research career**

Employment at Åbo Akademi University is based on employment contracts, which are governed by the Employment Contracts Act (55/2001) and other applicable regulations. An employment can be permanent or fixed-term, depending on the nature of the assignment within the university. Employment contracts are made in writing.

The work community at Åbo Akademi University also includes researchers who conduct research with personal research scholarships and grants.

At Åbo Akademi University, there are two forms of career ladders for researchers: the four-level career ladder and the tenure track system.

#### **a. The four-level research career**

The career ladder for researchers consists of four levels:

stage 1: Doctoral training level (doctoral students, research assistants),

stage 2: Postdoctoral merit level (postdoctoral researchers and university teachers),

stage 3: Independent researcher level (university researchers, senior lecturers)  
stage 4. Level of leading researchers in the field (professors)

The aim of the four-level research career is to clarify how a researcher identity is strengthened through the skills and experiences that the researcher acquires in the scientific community, and the way the researcher develops into an independent and, further on, leading researcher in his or her field. A more detailed description of the career system can be found in the university's guidance documents.

For permanently employed teaching and research staff at the university, it is possible to advance internally from one career level to the next when certain conditions are met and when it is compatible with the unit's strategic staffing plan. The process for advancement is stated in the university's guidance documents.

The tasks and the continuous competence development for researchers in both career systems are discussed in regular discussions on professional development with the immediate superior and are followed up in work plans. The immediate superior has a responsibility to support researchers in their career development.

#### **b. The tenure track career system for professors**

At Åbo Akademi University, the tenure track career system complements the four-level employment structure for research and teaching staff, and the system can be applied when recruiting professors. A tenure track employment as Assistant Professor (level 1) or Associate Professor (level 2) is initially fixed-term. To enable advancement to the next level, the researcher is given clear objectives and advancement criteria. The intention is for the researcher to be able to plan and carry out his or her academic activities in such a way that it favors a possible decision on permanent employment and advancement to the level of professor. The criteria for advancement are found in separate agreements and follow the university's overall decision on the tenure track process.