INTRODUCTION

One of the main activities falling within the scope of the Unit for Quality Management of Human Resources for Research (QMHRR), established by Rector’s Decree No. 115 of 07 March 2016, is to monitor and analyse the level of application, by the University, of good practices relating to the management of Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment procedures, as indicated in the EU document “Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers (OTM-R)”, drawn up by the “Steering Group for Human Resources Management” (SGHRM), as part of the European Research Area.

In the document “OTM-R”, which represents one of the pillars of the European Charter of Researchers and of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, approved in 2005, it is shown that an open, transparent and merit-based recruitment procedure brings benefits to researchers, institutions and a country’s research system. More specifically, the “OTM-R” policy makes research careers more attractive, guarantees equal opportunities for all candidates, facilitates mobility and, in general, contributes to an increase in the cost-effectiveness of investments in research. The document also specifies that the “OTM-R” policy must be set in combination with other human resources strategies aimed at improving the working conditions of researchers and attracting new ones, also from abroad, and that all the policies should be part of a University program aimed at increasing its level of quality and reputation, and therefore its attractiveness, generating quality research and positive effects on innovation, thus also improving the career opportunities for researchers and their mobility. The objective of an “OTM-R” system is therefore to ensure that the University always aims to appoint the best person for each position and that all recruitment procedures are based on principles of equal opportunities for all candidates, both internal and external.

The “OTM-R” document includes a check-list of actions, a self-assessment tool aimed at determining the degree to which the University's practices conform to the “OTM-R”, and at advocating the identification of possible strategies for improving those practices. The Unit for Quality Management of Human Resources for Research performed an analysis of the check-list points, providing, for each action, a review of the status of its application and proposals of actions to be taken if the analysis has identified a gap to be filled or a possibility of development or improvement of the procedures applied so far.
ACTIONS PROPOSED FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OTM-R POLICY IN UNICAM

1) *Have we published a version of our OTM-R policy online (in the national language and in English)?*
   The University adopts this document as an internal guide that defines OTM-R procedures and practices, and also provides an additional policy document, which expresses the University's commitment to applying these procedures. The documents are published on the University website in Italian and in English.

2) *Do we have an internal guide setting out clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of positions?*
   The University has regulations based mainly on the national legislation in force and containing specific references and links to the principles of the European Charter for Researchers. It is necessary, after verification, to update these regulations so as to make them consistent with the OTM-R principles and to produce, on the basis of these principles, a “guide” to be published on the University website, as a reference for all interested parties.

3) *Is everyone involved in the process sufficiently trained in the area of “OTM-R”?*
   The University will prepare an “Online Tutorial” for all the staff members. The preparation of the tutorial will require the support of experts from institutions that have already adopted similar training tools.

4) *Do we make (sufficient) use of e-recruitment tools?*
   E-recruitment tools are already used for the selection of PhD students (R1) (online application form for the first selection phase, remote interviews for the second assessment phase). Similar procedures are adopted for research grants (R2) awarded by the University. With regards to the recruitment of Researchers and Lecturers (R2, R3, R4), the University is committed to integrating, for all selection / assessment procedures, the instruments prescribed by the legislation for the use of e-recruitment tools, starting from the application submission phase, and to initiating a process of gradual implementation of e-recruitment tools, also in the selection phase.

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1 *TOWARDS A EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH CAREERS (Brussels, July 2011)*
5) **Do we have a quality control system for OTM-R in place?**

The University has established several bodies to promote and guarantee the quality assurance of its processes, also in relation to the OTM-R. First of all, a Unit for Quality Management of Human Resources for Research (QMHRR) has been established, with the function of monitoring and ascertaining compliance with the OTM-R procedures. Furthermore, the University relies on a Single Guarantee Committee (which has representatives within the QMHRR), a Trust Advisor available for problems of all the staff members, and a Student Ombudsman to whom the PhD students can also refer. In addition, the QMHRR proposes to assign to the University Transparency Officer the role of the contact person for monitoring and verifying compliance with the OTM-R guidelines in the selection procedures.

6) **Does our current OTM-R policy encourage external candidates to apply?**

The calls for admission to PhD programmes are written in English and the related selection procedures are organised in such a way as to encourage the participation of external candidates through the use of e-recruitment tools (see point 4). The University is also committed to disseminating externally, and on a regular basis, the notices inviting applications for research grants, research scholarships and coordinated and continuous collaboration contracts. With regards to the recruitment of fixed-term research fellows (R2) and lecturers (R3 and R4), the calls, in addition to what is prescribed by the regulations, are posted on the European Union website “Euraxess”, both in Italian and in English.

Access to the positions of fixed-term senior research fellows is, by law, only partially open, because it is limited by the regulatory requirement of previously holding a fixed-term junior research fellow contract, a research grant or a scholarship for at least 3 years (various titles are cumulative across a period of three years).

UNICAM has introduced several additional restrictions which, although not discriminatory, limit the participation to persons who meet the requirements that “safeguard” the University in terms of quality and integration in the context of development strategies programmed by the University (having carried out teaching activities for at least 3 years, even if not consecutive, even supplementary, in an amount not less than 120 hours in total; having obtained a positive evaluation by the governing bodies of the institution in which they carried out their scientific and teaching activity, accompanied by the judgement of three assessors external to that institution, who preferably carry out their activities abroad).

To encourage the participation of foreign candidates in associate-professor and full-professor selection procedures, for which it is necessary to obtain the national scientific qualification (ASN), the University is committed to raising awareness, among national authorities, of the need to give maximum publicity, even abroad, to the relevant procedures.
7) **Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract researchers from abroad?**
Publishing of the calls for admission to PhD programmes, for research grants, for the recruiting of R2, R3 and R4 on the “Euraxess” website, is an example of compliance with this requirement. In addition to the “Euraxess” tool, the University promotes the use of other methods for publishing the calls, both for admission to PhD programmes and for research grants, such as the professional Social Network for researchers, “ResearchGate”, or specialized databases Science Careers and Nature-jobs, and is committed to covering the costs of the same. UNICAM is committed to promoting the improvement of the Euraxess website at the European Commission, in order to make it more accessible and lighter.

8) **Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract underrepresented groups?**
The University is committed to improving its information policies aimed at favouring the inclusion of persons belonging to groups potentially subject to discrimination and at removing discriminatory barriers, in order to allow for the overcoming stereotypes, in a way similar to what is already the case with the broader inclusion and non-discrimination of students, for example with reference to the removal of architectural barriers and the application of tools for the visually impaired.

9) **Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to provide attractive working conditions for researchers?**
The University regularly monitors the perception of wellbeing, safety and quality, by administering questionnaires to the staff, and it also plans the actions necessary to achieve improvement. The University is also committed to introducing in the calls (in the form of a link to a web page) a statement on support services that will be provided to new hires, such as, for example, the availability of initial accommodation, a health insurance that guarantees, in addition to hospitalisation, the coverage of basic medical expenses, and the co-financing of the monthly fee payable to nursery schools. Other measures that may be reported by the persons concerned may be introduced following an assessment of feasibility and sustainability.

10) **Do we have means to monitor whether the most suitable researchers apply?**
The University is committed to providing the committees with a chart for monitoring the qualifications of all candidates for various positions. The chart will contain a check-list of the mandatory requirements so as to make it possible to verify, on a timely basis, if the competences of the candidate respond to all or only part of the requirements needed for the open position, including the requirements regarding the “degree of creativity and autonomy”.
11) Do we include in the job advertisement references/links to all the elements foreseen in the relevant section of the toolkit? [Chapter 4.4.1 a) of the Toolkit* (Advertising and application phase)]²?

The University is drafting a document containing the policies for recruitment with references / links to the elements present in the toolkit section, to be taken into account in future proceedings.

12) Do we keep the administrative burden to a minimum for the candidate? [see Chapter 4.4.1 b) of the Toolkit*]?

The University is committed to the computerisation of the application compilation phase and to requesting the documentation needed for the selection exclusively in an electronic form, postponing the presentation of the original documentation (where necessary) to the “entry into service” phase.

13) Do we have clear rules governing the appointment of selection committees? [see Chapter 4.4.2 a) of the Toolkit*]?

The University regulations contain the rules for the appointment and composition of the selection committees. A link is included in the calls for candidates to take note of the relevant sections of the regulations.

14) Are the committees sufficiently gender-balanced?

The national legislation for public employment requires that, in the committees, the less represented gender cannot be less than 30% (article 57, paragraph 1, letter a) and paragraph 1a, legislative decree 165/2001 and subsequent amendments). The University undertakes not to allow any exception.

15) Do we have clear guidelines for selection committees which help to judge ‘merit’ in a way that leads to the best candidate being selected?

The University does not have guidelines in this regard, but is committed to adopting them by and no later than 08 October 2016.

16) Do we inform all applicants at the end of the selection process?

² * Toolkit included in the “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” (see attachment)
As part of the action to facilitate the computerisation of the application compilation phase (see point 12), the University is committed to setting up an automatic system for confirming receipt of the request. In all the recruitment procedures, the candidates are informed of the timing of the various phases (verification of the eligibility, the date of the test(s), communication of the results, the time limit within which appeals may be filed). The candidates are informed, as part of the same procedure, of the means available to access the judgement of the committee.

17) **Do we provide adequate feedback to interviewees?**

The Personnel and Organisation Area is responsible for publishing all the reports relating to the selection procedures on the University website. The reports contain specific references to the criteria and the assessment methods, and to the results of the same for each candidate. All candidates can access the records of the procedure (see reply no. 16). All the candidates admitted to the last assessment phase are sent the opinions concerning them, without the need for a formal request.

18) **Do we have an appropriate complaints mechanism in place?**

The QMHRR proposes that the Transparency Officer manage the reception of complaints relating to recruitment procedures. To this end, a specific procedure must be prepared to govern the termination of the complaint and the relationship between the complaint and the QMHRR. It is considered appropriate to invite the Student Ombudsman and the Trust Advisor to take part, each year, in at least one of the QMHRR meetings. The aforementioned functionaries of the University undertake to prepare, every year, and also in the English language version, a summary report of their activities in relation to any appeals or complaints presented by researchers or PhD students. In such cases, the report shall take into account the data protection requirements of those who have presented the aforementioned appeals and complaints, while confidential mechanisms are provided for coordination with the competent governing bodies.

19) **Do we have a system in place to assess whether OTM-R delivers on its objectives?**

The QMHRR is actively committed to monitoring and verifying the correct application of the OTM-R guidelines and to indicating any actions for improvement. Monitoring is carried out through an annual review of the recruitment procedures applied by the University, to be carried out by the end of February each year. The review and self-assessment process is based on the data and information collected by the QMHRR, including through an “audit cycle” with the persons in charge of the procedures and the technical / administrative support structures involved in the procedures.
The results of the monitoring shall be outlined in a report, sent to the governing bodies of the University, which shall contain the analysis of any critical issues found and the consequent proposals for improvement.