

## **Policy for Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment at Medical University - Varna**

Medical University - Varna (MU-Varna) is committed to the principles of Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTMR) in accordance with the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R). This policy is based on the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, as outlined in the European Commission Recommendation 2005/251/EC of 11 March 2005, as well as the Practical Guidelines for Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment of Researchers approved in 2015.

The rules for the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers at MU-Varna aim to foster an academic environment that promotes values such as transparency and equal opportunity. As an institution awarded the "HR Excellence in Research" logo, MU-Varna clearly demonstrates its commitment to responsible and ethical practices, ensuring fair conditions for academic staff and supporting the university's integration into the European Research Area.

This policy serves as a strategic tool for attracting and retaining highly qualified research personnel, ensuring that the recruitment and appointment processes for researchers are transparent, open, and fair to all applicants. The conditions and procedures for the recruitment and appointment of researchers, as well as the specific job titles, are determined in accordance with the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Higher Education Act, and MU-Varna's internal regulations.

Through this policy, MU-Varna reaffirms its position as a leading institution that promotes academic integrity, innovation, and professional development, thus contributing to the achievements of the European Research Area.

### **General Principles and Requirements**

**Art. 1.** Recruitment procedures for academic staff at MU-Varna are open, transparent, and based on objective and clear criteria, taking into account the type of position and the source of funding.

**Art. 2.** Job announcements are published in Bulgarian in the "State Gazette" and on the university's website in both Bulgarian and English. For international positions, announcements are also published on the EURAXESS platform. Each announcement includes information about the position, requirements, and opportunities for professional development.

**Art. 3.** Candidates have the right to be informed about the strengths and weaknesses of their applications after the completion of the selection process.

### **Evaluation System for Recruitment and Promotion**

**Art. 4.** Candidates submit a CV providing evidence of qualifications and scientific achievements relevant to the position. The evaluation system is based on criteria that are objective, aligned with international standards, and applicable to the academic staff at MU-Varna.

**Art. 5.** The evaluation of candidates includes all professional and scientific achievements, as well as their ability to conduct independent research. The system takes into account indicators such as publications, patents, scientific supervision, participation in research projects, and teaching activities.

**Art. 6.** The selection committee uses both qualitative and quantitative indicators, including academic output, teaching experience, mentoring, and participation in socially significant research initiatives. Each qualification and professional experience of the candidate is assessed on its merits, including mobility and diverse experience.

### **Employment Relations and Researcher Development Environment**

**Art. 7.** Researchers conclude an employment contract with MU-Varna, which may be either permanent or fixed-term, depending on the position and type of funding.

- Permanent contracts are offered to researchers such as postdoctoral fellows, associate professors, and professors who occupy permanent positions.
- Fixed-term contracts are concluded with PhD students and researchers employed under research projects of specified duration.

**Art. 8.** The university ensures fair working conditions in accordance with national legislation and MU-Varna's internal regulations, including the collective labor agreement.

**Art. 9.** MU-Varna supports a balance between research and teaching activities, especially for early-career researchers, aiming to ensure that teaching duties do not hinder their scientific work.

### **Support for Professional Development and Mobility**

**Art. 10.** The university provides continuous opportunities for training and skills development for its researchers, including mentorship programs for young researchers and support for their career growth.

**Art. 11.** All academic staff, PhD students, and students have the right to participate in national and international mobility programs managed by MU-Varna.

**Art. 12.** The university offers structured orientation and support programs for newly appointed staff, facilitating their adaptation to the working environment and supporting their long-term engagement.

### **Appeal Procedure and Feedback**

**Art. 13.** MU-Varna ensures a transparent appeal process that allows candidates to submit complaints in cases of unfair treatment. Complaints are reviewed by an independent committee that guarantees an impartial examination of each case.

**Art. 14.** All candidates are provided with constructive feedback, regardless of the outcome of the selection process, in order to offer clarity and to help improve their professional performance in future applications.

## **Special Measures for Inclusion and Equal Opportunities**

**Art. 15.** The university ensures diversity within selection committees and actively works towards achieving gender equality and supporting candidates from diverse backgrounds.

**Art. 16.** MU-Varna provides accessibility arrangements for candidates with disabilities and adapts procedures when necessary to ensure their full participation.

## **Continuous Improvement and Monitoring**

**Art. 17.** MU-Varna conducts regular reviews of its recruitment policies and practices, gathering feedback from all stakeholders and striving to update its processes to meet emerging needs and requirements.

**Art. 18.** Based on feedback and regular reviews, the university updates and improves its recruitment procedures to maintain high OTMR standards and to affirm MU-Varna as a preferred place for scientific and academic work.

## **Professional Development and Career Progression**

**Art. 19.** MU-Varna provides its researchers with continuous opportunities for professional development, including specialized training in academic skills such as project management, teamwork, and public communication of scientific results. Through regular training and skill development support, the university helps its researchers achieve success and acquire new competencies in scientific and academic activities.

**Art. 20.** The university conducts regular assessments of researchers' professional progress and provides feedback to help personalize their career paths. These evaluations ensure alignment between individual career goals and the academic requirements of the university.

## **Structured Mentoring and Support for Newly Appointed Researchers**

**Art. 21.** The university has a mentoring program whereby newly appointed researchers are assigned experienced mentors. These mentors provide support on academic tasks, research projects, and navigating the university's administrative and scientific systems, while also fostering the researchers' personal and professional development.

## **Work-Life Balance**

**Art. 22.** MU-Varna supports a healthy work-life balance for its employees by offering flexible working conditions, including opportunities for remote work and part-time arrangements when feasible and applicable. This policy aims to meet the individual needs of staff members and promote their overall wellbeing.

## **Equality and Inclusion Policies**

**Art. 23.** MU-Varna actively works to promote equality and inclusion by ensuring that recruitment and appointment processes are fair and equitable. The university strives to reflect this through balanced composition of evaluation committees and by providing equal opportunities for all candidates regardless of gender, background, or other factors.

### **Support for Researchers with International Mobility**

**Art. 24.** MU-Varna supports the international mobility of its researchers and provides assistance with visa procedures, accommodation, and adaptation of foreign researchers to the university's academic and administrative environment.

### **Support for Career Breaks**

**Art. 25.** The university values and supports researchers whose careers have been interrupted due to personal, family, or health reasons. MU-Varna provides adapted conditions for returning to work and assists researchers in continuing their professional careers after interruptions.

### **Transparency of Evaluation Criteria**

**Art. 26.** Evaluation criteria for selection processes are clearly defined and made accessible to all candidates. MU-Varna provides opportunities for constructive feedback after the process concludes, helping candidates improve professionally and contributing to transparency in the evaluation process.

### **Continuous Monitoring and Improvement**

**Art. 27.** The university conducts annual reviews of its recruitment and appointment policy, incorporating feedback from candidates, selection committees, and administrative staff. MU-Varna is committed to the regular improvement of its practices, ensuring they align with the latest European standards and requirements for open and fair evaluation.