

## Programme to attract and retain talented researchers at the UAB

### 1. Preamble

The UAB stands out from other universities in Spain since it is a research-intensive university, as reflected in its high scientific production (e.g. international projects, scientific publications or doctoral theses). This is possible because the UAB has always believed that research should be the cornerstone of a public university and has always promoted the quality and impact of research and the attraction of talent. Unfortunately, the economic situation since the beginning of the 2010s, has not favoured the implementation of active policies in these areas.

In this context, the UAB faces the important challenge of a generational change in the coming years, and in this process it must be ensured that the competitive edge that has made the university different, does not weaken.

In fact, in the UAB's strategic plan (2018-2030), strategic line 3 (people as the UAB's main asset), anticipates the needs to attract and retain professional talent (strategic objective 3.2). Specifically, the "research" project strategic objective in the strategic plan is the **objective of moving towards a new model of recruitment, retention and increase of talent in the UAB teaching and research teams**, through the development of specific actions to **organise reinforced recruitment and training processes for talented researchers, promoting the recruitment of profiles that provide heterogeneity and make a significant contribution** as well as **ensure a good generational turnover** (operational objectives 3.2.1 and 3.2.2, respectively).

The main characteristics of these researchers must be scientific relevance and leadership, but they must also fit into with the spirit and values of the UAB, according to criteria that include, among others:

- Impact and relevance of the research
- Leadership in national and international research projects
- Ability to promote collaboration and participation in the hosting entity (Group/Department/Inst.) and in the campus in general
- Ability to connect the University's research groups with the most cutting-edge groups around the world, with particular attention paid to centres in the same field, and making UAB research visible in international scientific communities
- Competence in training new researchers, and willingness to form a team and establish alliances

- Interest in innovation and knowledge transfer
- Social impact
- In short, a capacity for leadership and scientific impact in the corresponding field is required based on honest and objective research, carried out based on respect, responsibility, integrity and impartiality.

## **2. Background and objective**

Since 2018, as a result of the implementation of the UAB Horizon 2020 Strategic Plan, the UAB launched a new call (UAB Talent-Banco de Santander) to retain research staff with an accredited research career, since it had been observed, for example, that the time that elapsed between a researcher ending their contract and finding an opportunity to consolidate a stable position at the UAB was not always reasonable. This programme (co-financed by Banco de Santander and the beneficiary itself through research projects) has led to the consolidation of 7 researchers as tenured or associate professors, as well as the new incorporation of research staff from outside the UAB.

In 2019, the UAB initiated a strategy for the INCORPORATION OF RESEARCHERS INTO THE UAB WITH AN ERC GRANT (Agreement 027/2019, of 4 April 2019 of the Academic Staff Committee, [https://www.uab.cat/doc/Incorporacio\\_Investigadors\\_ERCGrant](https://www.uab.cat/doc/Incorporacio_Investigadors_ERCGrant)), linked to the UAB's internationalisation strategy and its participation in Horizon 2020 and the Horizon Europe programme.

Finally, in 2020, this strategy was reinforced through a strong political decision taken by of the Executive Governing Body to support the participation of UAB departments and institutes in the Ramón y Cajal or ICREA programme, which led to a clear increase of UAB beneficiaries of this type of programme over the last three years.

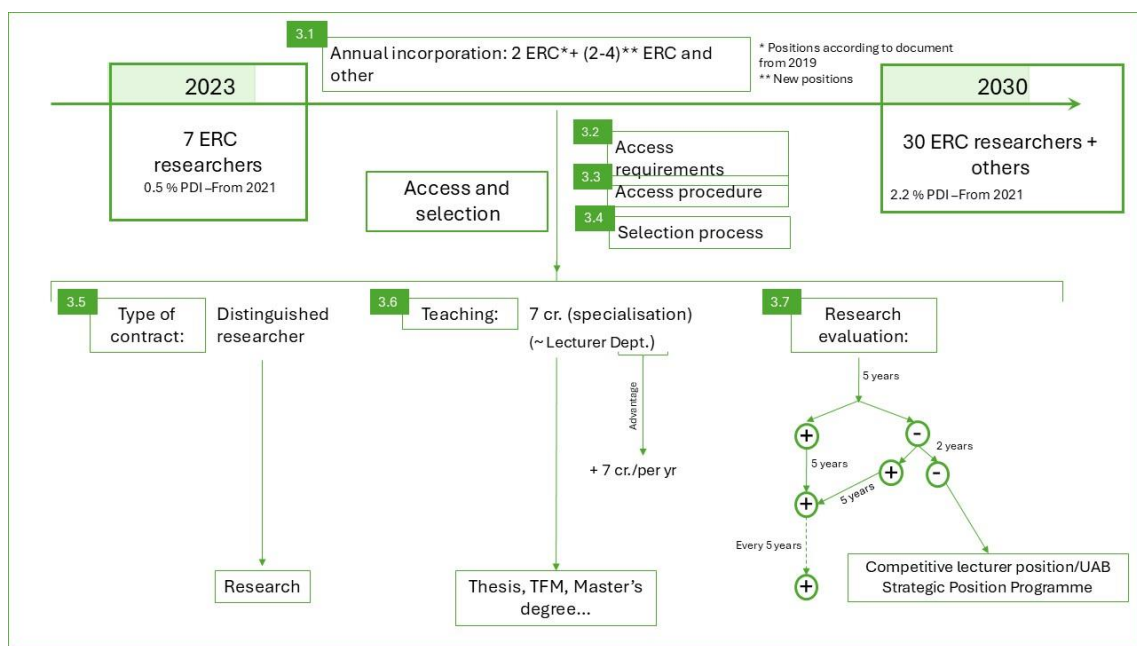
Having analysed, on the one hand, the results obtained through the implementation of these actions in terms of the incorporation of researchers and the economic and research impact (measured based on the research indicators usually used by the funding agencies [ERC number, competitive project number, European project number, etc.] and, on the other hand, the trends observed in the Science, Technology and Innovation Law (17/2022) and the Science Law of Catalonia (Law 9/2022), as well as the opportunities they offer in terms of research figures at the University, this document that we are now presenting proposes the consolidation of this policy of attracting and retaining talent at the UAB, following the strategy described below:

**Objective:** to increase the number of researchers and expand the range of typologies they represent.

**Goal:** to attract and/or consolidate up to 30 promising and influential researchers in all fields of knowledge to help maintain and further propel the UAB towards excellence by 2030.

**3. Action: Implementation of a coordinated policy for the incorporation of new researchers.**

The action to be carried out can be represented through the following diagram and the explanations for each part of the process can be found below:



**3.1 Scope of action**

As already explained, the plan is to achieve the goal of recruiting up to 30 permanent researchers by 2030. For this reason, in addition to the **2 annual places** already reserved according to the 2019 agreement, **up to 3 new places per year** will be added to the UAB PDI replacement rate to offer stable positions for researchers **until a total of 30 researchers have been recruited by 2030**. These positions will be mainly for researchers with an ERC project who have been accepted by a Department and/or by a UAB Institute.

This action is in line with LOSU legislation, in that it establishes a bridge between a research career and the university so as to attract research staff from programmes of excellence by reserving a number of staff positions for this purpose.

If there are more "candidates" than places available annually, the Vice-Rector for Research, after consulting the Vice-Rector for Academic Staff, will decide which candidates are prioritised, taking into account their value as a researcher and also the research promotion needs in the departments or institutes involved. This decision will be reported to the Academic Staff Committee, which approves the public employment positions available each year.

### **3.2. Access requirements:**

One of the following two criteria must be met:

- Being a member of research staff with R3 accreditation, with a recognised scientific track record of contributing to a competitive research ERC Starting Grant project of excellence (or other projects within or outside the European Framework Programme that entail implicit recognition of the excellence of your research career and outstanding funding and leadership).
- Being a distinguished member of the research staff, with R4 accreditation, contributions to a competitive ERC Consolidator or Advanced Grant project of excellence (or other projects within or outside the European Framework Programme that can be absorbed in terms of funding, complexity and leadership).
- Permanent members of UAB research staff or those already taking part in a process of consolidation will not be able to apply for access.

**3.3. Access procedure:** Access to a permanent research staff position requires candidates to pass the corresponding public competitive exams, in accordance with the provisions set out in the UAB Academic Staff Regulations. The competition must be promoted, in each individual case, by the Department in which the staff member will teach.

If applicable, if the ERC project starts at the UAB before the competitive exams have taken place, a distinguished researcher temporary contract will be provided and funded by the UAB.

**3.4. Selection process:** The criteria and procedure for the selection of research staff will be based on merit and scientific ability and these must be efficient, public, transparent and internationally comparable according to European standards, following the recommendations established in the European HRS4R strategy of which the UAB is an accredited member.

In accordance with the above, the access process will be as described below:

- Within the framework of the actions of the Office of the Vice-Rector for Research, to facilitate the attraction of international talent, the UAB will publicise the opportunities it provides for the incorporation of new research staff.
- Research staff must apply for access to this position through the Office of the Vice-Rector for Research, providing a letter of motivation, as well as a letter of acceptance from the department and, where appropriate, from the Institute they wish to join, as well as their CV.<sup>1</sup>
- The application and the CV will be analysed by the Office of the Vice-Rector, as well as by the department and institute, if applicable.
- The application and CV will also be evaluated by three prestigious researchers from the applicant's research area.
- Finally, the Office of the Vice-Rector for Research will make the decision based on the reports received. The selection process will be public, transparent and based on merit.
- The UAB will also ensure that there is a balance between the different areas and fields of knowledge, offering equal opportunities within the UAB.

**3.5. Recruitment process:** The recruitment of research staff will be carried out through a distinguished researcher contract. This is a permanent contract with a duration that is agreed between the two parties based on a commitment to offer a position of associate/tenured professor either when the parties agree to do so or depending on the result of the evaluation. This position will only compute 7 teaching credits in the affiliated Department .

This contract will include two potential professional categories

- R3 Distinguished Researcher: Doctors with proven research capacity, with R3 accreditation, with remuneration equivalent to that of an Associate Lecturer or Tenured Lecturer.
- R4 Distinguished Researcher: Doctors with R4 level consolidated research capacity, with remuneration equivalent to that of Full Professor.

The UAB will assign this contract to a Department, without this implying limitation in terms of research assignment for researchers hired from one of its own institutes, if applicable.

**3.6. Teaching:** A distinguished researcher position is eminently research-based, but the Science Law regulates a teaching capacity of up to 100 hours. The UAB requires this researcher to teach

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<sup>1</sup> The UAB will analyse CVs from the points of view of scientific, technological and social impact

a minimum of 7 credits per year of official courses in specialised classes such as Master's degrees, Bachelor's degrees, and/or supervision and supervision of bachelor's theses, master's theses, and doctoral theses. As already mentioned, these 7 credits will be counted in the Department of assignment.

Since research staff must maintain this link with teaching and the frameworks that support it, they will be assigned to a department, which will be responsible for managing the public competitive exams and the teaching carried out by the researcher.

**3.7. Evaluation of research intensification during their contract:** To ensure that the requirements that lead to access to the position of permanent researcher are met, the research activities of these staff members will be evaluated throughout their career at the UAB by a panel of experts in different fields of knowledge. This evaluation panel will be made up of experts in the subjects to be evaluated, in numbers that will depend on the number of researchers to be assessed, while ensuring that there is always a minimum of two people from the scientific area and at least one from a related area.

5 years after they achieve a stable position, these research staff members must submit a summary of their scientific activity (up to a maximum of three pages) adding the most important information to the following sections:

- Research
  - in. Relevance and impact of the research topic
  - b. Research results: quantity, quality, impact of publications and other relevant results
- Leadership
  - in. Evolution within the research group (e.g. PhD supervision)
  - b. Funds and distinctions obtained
  - c. Significant projects
- Future research plan

Depending on the evaluation result, 2 levels of research progress will be achieved: A- positive, or B-negative.

### 3.8. Evaluation results:

After the first and subsequent evaluations, the following circumstances may occur:

- If the result of the evaluation is **A-positive**, the research intensification will be maintained, and the next evaluation will be carried out after 5 years.
- If the result of the evaluation is **B-negative**, a second evaluation will be carried out after 2 years. If this second assessment does not result in the expected level, the UAB will offer an available teaching and research staff position similar to distinguished researcher with a progressive increase in teaching, which will increase according to the research intensification model in force at the UAB for teaching and research staff. However, no matter how many teaching hours these staff members have, the Department they are affiliated to will continue to count 7 teaching credits. If the interested party rejects this PDI (teaching and research staff) position or does not pass the PDI competitive exams, their distinguished researcher contract will be terminated.

**3.9 Promotion:** The promotion of researchers will be the same as that of the University's general teaching and research staff in terms of the positions that can be applied for. Since R4 Distinguished Researchers are already equated to the highest position within the academic career as full professors, promotion only takes place at the level of R4 Distinguished Researchers.

- R3 Distinguished Researchers will be able to achieve a position as an R4 Distinguished Researcher in two ways:
  - Through applying for the call for chairs based on relevant merits since they are equivalent to the category of Associate/Tenured Lecturer.
  - By obtaining a Consolidator or Advanced ERC Grant.

**3.10. Financial aspects:** the UAB has specific regulations for ERC projects, regarding the transfer of any remaining funds and the return of the university fee for these projects, which would also apply to other research projects obtained in competitive calls that were awarded a minimum amount of 1.2 million euros, equivalent to the average amount for an ERC Starting Grant.

This regulation implies that a variable percentage of the indirect expenses that the university earns for competitive projects are assigned to the principal investigator and to the basic department/institute/entity with which his or her research work is affiliated. This percentage, calculated based on the annual income accumulated by each researcher, is distributed between

the researcher (70%) and the basic department/institute/entity with which their research work is affiliated (30%), and may vary according to the following scale:

- From €2.001 to €100.000 per year per researcher: 7%.
- More than €100.000 per year per researcher: 9%.
- For ERC projects, the 9% applicable return will be increased to 12%. This increase of 3% will be assigned directly to the researcher (Regulations for the compensation of general expenses for research activity) for the costs of incorporating the researcher (adaptation of the space, furniture, computer equipment, etc.) or others.

In addition, for full cost Horizon Europe projects, 80% of the remaining funds are made available to the PI (freely available resources, RLD). ERC projects (Starting Grant, Consolidator, Advance Grant and Synergy Grant) and projects coordinated by the UAB within Pillar II of Horizon Europe are an exception to this general rule, since 100% of the planned freely available resources (RLD) are available to the principal investigator. In these cases, in an exceptional and duly justified manner, these may be used from the beginning of the project, always in accordance with the monitoring carried out by the International Projects Justification Unit in the Area of Economics and Finance at the UAB, the research department/institute/entity to which the project is assigned, or the International Projects Office (Agreement of the Economics and Organisation Committee dated 21 September 2022, <https://www.uab.cat/doc/Instruccio-gestio-desti-Recursoslliuredestinacio-210922>)

Finally, it should be noted that the UAB, through its ERC regulations and research regulations, allows one-off payments to be made via article 60 of the LOSU from the surpluses generated by projects.

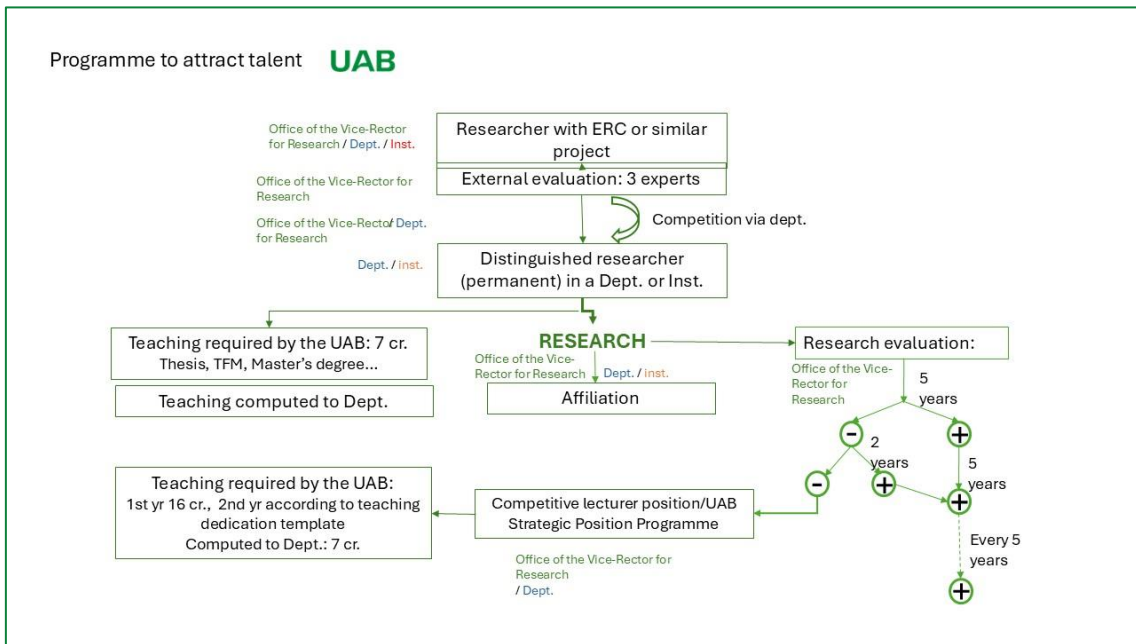
**3.11. Commitments of the researcher:** The incorporation of new researchers will involve the following commitments:

- Integration into the research department/institute/entity to which they belong and participation in its operation: organisation, management.
- Co-funding, from their remaining funds, part of their salary (20%) while their ERC Grant is in force.
- Applying for accreditation for research and/or advanced research from AQU or from TU and/or CU of ANECA in the first call in which they can apply once they have achieved the position of permanent researcher.



- Applying for positions in the ICREA programme, where possible.
- Carrying out the minimum required teaching of 7 credits (thesis, master's thesis, master's or bachelor's degree subjects).

The research positions that will be offered at the UAB have the following characteristics:



These regulations will be reviewed 3 years after their application.