# URGE deliverable 5 – Admissions and Hiring Policies at NIOZ

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This is the information on the Hiring and Admission Policies found by the URGE POD at the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ)

## Hiring process at the NIOZ – current situation

We will focus on the hiring policies and processes for PhD and Post-doctoral positions. First, we state the general hiring policy. Second, we outline (the variability in) the hiring process and the requirements asked of applicants. Last, we formulate the involvement of the hiring committee during the hiring process.

### 1. General Hiring Policy

During the recruitment and selection of applicants, the following policies, stated in the collective labour agreement for Research Institutes (vwoi), should be followed (see following webpage for full vwoi agreement: https://www.wvoi.nl/media/1053/chapter-2.pdf).:

   i. The employer (NIOZ) must establish a selection code with respect to recruiting and selecting personnel, taking the extant code of the Netherlands Association for Personnel (NVP) policy as the point of departure.

   ii. A medical selection only takes place if specific requirements for the performance of the work have been formulated which can be translated into medical terms. A medical examination shall, with regard to its nature, content and scope, be restricted to the relevant purpose. The employer shall bear the costs of the examination and re-examination.

The recruitment code stated by the Netherlands Association for Personal (NVP) policy and aims to provide a standard for transparent and fair recruitment and selection procedures. The code is based on the following underlying principles (retrieved from https://www.nvp-hrnetwerk.nl/sollicitatiecode):

   1. The applicant has a fair chance at the appointment, this means equal opportunity for equal ability and the organization will choose on the basis of suitability with respect to the position

   2. The applicant will be fully informed of the application procedure, the details of the vacant position and the level thereof within the organization

3. The organization will request and use only that information that is needed to assess suitability for the position
4. The applicant will provide the organization with the information that it needs to form a true picture of the applicant's suitability for the vacant position and of the applicant's professional competence (education, knowledge and experience) and will not withhold information that the applicant knows or ought to know is important to the fulfilment of the vacancy for which the applicant is applying; a payslip from the current or previous employer will not be required from the applicant
5. The organization will truthfully provide the applicant with all information that the applicant needs in order to be able to form a complete picture of the job vacancy, working in the Netherlands and of the organization
6. All information provided by the applicant will be treated confidentially and with due care and the applicant's privacy will be respected in accordance with legal provisions
7. Both the applicant and organization are aware that information available from open sources such as the internet and information obtained from third parties is not always reliable. The information that is obtained will be discussed with the applicant with reference to the source and the organization is transparent about the obtained information
8. If an applicant submits a written complaint to the organization about the recruitment and selection process in violation with the code, the organization will respond to that complaint in writing.

Though a code of conduct concerning the NIOZ hiring policy thus exists, personnel involved and/or responsible for the hiring process (often the Principle Investigators of the research project) are often not aware if its existence. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, a guideline of how to implement this code during the hiring policy is lacking. This leads to inconsistent hiring processes (outlined in section 3). Lastly, there is an absence of standardized criteria to ensure the NVP code of conduct is followed.

**2. Hiring process and criteria**
We could not find any open-access policy file that state what hiring process should be followed and what the expected requirements of the applicant are. However, based on the NIOZ Pod discussion and our own experiences, the hiring process and requested criteria for non-permanent scientific positions could be outlined as follows:

1. Once a vacancy opens within a research project, the PI and HRM department craft a job advertisement. A diversity statement is often (but not always) added to the job advertisement.
2. Job openings are posted at the NIOZ website (workingatnioz.com) and academicposition.nl. Often, they are shared on social media like LinkedIn and Twitter. In some cases, vacancies can be found on additional sites, like findaPhD.com, Academic Transfer, academicpositions.nl or on the website of the scientific program (like NESSC/SIAM). HRM and the PI can decide to advertise on more specific job-seeking websites, if desired.

3. Applicants are requested to send the following:
   a. A resumé listing all relevant work experience and received education.
   b. A, or multiple, letter(s) of recommendation, mainly as a reference for character of the candidate.
   c. A motivational letter
4. Candidates are screened by the PI and HRM department. Sometimes, a hiring committee is involved in this selection. More often, the hiring committee only becomes involved during stage 5. No established criteria exist for this selection process, and different PIs may find different criteria important. Nonetheless, applied criteria are often found to be based on:
   a. The motivational letter: is the letter specifically directed on the vacant position? Is the applicant truly motivated to fulfil the vacant position? The letter is moreover used as a measure for personality and enthusiasm as indicators for the potential success in completing the project.
   b. Skill set: does the applicant have the skills necessary to fulfil the position?
   c. Academic background/network: applicants that are from 'known' universities or have done internships at 'known' research groups are often advantaged, since this helps to assess the quality of the obtained training. In contrast, applicants from 'unknown' universities are at a disadvantage. However, within Dutch universities there is no clear preference, as they are all perceived to have the same level. Grades or test-scores are often not considered to be very important.
   d. Previous experiences (relevant BSc and/or MSc degrees, relevant work experience, relevant research projects, is there a consistent "red line" in research interest apparent, etc.).
5. Selection of candidates to be invited for an interview. A hiring committee is formed to be present during the interview, to assess the potential of the candidates (see section 3). The candidates screened initially by the PI are discussed and a selection to be invited for interview is made by the committee. The number of candidates invited depends on the evaluation of the hiring committee. On average 2 – 5 candidates are invited.
6. During the interview, candidates are often (but not always) asked to give a presentation. Following the presentation, the candidate is interviewed by the hiring committee as a group.
7. Candidates are invited for a second round of one-on-one talks with the individual members of the hiring committee and with a representative of HRM. Once present at NIOZ, they also receive a tour of the (lab) facilities and have a chance to interact with people working at NIOZ. Additionally, the candidate is sometimes taken out for dinner by PhD students or Postdocs, to give an impression of life on Texel (a small island). From the visiting candidates, one is offered the position.
8. The other candidates are informed of the decision by HRM once the successful candidate has accepted.

**3. Hiring committee**

No clear guidelines exist (to the best of our knowledge) on the composition of the hiring committee. Usually, the committee consists of three to four people: 1) the PI that offers the position, 2) the promoter and/or daily supervisor of the research project, and 3) one or two senior scientists from the same department, working in a related field/project. Additionally, a PhD students or Postdoc, working in the same research group, is also invited.  The diversity in the committee is often low (most PIs have a western-European background and/or are white), though there is an equal balance in male and female PIs. There is a clear intention to hire candidates from a diverse background, though in reality this appears to be difficult (we hope to facilitate this with the suggested improvements in the next section).

## Challenges in- and recommendations for the NIOZ hiring policy

**1. Hiring Policy**
The general hiring policy (see section 1) should be made easily accessible for all. Moreover, we suggest to outline a hiring policy specifically directed at NIOZ, in which it is clearly stated how the NVP code of conduct should be implemented during the hiring process. The NIOZ hiring policy should then be made available to all personnel involved in hiring processes. This ensures that the same hiring process is followed by all personnel. Moreover, the hiring policy should be made clear and transparent to applicants.

**2. Hiring criteria**
At present, there are no guidelines that formulate the requirements applicants should have to fulfil certain positions. Hiring criteria should thus be clearly stated by NIOZ, to prevent subconscious biases during the hiring process.

**3. Hiring Process**
   a) Advertisement: all job vacancies should be advertised on a broad range of platforms, to ensure people from diverse backgrounds are made aware of the job opening. Advertisement should be consistent for all job openings.
   b) Remove cultural barriers in the motivational letter. Different cultural approaches on motivational letters lead to cultural barriers. Therefore, it should be clearer what is expected of the motivational letter. This should either be stated in the job advertisement, or the motivational letter should be formatted as an online application form within the NIOZ application portal in which specific questions should be answered (e.g. boxes to respond to questions/statements).
   c) Actively ask candidates how they will commit to actualization of more diversity and inclusion.
   d) Make selection criteria clear and transparent in the job advertisement, but also during the hiring process.

**3. The committee**

      a. Provide courses and/or trainings for committee members, to make them aware of implicit biases during the hiring process.

      b. Make sure that diversity in hiring is monitored, by including an additional person in the committee focused specifically on this (either someone from the HRM department or a 'diversity consultant' within the department?).


**4. Diversity pipeline**

To stimulate a higher influx of people from a diverse background, the following propositions are made:

      a. Provide scholarships for people from minority backgrounds that provide them with the opportunity to follow an internship at NIOZ.

      b. Perform outreach activities to schools with a lot of students from minority backgrounds

      c. Set up a pipeline between high schools on the Dutch Caribbean islands, various BSc, MSc or HBO studies in the Netherlands, and the NIOZ: reserve a specific number of spots at Dutch HBO, BSc and/or MSc studies for people from the Dutch Caribbean, and offer them an internship at NIOZ during their studies in the Netherlands.


**5. Retention of minorities at NIOZ**

      a. Mentoring programs

      b. Peer networks (within the NIOZ or with NWO-institutes or Universities)?

      c. Make success criteria clear and continually revise them.

      d. Family-friendly policies


**6. Institution wide self-assessment and policy**

      a. External audit

      b. Is there an overarching policy/goal for increasing diversity at NIOZ that HRM can help with?

      c. Ask HRM to read the URGE reading material for this deliverable: Leveraging Promising Practices