UDC-Connect Program

1. Introduction

The project "Strategy to attract and retain international scientific talent for the UDC (STARS4UDC)", developed by the Research Staff Recruitment Office (OCPI) of the University of A Coruña (UDC) and funded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities through the call to facilitate the attraction of talent 2023 (GPE-2023), has as its main objective to increase the attraction of international personnel of recognized prestige or with professional projection in key areas of research.

One of the activities included in the aforementioned project is the creation of the UDC-Connect Program. This initiative is designed to ensure the integration of international research staff[1] joining our university. This program will assign each new member a "buddy", who will act as a guide and source of support during the initial period of adaptation at UDC and in the cities of A Coruña and Ferrol.

2. Objectives of the UDC-Connect Program

The main objective of the UDC-Connect Program is to facilitate the integration and adaptation of international research staff to their new academic and social environment. Specific objectives include:

a. provide personalized support to international research staff to facilitate their adaptation to the UDC and to life in A Coruña or Ferrol;
b. foster an inclusive and supportive community within the UDC;
c. ensuring that international research staff feel welcome and valued; and
d. to promote cultural and professional exchange between UDC staff and new research personnel.

3. Implementation phases

The UDC-Connect Program will be implemented in two phases:

Phase 1. Initial implementation

During this phase, the program will specifically target research personnel who meet the following criteria:

a. Staff with a doctoral degree.
b. Research personnel from abroad who have had a link with research institutions abroad in the last three years.
c. Research personnel incorporated to the University of A Coruña for a minimum period of two years.
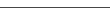
Phase 2. Opening of the UDC-Connect Program

In the second phase, this program will be opened to other candidates who join the UDC, especially those who arrive through talent attraction and excellent science calls, thus extending the reach and benefits of the program to a larger number of people.

Phase 1 will be launched during 2024, and Phase 2 will begin in late 2025.

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[1] Research staff are all staff engaged in research at any stage of their research career (R1, R2, R3 or R4), as well as technical and management staff.

4. Steps for the creation of the UDC-Connect Program

The matching process is an essential part of the UDC-Connect Program. To ensure that new international staff receive the most appropriate support, a series of criteria are defined to guide the selection and matching of fellow "buddies". These criteria are based on professional, personal and social aspects, with the aim of facilitating a harmonious and productive adaptation to the UDC and the cities of A Coruña and Ferrol.

Matching criteria:

4.1. Definition of pairing criteria

4.1.1. Career stage

For the career stage, we will use the classification used by the European Commission and EURAXESS, which categorizes research personnel into four stages: R1, R2, R3 and R4.

a. Research personnel R1 (in training)

- Description: researchers in the early stages of their research career and doctoral students.
- Ideal pairing: Experienced R2 "buddies" who can offer guidance on the completion of the PhD and transition to the postdoctoral stage.

b. R2 research personnel (recognized)

- Description: postdoctoral researchers who have already obtained their doctoral degree and are developing their career independently, but under the supervision of a mentor.
- Ideal match: Experienced R3 "buddies" who can offer support in securing funding, project management and independent career development.

c. Research personnel R3 (established)

- Description: researchers who have developed considerable independence in their research and can lead research projects and teams.
- Ideal pairing: experienced R4 colleagues who can offer guidance on managing research groups, obtaining funding, etc.

d. Research personnel R4 (leader)

- Description: leading researchers with a record of significant achievements in their field, capable of leading their own teams and lines of research.
- Ideal pairing: "buddies" with relevant experience in leadership and academic administration who can offer advice on team and project management at UDC.

The ideal "buddy" should have similar or slightly more experience than the international research staff to be able to provide adequate guidance. They should be from PTXAS, PDI or Chapter VI staff, as well as PhD students. All other students are excluded.

4.1.2. Research area

a. Discipline match. Whenever possible, research staff will be paired with partners who work in the same or related disciplines. This will allow the buddy to offer specific advice on resources, laboratories, and opportunities for collaboration within the UDC.

b. Research interests. In addition to discipline, specific research interests will be taken into account to ensure better compatibility and greater possibilities for collaboration.

4.1.3. Family situation

a. Research staff with families. Those research staff who arrive with their families (partner, children, etc.) will be paired with buddies in a similar family situation, in order to be able to offer support and advice on schools, family activities, job opportunities, housing, etc.
b. Independent research staff. In the case of research staff arriving alone, it will be sought to ensure that they can benefit from fellow researchers who can offer support and advice on social life, extracurricular activities and individual resources.

4.1.4. UDC and local community experience

a. Years of experience at UDC. Preference will be given to buddies with some experience at UDC and who are familiar with the administrative processes, resources and opportunities at our university.
b. Knowledge of the local community. Buddies with good knowledge of A Coruña or Ferrol, who will be able to offer better guidance on daily life, transportation, cultural and recreational activities, etc.

4.1.5. Linguistic and cultural competence

a. Common language. Research staff will be paired with buddies who speak a common language to facilitate communication.
b. Cultural sensitivity. Buddies with previous experience in international environments or cultural sensitivity will be selected to ensure better understanding.

4.1.6. Personal compatibility

Personal interests and hobbies, values, lifestyle. Whenever possible, the personal interests and hobbies of the research staff and the buddies will be taken into account in order to foster a closer relationship.

4.2. Recruitment of route companions

We will identify and recruit UDC staff who can fill the role of buddy. This will take into account their experience at our university and their knowledge of the local community.

General procedure:

a. UDC-Connect Program Announcement
Dissemination of this program through institutional e-mails, internal newsletters and posters in common areas of the UDC.
b. Requests for participation
Creation of an accessible form that will ask about personal and professional information, motivations for participation, availability and relevant experience. This form will be published after the announcement of the program on the OCPI social networks and on the UDC website, in addition to being sent by mailing lists to the entire university community.
c. Review of applications
OCPI will review applications and evaluate them based on UDC experience, knowledge of the local community, intercultural competencies and availability.
d. Selection and notification

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Asinado Por	Vicerr. de Investigación e Transferencia - Jerónimo Puertas Agudo	Asinado	08/11/2024 15:01:00
Observacións		Páxina	4/8
Url De Verificación	https://sede.udc.gal/services/validation/xUXaMJxo4EGRZClN1EXDvA==		
Normativa	Este informe ten o carácter de copia electrónica auténtica con validez e eficacia administrativa de ORIGINAL (art. 27 Lei 39/2015).		

Candidates who meet the established criteria will be selected. They will receive an e-mail notification to confirm their participation and provide them with information on the required training.

e. Training of buddies
Possibility of organizing initial training sessions according to the established training plan.

f. Assignment of buddies
Pairing of the buddies with the international research staff based on the compatibility criteria. Both will be informed of their pairing and the next steps to be taken.

Extraordinary procedure:

In special circumstances, the OCPI may conduct an extraordinary recruitment procedure for buddies. This process will allow the OCPI to identify and directly recruit UDC staff members who, because of their experience, specific knowledge or outstanding cross-cultural skills, are considered particularly suitable to support international research staff. This measure seeks to ensure optimal matching in situations where volunteer applications do not adequately meet the needs of the program or where a particular mentoring profile is required for specific cases.

4.3. Training of buddies

Training is essential to ensure the success of the UDC-Connect Program, as it ensures that buddies are fully prepared to provide the necessary support to international research staff.

The OCPI will be able to implement specific actions oriented to this training, working in close collaboration with the rest of the departments of the UDC, in order to create a comprehensive training program that covers all the needs and particularities that may arise during the integration process of the research staff. This interdepartmental cooperation will allow the training to be complete and adapted to the different realities and challenges that may be faced by buddies.

4.3.1. Certificate of participation

The Vice-rectorate for Research and Transfer will issue a certificate of participation for those who apply and actively collaborate as buddies in the UDC-Connect Program. This official recognition will accredit their contribution and commitment to the integration of international research personnel in the UDC.

4.4. Matching implementation

The implementation of matching in the UDC-Connect Program is a critical process to ensure that international research staff receive the necessary support from the buddies. The stages of the matching process are as follows:

4.4.1. Collection of information

New research personnel will complete a registration form that will include these data:

a. Personal information: name, age, marital status, children, etc.
b. Professional information: career stage, research area, specific interests.
c. Personal preferences: hobbies, interests outside work, languages spoken, etc.
d. Specific needs: family support, administrative advice, etc.

4.4.2. Compatibility Analysis

The data collected on the research staff and buddies forms will be analyzed using the previously defined matching criteria (career stage, research area, family situation, language proficiency, etc.). The OCPI will manually review the matches to ensure optimal compatibility.

4.4.3. Selection and Confirmation of Pairing

Contact with the international research staff and the proposed buddies to confirm their acceptance.

4.4.4. Initial introduction

An initial introductory meeting will be organized between the international research staff and the buddies, where they will receive a welcome packet, in collaboration with the EURAXESS office. This package will include useful information for both, including resource guides, city maps, important contacts and practical tips.

4.4.5. Duration of accompaniment

The accompaniment by the buddies will last for six months from the arrival of the international research staff at the UDC. The buddy commit to offer initial support, oriented to the integration in the university and in the city, maintaining regular contact with the assigned research staff.

Both the international research staff and the buddies will have the option to leave the accompaniment program voluntarily at any time, prior communication to the OCPI, to ensure proper management and the well-being of all persons involved.

4.4.6. Ongoing monitoring and support

The option of periodic follow-up meetings between the OCPI and the investigators and buddies will be offered to assess progress or resolve any problems. In exceptional cases, the reassignment of the buddy may be considered.

4.5. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are crucial components to ensure the success and continuous improvement of the UDC-Connect Program.

4.5.1. Objectives of the monitoring and evaluation system

a. Monitor progress. Evaluate the development of matching relationships and the adaptation of international research staff.
b. Collect feedback. Obtain feedback from participants to identify areas for improvement.
c. Measure impact. Evaluate the impact of the program on the integration and satisfaction of international research staff.
d. Adjust the program. Make necessary adjustments based on the data collected to continually improve the program.

4.5.2. Components of the monitoring and evaluation system

a. Regular meetings

Tripartite meetings between OCPI members, international research staff, and buddies, face-to-face or online, to discuss progress, experiences, and potential problems or challenges.

b. Satisfaction surveys

Conducting brief, online, anonymous surveys regarding satisfaction with the support received, identification of unmet needs and suggestions for program improvement.

c. Final evaluation and program adjustment

Final report prepared by OCPI at the end of each year with the overall evaluation of the program, the impact on the adaptation and integration of research staff and recommendations for future pairings. It will include proposals for solutions and improvements based on feedback from the surveys, in addition to the detection of recurrent and significant problems.

5. Conclusion

The UDC Connect Program is a key initiative to ensure that international research staff feel welcome, supported and valued at UDC. Through this program, we seek to create an inclusive and diverse academic community that benefits both international research staff and UDC as a whole. The two-phase implementation will allow for a gradual and effective roll-out, ensuring that all participants receive the support necessary for successful integration.

6. Data Protection

In accordance with Article 13 of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (RGPD), and with Article 11 of Organic Law 3/2018 of 5 December on the protection of personal data and guarantee of digital rights (LOPD), you are hereby informed that the data provided will be processed under the responsibility of the UDC, whose contact details are: rúa da Mestranza 9, 15001 A Coruña, telephone 981 167 000, e-mail secretariaxeral@udc.gal.

Within the framework of the UDC-Connect Program, all personal data collected from both international researchers and buddies will be treated with absolute confidentiality and used exclusively for the established purposes, such as matching and management of their participation. The UDC will adopt the necessary technical and organizational measures to guarantee the security and integrity of the data, preventing unauthorized access or improper disclosure.

Personal data will be kept for the time necessary for the development of the UDC-Connect Program and to comply with the corresponding legal obligations. Once this program has been completed and the legal retention periods have been met, the data will be duly deleted.

The data subject shall have the right to withdraw his or her consent at any time, without retroactive effect, unless the processing of the data is justified on the basis of one of the other grounds of legitimacy set out in Article 6 of the GDPR. In any case, the data subject shall have the right to request from the controller, at any time, access to, rectification or erasure of his or her personal data, as well as restriction of processing. He/she shall also have the right to object to such processing, as well as to request, except in cases of public interest and/or exercise of public authority, the portability of his/her data. You also have the right not to be subject to automated individual decisions, including profiling.

These rights may be exercised in any of the following ways:

- Notably, through the form for the exercise of rights regarding personal data protection that can be completed at the UDC's Electronic Site, in the Other procedures section.

- By means of a request to the data controller (UDC, General Secretariat) addressed to the following address: General Secretariat, Rectorado de la UDC, rúa da Mestranza 9, 15001 A Coruña; or to the e-mail address rpd@udc.gal. The application may also be submitted through the telematic register of the Electronic Site of the UDC or at the on-site registers of this university. The application must be signed and accompanied by a copy of the ID card.
- By means of a request to the Data Protection Delegate, to the same postal address indicated above, or to the e-mail address dpd@udc.gal. The request may also be submitted through the telematic registry of the Electronic Site of the UDC or in the on-site registries of this university. The application must be signed and accompanied by a copy of the ID card.

Likewise, the interested parties shall have the right to file a complaint before the Spanish Data Protection Agency (AEPD).