Toolkit for organizing workshops 'precarious positions' for early career researchers

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“I’m sick of this excellence. What I see around me, there is a gender effect, but there is also an effect of this excellence seen as a unique pipeline. When you go through it, it crushes people. And I have often thought that the best [researchers] go out. When I talk to postdocs, there are a lot of people who tell me: ‘I do not want to do this anymore, to publish, to apply, to find a postdoc. Give me anything that I can settle somewhere’. The game has become too much unidimensional”

—Participant GARCIA beneficiary—
ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

Why?
The positions of early career researchers are characterized by precarious conditions (i.e. uncertainty, low income, and limited social benefits and statutory entitlements). The increase of fixed-term contracts in academia and the limited opportunities for permanent positions, raise the number of post-PhD researchers who need to compete for a limited number of early academic jobs (see opening quote on first page). Recruitment and selection processes are key to these early career researchers when trying to obtain one of these hard-fought positions. It is therefore important to inform early career researchers about the criteria that are required for an academic career, and to make them aware of the gap that can exist between formal criteria displayed in job postings and actual criteria applies when a candidate is selected. Furthermore, criteria that are used in recruitment and selection processes can play out differently for men and women candidates, often to the disadvantage of the latter. Critical reflection on these criteria and on the process of academic recruitment and selection can help to advise and discuss with early career researchers how to take the next step in building their academic career.

For whom is this toolkit intended?
This toolkit is intended for academic staff members and/or diversity professionals who a) see the urgency of action plans and interventions geared to gender equality in academia; and b) want to organize and facilitate workshops for prospective candidates in the early stages of their academic career in order to inform them about the criteria for building an academic career.

What is the purpose of this toolkit?
The purpose of this toolkit is to help aforementioned staff members in effectively organizing and facilitating workshops for prospective candidates in the early stages of their academic career.

What are early career researchers?
Early career researchers are researchers in the early stages of their academic career before or just after finishing their PhD. There is a huge diversity within this category of early career researchers. Positions can take different forms and vary from temporary positions, without the prospect of a permanent contract (for instance postdocs and lecturers), temporary positions expected to become permanent positions in the long run (for instance tenure tracks), or a first permanent academic position (for instance assistant professors). These positions differ across countries, universities and/or institutes, so when using this toolkit, focus on the positions that are most appropriate to the context at hand.

What is the purpose of the workshop?
The purpose of organizing workshops with prospective candidates is threefold. First, to give candidates information about recruitment and selection criteria applied in the selection processes for early career researchers and how the formal criteria can differ from the actual criteria applied when a candidate is selected. Second, to raise awareness about the gendered construction of academic excellence and gender practices in recruitment and selection processes. And third, to discuss with early career researchers how they can take the next step in building their academic career.
A workshop is an interactive learning environment with ample room for discussion between participants. Participants are encouraged to share their experiences as early career researchers and invited to exchange their perceptions on recruitment and selection processes as well as gender practices therein.

What are recruitment and selection procedures?
Recruitment and selection procedures for early career researchers differ per position (for example between postdocs and assistant professors) and across countries, universities and research institutes. Whereas some universities and institutes have formal recruitment and selection procedures for all post-PhD positions, others have no such procedures. However, in all universities and research institutes there are early career researchers selected or appointed for post-PhD positions, even if it is according to more informal or internal procedures. So when using this toolkit, focus on the selection and evaluation processes and the criteria used therein, that are most appropriate in the context at hand.

What are gender practices?
Gender practices refer to the everyday social practices of distinguishing between men and women, between masculinity and femininity (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). Gender practices are produced and negotiated in interactions, for example when committee members make use of gender stereotypes to describe differences between men and women candidates.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The toolkit workshops for early career researchers provides a road map for designing and executing effective workshops. The toolkit is intended for academic staff members and/or diversity professionals who a) see the urgency of action plans and interventions geared to gender equality in academia; and b) want to organize and facilitate workshops for prospective candidates in the early stages of their academic career in order to inform them about the criteria for building a academic career.

The toolkit is part of work package 7 of the GARCIA project. The GARCIA Project – Gendering the Academy and Research: combating Career Instability and Asymmetries – is concerned with the implementation of actions in European universities and research centres to promote
gender equality and to prevent gender stereotypes and discriminations. Work package 7 focuses on the revealing of gender practices in the construction of academic excellence in recruitment and selection procedures. The construction of academic excellence is especially salient for the early stages of a academic career, as the label of excellence can make the difference between the inclusion or exclusion of researchers in academia. Building on GARCIA working paper n. 2 on the gap between formal and actual criteria (Herschberg, Benschop, & Van den Brink, 2015), and working paper n. 10 on gender practices in the construction of excellence (Herschberg, Benschop, & Van den Brink, 2016), this toolkit is designed to organize and facilitate workshops for prospective candidates for tenured (i.e. permanent) positions.

The Toolkit is based on the reports on workshops for prospective candidates that were organized in the six GARCIA beneficiaries: Belgium, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and Switzerland. The workshops were organized in two disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)). In order to create the best possible outcome, we recommend organizing reflexive working groups for recruitment and selection committee members next to the workshops for early career researchers. Recruitment and selection committee members are key players in the recruitment and selection processes of early career researchers. It is therefore important to also raise awareness among these selection committee members on how gender practices influence the selection process and the selection criteria, including conceptions of excellence (cf. D7.3 Toolkit reflexive working groups).

The aims of the workshops with prospective candidates are threefold. First, to give candidates information about recruitment and selection criteria applied in the selection processes for early career researchers and how the formal criteria can differ from the actual criteria applied when a candidate is selected. Second, to raise awareness about the gendered construction of academic excellence and gender practices in recruitment and selection processes. And third, to discuss with early career researchers how to take the next step in building their academic career. Workshops are thus designed to discuss the recruitment and selection criteria and processes for early career researchers and how gender practices can play a role in these processes. Participants are invited to share their experiences as early career researchers and their perceptions of recruitment and selection processes as well as gender practices therein. Workshops aim to increase candidates’ understanding that selection and evaluation criteria are not objectified truths. Both the formal criteria often displayed in job postings are presented, as well as the actual criteria applied when a candidate is selected. The discrepancy between these formal and actual criteria can reveal that not all criteria are equally important and conceptions of “academic excellence” differ. Moreover, criteria that are used to define “academic excellence” may work out differently for men and women candidates and gender practices influence the selection process and the selection criteria. Finally, participants discuss how they can take the next step in building their academic career.

The toolkit is divided into three main parts: preparation, execution and evaluation. The preparation part focuses on all aspects involved in organizing and setting up a workshop. This section explains what organizers/facilitators should take into account in anticipation of the execution of workshops. The execution part focuses on all aspects involved in the actual execution of the workshop. In this section, we describe how facilitators can run a workshop effectively. The evaluation part focuses on all aspects involved in evaluating the workshop. This section provides guidelines how to collect feedback and evaluations at the end of the workshop in order to improve future workshops.
1. PREPARATION
1. PREPARATION

The preparation for the workshop can be divided into two main parts:
1. Research in preparation of the workshop
2. Preparing the workshop

The first part involves research activities within the institute(s), organization(s), or department(s) in which the workshops are to be organized (hereafter just referred to as institute(s)). After the first part is completed, workshop organizers can continue with the second part, that is, the preparation of the actual workshop. These two main parts will be further elaborated upon in the following sections.

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
In order to create the best possible outcome, we recommend organizing reflexive working groups for recruitment and selection committee members next to the workshops for early career researchers. Recruitment and selection committee members are key players in the recruitment and selection processes of early career researchers. It is therefore important to also raise awareness among these selection committee members on how gender practices influence the selection process and the selection criteria, including conceptions of excellence (cf. D7.3 Toolkit reflexive working groups). The research in preparation of the workshop can serve as a basis for both the workshops as well as the reflexive working groups, and needs to be conducted only once.

1.1 Research in preparation of the workshop
The first aim of the workshop is to give candidates information about recruitment and selection criteria applied in the selection processes for early career researchers and how the formal criteria can differ from the actual criteria applied when a candidate is selected. The second aim of the workshop is to raise awareness about the gendered construction of academic excellence and gender practices in recruitment and selection processes. In order to bring an understanding among early career researchers that selection and evaluation criteria are not objectified truths, that evaluators’ conceptions of criteria differ, and that these conceptions are gendered, a prerequisite for an effective workshop is to have knowledge about these criteria and the gender practices within the institute in which the workshop is to be organized.

To acquire this knowledge, research needs to be conducted prior to the workshop. This research can be done in two different ways. The first, and most recommended, way is a study within the institute in which the workshop is to be organized. Although this research is time-consuming – estimated time is six to eight months (cf. GARCIA working paper n. 9) – the insights gained from this type of research also provide the most contextualized knowledge about the selection and evaluation criteria, and the gendered practices within the institute where the workshop will take place.

A second, less time-consuming but also less contextualized way, to collect the appropriate knowledge on gendered recruitment and selection practices is to conduct an extensive literature study on the construction of excellence in recruitment and selection criteria and processes, and the gender practices therein (see §1.1.1 Step 1: Literature review). Publicly available documents on the Internet on European and US projects like GARCIA or ADVANCE can function as a source for additional information to gain a general understanding of gender biases in selection criteria and selection processes.

We recommend the first, contextualized approach, because data from the institute where the workshop is to be organized would present concrete examples and better insights into the specific difficulties within the institute as well as the discipline, and, therefore, better aimed suggestions how participants can build their academic career. Based on the contextualized research approach, we outline three steps that can serve as a guide to carry out the research. These steps are based on GARCIA working paper n.9 (Bozzon, Murgia, & Poggio, 2016). The results of this research will form the basis of the content of the workshop.
1.1.1 Research guidelines

**Step 1: Literature review**
To gain an understanding of gendered recruitment and selection practices and the gendered construction of excellence it can help to conduct a literature review on the construction of excellence and gender practices in academia. See Appendix A for recommended readings.

**Step 2: Data collection**
*Documents* Collect available documents related to the recruitment and selection of early career researchers: job postings of the last five years; policy documents on hiring and promotion practices (e.g., recruitment protocols); and other HR-documents (e.g., appointment reports and assessment sheets for evaluation of early career researchers). Additionally, collect data on gender statistics in research and academia from the institute and/or from other sources (such as the She Figures).

*Interviews* Conduct interviews with recruitment and selection committee members and other members of the recruitment procedure to identify how excellence criteria are applied during selection procedures (see Appendix B for an interview guide). If possible, also organize focus group interviews with recruitment and selection committee members and/or other key players might be a good addition to acquire more information. Record the interviews and focus groups in order to better analyse the data afterwards.

**Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries**
When present in the institute, a list and email contacts of the committee members can be obtained from the HR or personnel department. NB: Also contacting the legal office might be helpful to manage possible difficulties about privacy issues when contact details are to be disclosed.

**Step 3: Data analysis**
The data analysis phase consists of four activities. First, transcribe the interview- and focus group material and conduct a content analysis on the collected documents. Second, analyze the formal selection criteria, for example displayed in job postings. Third, analyze the actual criteria applied when a candidate is selected and how these criteria come about. You can use the following questions to guide your analysis:
- Is there a gap between the formal criteria and the criteria applied in practice?
- How are selection criteria – such as the criterion of excellence – constructed by committee members?
- Which (micro-political) processes play a role in recruitment and selection committees when they decide upon the criteria on which candidates are evaluated?

Fourth, analyze the gender practices that occur in recruitment and selection processes. The following questions may help during the analysis:
- Do selection criteria play out differently or similarly for men and women candidates?
- Are competencies of men and women candidates rated differently? If yes, which competencies? How are these competencies rated differently?
- Can some criteria be considered to be more masculine or feminine?
- How are selection procedures organized?
- How is the ‘selection game’ played and who are the key players?
- What power processes take place in the recruitment and selection?

**Step 4: Writing a research report and/or making a presentation**
Summarize the findings and conclusions either in a research report or in the presentation that will be used during the workshop. Focus in the report or presentation on, a) the (gap between) formal criteria and actual practices of recruitment and selection of candidates that are used to construct academic excellence in the institute; and b) the gender practices in recruitment, selection or evaluation procedures within the institute.

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1 Since recruitment and selection procedures for early career researchers are not always formalized (in job postings), and differ per position and across countries, universities and institutes, focus on the selection and evaluation processes and the criteria used therein, that are most appropriate in the context at hand.
1.2 Preparing the workshop

The following sections elaborate on the core organizational aspects that should be taken into account when organizing workshops: the participants of the workshop, the facilitators of the workshop, when to organize the workshop and other (practical) arrangements that should be made.

1.2.1. Who?
The who-question refers to the participants of the workshop as well as to the facilitators of the workshop. We will discuss them separately.

The participants
The participants of the workshop are the people who attend the workshop. The target participants are non-tenured researchers in the early stages of their academic career. Early career positions differ across countries, universities and/or research institutes and vary from temporary positions, without the prospect of a permanent contract (for instance postdocs), temporary positions expected to become permanent positions in the long run (for instance tenure tracks), or a first permanent academic position (for instance assistant professor). When preparing the workshop, focus on the early career positions that are most appropriate in the context at hand.

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- Aim for eight to sixteen participants. A small number of participants better allows for a collective debate and more time for each participant to discuss her or his experiences and perceptions.
- In some institutes positions of early career researchers may not be as clearly defined as ‘postdoc’ or ‘assistant professor’. As facilitators, try to reach all early career researchers within the institute, also those early career researchers in more “hidden” positions.
- Consider inviting PhD candidates, in particular when the institute has very few postdoc positions. PhD candidates can benefit from a workshop that informs them about possible future career moves.

1.2.2. When?
Choosing the right time for the workshop is important, in particular with respect to getting participants. Choose the date and time of the workshop after a careful check of the institute’s commitments, that is, not in a holiday period or during conference season.

Allow at least two hours for the workshop. This is the minimum amount of time needed to discuss the selection criteria, and to discuss the gender practices in recruitment and selection processes, and to have room for participants to share their experiences and perceptions, and to discuss possible suggestions that can help participants in building their academic careers. For more in depth discussion we recommend a workshop of three hours.

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- Consider organizing the workshop on a conference in the institute.
- Consider using an online scheduling tool (such as Doodle) to schedule a date for the workshop. This works best when target participants are known in advance and the group is relatively small.
- In case the institute has a secretary, consult them when picking a date for the workshop in order to prevent overlap with other events or activities.

1.2.3. How?
Start well in advance with the organization of the workshop. We advise at least two to three months. Not only because practical matters, such as the room and catering, should be booked well in advance, but also to prevent that participants (and facilitators) are already engaged in other activities. The following steps provide guidelines to effectively structure the organization and preparation of the workshop.

Step 1: Collaborate with other official services for early career researchers
When organizing workshops, it is highly recommended to contact and possibly collaborate with other services that already exist within the institute that focus on early career researchers, for example temporary academic personnel networks, Doctoral Offices, Graduate Campuses, Student Counselling Offices, or Career Centers. This not only prevents overlap with other courses and training possibilities for early career researchers, it is also beneficial in reaching and contacting as many participants as possible. Also, get support from full professors, persons well known and appreciated within the institute, from the HR department, and, moreover, from the institute’s management, i.e. the dean or director. Commitment from full professors possibly results in a higher number of participants (because they can encourage early career researchers to participate), commitment from the management and the HR department is helpful in getting access to necessary facilities more easily (for example to obtain contact details of potential participants, or to get budget for catering).

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- When having the support of the management, a word of welcome of the head/director/dean of the institute can highlight the importance of the workshop. However, it is important that during the remainder of the workshop the head/director/dean of the institute is not present, because this can possibly make participants reluctant to openly share their experiences.

- Integrate the organization of the workshop with already existing gender initiatives in the institute. Organizing the workshops as part of these initiatives might be beneficial, particularly when existing diversity, equality and inclusion bodies are already supported and facilitated within the institute.

Step 2: Contact details of potential participants
Obtain a list from for example the administrative or human resource offices – or when present the doctoral office or equivalent – with the names and contact details of all early career researchers (NB: bear in mind possible “hidden positions”, see §1.2.1 The participants). If this is not possible, contact the whole department and specify the target population of early career researchers in the invitation letter or e-mail.

Step 3: Sending invitations
The text of the invitation should be fine-tuned and adjusted to the target participants of the workshop. If possible, involve secretaries or doctoral offices (or equivalent). The letter or e-mail that is send to the potential participants should contain the purpose, the date and the location of the workshop. Organizers can send the invitations themselves, but it is even better to have the management (i.e. dean or director) send the invitation out and urge their staff members to participate (see box text 1.1 on p. 12 for an example).

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- Send out invitations at least two months before the day of the workshop. Send reminders a week before the workshop.
- When a collective mailing list does not lead to a sufficient number of participants, consider to contact participants personally or during staff seminars and official temporal staff and/or PhD meetings.

Step 4: Practical arrangements
Book a meeting room for the workshops, ensuring that the room is set up in a way that discussion can be facilitated (e.g. tables placed in a U-shape).
If the intention is to present the findings via a projector, it is necessary to ensure the room has the necessary facilities. Make sure that arrangements are made for the appropriate technical support as well as possible catering (e.g., coffee/tea/biscuits; lunch; refreshments; water – depending on the time of day the workshop are organized).

**Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries**
Secretaries can be helpful in arranging a room and catering as well as sending reminders. This can alleviate some of the organizational work.

1.3 Managing challenges and resistances

**Challenge no. 1: Getting (women) participants**
One of the main challenges that GARCIA beneficiaries experienced is getting participants for the workshops. It is noteworthy that in some GARCIA beneficiaries more men participated in the workshops than women. Reasons that were given for not participating where 1) that early career researchers did not want to address this topic with colleagues; and 2) because of an already heavy workload and no time for additional workshops not directly related to the core work.

There are several actions that can be taken in order to maximize the possibility that invited participants will attend.

**Involve other stakeholders**
As mentioned, commitment from other bodies with the institute – networks for temporary academic personnel, doctoral offices or equivalents, full professors or the institute's management (e.g. the dean or director) – is important and could result in a higher number of participants.

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**Box text 1.1: Invitation workshop for prospective candidates on building an academic career**

Dear early career researchers,

Our [institute] is concerned with the implementation of actions to enhance early career researchers' work environment and prospects and promote gender equality in academia.

We would like to invite you, [various early career researchers within the institute, such as (senior) PhD candidates, postdocs, assistant professors] of the institute, to take part in a workshop on building an academic career and the criteria and requirements for early career researchers in the current academic system.

What do selection committees look for? How do you build a CV? How can you present yourself in such a way that you make an ‘excellent’ candidate? How does gender play a role in recruitment processes? In the workshop, [the facilitators] will present the findings of their research and facilitate a discussion about being an early career researcher. This workshop will be valuable for preparing yourself for the labor market and for planning your academic career.

The workshop will take place on [date and location]. [Lunch/drinks] will be provided. Please register before [date two weeks prior to the workshop] with [names and contact details of the facilitators]. Both women and men are invited to join! The registration is on a first come, first serve basis. There is room for [sixteen] participants.

With kind regards,

[Name + Title]
Director [Institute]
Collaborate with these bodies in the preparation of the workshop and when sending invitations (see §1.2.3 step 3). The institute’s management can also contribute, for example by opening the workshop; this will show their commitment. However, it is important that during the remainder of the workshop the management of the institute is not present, because this can influence the open atmosphere of the workshop and make participants reluctant to share their experiences and opinions.

**Timing**
Choose the day and time of the workshop carefully (see §1.2.2).

**Promoting the workshop**
Do not only rely on invitations send by letters and e-mail, but also publish the information of the workshop on the news page of the website or intranet of the institute.

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**Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries**
In some beneficiaries – especially in institutes where there was support from the management – the workshop is made mandatory for (new) early career researchers. The workshop can for example be organized once or twice a year. Working together with a doctoral office (or equivalent) for early career researchers is helpful in contacting early career researchers. Organize the workshop around lunchtime and provide the participants with lunch.

In some of the GARCIA beneficiaries, the English language in which the workshops were conducted was seen as problematic for participants who did not speak English fluently. Consider to organize two workshops in two different languages: one in English and one in the language of the country/institute (see also §2.4 Challenge no. 1: Effective discussion in the workshop).

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**Challenge no. 2: Finding a balance between time and effect**
Participation in workshops is time-consuming and requires an extra time investment of participants. As indicated above, a high workload was one of the reasons for early career researchers not to participate in workshops that are not directly related to their core work. A meeting of three hours or more might discourage candidates to attend. However, during a workshop of two hours, it is difficult to go into detail and involve all the participants in the discussion. Therefore, workshop facilitators need to find a balance between the time investment that is asked of participants on the one hand, and the time that is needed to effectively reflect on selection and evaluation criteria, the construction of academic excellence, and gender practices in recruitment and selection processes on the other hand.

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**Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries**
Leave ample room for discussion. Collective discussion among participants and room for questions and dialogue on how to build an academic career was highly appreciated by workshop participants.
2. EXECUTION
2. EXECUTION

In the following sections we will further elaborate upon the actual execution of the workshop. Our description relies on a contextual approach (see §1.1) and is based on a duration of three hours.

The workshops can be divided into three parts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Time allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Introduction</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Core content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Discussion of formal versus actual selection criteria</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Discussion of the construction(s) of academic excellence and the gender practices in recruitment and selection processes</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Discussion on how to take the next step</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Evaluation and feedback</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TIP! |

**Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries**
Keep the time schedule in mind but be flexible. Make sure there is enough room for questions and remarks. Do not tell at the start of the workshop that there is room at the end to raise questions but incorporate time for questions during the presentation and discussion.

**2.1 Introduction**

The first part of the workshop is the introduction. The objective of the introduction is twofold. First, to make the goals and importance of the workshop clear to the participants and create a safe learning environment. Second, it is important that the workshop facilitators also know their participants and their experiences and expectations.

Time allocation 30 minutes

**2.1.1. Introducing the workshop**

Use the first part of the introduction of the workshop to 1) introduce the workshop facilitators and their expertise, 2) elucidate the aim and goals of the workshop, and 3) create a safe and constructive atmosphere in which participants can share and reflect openly on their opinions and experiences.

It is important that participants know what they can expect during the workshop, but also what is expected of them. Explain why the workshop is important and why active participation is even more important. Try to create a safe learning environment by inviting participants to openly discuss their perceptions and to share their experiences.

**Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries**

To create a constructive atmosphere and safe learning environment, it is important to start the workshop by recognizing and acknowledging the pressure that early career researchers face nowadays. It is expected from researchers to be a “Jack-of-all-trades” and to be “excellent” at everything they do: they have to be able to publish in top tier journals, able to understand the legislation and politics, to be familiar with technologies and to be able to apply for grants. In addition, they have to be good at generating impact, engaging with the public, be open to the media, and combine everything with their teaching responsibilities.

**2.1.2. Introducing the participants**

The second part of the introduction entails the introduction of the participants. Even if the participants already know each other, it is important for the workshop facilitators to get an impression who the participants are, their positions, what their expectations of the workshop are, and what they want to learn during
the workshop. Therefore, ask all participants to briefly introduce themselves and to communicate their expectations of the workshop.

2.2 Core content
The introduction should have provided the workshop facilitators with a good overview of the expectations of the participants. The workshop facilitators can now move on to the core part of the workshop. This core part is based on the insights from research that was carried out prior to the workshop, and consist of three parts. In the first part, the focus is on discussing the discrepancy between formal criteria as documented in HR documents, policies, and job postings, and the actual criteria applied when a candidate is selected. In the second part, workshop facilitators discuss the construction of academic excellence and the gender practices in recruitment and selection processes. In the third part, participants discuss how to build an academic career. Throughout the core part, it is important to get participants to actively engage in the discussion and to encourage the exchange of perception and experiences. The three core parts will now be described in further detail.

2.2.1. Discussion of formal versus actual selection criteria
The first part of the core of the workshop focuses on discussing the discrepancy between the formal criteria documented in HR documents and job postings, and the criteria that are applied by selection committee members. When in the context and positions at hand, there are no formal criteria, focus on the results of the actual selection (or evaluation) criteria and (informal) processes as distinguished in the research prior to the workshop. The facilitators of the workshop can make use of the steps outlined below to guide this discussion effectively.

Time allocation 40 minutes

Step 1: Ask participants what they consider as key criteria
The facilitators ask the participants what they think are the most important criteria for selecting and evaluating early career researchers. The main purpose is to identify what the participants think are the main ‘formal’ criteria. The following questions could guide this discussion:
- What are the formal criteria for the appointment of a [position]?
- Have selection criteria been changed in the last decade?
- What does it take to be able to fulfil these criteria - for instance in terms of work generated and networks someone is part of?

Step 2: Show the formal criteria versus the applied criteria
The research conducted prior to the workshop should have yielded the necessary input to show and present the participants what formal selection criteria are used in the job postings in their institute on the one hand, and the actual criteria applied when a candidate is selected.

Step 3: Discuss discrepancies, the construction of academic excellence and gender practices
The findings that are presented at step 2 about the ‘formal’ criteria vis-à-vis the actual criteria, provide the workshop facilitators with input to facilitate a discussion about the discrepancies between these criteria. This discussion should also allow the facilitators to lead the discussion towards the construction of academic excellence and the relevance of gender. Facilitators could for instance use the following questions to guide the discussion:
- Are some criteria more important?
- Does importance sometimes differ?
- What is academic excellence?
- Who defines academic excellence?
- Are there different definitions in the various academic disciplines?
- Are the criteria equally important for women and men? Or do some criteria weigh differently for women and for men?
- Is there a more masculine or a more feminine connotation to the criteria?
Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- Always appertain to (the possible differences between) women and men candidates by a) asking participants what they would expect from an ideal candidate on a certain criterion, b) then compare the differences with the candidates at hand, and c) look for gender distinctions in this.

2.2.2. Discussion of the construction(s) of academic excellence and the gender practices in recruitment and selection processes
The second part of the core of the workshop builds on step 3 as discussed in the previous paragraph. The focus of this part is on the gendered construction of academic excellence and gender practices in recruitment and selection processes of early career researchers. The purpose of this discussion is to increase the awareness among participants about gender practices in recruitment and selection criteria and processes.

The facilitators present the gender practices found in research that was conducted prior to the workshop, and elaborate on what gender and gender inequality in academia comprise. It is important to emphasize and explain that ‘quality’, ‘excellence’ and ‘meritocracy’ are not objective, gender neutral concepts. Gender can influence our perceptions of quality and excellence. These statements can be supported by examples from previous research.

This is the most elaborate part of the workshop and it is fundamental that the facilitators ensure that gender and gender practices remain the key topics of the discussion. During this part, the facilitators should raise awareness among participants about how selection criteria can play out differently for women and men candidates. For example, by indicating how specific competencies of women and men candidates are rated differently, and how this rating affects women and men candidates (see for examples, Herschberg, Benschop, & Van den Brink, 2016, GARCIA working paper 10).

Time allocation 60 minutes

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- Introduce selection interview dynamics in the discussion in order to help participants to be aware of and reflect on 1) their role in selection interviews, and 2) how these may impact selection decisions.
- Provide concrete examples of gender practices in selection processes (such as the selection interview) and informal recruitment based on previous research (see example presentation in Appendix C) and research that has been conducted prior to the workshop.

2.2.3. Discussion of gender practices in recruitment and selection processes
The third and final part of the core of the workshop focuses on how participants can build their future academic career. During this part, it is key to facilitate a discussion on the way early career researchers want to adhere to the current academic system or how they would like to make different forms of quality and excellence visible, including different academic career paths. What to do, or how to intervene, when you observe and recognize gender practices? Further suggestions for this discussion are for example the role of supervisors, mentors and sponsors, visibility, informal recruitment and networks (see the example presentation in Appendix C for suggestions).

Time allocation 40 minutes

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- Make sure that the discussion and suggestions that are made are concrete and tailored to the specific context in which the participants operate.
- Work towards an explicit outcome, such as a manifesto, with guidelines on how to avoid (gender) bias in evaluating excellence in the institute. The manifesto can for example be disseminated in the institute (see Appendix D for an example of a manifesto from the Italian GARCIA beneficiary).
2.3 Evaluation and feedback

The third part of the workshop is the evaluation. During this part facilitators ask the participants for their feedback on the workshop. It is important to evaluate the workshops for two reasons. First, to see if the expectations and learning points of the participants, as expressed during the introduction of the workshop, were met. Second, the participants’ evaluations can serve as valuable input for future workshops (also see Section 3: Evaluation).

Time allocation 40 minutes

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries

- Hand out an evaluation form the participants can fill in at the end of the workshop, with for example the following questions:
  I. What are the most important insights you gained from the workshop?
  II. How did you experience the presentation and facilitation of the workshop? (Pleasant unpleasant, informal, formal, informative, etc.)
  III. What could be improved about the workshop?

2.4 Managing challenges and resistances

Challenge no. 1: Effective discussion in the workshop

One of the challenges that some GARCIA beneficiaries encountered during the execution of the workshop was to establish an effective discussion among participants. There are two reasons reported why it was difficult to establish an effective discussion: language and pessimistic views on participants’ future in academia.

Language

When participants attend a workshop that is held in a language that is not their first language, this can lead to hesitation of some of these participants to actively participate in the discussion during the workshop. It is therefore important that facilitators create a constructive atmosphere and safe learning environment (see §2.1.1), which they maintain throughout the workshop. Facilitators can make an effort to involve all participants.

Pessimistic views

Another challenge that some GARCIA beneficiaries encountered and which prevents effective discussion, are pessimistic views on participants’ future in academia. Discussions can be dominated by emotions like frustration, disillusionment, disappointment, and even disgust (as illustrated by the quote on page 3). Some participants of the workshops in various GARCIA beneficiaries were very close to leaving academia. By sharing and exchanging experiences, the workshop can possibly reinforce negative emotions and perceptions that early career researchers already have to some extent. This leads to challenge no. 2: Finding a balance between hope and despair.

Challenge no. 2: Finding a balance between hope and despair

The workshop probably does not present a cheerful image of the current situation for early career researchers in academia, in particular for women. With regard to the aforementioned pessimistic views and emotions of frustration and disillusionment, workshop facilitators have to find a balance between the demanding reality on the one hand and possibilities for change on the other hand. There should be room for these frustrations as well, but facilitators should not let these emotions lead the outcome of the workshop. Facilitators can for example discuss the needs and opportunities of participants specific to their context and aim to develop a document, such as a manifesto (see Appendix D).
3. EVALUATION
3. EVALUATION

After the actual execution of the workshop, it is important to evaluate the workshop with the team of facilitators. The feedback from the participants during the workshop, possibly the evaluation forms (see §2.3), but also the experiences and reflections of the facilitators themselves are important to evaluate the workshop.

Discuss among the facilitators what went well and what did not. Especially when the workshops are to be organized within the same institute in the future.

The following questions can be helpful when evaluating the workshops:
- What worked when planning and performing the workshops?
- What challenges and resistances have you come across when planning and performing the workshops? How did you overcome them (or not)?
- What are the learning points gained from planning and performing the workshops?
- What feedback did the participants give?
- What do future workshop leaders need to take into account?

**Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries**
- Disseminate a short online survey to evaluate the workshop among participants.
- Document the results for future use in recruitment, selection and evaluation.
4. PLANNING TIMELINE
### 4. PLANNING

#### TIMELINE

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<td>Collect available job postings, policies and HR documents on recruitment and selection</td>
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5. PLANNING CHECKLIST
5. PLANNING CHECKLIST

Preparation
✓ 6-8 months in advance of the workshop
   Contact the management for their support
   If possible, contact HR department and/or secretaries
   Contact other official bodies or service for early career researcher for their support and possible collaboration
   Obtain a list of possible participants (both for interviews and focus groups as well as the workshops)
   - Optional: contact legal office

Research in preparation of the workshop:
- literature review
- data collection
  - gender statistics
  - documents (job postings/HR documents/She-figures)
  - interviews with selection committee members and other key players
  - focus groups with selection committee members and other key players
- data analysis
- write report and/or presentation

✓ 2 months before the workshop
Draft the invitations with:
- purpose
- date
- location
Send out invitations to potential participants
Optional: contact external facilitators

✓ 1-2 weeks before the reflexive working group
Make the necessary practical arrangements:
- room
- catering
- technical support
Send out reminders to potential participants

Execution
✓ 30 minutes before the workshop:
Be sure to be in time in the room to have potential bugs fixed in time (e.g. when a projector/smartboard does not work)
Check if the presentation works
Make sure the room is set up properly for discussion (e.g. U-shape)

✓ During the workshop:
Clearly explain the aim and goals of the workshop
Invite participants to share their ideas and experiences
Create a safe learning environment by:
  - by recognizing and acknowledging the pressure that early career researchers face nowadays
Let participants introduce themselves:
  - their name and position
  - their expectations of the workshop
  - what they want/expect to learn
Involve participants in an interactive discussion by:
  - invite them to share their experiences
  - encourage to openly discuss their perceptions
Evaluate: Hand out evaluation forms
  - OR send out an evaluation survey

✓ 1-2 weeks after the workshop:
Review participants’ evaluation forms
Evaluate with team of facilitators/or organizers
Report what went well and what not for future workshops
REFERENCES
6. REFERENCES

APPENDIX A: RECOMMENDED READING LIST
APPENDIX A: RECOMMENDED READING LIST

As a basis for a literature review on the construction of excellence and gender practices in science, we particularly, though not exclusively, recommend the following references:


APPENDIX B:
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview guide
Please find below our questionnaire divided in three different topics. Please start with the main question and then continue with clarifying and concretizing questions (see the last column for suggestions). Encourage the interviewee to be very specific and get as much information as possible from the interviewee on the applied criteria for a D- or C-level position, the selection process, etcetera. Use terminology that is applicable to your national/local context (e.g., regarding the D/C-level position).

ABSTRACT REQUIREMENTS

1. Which criteria do you use to select candidates for a D/C-level position?
   i. First, ask clarifying and concretizing questions on the mentioned criteria:
      - What do you mean by ...?
      - Can you give an example?
      - Why is that important?
      - How does a candidate show that he/she meets this criteria?

2. Do you consider ... an important criterion for a D/C-level position?
   i. Second, if the interviewee is not able to mention other criteria, please ask about criteria that are not mentioned but are relevant to your context:
      - Education (institution that awarded PhD, topic of PhD, PhD supervisor, etc.)
      - Teaching experience: experience with lecturing, seminar groups, thesis supervision
      - Research: participation in research projects (number of projects and position within), number of publications, journals and ranking, single author, publications with supervisor
      - Acquiring research funding: how much and which funding organization?
      - Management experience/committee work
      - International mobility/experience/network: duration of visit, location / institution, international collaborations
      - Service / outreach: media appearances, public lectures/debates, consultancy and advice
      - Fit in team: a) someone fits in the team culture? b) brings in expertise that is missing?
      - Personality / attitude of the candidate (analytical/ creative/ communicative, motivation/ enthusiasm/ energy/ bodily appearances, etcetera).

3. What are the most important criteria in your specific academic field?
   i. This question is meant to discover possible disciplinary differences. Ask clarifying and concretizing questions on responses (in a similar way as question 1).

4. How would you describe the difference between a candidate with minimal requirements and a really excellent candidate?
   i. Try to find out what the ‘ideal candidate’ looks like, and what the minimal requirements are for the position.
ACTUAL SELECTION (PROCESS)

5. Can you think of the latest appointment of a D/C-level position in which you were involved? Can you shortly describe the course of the selection process?
   i. Make sure the appointment applies to the department under study.

6. a. What was the composition of the committee? (Number/position of people, women)
   b. Was it formal and/or informal recruitment?
      i. In case of formal recruitment, there is a standard procedure: i.e. the vacancy is made publically available (internet, newspapers, journals). In case of informal recruitment, the call is informally circulated or candidates are invited to apply through informal networks.

7. How did the decision making process go within the committee?
   i. Ask clarifying and concretizing questions on responses:
      . Did you easily reach a consensus?
      . What did you do if you disagreed?
      . If you disagreed, what was the main point of discussion?

8. a. Which were the decisive criteria in the selection of the appointed candidate?
   b. Were the decisive criteria used in the selection of the appointed candidate mentioned in the formal job description?
      i. Which of the criteria under question 2 where the most important for the respondent in selecting the candidate?

9. Do you consider the appointed person an excellent candidate? Why?
   i. Earlier research indicated that the formal criteria of excellence are almost not realistic, and appointed candidates often do not meet this standard of excellence (see Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). With this question, we like to check whether this is the case here too.

10. a. Why did the runner up end up on the second position?
    b. Which was / were the decisive criterion / criteria not to appoint the candidate?
       i. Try to find out the difference between the selected candidate and the runner up candidate.

11. a. In this procedure, how many female candidates applied?
       i. Ask clarifying and concretizing questions on responses:
          . Why were there no / so few (so many?) female candidates?

   b. How many female candidates were on the long/short list?
      . Long list: list of applicants after first selection by committee. Short list: final list of applicants taken into consideration (and invited for an interview/lecture).

   c. Why were they (not) appointed?

12. Can you give an example of a case in which the selection process turned out to be very successful, i.e., that the chosen candidate performed beyond expectations?

13. Can you give an example of a case in which the selection process turned out to be a failure, i.e., that the chosen candidate underperformed or left quickly?

GENDER

14. Does gender play a role in the selection of candidates?
   i. Ask clarifying and concretizing questions:
      . Do you think gender matters (or not)?
      . Could there be a gender bias against female candidates?
      . Please also observe the emotions and non-verbal language of the interviewee with this question (e.g., agitation, etc.).

15. Do you know if there is a gender policy on recruitment and selection within your institution?

16. What is your opinion on such gender policies?
   i. You can ask this question even if the question to previous question is “no”.

17. In what way do you apply this gender policy in practice?
   i. Ask the interviewee to give examples.
Today’s agenda

1. Introduction
   • Questions / expectations

2. Most important findings + discussion
   • Recruitment and selection criteria
   • Selection in the interview
   • Informal recruitment

3. Feedback

Introduction

• Name
• Position
• Faculty
• Questions / expectations

Recruitment and selection criteria

• Publications – quality over quantity
• Postdoc experience (abroad)
• Own research line
• External funding (potential)
• Teaching / supervision
• International network

Recruitment and selection criteria

Assistant professor job posting (example)

• a PhD in XXX
• a proven track record of conducting independent research in one of the leading areas of XXX
• regular publications in leading journals;
• postdoctoral experience, preferably gained abroad;
• experience in applying for external funding;
• a clear vision on research and teaching;
• good communication skills and the ability to work with researchers from other fields;
• good teaching skills and a university teaching qualification (or the willingness to obtain such a qualification);
• the ability to teach in English and Dutch (the latter to be acquired within two years).
“Academic excellence”
- Quality as a social construction (Brown & Adin, 2004; Lomont, 2005; Van den Brink & Brinkop, 2013)
- Attention for bias in academic evaluation (e.g., Hermanek & Wodz, 1999; Gottlieb, 2000; Dasinger, 2007; Messeron et al., 2012; Van der Lee & Ellemers, 2013)
- Fair and meritocratic?
  - Uneven rating of research and teaching
  - More women on precarious positions
  - Linear career patterns
  - Gender bias in evaluation of research and teaching (Bong, 2013)

Selection in the interview
- Interview dynamics
- Person can overcome formal criteria
- Constructs excellence in two ways:
  - Positive individual capital: likeability as quality
  - Negative individual capital: too difficult or too modest

In general, women do not “keep their cards on the table” and say “we are going in that direction.” Yes, that is not the case. However, there are few who do, but those women are exceptions. And when they do display that kind of attitude, then you immediately get the reaction among committee members: “No, not that one.” That is pretty clear. When a man acts like that, it is more acceptable, he is still in the race. But when a woman displays that behavior, she is out. (Natural sciences, male)

Informal recruitment
- Scouting: the active search and inviting of candidates
  - Social academics on key positions of influence who are involved in decision-making process
  - Social determinants which candidates are nominated and who remain excluded
  - This is gendered!
  - Gender is also linked to different career advancement

- Academic network connections are key in academic careers
- Visibility depends on social networks: granting visibility
  - Encouragement to apply
  - Information, support, trust, value
  - Visibility
  - Being nominated, asked, recommended, being in the picture
  - Better in applied science (Kleibo, 1994)
  - Knowledge

Informal recruitment
- Does your supervisor know what your future plans are?
- Does your supervisor introduce you to important network connections?
- Does your supervisor brag about you to her/his colleagues?
- Does your supervisor give information about future jobs?

No? Then ask her/him!
APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE MANIFESTO

MAKING VISIBLE

A MANIFESTO FOR THE FUTURE OF PRECARIOUS POST-DOCS AND PH.D. STUDENTS

OUR LIVES AND WORK ARE OFTEN INVISIBLE. THE RULES OF THE GAME ARE INVISIBLE TOO. MAKE THEM VISIBLE, MAKE OUR LIVES BETTER.

- We are not just writing machines. We are gendered bodiee, we have friends, lovers, and families. Think about it when you evaluate us.

- We are asked to be totally available, always. Gender imbalance in the academia is built from the early stages of the scientific path. Don’t consider young researchers who also chaise their personal development unable to meet this criteria.

- We play the academic game but its rules are opaque. Show us its mechanisms so we can be strategic players.

- We are required to be excellent. Let us understand the parameters of excellence, who defines them and how.

- We produce and share knowledge with colleagues around the world. Intellectually encourage, materially support, and institutionally value this.

* This manifests emerged from the proposals collected during the “Making Academic Careers Together” workshops, part of the GARDA project and funded by the FP7/2013-2014. The workshop saw the participation of professors, post-docs, and Ph.D. students attending the conference and/or affiliated to the University of Trento.

We are not just writing machines in Trento
We care for other people, we can have health issues. Officially consider this while evaluating our CVs for different positions or grants. Don’t think we should necessarily and often change the city we live in.

We play the academic game in Trento
We are evaluated through logos we can’t see. Tell us what the rules of the game are. Let us understand your politics. Our contracts are short-time. Define the renewal conditions since the beginning.

We are required to be excellent in Trento
Make evaluation criteria explicit. How are publications, teaching, and grants evaluated? Tell us who evaluates us. Make public the names of the committee members at the time of application. When you have evaluated us, help us improve through public available reports.

We produce and share knowledge in Trento
Seeking professional development, we attend conferences, co-author with international colleagues and visit universities around the world. Encourage these activities. Grant all of us the time and money to participate in them. Consider this when evaluating us.

We are academics and professionals in Trento
Make all our work visible. Recognise us as Principal Investigators for externally-funded projects. Recognise the work we invest in thesis supervision, independently from our teaching. Recognise the administrative work we do. Value and appreciate the peer-to-peer work we do, for example mentoring younger scholars.

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