



Human Resources Directorate

Charter for doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows recruited on contract by INRA

On 22 February 2006, INRA committed itself to compliance with the European Charter for Researchers (ANNEX 1). It thus placed construction of the European Research Area, and the attractiveness of the Institute to young researchers, amongst its strategic priorities for 2006-2009.

Adopted by the European Commission on 11 March 2005, the European Charter for Researchers aims to clarify the responsibilities, rights and duties of researchers and their employers or fund providers.

INRA is already committed to ensuring the convergence of its procedures with the provisions of the European Charter for Researchers; for example in terms of ethical principles, transparent recruitment procedures and continuing professional development.

INRA considers that all the general principles laid down in the European Charter for Researchers should apply to all the researchers it employs¹.

A Thesis Charter (ANNEX 2) was indeed proposed by the French Ministry of Education in 1998, and its use has spread throughout all doctoral schools. INRA recommends its use in its research units.

The present Charter does not replace the European Charter for Researchers and the Thesis Charter. It supplements them by stipulating the basic conditions for the hosting of doctoral candidates and young postdoctoral fellows recruited on contract by INRA.

This Charter also forms an important part of the active partnership policy that INRA is developing with higher education in its efforts to become an institution that is associated with the dozen or so doctoral schools where the majority of doctoral candidates hosted by INRA laboratories are enrolled. In this context, the commitments laid down in this Charter are shared with the doctoral schools and may benefit from the additional resources that INRA can contribute under this reinforced partnership.

¹ By adhering to the European Charter for Researchers, INRA has adopted the Frascati definition (OECD 2002: *Proposed standard practice for surveys on research and experimental development*) used by this Charter, which describes researchers as "professionals engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge, product processes, methods and systems, and in the management of the projects concerned.... at any career stage, regardless of their classification". In addition, the European Charter for Researchers makes a distinction between early-stage researchers and experienced researchers:

- The term "early-stage researcher" refers to researchers in the first four years (full-time equivalent) of their research activity, including the period of research training,
- "Experienced researchers" are defined as researchers having at least four years of research experience (full-time equivalent) since gaining a university diploma giving them access to doctoral studies, in the country in which the degree/diploma was obtained, or researchers already in possession of a doctoral degree, regardless of the time taken to acquire it.

1. Population concerned

This charter applies to all doctoral candidates and young postdoctoral fellows being remunerated by INRA.

A doctoral candidate is preparing a thesis, and is thus enrolled in a doctoral school. The student carries out research activities that form part of the project of the research unit that is temporarily hosting him (or her) within the Institute.

A postdoctoral fellow has held a doctorate or equivalent diploma for less than five years. He (or she) is hosted on a temporary basis by a research unit where he carries out research activities that form part of the project of that unit.

2. Recruitment

2.1. Objectives

The recruitment on contract of a doctoral candidate or postdoctoral fellow by INRA has the dual objective of the training in and through research of high-quality scientists – whose professional future is generally open-ended – and reinforcement of the scientific activities of a working community in its proven area of competence. Regarding the recruitment of a postdoctoral fellow, this reinforcement may also enable exploration of a research area that is complementary to the usual scientific activities of the host unit.

2.2. Conditions for eligibility

Conditional on the terms fixed by specific contracts within INRA.

Any person with a Master's degree (II) or equivalent, of any nationality, can apply for a post for a doctoral candidate.

Any researcher who has held a doctorate or equivalent diploma for less than 5 years, of any nationality, can apply for a post for a postdoctoral fellow.

2.3. Principle of mobility for postdoctoral fellows

Because mobility is recognised as a means of enhancing the professional development of researchers, it is strongly encouraged in the context of a global Human Resources policy.

Consequently, no postdoctoral fellowship contract can be offered to a scientist in the research centre where he completed his doctoral thesis. This principle of mobility also applies to Associate Scientists on Contract (ASC).

Furthermore, because of its desire to participate in construction of the European Research Area and to promote the internationalisation of research, INRA complies with the principle of equality of treatment for European candidates and undertakes to implement a hosting policy that is favourable to those of other nationalities², as well as French candidates who can claim experience in other countries.

2.4. Information on the posts available

To a great extent, the attractiveness of INRA is reliant on its ability to encourage the hosting of young scientists by its research units.

In a spirit of openness, calls for applications are disseminated as broadly as possible in the scientific community concerned, by the research unit or division seeking candidates. Posts are also advertised via the Human Resources Directorate on INRA's national and international websites for two months before the closure date for applications and the posts becoming available, on other websites specialised in employment in research and the websites of partner organisations³.

The information supplied covers at least the following areas: subject, scientific disciplines, duration, remuneration (gross salary). Additional information, notably with respect to working conditions and professional prospects, are available from the research unit, research centre or division concerned.

2.5. Choice of candidates

Selection must comply with the principles of transparency and the equality of treatment of candidates.

² Foreign researchers employed by INRA can benefit from the services offered by the mobility centres of the ERA-More network regarding the practical organisation of their attachment (www.fnak.fr)

³ For example: www.abg.asso.fr, www.emploi-scientifique.info, ec.europa.eu/eracareers/index_en.cfm,...

Candidates are selected by a selection committee organised by the research unit concerned, the composition of this committee following the guidelines laid down by the European Charter, in a transparent and appropriate manner. The Head of Division is responsible for the quality of all selection procedures.

In the context of partnerships with certain doctoral schools, the selection process for some doctoral candidates may be carried out under the responsibility of the doctoral school but in compliance with the principles of transparency and the equality of treatment of candidates, and in close collaboration with INRA.

2.6. Remuneration

The categories of researcher concerned by this Charter are paid by the Institute from its own or outside funds. However, like all other categories of contracted staff, INRA is responsible for paying the social charges incumbent upon a public sector employer.

Under the conditions and within the limits fixed by the regulations relative to supplementary activities, doctoral candidates may be authorised to undertake additional paid activities for the purposes of the valorisation and dissemination of scientific knowledge or training through and in research (e.g. monitoring, short-term projects, training, etc.). Under the same conditions, postdoctoral fellows may also carry out teaching or advisory activities, remunerated expert reports, etc.

2.7. Duration

The duration of the research project for a doctoral candidate is 3 years. The length of a project by a postdoctoral fellow may vary, and be between 1 and 3 years.

The director of the research unit ensures that the subject proposed is appropriate to the recruitment level envisaged, and undertakes that it shall be completed in light of the state of the art and the resources available, and within the period allocated.

Whatever the mode of funding and the type of contract, the director of the unit ensures that funds are available to pay salaries and cover the costs of the research throughout the duration of the thesis or the postdoctoral fellow's project.

The extension of a contract is exceptional and supposes obtaining the necessary funding and determining an explicit and shared objective for completion; in the case of doctoral candidates, it is necessary to obtain the agreement of the doctoral school to which they are attached. Any extension must be planned beforehand, so as not to destabilise the researcher's working conditions.

3. Positioning in the research unit

Doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows are full members of the scientific staff in their research unit. They have access to equipment and facilities in the same way as other research staff, on condition of compliance with the prevention and safety rules specific to the unit and the equipment and facilities concerned. They participate in the scientific activities of the unit and the INRA research division to which they are attached.

As a corollary, they must comply with current internal regulations (hierarchical supervision by the director of the unit, functioning of the unit, working hours, confidentiality and intellectual property, scientific ethics, health and safety, prevention, etc.). They must undertake to cite their membership of the laboratory according to INRA standards in the event of any valorisation of the work they have carried out within the Institute. On a voluntary basis, and for four years after they have left INRA, they are asked to supply the unit with all the information that is required to monitor the course of their professional career.

The participation of doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows in any scientific events or projects of a collective nature should be encouraged when it enables their integration in the life of the unit, centre or division, and/or helps them develop their professional career. They can participate in all decision-making bodies that exist within research units and divisions.

The unit director ensures that structured, regular and effective relationships are established from the beginning of the contract between doctoral candidates and thesis supervisors, and between postdoctoral fellows and the scientific manager of the research project. As a general rule, INRA undertakes to offer the same working conditions and professional environment as those provided for its full-tenure staff.

3.1. Management of doctoral candidates

Thesis supervisors must have proven competence in the supervision of research work. They must have the time, knowledge, experience, expertise and commitment necessary to offer adequate support for doctoral candidates hosted by the research team. They transmit information on the preventive and safety measures specific to the activities carried out, based on the procedure defined by the unit for hosting new arrivals⁴ and on the overall risk assessment document⁵. They present those active in prevention in the unit (agents responsible for prevention, person competent in radioprotection, occupational first aid provider) and ensure knowledge of general safety instructions (emergency procedures, identification of high-risk areas, etc.).

In particular, the number of doctoral candidates hosted by a unit cannot exceed the actual management capacities of the unit; for example, the number of researchers accredited to manage research (HDR), senior researchers (DR) and professors (PR) present in the unit. Almost without exception, the maximum accepted staffing ratio is two doctoral candidates for each accredited researcher (HDR, DR and PR)

The thesis supervisor carries out his (or her) management mission in the setting of a constructive and positive relationship with the doctoral candidate. He undertakes to commit a significant part of his time to the doctoral candidate. Supervision is organised in particular in a context of structured and regular contacts, so that the doctoral candidate receives optimum benefit from this transfer of knowledge, gradually acquires independence and develops innovative methods and approaches.

⁴ The "Réussir ensemble la prévention" guide (in English, "Safety – It's everyone's business"), can be downloaded from the prevention intranet website (<http://www.inra.fr/prevention/guidesetaidesmemoire.htm>) is a good tool to raise awareness to the dangers linked to research activities and their prevention. The "Accueil et prévention" guide (in English: "Hosting and Prevention") (<http://www.inra.fr/prevention/guidesetaidesmemoire.htm>) recalls the principal steps to be followed when a new member of staff joins a unit.

⁵ In most INRA units, the results of risk assessments are recorded in the OPPI (Outil de Pilotage de la Prévention à l'INRA) (Prevention Management Tool for INRA)

Each doctoral candidate is followed by a thesis committee made up of at least four members, half of whom are personalities external to the unit. This committee meets once a year, verifies the feasibility and pertinence of the thesis project, monitors its implementation, issues recommendations and gives its opinion on compilation of the manuscript.

The thesis supervisor, working with the doctoral candidate, proposes the composition of the thesis jury in compliance with the rules specific to the doctoral school, and chooses the date when the thesis shall be defended.

3.2. Management of postdoctoral fellows

Because they are experienced researchers in the sense of the European Charter, postdoctoral fellows carry out the research project that has been entrusted to them with greater independence than a doctoral candidate. They report regularly on the progress of their work to their scientific manager who ensures that this work is carried out appropriately and provides the fellow with all necessary support.

Initiation with respect to prevention is ensured according to the same principles as for doctoral candidates, by the scientific manager: transmission of information on preventive measures specific to the activities that will be carried out, based on the procedure for hosting new staff and on the overall risk assessment document³, presentation of actors in prevention in the unit and transmission of general safety instructions (emergency procedures, identification of high-risk areas, etc.).

3.3. Monitoring of career development

Unit directors must ensure that as soon as they arrive, doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows have a clear and well-constructed career project. They provide support and monitor the professional outcome of doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows hosted by the research unit, by maintaining the necessary contacts. This monitoring must cover a period of at least four years following their stay at INRA. The doctoral candidate or postdoctoral fellow should voluntarily supply this information to their division head, the centre president and, in the case of doctoral candidates, to the doctoral school to which they are attached.

Questions regarding the management and outcome of doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows must be the subject of a specific point in the assessment of research units and research divisions.

4. Continuing development

INRA considers that it is the duty of the Institute to ensure that the stay of doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows in an INRA research unit constitutes a valued step in their career path in terms of the skills acquired and their career opportunities for the future.

INRA thus considers that in terms of the research experience acquired in research units, the future professional development of doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows must be based on acquiring the broadest possible range of skills appropriate to a chosen career path by preparing in particular their continuing professional development. Associations of young researchers provide an opportunity for their members to make themselves known, express their needs regarding supervision and training, exploit their skills, and familiarise themselves with a variety of professional environments, particularly of an industrial nature. INRA encourages these associations to pool their actions in order to work in optimum synergy with the actors concerned. In addition, INRA research centres organise regular welcome seminars during which presentations are made of the support arrangements available with respect to continuing training, professional development and career orientation. These associations of young researchers are also presented during these welcome seminars.

4.1. Continuing training

INRA undertakes to take account of the special needs of doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows when developing the Institute's training plan, and as far as possible to organise training courses that meet the specific needs of this population.

In the same way as full-tenure researchers at INRA, doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows have access to the training courses organised by the Institute. The unit director provides them with information with on these courses and encourages them to follow those that are necessary to broaden their skills.

A local continuing training manager is present at each INRA Research Centre and can assist doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows to identify appropriate training programmes.

In the case of doctoral candidates, and in view of the fact that doctoral schools are required to offer the training necessary for professional development and for the acquisition of a broad scientific culture to their doctoral candidates⁶, it is necessary to adapt the training courses available in collaboration with the relevant doctoral schools; these collaborative efforts should as far as possible be included in the framework of the partnership agreement.

4.2. Career orientation

The activities of each doctoral candidate or postdoctoral fellow must be placed in the setting of the individual and professional career project. The scientific manager and unit director must make every effort to ensure that these researchers benefit from all the resources necessary to achieve their project.

More generally, INRA offers an opportunity to doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows to follow training appropriate to their situation. Similarly, each doctoral candidate or postdoctoral fellow benefits from personalised support to develop his or her professional objectives. Each INRA research centre has a local Human Resources office that can assist doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows with this approach and, if necessary identify the most appropriate interlocutors (Division Head, INRA careers office, etc.).

However, in the case of doctoral candidates, in view of the fact that the mission of doctoral schools is to provide support for the future career development of these candidates⁷, it is necessary to adapt INRA resources on a case-by-case basis in a context of collaboration with the doctoral school concerned. If the doctoral school fails a candidate, then INRA will act in its place, in the best interests of the candidate.

⁶ cf. Order dated 7 August 2006 relative to doctoral training. JO n°195 of 24/08/06 NOR MENS0602083A

⁷ *ibid.* 2

5. Publications and exploitation of results

The quality of research work is principally evaluated with reference to the exploitation of its results, in the form of scientific publications, lectures at international congresses or the filing of patents. The professional future of doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows is dependent upon this to a great extent.

It is therefore essential:

- to ensure that doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows are offered research topics that are feasible in terms of their valorisation and completion;
- that the exploitation of research results in the form of scientific articles is subject to specific restrictive conditions, and the consequences for the researcher must be correctly evaluated;
- in the context of the contract, to ensure sufficient time to achieve exploitation;
- to provide the time and budget necessary to enable the participation of doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows in scientific congresses and meetings;
- that the researcher is the author of work arising directly from his or her professional project.

Regarding defence of a thesis, the doctoral candidate must comply with the publication norms that prevail in his or her doctoral school.

6. Methods for follow-up and changes to the hosting system

INRA is committed to the principle of an annual meeting under the responsibility of the Deputy Director General in charge of Scientific Programmes, Resources and Assessment, that brings together all INRA's scientific managers and representatives of doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows, in order to review the conditions for their hosting by the Institute and to discuss any outstanding problems. This opportunity for exchanges between central management and the population concerned by this Charter is likely to be reinforced because of the application to INRA of French Decree No. 2007-338 dated 12 March 2007, which provides for the introduction of joint consultative committees for non-full-tenure staff, in which they are required to participate.

In the event of non-compliance with the principles laid down in the Charter, doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows have a

right of appeal, in the first instance to the director of their host unit. If the latter is also their scientific manager, or if the unit director is not able to propose a solution that is acceptable to all parties, the President of the INRA centre to which the unit belongs or, in the case of doctoral candidates, a mediator appointed by their doctoral school, can be asked to make a final decision.