> ACADEMIC**TRANSFER**

International PhD Recruitment Events
Fair Guide for Supervisors and Support Staff

Version 1.0
August 2020

> ACADEMIC**TRANSFER**

Contents

1. Preface

What you have before you is our fair guide, for supervisors and support staff who participate in international PhD recruitment events.

AcademicTransfer strives to reach academics and researchers all over the world, to persuade them to continue their careers in the Netherlands and to help them find a position with your organisation. Each year, we select international career events at which to recruit talent in cooperation with the Dutch knowledge institutions. A PhD recruitment event in another country puts you in direct contact with academics and researchers. It's an ideal opportunity to draw international attention to your organisation. Individual interviews with the candidates on location ensure an effective first round in the selection procedure.

Since 10 years AcademicTransfer organises recruitment events for its members. Starting with one event in China in the first year, we expanded our activities to events in six countries in 2020. Based on our experiences in organising these events we compiled this fair guide in close collaboration with some of our members[*] who shared with us their best practices. This makes this guide both informative on the events we organise and our role but also supportive for your institute how to make the participation in such an event as successful as possible.

In the following chapters you will find information on the type of events we organise, our role and what we facilitate for you, advice in preparing fairs and selecting candidates at the part of the institutes, tips and tricks on conducting interviews, examples of internal emails of organising institutes, useful contacts and websites..

Please consider this version as 'work in progress'. As we continue to pick up on tips and tricks we will further professionalise this guide.

---

[*]   NWO-i (CWI), EUR, RUG, UU, VSNU and the VU

2. Events organised by AcademicTransfer
and the different roles

2.1 Two kinds of events

There are two kinds of events that we organise:
- Career fairs focused on recruiting academics, researchers and scientists
- PhD workshops focused on recruiting PhD candidates bringing their own funding

What all events have in common, is the fact that the matchmaking aspect results in one-on-one interviews, whether you are in China at a PhD-recruitment event or in Boston at a career event for all kinds of research positions. Because of these interviews, participants are always facilitated with a digital matchmaking and planning system, either provided by the event organiser or by AcademicTransfer. Further facilities - which differ per country/event - are a welcoming dinner, an introduction programme and a networking reception. During most events we also organise a 'Netherlands House' in which we inform candidates about the Netherlands. This way the interviews can be focused on the content of the research proposal only.

On most occasions we are in close contact with the fair organiser or representatives of the Netherlands in specific countries.

Read more about the differences on the corporate site of AcademicTransfer. In this guide we focus on PhD workshops only.

2.2 Current events and registration

A current overview of upcoming events is listed on the corporate site of AcademicTransfer. Each event is described and offers the opportunity to register directly.

2.2.1. NEW in 2020: virtual recruitment fair

Due to COVID-19 all physical PhD workshops and career fairs abroad are cancelled in 2020. As a replacement, we are organizing our first virtual event, with an online exhibition floor

What do all events have in common?

- One-on-one interviews with candidates
- Digital matchmaking and planning of interviews
- Welcome dinner, introduction, networking
- Netherlands House

and video call possibilities. The idea is the same: with our event planner tool the participating delegates can review candidates' CV's and research proposals and plan interviews for the virtual fair days. You can download our booth design document here to get a better idea of the virtual exhibition floor and online possibilities.

3. Preparing PhD fairs
and selecting candidates
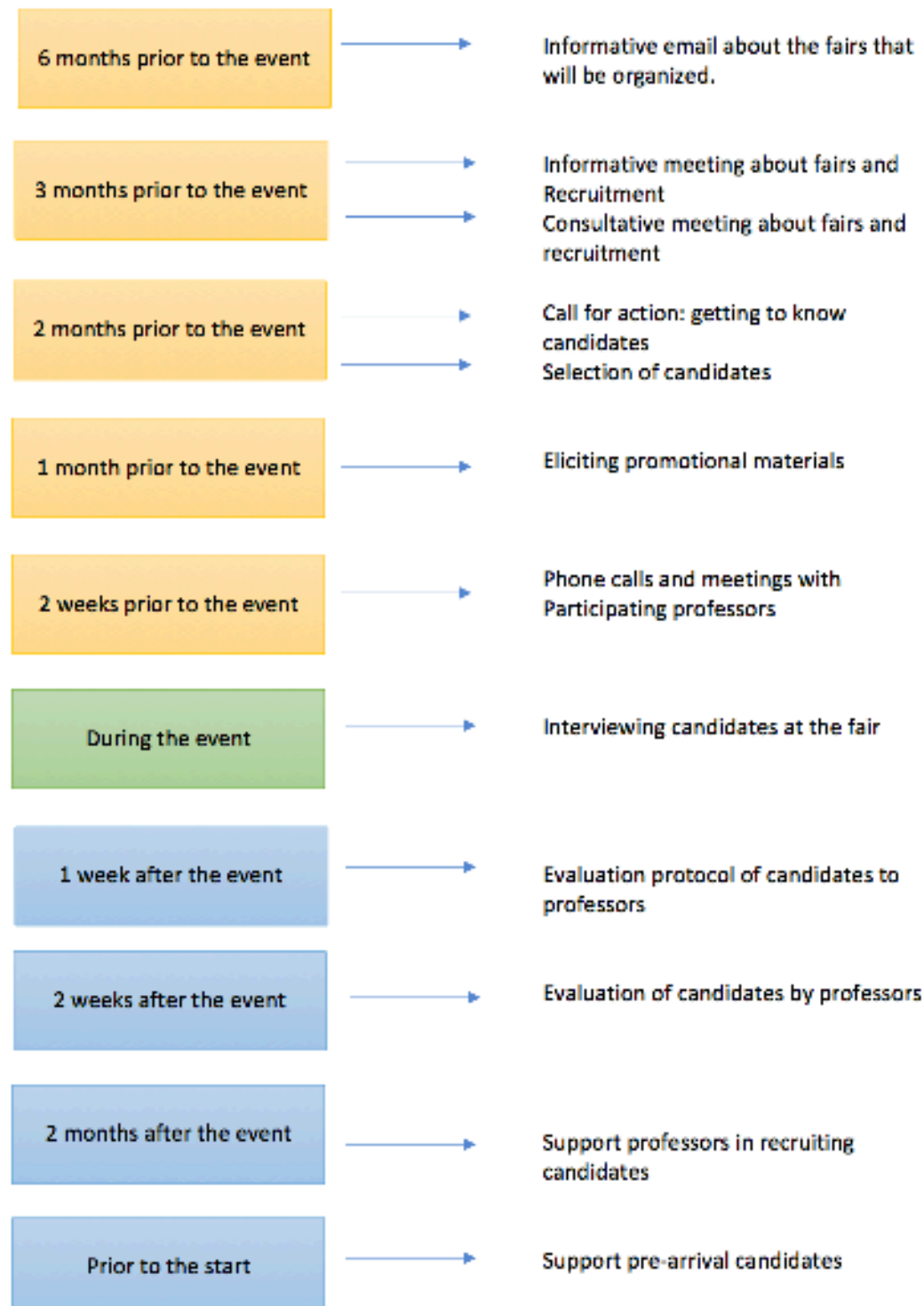
3.1 Overview coordination PhD Workshop
tasks for the coordinator or the PI of the participating organisation

PRIOR TO THE PHD WORKSHOP	
Time prior to the workshop date	**Activity**
Six months prior to the event	Informative email to all professors and graduate schools about the fairs your organisation will attend + special MoUs and deals your organisation has with countries (examples: CSC-China, Minciencias/Colfuturo-Colombia, Conacyt-Mexico, LPDP and MORA-Indonesia).
Three months prior to the event	Informative meeting for all professors about fairs and recruitment.
Three months prior to the event	Consultative lunch meetings for participating professors about fairs and recruitment.
Two months prior to the event	Call for action to participating professors: information email about recruitment fairs (see example email 1 in attachment 'Email examples'.)
Two months prior to the event	Selection candidates prior to the fair: 1. Professors search via topic and keywords. 2. Selected students get invited for an interview at the fair.
One month prior to the event	Eliciting promotional material from professors (ask for project opportunities) per fair.
Two weeks prior to	Phone calls and meetings with professors for further information.

DURING THE EVENT
Interviewing candidates by participating professors during the fair: 1. Some organisations present current research and ask applicants where their interest lies and how they see themselves contribute. Current research is presented in a brochure, a folder or through websites; 2. Some organisations keep the research topics open (not the discipline); 3. Some organisations use both methods: method 2 for candidates selected prior to the fair (outbound-candidates) and method 1 for walk-in candidates (inbound-candidates); 4. Have information on onboarding in the Netherlands ready.

AFTER THE EVENT	
Time after the workshop	**Activity**
One week after the fair	Evaluation protocol of candidates (see example email 2 in attachment 'Email examples')
Two weeks after the fair	Follow up: evaluation for professors and email to candidates that your organisation has interviewed (see example email 2 in attachment 'Email examples')
Two months following the final selection of candidates	Follow up: support professors in recruitment (preparing necessary documentation and strategically advising on application to specific scholarship agencies)
Depending on start	Follow up: support candidates pre-arrival (information on housing, visa, what it means to do a PhD at VU, relevant phone numbers and emails; arranging special assistance, preparing for participation in the bridging programme etc., see example mail 3 in attachment 'Email examples').

Preparing PhD fairs
and selecting candidates

3.2. Timeline

| 6 months prior to the event | → | Informative email about the fairs that will be organized. |

| 3 months prior to the event | → | Informative meeting about fairs and Recruitment |
| | → | Consultative meeting about fairs and recruitment |

| 2 months prior to the event | → | Call for action: getting to know candidates |
| | → | Selection of candidates |

| 1 month prior to the event | → | Eliciting promotional materials |

| 2 weeks prior to the event | → | Phone calls and meetings with Participating professors |

| During the event | → | Interviewing candidates at the fair |

| 1 week after the event | → | Evaluation protocol of candidates to professors |

| 2 weeks after the event | → | Evaluation of candidates by professors |

| 2 months after the event | → | Support professors in recruiting candidates |

| Prior to the start | → | Support pre-arrival candidates |

Preparing PhD fairs
and selecting candidates

3.3. Workflows on (pre-)selecting candidates

AcademicTransfer organises two types of international recruitment events (see 2.1.). As stated, this fair guide focuses on International Recruitment Events (IRE) where PhD candidates bring their own funding. To support you to prepare for this recruitment event as much as possible we present different workflows for different situations in the preparation process.

3.3.1. Outbound versus inbound

- 'Outbound' refers to the situation where the organisation reaches out to candidates (pro-active selection).
- 'Inbound' refers to the situation where potential candidates contact the organisation by themselves. 'Inbound in advance' refers to the situation where candidates contact the organisation prior to the event and 'inbound during event' refers to the situation where potential candidates contact you during the event.

3.3.2 Outbound workflow

In this most optimal situation there are three parties involved:

- Candidates (they register through either a tool provided by the fair organiser or by AcademicTransfer).
- Organisation's prime contact: mostly a dedicated coordinator, hr-advisor, recruiter or internationalisation officer.
- Future Principal Investigators (PI)/Research coordinators.

In an outbound situation the organisation's prime contact is in the lead. She/he:

- informs PI's and asks for draft project descriptions (examples).
- optional: prime contact checks candidates on CV, research interest and/or project proposal (during this step the PI can also be in the lead or PI and prime contact share responsibility during this step).
- arranges access for PI's to database and asks for selection of candidates.
- invites and schedules the selected candidates.
- arranges or conducts interviews together with/next to PI's.
- coordinates the decision process of further selection (PI's/ Research Coordinators make decisions).
- if a potential candidate does not make to the final selection, makes sure to refer them for instance to other positions/ possibilities at the organisation's website (careful 'hand off')

3.3.3. Inbound 'in advance' workflow

In an 'inbound in advance' situation, candidates contact your organisation. After a pre-selection (is the candidate interesting enough for a PI/research group), prime contact asks candidate for additional information and for completion of the database as soon as possible. Then ask candidate to check research/PI's.

3.3.4. Inbound 'during the event' workflow

In an 'inbound during events' situation, you meet the candidate for the first time during the recruitment event. Make sure to prepare for this situation by:

- having draft project descriptions or '(research) interest statements' from the PI's/Research coordinators in writing/ print ready where new candidates can look up their topic of interest/their match (see for examples of project descriptions attachment).
- reserving time or space for spontaneous interviews.

3.3.5. Solo Scenarios: PI or Research Staff?

Sometimes institutes choose to send a small delegation, or adventurous scientists go by themselves and there is no prime contact. Sometimes the reverse situation is at stake.
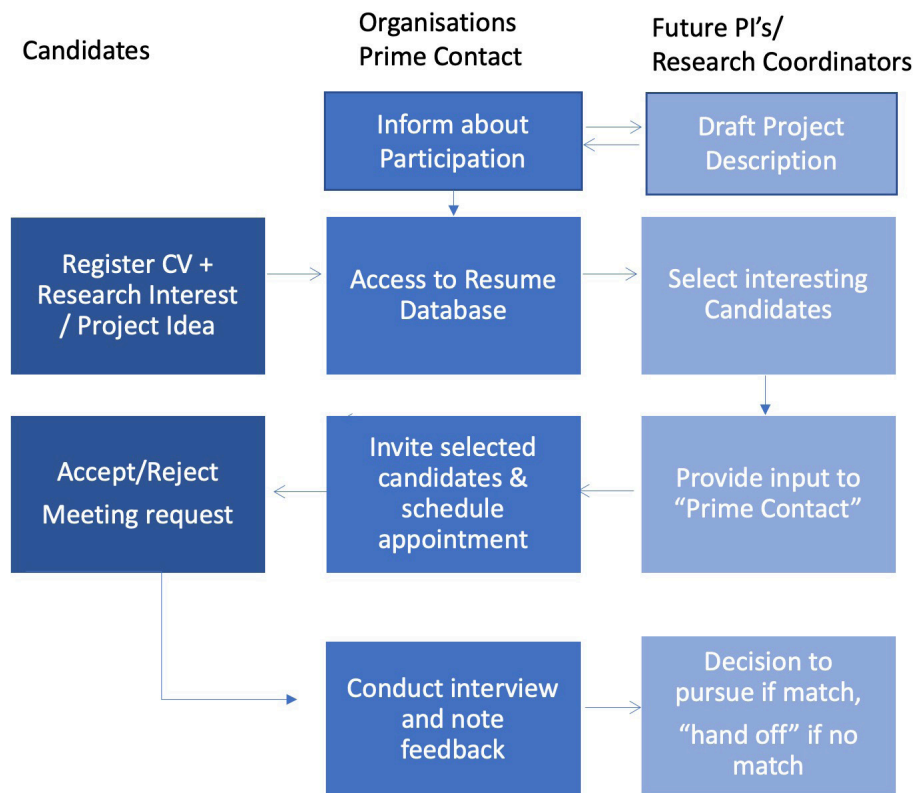One of the biggest challenges is knowing who and what to look for:

- PI are experts in their discipline: their biggest challenges is getting support from their organisation and possible selection guidelines (onboarding process, mostly available at either HR or Internationalisation).
- Research Staff usually has easier access to support but they need to be aware what research is going on, where the interested PI's are and who they may be looking for.
- Project Descriptions or "(Research) Interest Statements" can be very use full for this. See examples.
- When time is constraint in advance, it seems more logic to consider a predominantly inbound approach. However to make the most out of an event, it pays off to set up appointments before hand.
- Project Descriptions or "(Research) Interest Statements" can be used both for database searches prior to the event and during the event to validate walk ins.

Preparing PhD fairs
and selecting candidates

Outbound

Candidates	Organisations Prime Contact	Future PI's/ Research Coordinators
	Inform about Participation	Draft Project Description
Register CV + Research Interest / Project Idea	Access to Resume Database	Select interesting Candidates
Accept/Reject Meeting request	Invite selected candidates & schedule appointment	Provide input to "Prime Contact"
	Conduct interview and note feedback	Decision to pursue if match, "hand off" if no match

Preparing PhD fairs
and selecting candidates

Inbound in Advance

Candidates **Organisations Prime Contact** **Future PI's/ Research Coordinators**

Candidates	Organisations Prime Contact	Future PI's/Research Coordinators
Request Interview	Ask about Research Interest/Field/PI	Informed about Participation. Asked Project Description
Student Check site and/or Files in Schedule Tool	Information complete	Seeks matching PI/ResearchGroup check interest
Accept/Reject Meeting request	Invite selected candidates & schedule appointment	Provide input to "Prime Contact"
	Conduct interview and note feedback	Decision to pursue if match, "hand off" if no match

Preparing PhD fairs
and selecting candidates

Inbound during Events (Walk ins)

Candidates	Organisations Prime Contact	Future PI's/ Research Coordinators
	Inform about Participation	Draft Project Description
Request for interview	Ask about Research Interest/Field/PI	Check against known PI's, Interests, Projects,
	Conduct interview and note feedback	Seeks matching PI/ResearchGroup check interest
		Decision to pursue if match, "hand off" if no match
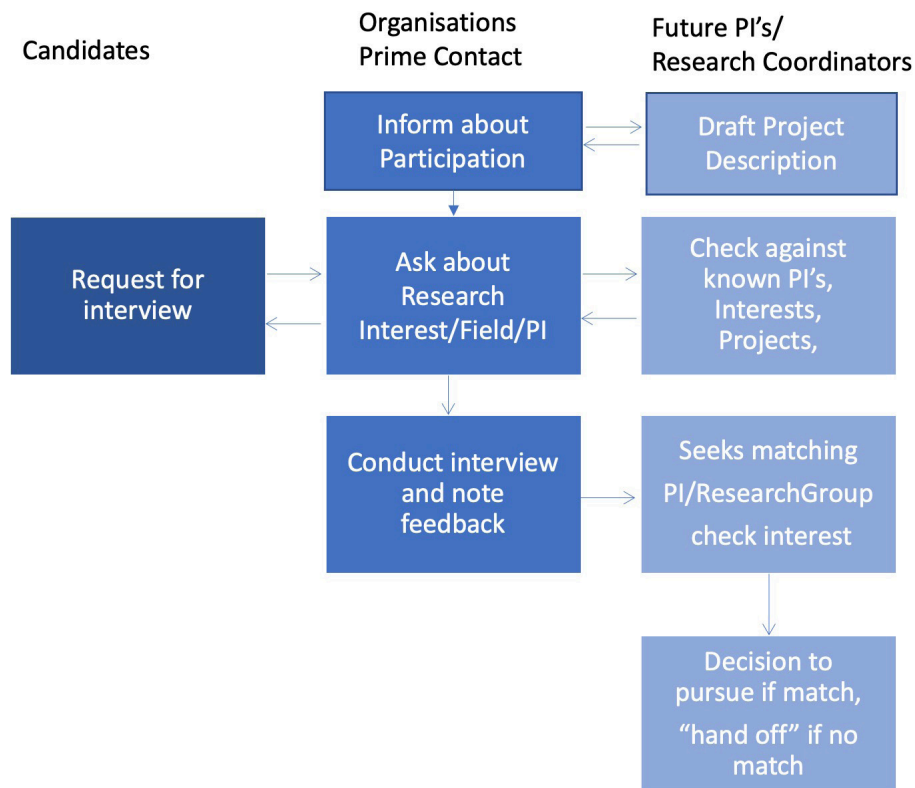
Preparing PhD fairs
and selecting candidates

Outbound Solo PI

Candidates   **Future PI's**

Register CV + Research Interest / Project Idea	→	→	Access to Resume Database Select interesting Candidates

Accept/Reject Meeting request	←	←	Invite selected candidates & schedule appointment

		→	Conduct interview. pursue if match, "hand off" if no match
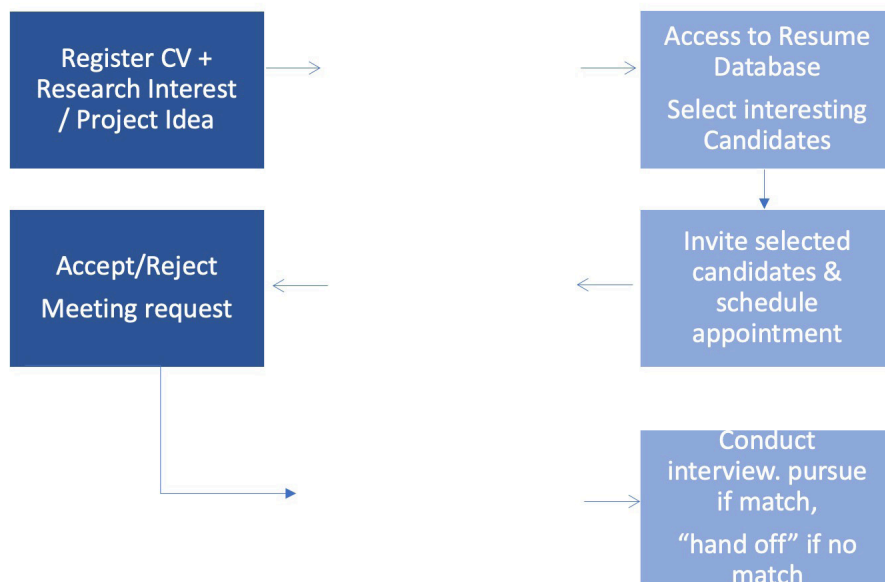
Preparing PhD fairs
and selecting candidates

Outbound Solo Research Staff

Candidates	Research Coordinators	Future PI's
	Inform about Participation	Draft Project Description
Register CV + Research Interest / Project Idea	Access to Resume Database / Select interesting Candidates	
Accept/Reject Meeting request	Invite selected candidates & schedule appointment	
	Conduct interview. pursue if match, "hand off" if no match	Follow up Interview, further procedure
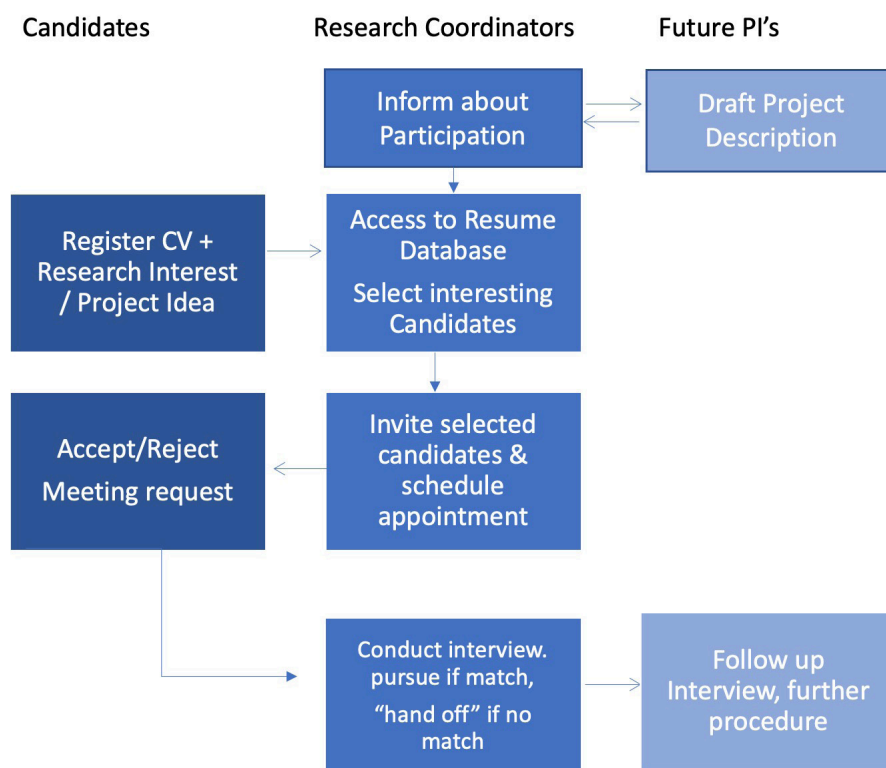
Preparing PhD fairs
and selecting candidates

3.3.6. Preparation in short

For a successful event you need to prepare:
- research interest/project information. Check out some examples we've collected for you.
- promotion materials
- onboarding information

When a team participates, the relevant people can contribute as in their own daily role/expertise. If there is solo representation, this input needs to be collected upfront. See the diagram below.

Preparation
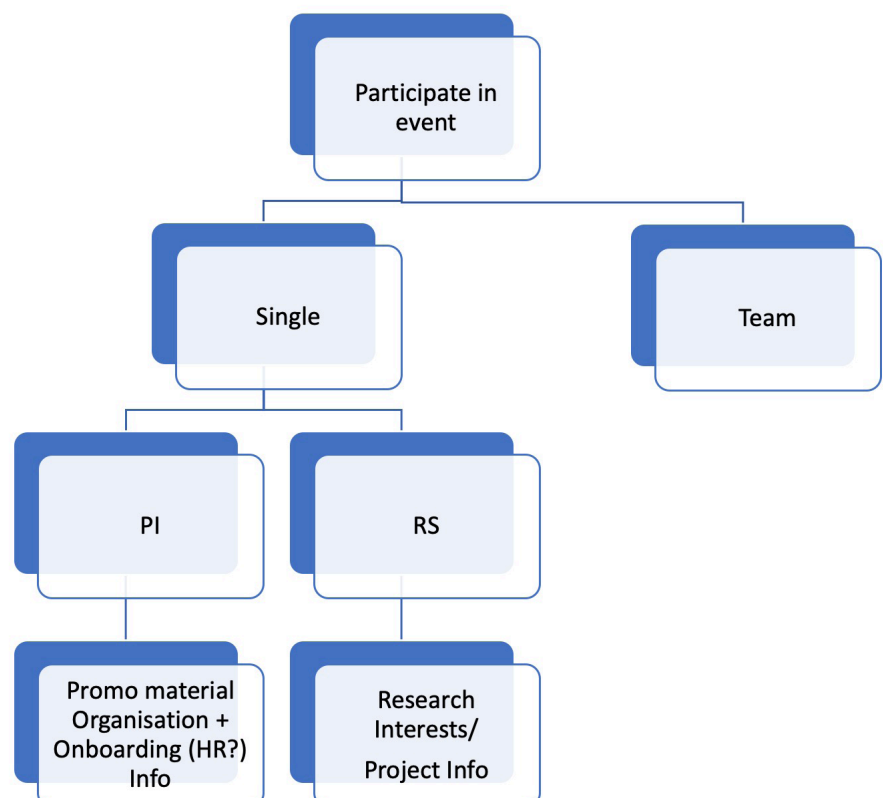
4. Best practices on interviewing

4.1 Conducting job interviews[*]

Spectrum of job interviews

On the one hand of the job interview spectrum is the unstructured interview (no standardised questions at all) and on the other the fully structured interview.

Unstructured x---------------	Semi structured ---------x---------	Structured ----------------x
interviewer asks whatever questions come to mind	prepared questions and room for questions that come to mind	much like an open-ended test with oral rather than a written response

Two ways to use the interview

- Alternative to an application form or a written questionnaire to collect information (what is your interest in research; have you ever supervised anyone; what was your major in college; would you mind giving presentations on your research).

- To make inferences about a person's suitability for a job based on both the person's answers to the questions and his or her behavior in the interview situation.

Interviewers can be asked to make ratings on job-related dimensions such as communication skills and relevant experience. Be aware of interviewer biases and cognitive processes that can reduce the accuracy of the rating.

Ratings of interviewee employment suitability from a structured interview have been shown to predict further job performance across many different studies.

Enhancing the reliability and validity of a structured interview

- The interviewer should ask standardised questions.
- The interviewer should have detailed information about the job in question.
- The interviewer should not have prior information about the interviewee, such as psychological test scores.
- The interviewer should not evaluate the interviewee until the interview is completed.
- The interviewer should make ratings of individual dimensions of the interviewee, such as educational background and relevance of prior work history, rather than a global rating of suitability for the job.
- Interviewers should receive training in how to conduct a valid structured interview.

4.2 Profile regular PhD student

The VSNU uses the UFO-profiles for all university-functions.
Main activities for regular PhD students (i.e. PhD students that hold a regular contract with the university/research institute) are:

- research proposal
- research plan
- budget proposal for research
- research
- supervising research support staff
- publication of research
- doctoral thesis
- teaching
- supervising students

Best practices on interviewing

For external PhD's or PhD's who bring their own funding, the following tasks may be left out:
- supervising research support staff
- teaching
- supervising students

4.3. Competences PhD student*

The VSNU published the competences for PhD students. These are:

1. Conceptual capacity: formulating views, ideas and concepts based upon complex information, and constructing conceptual frameworks or models.

Questions:
- What do you consider to be complex information?
- Use an example to show how you arrive at the formulation of concepts.
- What did you do with the various concepts?
- Have you recently arrived at new insights based on complex information which you have analysed? How did these insights came about?

2. Presenting: oral presentation, public performance.

Questions:
- Have you given any presentations over the last year? How often? What about? Did you find it easy?
- When do you feel a presentation has been successful?
- Has presenting been part of your job evaluations? What did the evaluation involve?
- Can you give a 2-3 minute presentation about your motivation for this job?
- How do you communicate knowledge in a lecture? Do you use specific techniques?

3. Planning and Organising: surveying the work, setting goals and priorities, planning activities, time and resources needed.

Questions:
- What are the critical steps in organising your current project-based work?

- How do you prepare for meetings and how do you keep them under control?
- Have you ever drawn up work procedures? How did you implement them?
- What were your objectives over the past year? Did you achieve these objectives?
- Do you have a certain approach for keeping an eye on issues which must be tackled in the short term?
- What is this approach? Example?
- How did you determine which tasks has priority over the past year? Give a few examples.
- Have you ever actively been involved in a reorganisation? What was the scenario for this reorganisation and what was your contribution during the preparation for this reorganisation?
- Have you ever been asked to organise something extra? Can you give an example?
- Describe an example of a situation where you had to adjust the original planning. What resistance did you meet? What did you do about it? How did you organise your work?
- Can you give an example of a situation where you indicated that you didn't have time for an extra job?
- How do you ensure that you remain well informed about what happens in your environment/field?
- How do you plan your research and ensure that you meet the deadlines?

4. Monitoring: acting to monitor and check the progress made on activities or tasks.

Questions:
- What kind of controls do you build in your work?
- How do you manage to meet the appointments you make with people, both in time and quality?
- How do you manage to be well informed about the progress of a project or activity?
- How do you manage to work according to plan or planning?
- Do you have any experience with a co-worker who didn't meet up to appointments? What did you do?
- How do you evaluate your activities? Example?

---

* Bron: https://fws.e-office.com/vsnu/fws.nsf/wwwlogin?openform

Best practices on interviewing

4.4. Cross cultural communication

Please be aware of differences in communication styles when interviewing candidates with a different cultural background. We advise you to*:

- be aware of differences between high-context cultures (need for socialising before coming to the point) and low-context cultures (coming to the point straight away as in the Netherlands, in Germany and in the Scandinavian countries). In case of high-context countries and a time constraint of a 20-minute interview:
  • make at least a compliment about the country (country side, food etc) .
  • or ask the origin of someone's name (often names have a specific meaning) and make sure you pronounce the name of the candidate correctly.
- be aware of differences in hierarchy standards (the Netherlands: low hierarchy standards where you can challenge your authority which is absolutely not done in countries with high hierarchy standards).
- investigate in the education system of the country where the event takes place and explain the difference between our AIO (paid position) and Bursalen (funded position) system. In most countries you are a student when doing a PhD.
- investigate in the cultural intelligence of your candidate: ability to work in a different culture/adapt to a different culture.
- be aware of skills that advance the quality of the interview:
  • be able to adapt your communication style.
  • be flexible in the way you ask your questions (if necessary: 'wrap' your question in a story or example).
  • be open minded: not too much assumptions that you know how it works.

If you are interested in learning more on cross cultural communication, we advise you to read the book *Cultural Map* by Erin Meyer.

5. Example attachments & useful links

For a successful preparation and event, we've collected some examples for you:

- examples of project descriptions
- examples of internal organizational emails

Factcards is the webpage hosted by AcademicTransfer where you and your candidate can find information on the Netherlands:

- arriving
- living
- studying
- working
- research

❯ More information

For more information about the upcoming events visit corporate.academictransfer.com/en/internationalisation or send an e-mail to **events@academictransfer.nl**.

Like and follow us:

in f academictransfer @academictrnsfr

www.academictransfer.com

+31 (0)880 282800