

March, 2024

Second Call for Proposals: Research-Associate Program

Introduction

Employment tracks for Research-Associates or Non-Faculty Researchers (NFR) exist in leading universities and research institutions around the world, as well as in Israel (e.g., Weizmann Institute).

Research-Associates/NFRs are scientists who engage in research on a fulltime basis, under continuing mentorship of a principal investigator (PI), generally as a member of a research team. They assist in promoting research projects and ongoing lab work (operation of equipment/infrastructure, student supervision, grant writing and publication of papers/results).

The Planning and Budgeting committee (PBC) of the Council for Higher Education (CHE) in Israel has launched a five-year initiative to increase the employment of Research-Associates/NFRs in select research laboratories with the goal of promoting cutting-edge, breakthrough science. The initiative will also encourage “brain gain” by creating an attractive employment option for post-doctoral graduates, alongside tenure-track positions.

Program Features

1. The program is open to submission from all research universities funded by the PBC.
2. Eligibility criteria: Candidates must hold a PhD degree at the time of application, and show proof of research capabilities (publications, scholarships, grants, awards, etc.) including extensive knowledge of the subject-matter relevant to the research group/facility which they are intended to integrate.
3. Research-Associates/NFRs may be employed in full-time or part-time positions in order to allow, among other things, the extension of the Teacher-Researcher Program¹.
4. The university may submit full-time or part-time candidates that meet the eligibility criteria above, up to a total of 10 full-time positions annually. (Nota Bene: a researcher in a part-time position in the program is not required to teach part-time in a high school).
5. The PBC will provide financial support for the employment of Research-Associates/NFRs to the extent of up to 40 full-time positions annually between the years 2023-2027.

¹ The Teacher-Researcher Program offers PhD scientists an employment track that combines research at a university with a science education teaching position in high-schools. The aim of the program is to, simultaneously, strengthen research laboratories and increase the number of highly educated science teachers in order to encourage more students to specialize in the sciences. Today, the program is active in The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in collaboration with the city of Jerusalem and the Trump Family Foundation. For further information (in Hebrew), see: [Report of the PBC for Increasing the Number of Students in High-Tech Related Fields](#) (21, 63)

6. The evaluation process: The PBC will appoint an evaluation committee comprising representatives from each participating university, in accordance with the candidates' fields of expertise at a given submission cycle. Evaluators will not evaluate applications from their home institutions. The evaluation will be on the basis of scientific excellence and the candidate's fit to the research group/infrastructure which s/he is to integrate, as well as her/his potential to contribute to the latter.
7. Terms of employment:
 - 7.1 The Research-Associate/NFR must be employed by the university in accordance with the terms of the program detailed above, and with the general employment regulations of the PBC and the Ministry of Finance.
 - 7.2 The PBC's financial support for the employment of the Research-Associate/NFR will not exceed 116 thousand NIS annually for a period of up to 5 years. The PBC's financial support constitutes roughly a third of the employment cost, estimated at about 350 thousand NIS per year (this figure includes additional funding for attending conferences and workshops abroad). The remaining portion of the employment cost (approx. two thirds) will be paid by the university and the PI (see Appendix A).
 - 7.3 The university's contribution may exceed a third of the employment cost, however, the PI's contribution will not exceed a third of the employment cost, based on the description in clause 7.2 above.
 - 7.4 The university may increase the Research-Associate's total salary using its own funds and/or The PI's funds.
 - 7.5 If the Research-Associate/NFR admitted is New Oleh or a returning Israeli resident who meets the conditions of the [Ministry of Aliyah and Integration](#) and is eligible for assistance according to the criteria of The Center for Integration in Science of said Ministry, the university will be entitled to an additional subsidy from said Ministry (see Appendix B). The Ministry of Aliyah and Integration will subsidize up to 20 positions in 2024.
 - 7.6 Universities must produce an appointment letter or a letter of commitment for at least a two-year employment period to all candidates admitted into the program. If employment continues after that period, the university must produce an additional appointment letter for the remaining employment period.
 - 7.7 The conditions stipulated above apply equally to Research-Associates/NFRs in part-time positions, for which the PBC's financial support will not exceed 58,000 NIS annually (based on an annual employment cost of 175,000 NIS).
 - 7.8 The Research-Associate/NFR is required to assume her/his new position at the start of the 2024-2025 academic year, or during that year's first semester at the latest, and no later than the start of the second semester.

All parties must adhere to the PBC's guidelines regarding employment and cost of researchers, and to the relevant salary and employment agreements set by the Ministry of Finance.

Application Procedure

Applications must be submitted by the Rector/VP for Research of the university, and include a list of up to 10 candidates, ranked by order of priority. The evaluation committee will consider institutional priorities, but will not be bound by them.

Application Materials

1. For each candidate please submit the following:

- A signed cover letter from the candidate.
- A signed letter from the University Rector/VP for Research, which includes the university's reasons for selecting the candidate, as well a guarantee that the university will employ the Research-Associate/NFR according to the conditions specified above.
- CV including a complete publications list (and links to articles when possible), mention of scholarships, grants, awards, etc.)
- A copy of the candidate's PhD certificate.
- Reference letter(s) from the PI(s) interested in employing the candidate.
- 2-3 letters of recommendation from senior researchers in the candidate's field. It is the responsibility of the University Rector/VP for Research, the Dean, or the relevant Department Head to request the recommendation letters for the candidate. Recommendations must be written especially for the program. Recommendations written for other scholarships, appointments, promotions, or any other purpose will be rejected. Recommendations must come from outside the university that wishes to employ the candidate, and be no more than two years old. In addition, recommendations should include a short background explanation of the work of each of the referees, the details of the institution in which s/he conducts research/teach, and a short explanation of her/his relationship with the candidate.

Applications Deadline

Applications must be submitted by the University **no later than Sunday, 12.5.2024.**

Appendix A

Estimated employment cost per Research-Associate (NIS)

	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year	Total
Estimated employment cost per Research-Associate (NIS)	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000	1,750,000
PBC	116,000	116,000	116,000	116,000	116,000	580,000
University and PI (PI no more than a third of the employment cost, based on the description in clause 7.2 above)	234,000	234,000	234,000	234,000	234,000	1,170,000

Estimated employment cost per Research-Associate performing Aliyah or returning citizens (NIS)

	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Fifth year	Total
Estimated employment cost per Research-Associate (NIS)	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000	1,750,000
PBC	116,000	116,000	116,000	116,000	116,000	580,000
The Ministry of Aliyah and Integration*	117,000	117,000	117,000	117,000	117,000	585,000
University and PI	117,000	117,000	117,000	117,000	117,000	585,000

* For a maximum period of 5 years for those performing Aliyah, and 4 years for returning citizens



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Appendix B

Program for Promoting the Integration of Researchers Performing Aliyah and Returning Israelis in Academic Research Positions

Background

In 2019, The Center for Integration in Science approached the PBC regarding the possibility of opening a new research fellowship program meant to integrate scientists in universities, in light of a decrease in the number of New Olim and returning Israelis scientists, integrating in research positions in academia. The appeal followed a meeting with over 100 Israeli post-doctoral scientists living abroad who reported difficulty returning to Israel due to the scarcity of research positions in Israeli universities. Simultaneously, Vice Principals of Research in universities have shown interest in such a program. An outline for a five years plan was suggested, which has since been adapted and reshaped.

The purpose of the program is to respond to the need to expand the possibilities of accepting New Olim and returning Israelis scientists with research experience, as researchers with a stable status and occupational horizon, yet not depended on tenure position (that are in limited number).

The plan was inspired by the PBC's historic participation in the first discontinued edition of the Ministry's program for the integration of New Olim scientists ('קנ"ע א'), and its current participation in the second edition of the same program ('קנ"ע ב'). The latter integrated a very low number of scientists, because of the program's limited terms.

Program Features and Terms

1. The program's intended audience are scientists performing Aliyah and returning Israelis with a doctoral degree or higher, who have a proven research track record, and are interested in assuming a research position in a laboratory in one of Israel's universities.
2. Prospective scientists must fit the definition of New Oleh or a returning Israeli scientist eligible for assistance by The Center for Integration in Science at The Ministry of Aliyah and Integration. The candidate's eligibility can be checked prior submission.





3. Upon commencing employment, the scientist must be within the relevant eligibility period: less than 3 years since their day of Aliyah, or 2 years since their day of return to Israel.
4. The scientist must have not been previously employed with the assistance of The Center for Integration in Science for more than 6 months.
5. Research universities will submit applications to the program in response to the call for Proposals publicized by the PBC.
6. A professional PBC evaluation committee will evaluate candidates' merit based on considerations of scientific excellence.
7. Upon notice of winning (and given advance commitment to participate), receiving institutions will produce a tentative appointment letter or a letter of commitment for at least a two-year period. If at the end of two years, the institution chooses to continue employing the researcher, the former will produce an additional employment letter for the remaining period.
8. Participating scientists' salaries will correspond to those of senior lecturers, including supplementary funds for conference participation, calculated according to the science connections fund expenses allotted to senior lecturers in the institution.
9. Other terms will follow the conditions stipulated in the PBC's program.

Sources of Funds

1. The Ministry of Aliyah and Integration will fund half of the institution's participation expenses and half of the PI's (Principle Investigator's) participation expenses, such that roughly 33% of expenses will be paid by the PBC, 33% by The Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, and 33% by the institution and the researcher.
2. New Olim will receive support for a maximum period of 5 years, and returning Israelis for a maximum period of 4 years.
3. The share of The Ministry of Aliyah and Integration will be transferred directly to the receiving institution upon receiving a tentative appointment letter, and according to the process coordinated with the PBC.

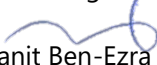




The program will increase the number of viable integration opportunities, and open occupational horizons with clear employment terms and stability for a period of at least 5 years – which is sufficient time to overcome the challenges of integration, prove professional acumen, carve a place for oneself in a field of research, and contribute to the Israeli research and development landscape.

Funding is subject to committee approval and budgetary availability.

Best regards,


Granit Ben-Ezra Zinger

Head of the Center for Integration in Science

