

**FUNDACIÓ INSTITUT D'ESTUDIS ESPACIALS DE CATALUNYA (IEEC)**

## **Career Plan**

*Alignment of career development with the European framework (R1–R4)*

*Stabilisation · Functions · Mobility · Networks · Promotion procedures*

*Document prepared within the framework of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRA / HR Excellence in Research)*

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## 1. Introduction

This IEEC Career Plan is framed within the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRA) promoted by the European Commission. Its objective is to provide the organisation with a transparent, equitable and predictable framework for professional development, aligned with the European researcher framework (R1–R4) and with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for their recruitment (OTM-R).

### 1.1. Institutional context

The IEEC belongs to the public sector of the Government of Catalonia and is currently a CERCA centre (Research Centres of Catalonia). It is governed by a Board of Trustees comprising the Government of Catalonia, the University of Barcelona (UB), the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya · BarcelonaTech (UPC) and the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC).

R&D activity is organised around four Research Units, which constitute the scientific core of the Institute: the Institute of Cosmos Sciences of the UB (ICCUB), the Centre for Space Studies and Research of the UAB (CERES), the Space Science and Technology Research Group of the UPC (CTE), and the Institute of Space Sciences of the CSIC (ICE-CSIC). The IEEC has staff linked to the institution through different arrangements. On the one hand, it has staff employed directly by the IEEC, who carry out their activities in the Institute's different units and areas. On the other hand, the IEEC has staff assigned or affiliated to the Institute who are employed by one of its Units or associated institutions; their employment relationship is governed by the regulations and provisions applicable at the corresponding institution.

### 1.2. Reference to the IEEC Staff Professional Classification document

This Plan is based on and develops the document “Professional Classification of the staff of the Fundació Institut d’Estudis Espacials de Catalunya”, approved by the Board of Trustees in March 2022 and updated in 2025 as an instrument for organising IEEC staff. This document assigns each person a professional group, subgroup and salary level based on the functions actually performed — regardless of job title or qualification — and on the requirements of the position, taking into account factors such as general responsibilities, training, qualifications, practical experience, responsibility and impact, autonomy, management and complexity.

The document structures IEEC staff into three professional groups:

- Group I — Management, administration and services: senior management and technical, economic, administrative and legal management.
- Group II — Engineering staff: development of high value-added technological services (Senior Engineer, Research Engineer, Technical Engineer, Junior Engineer and Support Technician).
- Group III — Scientific staff: research staff who lead or participate in projects (Distinguished Scientist, Senior Scientist, Research Scientist, Senior Postdoc, Junior Postdoc, Researcher in Training and Graduate Research Staff).

It also distinguishes between structural staff and research staff, defines three salary levels (1, 2 and 3) for each subgroup, and regulates professional progression and internal promotion in accordance with the national collective agreement for university education and research centres and Law 9/2022 on Science, also taking into account the human-resources management autonomy of CERCA centres recognised by Law 9/2022, of 21 December, on Science (Catalan Science Act).

This Plan does not replace the IEEC Professional Classification document; rather, it applies and projects it onto professional career development.

## 2. Purpose and scope

### 2.1. Staff contribution and scope of management of the Plan

The IEEC model entails an essential distinction for the purposes of this Plan. Scientific research staff assigned to the IEEC are provided by the institutions represented on the Board of Trustees (UB, UAB, UPC and CSIC), which are their employers and are responsible for their professional careers. All these institutions hold the European “HR Excellence in Research” recognition and implement their own Human Resources Strategies for Researchers (HRS4R), as well as their respective frameworks for recruitment, evaluation, promotion and stabilisation. This context places the IEEC within an institutional environment fully aligned with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the HRS4R framework. The IEEC, by contrast, directly employs its engineering staff (Professional Group II) and scientific staff (Professional Group III).

The Plan aims to: provide engineering and scientific staff employed by the IEEC with a progression pathway based on merit, ability and performance evaluation; define the structure of salary scales and supplements; establish routes for stabilisation and consolidation; and promote mobility and integration into networks, in coordination with the institutions represented on the Board of Trustees.

## 3. Alignment with the European researcher framework

The European Research Careers Framework classifies scientific staff into four professional profiles (R1 to R4), with increasing levels of competence, autonomy and leadership. In its Professional Classification document, the IEEC has defined its own professional categories aligned with these profiles.

### 3.1. IEEC engineering career path (Group II)

IEEC categories for engineering staff use the European R1–R4 framework as a reference for establishing the following functional equivalences:

| IEEC Category (Group II) | R Profile | Requirements                                                                         |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Support Technician       | —         | Technical support tasks; intermediate/higher vocational training.                    |
| Junior Engineer          | R1        | Graduate or final-year student with little or no experience.                         |
| Technical Engineer       | R2        | Execution/management of technical projects; medium complexity.                       |
| Research Engineer        | R3        | ≥3 years of experience; leads with secondary responsibility; PI of a small project.  |
| Senior Engineer          | R3–R4     | ≥3 years as Research Engineer; leads highly complex programmes; technical lead / PI. |

### 3.2. Scientific career path (Group III)

IEEC categories for scientific staff correspond to the following researcher profiles defined by the European Commission:

| IEEC Category (Group III) | R Profile (ref.) | Requirements                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Graduate Research Staff   | R1               | University graduate who is not enrolled in a doctoral programme.                                                                                      |
| Researcher in Training    | R1               | University graduate who has completed a university Master’s degree or equivalent and is enrolled in a doctoral programme.                             |
| Junior Postdoc            | R2               | <3 years of experience; holds a doctoral degree and works under the instructions of the group leader.                                                 |
| Senior Postdoc            | R2               | ≥3 years of experience; holds a doctoral degree and may supervise a researcher in training and a small number of students.                            |
| Research Scientist        | R3               | ≥2 years of postdoctoral experience; has secondary responsibility for project tasks and may supervise postdocs, researchers in training and students. |
| Senior Scientist          | R3               | ≥5 years of postdoctoral experience and the required level of specialisation; has direct responsibility in the research project.                      |
| Distinguished Scientist   | R4               | ≥10 years of postdoctoral experience; leads projects as Principal Investigator (PI).                                                                  |

## 4. Functions and responsibilities by category

### 4.1. Engineering staff (Group II)

| R Profile | Category                               | Main functions and responsibilities                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| —         | Support Technician                     | Technical support tasks under the supervision of a manager; specialised intermediate or higher-level training.                                                                                       |
| R1        | Junior Engineer                        | Engineering tasks under supervision; graduate or final-year student with little or no experience (credits may be completed within 1 year).                                                           |
| R2        | Technical Engineer / Technical Manager | Execution and management of technical projects in the space sector: programming and systems design, software integration, testing and qualification of instrumentation.                              |
| R3        | Research Engineer / Research Manager   | Leads projects with secondary responsibility and medium complexity; may be PI of a small-scale project; supervises technical engineers. Requires ≥3 years as Technical Engineer.                     |
| R3–R4     | Senior Engineer / Senior Manager       | Leads highly complex programmes/projects and their resources; strong innovation capacity; technical lead or PI; supervises research and technical engineers. Requires ≥3 years as Research Engineer. |

### 4.2. Scientific staff (Group III)

| Profile | IEEC Category                                    | Main function (reference)                                                    |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| R1      | Researcher in Training / Graduate Research Staff | Carries out a thesis or begins research under supervision.                   |
| R2      | Junior / Senior Postdoc                          | Postdoctoral research under supervision; occasional supervision of students. |
| R3      | Research Scientist / Senior Scientist            | Scientific independence; may act as PI; leads a research team.               |
| R4      | Distinguished Scientist                          | Established leadership, international reputation, programme leadership.      |

## 5. Stabilisation and consolidation

Staff employed by the IEEC are divided into permanent or structural staff required for the organisation's ongoing operation, and non-structural staff employed against research projects or staff programmes.

Structural staff are stabilised and consolidated through an open-ended employment contract funded from the organisation's structural funds.

Non-structural staff are employed under scientific-technical activity contracts, which are considered open-ended contracts linked to a line of research.

### 5.1. Legislative framework and general principle of open-ended employment

In accordance with current Spanish labour legislation and, specifically, within the Spanish Science, Technology and Innovation System, following the reform of Law 14/2011 on Science, Technology and Innovation by Law 17/2022 and Royal Decree-Law 32/2021 on Spanish labour reform, the general rule is that employment contracts are open-ended.

Within this legal framework, most employment contracts are presumed to be open-ended by default from the moment they are formalised. This legal configuration already constitutes an inherent stabilisation mechanism for staff employed by the IEEC, moving beyond the traditional patterns of temporary employment that previously predominated in the Spanish research sector.

### 5.2. Implementation of stabilisation according to the source of funding

Despite the open-ended nature of the employment relationship, effective stabilisation and consolidation within the organisation are implemented according to the nature of the activity and the source of funding:

## 1. Structural staff:

- Definition: Staff required to ensure the organisation's continuous operation, management and permanent scientific-technical activity.
- Implementation: The definitive stabilisation and consolidation of these staff is formalised through an open-ended structural contract funded directly from the IEEC's ordinary or structural funds. Consolidation of these positions is carried out through the public selection and appointment procedures applicable to the public sector.

## 2. Non-structural staff (linked to research lines or projects):

- Definition: Staff employed against research projects, talent attraction programmes or competitive funding.
- Implementation: Usually through the scientific-technical activity contract provided for in Article 23 bis of the Science Act.
- Stability and grounds for termination: this contract is considered open-ended — which in itself provides stability during the execution of the project or research line — but, in accordance with the Science Act, its link to specific funds means that it may validly be terminated on objective grounds if the funding allocated to that line or project is unavailable or exhausted.

## 5.3. Professional consolidation mechanisms

Consolidation within the IEEC research career is achieved through staff remaining in active research lines thanks to the continued attraction of new competitive funding, thereby ensuring the continuation of their professional development within the R1–R4 framework.

## 6. Mobility

Mobility is a relevant element in the professional development of IEEC staff. In line with the principles of the OTM-R policy, different mobility experiences are recognised and valued as a significant contribution to career development, supporting the acquisition of new competences, knowledge and experience.

The IEEC promotes different forms of mobility, including:

- National and international mobility: stays at other institutions, both national and international, are encouraged, particularly during predoctoral and postdoctoral stages.
- Interdisciplinary mobility: the value of experiences involving exchanges between different disciplines or fields of knowledge is also recognised.
- Mobility and collaboration with companies: for technical staff, short visits, staff exchanges and training periods in companies may be promoted in order to broaden knowledge and gain experience in specific technical fields.
- Recognition in professional development: mobility experiences are taken into account as part of the professional trajectory and may contribute to the overall assessment of a researcher's development and progression.

## 7. Networks and scientific collaboration

Career development for scientific and engineering staff is also promoted through:

- Integration into European consortia and projects (Horizon Europe, MSCA) and research infrastructures.
- Participation in space-sector networks (ESA, national agencies) and alliances with universities and CERCA centres.
- Promotion of Open Science, FAIR data management, and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI).
- Institutional support for senior staff leading networks as a criterion of excellence.

## 8. Minimum criteria for professional progression and change of category

The professional progression mechanism for IEEC research staff is established in the Professional Classification document.

### 8.1. Minimum requirements by category (Group II and Group III)

| IEEC Category (Group II) | R Profile | Requirements                                                                         |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Support Technician       | —         | Technical support tasks; intermediate/higher vocational training.                    |
| Junior Engineer          | R1        | Graduate or final-year student with little or no experience.                         |
| Technical Engineer       | R2        | Execution/management of technical projects; medium complexity.                       |
| Research Engineer        | R3        | ≥3 years of experience; leads with secondary responsibility; PI of a small project.  |
| Senior Engineer          | R3–R4     | ≥3 years as Research Engineer; leads highly complex programmes; technical lead / PI. |

| IEEC Category (Group III) | R Profile | Requirements                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Graduate Research Staff   | R1        | University graduate who is not enrolled in a doctoral programme.                                                                                      |
| Researcher in Training    | R1        | University graduate who has completed a university Master's degree or equivalent and is enrolled in a doctoral programme.                             |
| Junior Postdoc            | R2        | <3 years of experience; holds a doctoral degree and works under the instructions of the group leader.                                                 |
| Senior Postdoc            | R2        | ≥3 years of experience; holds a doctoral degree and may supervise a researcher in training and a small number of students.                            |
| Research Scientist        | R3        | ≥2 years of postdoctoral experience; has secondary responsibility for project tasks and may supervise postdocs, researchers in training and students. |
| Senior Scientist          | R3        | ≥5 years of postdoctoral experience and the required level of specialisation; has direct responsibility in the research project.                      |
| Distinguished Scientist   | R4        | ≥10 years of postdoctoral experience; leads projects as Principal Investigator (PI).                                                                  |

### 8.2. Procedure for change of category and salary level

The procedure for changing category and salary level for scientific and engineering staff is regulated in the IEEC Professional Classification document, which establishes the following steps:

- The immediate line manager / PI issues a report justifying that the requirements regarding training/qualifications, autonomy, initiative, professional track record and, where applicable, seniority defined for the target category or level are met.
- The Human Resources Office contacts the Projects Office for approval of the budget allocation under the research project.
- The report is submitted to the Director of the Management Area / Manager, who drafts a proposal for resolution.
- The proposal is submitted to the IEEC Director, who approves the final resolution.
- An addendum is made to the employee's contract indicating the new conditions.
- General requirement: a minimum of 1 year of seniority in the original group/subgroup or level, unless an exception is justified by the level of responsibility, autonomy and initiative acquired.

## 9. Implementation

Implementation of the Career Plan is the responsibility of the Management Area / General Management, with the support of the Human Resources Office and under the supervision of the Directorate.