

CEITEC MU Leadership Policy and Practice



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1. PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

This document is based on principles of **the European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers** ("Charter and Code for Researchers"). It forms an integral part of the implementation of the **HR Award (HR Excellence in Research, HRS4R)**, which was laid out in the so-called "HR Award Strategy and Action Plan" for the period of 2018-2022 (also "HR Strategy").

According to the HR Strategy, the institute should ensure **high-quality supervision**, and at the same time, the supervisors should be able to get **quality training in leadership and managerial skills**.

What was identified as a gap in evaluating researchers is a missing evaluation system tailored to the position of the group leader (resp. CF head) as a leader and manager. CEITEC MU has a well-developed evaluation of the research quality that enables evaluating a research group's performance. However, the institute is missing a process for assessing the group leader as a manager using more "soft indicators," e.g., *Is the group leader good in leading people? Is she/he an active member of the academic community at CEITEC MU? Is she/he involved in any other roles/positions, such as committee member, member of an evaluation panel, mentor role?*

Based on the HR Award Gap Analysis and HR Strategy, concrete action was formulated: **Annual evaluation of group leaders will be designed, focusing on managerial and supervisor performance. In addition, the assessment will be closely linked to offered training for group leaders.**

This document express expectations towards all employees of CEITEC MU who have managerial and supervisory roles, i.e., Group Leaders (GL), Core Facility Heads, Heads of Administrative Departments (HAD), and CEITEC MU management. All leaders at CEITEC MU are pivotal as they are responsible for developing the institute and achieving individual and shared goals and challenges described in project pipelines and CEITEC MU Strategic Plan.

The general policy of the CEITEC MU on leadership is to provide a framework for developing and evaluating competencies and other attributes needed for being a good team leader. The systematic approach defines leadership assignment, sets up the **minimal standard for the leadership** (binding rules), and provides **recommendations** and further information that help develop a realistic and modern leadership style of team leadership. It also establishes the **evaluation system** in the form of regular interviews between representatives of the management of the institute and the team leaders. This tool should help reveal the possible irregularities and shortcomings at the beginning stage, prevent failures in the team's direction, and encourage team leaders to be active employees.

The Leadership Policy and Practice shall be further expanded upon in the Director's Measures and guidelines to realize the principles and strategic objectives in daily routines.

2. LEADERSHIP ASSIGNMENT

2.1. Binding rules for leading employees at CEITEC MU

The general tasks for leading employees at all institutional levels are defined in Part 3, Article 6 of the [Rules of Organization of the CEITEC MU](#). According to this document, leaders at CEITEC MU are responsible for:

- a) managing the work of employees within the scope of their management powers and taking care of the employees' expert and professional development;
- b) taking care of the conceptual development of the relevant worksite's activities in line with the institute's Strategic Plan and promoting cooperation with other worksites at the given level;
- c) ensuring responsible, lawful, purposeful, and efficient use of financial resources and assets;
- d) ensuring compliance with applicable legal regulations and further regulations in the course of the relevant worksite's activities.

Besides these fundamental tasks, leadership assignment at CEITEC MU includes further activities defined along with different Leadership areas. Regardless of the area, all the tasks related to the leadership assignment must be treated concerning gender equality, diversity, and equal opportunity principles defined in the "[Code of Scientific Conduct and Research Integrity \(2018\)](#)," which are fully obligatory for all CEITEC MU employees.

2.2. Leadership areas (recommended best practices)

Areas of leadership should help identify the spectrum and the scope of activities in which a good leader should be actively involved, and which helps to co-create. Of course, how this happens may vary from case to case based on the career phase, career path, and individual skills and competencies. Still, all the acts should always be guided by supporting and developing the individual, team, and the institute.

2.2.1. Principal Idea Leadership (“Statement of Expectations”)

One of the most characteristic and expected roles of the leader is being a good and successful principal idea leader of the team. For CF heads and HADs, this role is mainly focused on building a quality and modern knowledge and methodology base, while specific topics are given either by the needs of users (CFs) or the management of the institution (administrative departments).

For GLs, this role is also enriched by creating key research topics, publication and grant strategies, and the development of international and cross-sectoral cooperation. These areas correspond with evaluating the performance of research groups. Following expectations are set for GLs (according to the phase of the leader's career) and CF heads:

a) Advanced group leader (typically 10 and more years of being a senior GL)

"Leading research"

GLs of research groups with excellent scientific output, high international recognition, and ambitious research vision that can bring results of the highest quality measured by international standards. These researchers are expected to be faces of the CEITEC and bring CEITEC recognition at a global level.

This level includes (not necessarily all) following characteristics:

- primary authorship of a number of important publications, some of which have had a significant impact on advancing the field or are accepted as authoritative in the field;
- H-index about 25 or higher;
- contributions to inventions, techniques, methods, therapies, or other types of applied research results being regarded as significant advances and open the way for further developments;
- awarding by competitive international funding including consortial projects participation and coordination;
- responsible mentorship and supervision of team members with specific attention on early-stage researchers;
- well established network of international collaborators;
- excellent, balanced, and healthy working team highly attractive for new researchers selected based on OTM-R (open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment) principles;
- contributing to strategic research planning and program development on the institutional level;
- contributing significantly to professional symposia defining the state of the discipline and new or emerging areas in the field;
- regular invitations for talks at scientific conferences or seminars at international institutes;
- participation in national/international professional organizations, committees, and editorial boards of international journals;

b) Senior group leader (typically up to 10 years of being a senior group leader)

"High standard research"

GLs of internationally recognized research groups with a robust research program and continuous output of results that are valued in their respective disciplines.

This level includes (not necessarily all) following characteristics:

- primary authorship of publications of considerable value to the field;
- H-index about 15 or higher;
- contributions to inventions, techniques, methods, therapies, or other types of applied research results with a clear impact on end-users;
- sufficient funding from both national and international sources, including highly competitive individual schemes (ERC and similar);
- responsible mentorship and supervision of team members with specific attention on early-stage researchers;

- recognition by the scientific community through invitations for talks at scientific conferences or seminars at international institutes, participation in editorial board and journal committees;
- integration of new research findings and technology into institutional policies;
- invitations to make presentations to professional societies and others outside the organization;
- member of committees and review panels;
- a stable network of national and international collaborators;
- reliable and well-assembled working team with a dynamic fluctuation of early-stage researchers selected based on OTM-R principles.

c) Junior group leader

"Rising stars"

GLs with clearly defined ambitious independent research that has good potential, but which may not be so far reflected in significant independent publication outcome as a senior scientist, entirely independent funding, or wide international reputation.

Statement of expectations for junior GLs describes expected performance at the time of evaluation of the research group in order to be promoted on senior research group, i.e., after 4-5 years of being junior group leader, which is:

- at least one independent primary authorship publication of considerable value to the field in the higher-tier journal;
- contributions to inventions, techniques, methods, therapies, or other types of applied research results with a clear impact on end-users;
- sufficient funding from national and/or international sources and apply in highly competitive individual schemes (ERC and similar);
- responsible mentorship and supervision of team members with specific attention on early-stage researchers;
- active participation at scientific conferences or seminars at international institutes;
- active networking on a national and international level;
- a solid and well-assembled working team selected based on OTM-R principles.

d) Core facility head

"Top quality service for research"

The core facility provides state-of-the-art and demanding services, whose portfolio is continually expanding and improving according to how the science is carried out and how the requirements of target users are placed.

The profile of the core facility head should include following characteristics (not necessarily all of them):

- strategical thinking and planning of the operation and development of the core facility to increase stability and enhance growth;

- ability to build and develop methodological, technical, and knowledge capacity of the institute in the area of the core facility expertise;
- implementation of the key managerial activities and concepts necessary for the smooth operation and development of the core facility, especially financing strategy, marketing, human resource management, and team building, and others;
- adequate protection and valorization of the core facility results;
- building a network of users;
- building a network of mentors and user committees.

2.2.2. Team Leadership

The essential role of a team leader is to build a capable and functioning team that is thoroughly identified with the priorities and goals set by the leader and the institute. This includes partial steps regarding team composition, team communication, working (laboratory) practice, and other rules that are generally valid for all team members and contribute to the effective management of the team. This area includes:

- Set the size and composition of the team so that the capacity and knowledge, and skills base of the team is adequate to meet given objectives and, at the same time, meet the rules for team composition within the Director's Measure 2019/04. "Jobs Systemization at CEITEC MU."
- Set the rules of common working (laboratory) practice.
- Set the rules for handling the outputs and results of work.
- Set the team communication rules, including creating space and rules for mutual communication in regular meetings of all team members. The discussion must be open to various topics and should involve all team members, including early-stage researchers.
- Guide all team members to valid/relevant regulations, policies, and procedures including, safety training.
- Perform regular evaluation interviews with team members about how the team works, how to improve working environment/conditions, etc.
- Verify the satisfaction with communication, mood, cooperation within the team, and information about plans, results, priorities, etc.

Available (recommended) tools: Satisfaction survey/interview to evaluate the functioning of the team; Rules for conducting joint meetings.

Existing rules and policies: Lab Notes Policy, Recruitment policy.

Indicators: Regularly held team meetings; Regularly organized satisfaction surveys/interviews with team members. The group is positively evaluated by the external evaluation boards and meets the conditions of the "Jobs Systemization at CEITEC MU."

2.2.3. Leadership of Individuals

In addition to the common rules and procedures that the team leader sets for the entire team, it is necessary to create a system of activities that are devoted to each team member. This applies to perform individual tasks, but at the same time, it helps to verify that everybody in the team has a thorough understanding of the team's and institute's internal culture, goals, and priorities and that they identify with it.

This area includes:

- Assignment of individual tasks and monitoring of their fulfilment by using coaching methods.
- Providing motivational, constructive, and regular feedback.
- Communication and support of personal, career, and community development.

Available (recommended) tools: Rules of conduct and schedule of individual meetings of the team leader and team members with an identified space for solving career and development issues and other non-scientific topics; System for reviewing assigned tasks. Coaching tools (asking questions, communication rules, etc.).

Indicators: Regularly held individual communication; mutual evaluation interview between team leader and team member.

a) Supervision of Ph.D. Candidates

Although the supervision of Ph.D. candidates should not include special treatment from the supervisor that goes beyond the positive, helpful, still professional treatment of a typical leader, some other tasks that the supervisor should be prepared to provide specifically to the Ph.D. candidates. These tasks include:

- Guide Ph.D. candidates on university and institute regulations, policies, and procedures regarding Ph.D. studies, academic integrities, safety training, and research conduct.
- Help the student with the Individual Study Plan (ISP) proposal and enable achieving the milestones of ISP.
- Be familiar with the support services provided by the Ph.D. Manager, Training manager, Welcome office, etc., and help the student exploit these services according to his / her needs.
- Equip the student with access to all necessary sources (materials, chemicals, premises, methodologies, appliances, etc.).
- Serve as a mentor.
- Provide evaluation interviews and written reports; be a member of the selection, evaluation, advisory, and final committees; enable the student to take a mock interview.
- Provide objective feedback on the student's performance in regular one-to-one meetings.
- Support activities that can broaden the student's competencies.
- Provide career counselling.

Available (recommended) tools: Regular meetings covering scientific and non-scientific topics.

Existing rules and policies: Thesis Advisory Committee.

Indicators: Number of finished students, Average length of study of Ph.D. candidates within the team; Number of uncompleted studies; Number of PhD students completing internships abroad beyond their duties; Number of Ph.D. candidates completing training beyond their duties; Satisfaction survey/interview to evaluate the leader as a supervisor.

b) Supervision of Postdocs

The postdoc fellows are particular and much-needed positions at the research team. They are essential for the development of the team as well as the institute. On the other hand, incorporating the postdoc into the existing research team may be demanding as they are usually coming from different environments (cultural, institutional differences, language aspect, etc.). Therefore, it is necessary to give sufficient attention to the postdocs' adaptation (onboarding), orientation, and leadership.

At the same time, the role of postdoc is relatively specific. The postdoc is a researcher in the critical phase for deciding on his/her next independent career in research. Therefore, it is necessary to pay increased attention to the individualized development of other (non-scientific) competencies, including various aspects essential for future managers (see Junior group leaders' expectations).

The proper care of postdocs includes:

- Guide the postdoc on the university, and institute regulations, policies, and procedures regarding academic integrities, safety training, and research conduct.
- Help the postdoc with shaping the Individual Development Plan (IDP), including training focusing on his/her future-needed leadership skills.
- Be familiar with the support services provided by the Training Manager, Welcome office, Postdoc Platform, etc., and help to exploit the services according to the postdoc needs.
- Provide objective feedback on the project progress and conduct an annual review that assesses the progress and development as defined by IDP.
- Serve as a mentor.
- Support activities that can broaden the postdoc's competencies.
- Provide career counselling

Available (recommended) tools: Regular meetings covering scientific and non-scientific topics; Individual Development Plan; Training program.

Indicators: Mutual evaluation interview between team leader and postdoc.

2.2.4. Leader as a part of the institute

In addition to the duties of the leaders towards their subordinates, they also have an essential role in shaping institutional culture, standards, values, and strategies. Therefore, although the capacity of the team leaders should be preferentially devoted to the scientific issues, it is expected that they will also provide regular feedback and advice on important strategical issues, discussions, and assessments introduced by the institute's management. These include:

- Regular participation in meetings organized by the institute's management for team leaders (GL and CF meetings, GL and CF retreats, etc.).
- Active involvement in shaping strategies of the institute.
- Participation in committees and working groups organized by the Director of the institute.
- Contribution to other institute' activities (ISAB meetings, evaluation of scientific excellence, advisory committees, etc.).

Indicators: Attendance at GL and CF meetings, GL and CF retreats, and other strategical or advisory bodies; Number of feedback on key documents of the institute.

2.2.5. Leader as a part of the community

Another expectation placed on team leaders is their contribution to the shaping institute's community. Although the involvement in community activities is voluntary, it is considered a sign of deep belonging to the mission of the institute, its standards, and its values. Therefore, in addition to direct involvement, another form of support is appreciated, including encouraging team members in common and social activities.

These include:

- Participation in events organization, e.g., as a member of the organizational committee.
- Participation in working and focus groups and solving specific community issues.
- Providing mentoring, coaching, career counselling, or specific feedback to anybody from the institute.
- Participation in peer-mentoring.

2.2.6. Ambassadors of the institute

As the leading representatives of the institute, the team leaders are involved in presenting the institute to the public, including statements on various scientific and social topics in mass media. These public activities must be in line with the CEITEC's Communication policy and consulted with the spokesperson. In general, every leader needs to reflect on the institute's values and be its credible advocate. Then public engagement is perceived positively and in full accordance with the expectations of the institute's management.

The specific part of the ambassador's role is the communication and positive relationship with former students and employees, so-called Alumni. The content and way of communication are entirely in the leader's competence. The Alumni section on individual research groups' websites is also very much supported as a place where former members of the research group and their new positions and workplaces are summarized.

These include:

- Proper communication of research topics outside the institute
- Public discussion involvement

- Communication with the public
- Building an alumni network (former students and team members) and keeping in touch with it

Indicators: List of PR outputs; List of Alumni.

2.3. Self-development of the Leader

The best way how individual team leaders can become better is to identify missing behaviour and activities that, if introduced, would have an impact on the overall leadership effectiveness and meeting other expected leadership and managerial roles. This behaviour or actions may be different for different individuals based on their natural prerequisites and previously completed training. These may include the need to improve communication skills, the introduction of coaching tools in leadership, or the management of specialized areas, e.g., core facility management, and so on. The identified characteristics of individual leaders may include areas that are evidently poorly introduced and those already seen by others as executed at an above standard. Still, they could be mastered until it becomes profound strength.

Employees in leading positions are expected to be willing to supplement their attainment and implement newly acquired knowledge in these areas. They can use the institutional tools for the improvement or ask for extra individualized help in identifying missing aspects of their leadership as well as suitable training, but they should be the main drivers of the process

Indicators: List of completed leadership and another soft skills training.

3. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CEITEC MU strives for targeted support and the help of its team leaders' development systematically, by setting a common standard for team leaders and individually, by identifying possible weaknesses of each leader and taking specific steps leading to redress.

The goal is not only to inform employees about good practices or expectations, but the effort is a permanent change in their behaviour, leading to the more efficient functioning of the team. It includes the identification of weaknesses, learning new habits, and implementing them into everyday work life. **As change is undoubtedly challenging, we want to provide team leaders with sufficient support in a wide range of opportunities for training, adequate room for the practice of acquired skills, and feedback on progress from the institute's management. On the other hand, all leaders are expected to make a personal effort to improve their shortcomings and take responsibility for their personal development in the leadership area.**

3.1. Leaders Training Academy

We want to continue in providing team leaders (as heads of worksites and hiring managers) with the means of further development, offering them various types of training opportunities. Successful cooperation with group leaders is essential in our effort to implement new HR policies, and to change internal culture in a desired way.

Each new team leader will join the **Leaders Training Academy** that will offer training in core areas essential to be/become a good leader and manager of the worksite, such as¹:

- Laboratory leadership² – for group leaders
- Recruitment of the best talents in an unbiased way – for all team leaders
- Finance management – for group leaders and CF heads
- Communication course – for group leaders and CF heads
- Quality Management – for CF heads

An individual approach needs to be used, to reflect a specific needs of individual team leaders. HR Department will coordinate the agenda of Leaders Training Academy that will combine external and internal courses. Individual needs of each GL will be considered while designing her/his training plan, including consideration of past training courses taken at previous institution of employment or studies.

¹ The list is not exhaustive. Details are to be specified in the Director's measure and methodology guidelines.

² EMBO Laboratory Leadership could be provided to group leaders, cost € 1800 excl. VAT will be covered by the institute, <https://lab-management.embo.org/dates/gl-2021-online>

Director's Measure will define which training courses will be obligatory (e.g. training on recruitment practices).

3.2. Assessment and Development Interviews

All leading employees must regularly participate in the assessment and development interviews with their superiors. These interviews aim to evaluate how the leader meets defined expectations within his position and how she/he generally fulfils the leader's role in all leadership areas. The aim is to highlight the employee's strengths and motivate him/her to share good practices with other managers. Equally, the objective is to identify individual weaknesses that may handicap a leader in his/her leadership role and help design appropriate remedial measures.

Although interviews have an individualized form, standard basic rules must be followed to maintain maximum efficiency and objectivity.

- **The interview is performed regularly. The first run must take place no later than one year after taking up the leader's position. After that, for junior leaders, the interview is repeated every year. Finally, it is carried out once every three years for senior leaders, unless the result of the previous interview determines otherwise.**
- The interview is carried out by the head of the interviewed person, possibly in cooperation with his/her deputy, i.e., GL's interview is carried out by the Director of the institute together with the Deputy Director for Science. The CF head interview is carried out by the Director of the institute, together with the Deputy Director for Research Infrastructure. Finally, the Deputy Director for Administrative interviews HADs, possibly cooperating with the interviewed employee's methodological manager.
- The assessment is performed by the method of informed interview. The evaluator may request in advance background materials from the interviewed person, his/her subordinates, or the administrative section.
- The interviewed person is allowed to get acquainted with the background materials in advance.
- Sensitive data and information in background materials coming from the interviewed person's subordinates must be anonymized.
- An assessment and development report (ADR), with the summary of the evaluator's recommendations, must be taken in written and verified by both the evaluated and the evaluator. The final document must be stored in the HR department in a personal folder.

3.2.1. The practice of assessment and development interviews

The proper management and organization of interviews with group leaders are entrusted to a Scientific Secretary, the secretary of assessment and development interviews with the GLs. The Core Facility Manager is the secretary of the interviews with the CF heads. There is no special secretary of interviews with HADs. The Deputy Director entirely organizes the process for Administrative (except interviews of Director's Office employees, which the Head of Director's Office organizes). The tasks of the secretaries are:

- Prepare the interview plan of the target group for the given year and inform the interviewed persons about the program;
- Ensure background materials for evaluation;
- Ensure the Report from the interview and its verification.

Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan is drawn up to include all new employees in the leading position of the target group and leaders who undergo regular evaluation in a given year. This plan will then be approved with the evaluator relevant to the target group and sent to the Scientific Secretary by the end of February at the latest. Next, the Scientific Secretary will present the evaluation plan at a meeting of the HADs and a meeting of the institute's management. Subsequently, the secretaries will set the individual interviews' date and inform all persons involved in the process.

Background materials

All secretaries agree with the evaluators on the type of background materials required for the assessment. Next, they request their delivery from a particular person in the administration, evaluated person, or his/her subordinates.

Background materials may contain numerical values of specific indicators but may be like an answer to an open question (i.e., the form of a questionnaire). Materials from the subordinate are collected anonymously.

The secretary submits the background materials to the evaluated person and evaluator no later than five working days before the interview.

Specific form (structure) of the background materials will be specified by methodology guidelines and will be adjusted based on pilot testing period.

Assessment and Development Interview

The evaluator and the evaluated attend the mutual evaluation interview. The evaluator conducts the interview, aiming to fully assess the evaluated person's performance in all leadership areas and expectations. The sufficient room for expressing feedback or other comments of the evaluated person must also be ensured. At the end of the interview, the evaluator clearly defines the conclusions and possible recommendations to the evaluated person, modified or broadened in the Report even later.

Assessment and development Report

The course of the interview is summarized in the form of an evaluation and development report. If any recommendations have been made during the meeting, they will also be included there. No later than one month after the interview, the Report must be delivered to the evaluated person for review. (S)He may request supplementation or clarification of the Report or respond to recommendations no later than one month after receiving the minutes. After that, the Report is considered final, being confirmed by both evaluator and evaluated person.

The Report serves as input material for the following interview to remind a previous situation. The Report also defines the date when the subsequent evaluation is to take place.

Annual evaluation of interviews

After all the planned interviews have been completed in a given year, the secretary meets the evaluator to discuss the evaluation's global outcomes. The aim is to analyse whether it would be good to systematically address some areas of leadership and design appropriate training or whether it is possible to share the good practice among evaluated (peer-mentoring), etc. The meeting may also serve for the specification of the evaluation plan for the following year.

The scientific secretary will then organize a meeting of all secretaries with the HR specialist to put together all interviews' outcomes and discuss appropriate training activities across different groups of leaders. The evaluation process will also be analysed in general so that proper modifications can be proposed

Impacts of evaluation

The assessment has a formative character and is multi-criterial. Its testing phase (first years) will not directly impact the research group's budget and will not be linked to specific financial benefits. At a more advanced stage of evaluation, the assessment results may be linked to the group's funding, reflected in the institute's budgetary rules. Such a decision will be taken based on practical experience and discussion with group leaders and CF heads about positive and negative aspects of any bonus/malus system linked to leadership assessment and development interviews.

Approved by the director on 22. 2. 2022