

Some institutions require a certain application template to be used, which can make the process more time consuming.

The most noteworthy aspect of the whole process perhaps lies in how applicants are assessed. After the deadline, the department will usually appoint a panel consisting of 3–4 external referees (often from outside Sweden) to assess all the applications. These will narrow the list of applicants down to a top group of about four people who get called to a trial lecture and interview. The external panel is present for these, and then produce a final ranking of this top group. The department is then to a large extent expected to appoint the panel's top-ranked candidate.

The written assessments produced in this process are usually sent to all the applicants afterwards, or are available upon request.

One can also apply for research funding from various sources in Sweden, whether one is already at an institution in the country or not — but the grants are usually to be hosted at a Swedish institution. The main source is Vetenskapsrådet (see vr.se), the Swedish Research Council, who have deadlines a couple of times a year. They offer funding for up to four years for various types of positions and projects. Tenured lecturers in Sweden are expected to apply for this funding on a regular basis, in order to fund their research time, which tends not to be budgeted for in the departmental funding to the same extent as in the UK.



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France has a reputation for loving exceptions. It is no surprise, then, that the academic

market can be baffling at first. As an early-career researcher, you can get two types of permanent positions: Maître(sse) de conférences (university-based position with 192 hours of teaching per year, the rest devoted to research and various duties) or Chargé(e) de recherches CNRS (national research-only position)¹.

In the first case, speaking French fluently is unsurprisingly a requirement in most places. While the attractiveness of such a position varies a lot depending on the university (better students, better amenities, or fewer duties to share between the faculty members), there is one unusual nationwide feature to the recruitment process. Prior to applying for any such job, one needs to obtain a “qualification”, which has to be requested in October roughly a year before the desired starting date. All the information can be found here: cnu27.iut2.upmf-grenoble.fr (in French, as part of the fluency test). Please note that there are many different sections corresponding to various fields, and that you may well be eligible for more than one (for example, in my community of combinatorialists, it is not uncommon for someone to be “qualifié” for sections 25, 26 and 27). It is worth keeping an open mind about which sections to apply for. The job openings are all available through the not very user-friendly website Galaxie².

In the second case, speaking English is sufficient. There are even examples of long-time chargés de recherche CNRS still having barely more than survival skills in French, though of course that may dampen the experience. A CNRS researcher is always part of the workforce of a university, but there is significant flexibility regarding switching universities. Very casually speaking, the CNRS hires researchers then lends them to partner labs. Thankfully, a researcher is only ever reassigned at their request. The application process usually starts in early January for possible starting date on 1st October, see the website cn6.fr for more info. Note once again that there are different sections, though they are independent from the ones previously mentioned (people I collaborate with are typically part of sections 6 or 7).

In both cases, one factor which cannot be overestimated is obtaining strong local support. For CNRS, you need to suggest three labs that you could be sent to, and actually justify how your research proposal will fit there: each of the labs sends a letter discussing the different candidates that expressed interest in being sent to them. These ties should ideally be developed more carefully than through an email shortly before the deadline — it is often good to visit and give a seminar, or at least to have extensive discussions over email or Skype. Once they are convinced that they want you as a colleague, they will most probably help you navigate the often confusing French system (I promise that you can survive it!).

¹Let us also mention Inria, another institute similar to CNRS, though dedicated to more applied areas of Computer Science

²Available through the cnu27 webpage