



CLARA

Center for Artificial Intelligence and Quantum Computing in System Brain Research

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1 Executive Summary

CLARA is the first interdisciplinary Center of Excellence in Central and Eastern Europe that focuses on the next generation of artificial intelligence and machine learning applications and quantum-centric supercomputing tools to push the frontier of neurodegeneration research. As the new international center of research and innovation excellence, it has its human resource policy at the forefront of its activities. People are the most valuable and competitive resource needed for achieving the goals of excellence building. Therefore, the ability of CLARA to offer attractive scientific career opportunities is one of the cornerstones of the CLARA vision.

CLARA will open three tenure track positions, which will lay a foundation for the sustainable structure of the new research centre. Still, the development of CLARA over several years might create additional opportunities to extend the number of positions and broaden the geographic location. If this happens, the consortium will use guiding principles outlined in the current document, although the concrete implementation details might differ.

The Tenure Track (TT) Policy, partially evolved from the [Tenure Track System at CTU](#) and best practice of CLARA Partners, serves as a main guideline for CLARA Center to attract and retain excellent researchers at tenure track positions. The TT Policy describes the goals and principles of this activity, as well as the process designed to ensure that the investments the project will make in TT positions will have the strongest possible impact on the scientific excellence of CLARA, its sustainability, and dynamic development. By implementing the TT Policy, CLARA aims to help increase the R&I culture in the Czech Republic. Therefore, the TT positions will be hosted by Czech partners of CLARA.

2 Motivation and general goals

2.1 Definitions

The widely accepted definition of “Academic Tenure” is given in Wikipedia:

*A **tenured** post is an indefinite academic appointment that can be terminated only for cause or under extraordinary circumstances, such as financial exigency or program discontinuation. Tenure is a means of defending the principle of academic freedom, which holds that it is beneficial for society in the long run if scholars are free to hold and examine a variety of views.*

A “Tenure Track” can be defined as follows:

*A **tenure track** is a structured career pathway for researchers with the goal of attaining a tenured position. The tenure track is a system designed to ensure that those who achieve tenure have demonstrated a sustained commitment to their field through research, teaching, and service. This progression is typically marked by significant milestones, such as publications in peer-reviewed journals, securing research grants, and contributions to academic conferences.¹*

In the context of CLARA, tenure means a permanent (indefinite) appointment of a researcher

¹ <https://academicpositions.com/career-advice/what-is-tenure>



at the Czech partner sites (CTU, VSB-TUO, INDRC) after fulfilling key success criteria outlined in the individual Tenure Track Plan prepared together with the tenure track candidate. The project foresees three TT positions. All legal arrangements and conditions will correspond to the respective parts of the Czech Labour Law and existing practice of academic appointments.

2.2 Goals of establishing tenure track positions

The long-term effect of having permanent and secure positions in an academic environment is well-known. Tenure personnel typically create a sustainable foundation of an academic / research organization, the “skeleton” bearing the load of defining scientific directions and developing young researchers, representing institutional memory and tradition. The best-performing international research groups are typically composed of a healthy mixture of permanent staff members taking leading, direction-defining positions, and temporary staff members attracted on project-based principles. Such structure possesses flexibility and resilience and, at the same time, continuity and stability.

CLARA is developing an HR policy and a TT system to attract, retain, and develop excellent staff. TT positions are drivers of robust HR capacity building since the consolidation of one's research team and grant acquisition for independent research is one of the key success criteria to obtain tenure. The main purpose of the TT system is to provide clarity about the requirements for a permanent appointment and clarity about mutual expectations. A mentoring program will be put in place to ensure that recruited TT faculties can develop their research activities and careers in ideal conditions. Specifically, each new TT participant will be matched with a mentor among CLARA partners. The mentor will provide advice on various aspects (research projects, lab set-up, recruitment of PhD candidates and postdocs, and guidance on career development). Moreover, TT participants will be invited for research stays in advanced countries.

Therefore, one of the main objectives is to allow TT faculties to develop their research direction and build a research group around it. Tenure track participants prepare for all aspects of their academic career: develop an educational portfolio, learn to supervise PhD students, lead a lab, develop an international network, communicate with the general public, acquire project funding, deal with ethical matters, etc.

2.3 General principles of tenure track policy

The purpose of this document is to outline the best practice and general principles of the tenure track policy for the CLARA Center, specifically regarding the appointment of the three tenure track positions anticipated in the CLARA project (CIIRC, INDRC, VSB-TUO), while respecting the existing HR procedures at partner institutions. To ensure maximum flexibility for the partners, the policy does not impose general HR procedures on these institutions, which will remain unaffected.

A TT appointment is a temporary appointment for scientific staff. It starts at the position of a researcher and leads to a tenure, i.e. a permanent appointment as a senior/principal researcher. At the end of the TT appointment, the candidate is assessed against key performance indicators and success criteria to gain the permanent appointment. If, at the end of the tenure track, the TT participant does not meet the requirements set for the permanent appointment, the TT appointment can be extended by a maximum of 1 year to allow the employee to search for a different career path with another employer.



Each TT participant is assigned an immediate superior and, additionally, an experienced mentor. The mentor supports the TT's development by serving as a sounding board and advisor.

The immediate superior is designated based on the organisational structure and internal regulations of the partner organization (e.g. head of the team or department). At the start of the TT appointment, the immediate superior and the TT participant agree on the steps required to meet the end criteria. This agreement is documented in the Tenure Track Plan.

Accelerated awarding of tenure may take place in the event of exceptional performance such as for instance obtaining a prestigious grant (e.g., ERC), scientific award or exceptionally important scientific results.

3 Roles and functions during the tenure track process

TT participant. The TT participant actively adopts responsibility for his/her career and personal development. This includes asking for feedback and advice. The TT participant monitors his/her development by listing the results achieved and reflecting on these. The TT participant demonstrates that he/she:

- is an independent researcher and inspiring educator
- is proactive and capable of leadership
- plays an active role at the university/research organisation and contributes to various committees and/or projects
- coaches students, PhD students, and postdocs
- continuously improves his/her skills
- is capable of acquiring research funding
- has language skills at the level required to properly communicate with colleagues and provide good education

Immediate superior. The immediate superior is clear about the requirements set for the TT participant and coaches him/her in this respect. The immediate superior provides both solicited and unsolicited feedback on the growth of the TT participant and periodically provides feedback on whether the tenure track participant is on track. The immediate superior provides the TT participant with enough freedom and room to develop as independently as possible into a fully-fledged researcher with his/her research line and team. The immediate superior provides advice on publication strategies, cooperation, and possibly time spent abroad. The immediate superior also keeps an eye on competencies such as leadership, result orientation, self-reflection, coaching, insight into learning processes, dealing with others and cultural differences, verbal communication, and powers of conviction.

Mentor. The mentor is an experienced scientist of at least associate professor level or similar and preferably from another department or faculty. The mentor supports the coaching of the TT participant in the development towards independence and acts as a sounding board, advisor, and guide. The guiding could include, for example: developing a network both at and outside of the university/research institute, personal development, and career questions. The immediate superior supports the TT participant in finding a mentor at the start of the temporary appointment.



Career Committee. The Collegium of Experts, supervising the RPs and leading the industrial research and educational programs, will serve as a Career Committee in terms of TT progress evaluation. The Career Committee assesses the TT policy and monitors the progress and development of the TT participants at CLARA. The Career Committee advises the immediate superior regarding the staff recommended for permanent appointment. Halfway through the tenure track, i.e. after approx. 2.5 years, the TT participant meets with his immediate supervisor, the head of the department/group, and representatives of the Career Committee. The Career Committee provides judgment on whether the candidate is on track and makes recommendations for the rest of the track. The decision to award a tenure position nonetheless rests with the university/research institution administration that employs the TT participant.

HR. The HR department initially provides overall administrative support and its role in the process may grow in time.

4 Tenure track process

4.1 Selection of the candidate

The TT policy represents a guideline for CLARA Center to attract and retain talented researchers and support their career growth. Although the general principles of the tenure system are applicable regardless of the research area, the selection procedure for the appropriate candidate remains the responsibility of the CLARA partner opening the position. The announcement of the TT positions opening will be widely published. Each of the CLARA partners opening the position will set up a Selection Committee and a transparent process of selection, recruitment, and onboarding of the TT participant.

4.2 Progress monitoring

- **Year 1:** Preparation of an individualised TT plan to be included in the personnel file of the TT participant.
- **Year 2:** TT participant will held regular meetings with the immediate superior and mentor.
- **Mid-term review:** Preparation of all results and achievements to be presented to the Career Committee. The findings will be included in the personnel file.
- **Year 3 & 4:** Regular meetings with the immediate superior and mentor.
- **Year 5:** Final presentation to the Career Committee.

4.3 Tenure procedure - permanent appointment

- 1) The TT participant prepares a file for the final tenure-review presentation. The file consists of:
 - a. The TT participant's vision on the field of his/her research, education, funding acquisition and the role as the leader of his or her own group.
 - b. A list of publications, including citation analysis according to Web of Science (ISI), Scopus, and/or Google Scholar, including H indices, as most appropriate in the scientific field of the TT participant.
 - c. A list of best scientific results with description of their scientific value (up to five results).
 - d. An extensive CV, including an overview of the research group's composition, the number of PhDs the candidate (co-)supervises or has supervised, projects, project partners and project funds/grants assigned, contributions to education, and



contributions to the organization. It is recommendable to indicate which role the tenure track participant played in project applications and projects.

- e. A list of at least six international references, with a mix of academic references and references from other sectors, at least at an associate professor level (or equivalent). At least three of the referees must have no conflict of interest with the TT participant.

The above documents are sent to the Career Committee.

- 2) The TT participant gives a presentation to the Career Committee and the committee provides a recommendation to the TT's immediate superior about the decision to award tenure.
- 3) After the Career Committee's advice, the CLARA partner's site employing the TT participant proposes the decision concerning the tenure appointment.

4.4 Proposals for the composition of the Career Committee

The Career Committee at each CLARA partner opening the CLARA TT position needs to be endorsed by the CLARA Collegium of Experts which consists of six members, one of whom is an additional member from the industry. The CLARA Collegium of Experts advises and gives recommendations to the CLARA partner that opens the TT position.

4.5 Proposals for the procedure for opening new TT positions

New TT positions are opened at the level of the CLARA partner and are handled by the particular CLARA partner. The respective CLARA partners set up the necessary requirements for the position, specific personal KPIs and release the announcement for the new position.