

Academic permanent positions in the french system

Julien Aubert (DFG team, CNRS/IPGP)

The french system in Earth sciences

- **3 main sources** of employment (as **civil servant**) in the Etablissements Publics Scientifiques et Techniques (EPST) and the Universités, with several openings each year: CNRS researchers, Maître.sses de conférences, Physicien.nes d'observatoire.
- **non-civil servant permanent** research/engineering positions also in the Etablissements Publics à Caractère Industriel et Commercial (EPIC): CEA, BRGM, CNES...

CNRS researcher

- **multidisciplinary**, organised in ~ 40 panels (sections), several are relevant to ED STEP'UP:
 - 05: Physique théorique : méthodes, modèles et applications
 - 12 : Milieux fluides et réactifs : transports, transferts, procédés de transformation
 - 19 : Astrophysique
 - 20 : Terre et planètes telluriques : structure, histoire, modèles
 - 21 : Système Terre : enveloppes superficielles
 - 32 : Surface continentale et interfaces
- Each section opens a few (**recently, ~6**) positions each year, nationwide. The **profile is open** and only bounded by the section thematic contours.
- The candidates applies for a **specific** primary (possibly a secondary) **host laboratory choice**, and into the section(s) that the laboratory has been labelled with.
- The CNRS position is theoretically **mainly research**. In practice, an involvement is also expected from the CNRS researcher in teaching, training, R&D applications, and management.

Maîtres.sse de conférences (MCF)

- **Local, opened by universities** at a specific location.
- Not every year at a specific location, but can expect a few positions/year nationwide.
- Usually attributed to a **specific lab**, with a **specific profile** that can however be quite large.
- The MCF position is **50% teaching, 50% research**. There is a **teaching profile** associated with the research profile. In practice further involvement can again occur in training, R&D, management.

Physicien.ne adjoint.e d'observatoire (CNAP)

- **Attached to the SNOs** (Services Nationaux d'Observations) which is a label that some activities only have in some laboratories only. Examples at IPGP: OSVG, OSVGM, OBSERA, GEOSCOPE, Observatoires magnétiques
- Nationwide, 3 sections, all relevant to STEP'UP:
 - Surfaces, interfaces continentale, océan et atmosphère
 - Astronomie & Astrophysique
 - Terre solide
- Few positions (**0-2/yr/section**), not specifically attached to a given location but usually **strongly 'colored'** with the specific needs expressed by the observatories.
- Profiles can therefore be rather narrow
- The Phys-Adj position is **1/3 research, 1/3 teaching, 1/3 observation** tasks.

Calendar and procedures

- **CNRS:**
 - check www.cnrs.fr
 - contest opens early december, written application deadline early/mid january, written application cut mid march/early april, interview april (can vary)
- **MCF:**
 - check institutional sites and <https://www.galaxie.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/ensup/>
 - contests open january, written applications deadline march, oral cut and interviews in the spring
- **CNAP:**
 - AA: <https://cnap.obspm.fr/CNAP-Recrutement/concours.html>
 - TS: <https://wwwobs.univ-bpclermont.fr/lmv/CNAP-TI/>
 - SIC: <https://cnap-scoa.osug.fr/Infos.htm>
 - positions open on galaxie, with same calendar as MCF (see above)

Which position is for me?

- it's worth trying everything, don't limit yourself but
- it also depends on which kind of young researcher you feel you are developing into
 - **CNAP** if your personal record and project involve the acquisition, processing and analysis of large amounts of **natural data** that already fit or can fit within established SNOs
 - **CNRS** if your personal record already contains fundamentally oriented results and your project addresses **fundamental** questions
 - **MCF** if your project addresses fundamental questions and if you are attracted towards a diverse career also involving **teaching**

I have just obtained my PhD, should I apply now?

- Tough question. A **PhD is indeed the minimum** needed to apply to these positions. There are upsides and downsides in applying immediately after the PhD.
 - up: more **experience** in job applications is always better. Enables **maturation** in the research project, **identification** of the candidate in the nationwide research network, and of course increases chances of success
 - down: a **post-doctoral** experience **abroad of min 1 yr**, together with at least **one paper without the PhD advisors**, is frequently requested to pass the written application cut. The committees want to ensure that the young researchers have an **international experience** and have become **independent**.
- **Applying early is probably still the best strategy**, just for the sake of organising your ideas, structuring your project, contacting the labs, getting known. The workload can also often be re-used for postdoctoral applications, so don't be upset if you don't make it beyond the written application cut.

Preparing a written application

- It is obligatory to **contact the lab prior to an application**. Giving a **seminar** is best. Identify and talk to the teams, people, collaboration network, research needs where you could fit in.
- Pay attention to the **profile** if there is one. Some positions are quite open (CNRS, some MCF), some other locked towards a specific need. Evaluate the open-ness of the contest by talking to people, **no need to apply if the profile is too tight**.
- Pay attention to the **teaching profiles** for MCF and Phys Adj, and you will be requested to write a **teaching project**. Contact the people in charge on the teaching side, talk to them, check the practical future teaching needs beyond the profile (e.g. people retiring soon and what they are teaching, new courses opening,...).
- for CNRS, **target your application geographically** (and possibly **thematically**) by checking recent past hirings.
- for PhysAdj, check the observation needs. There is a strong local component despite the contest being national. You will be requested to fit your project within an **observation infrastructure** or contribute to the development of one.

I'm selected for an interview, great!

- build a talk that **ZOOMS OUT**, should almost be an outreach talk, clearly highlighting
 - the big scientific **question**
 - the **state of the art**
 - how you plan to **improve**
 - how your profile made you the perfect person to achieve this, **what you bring to the lab**
 - how the host lab is the perfect place, **what the lab brings you**
- Prepare with the host lab, **rehearse** a lot, especially in front of people that are **non-specialists**. The panels are more than often made of people who have absolutely no clue about your specific research topic. Not a lot of tight rules but **absolutely avoid being overtime**.
- for MCF interviews, it is becoming commonplace to ask you to make **a short 'leçon'** i.e. a synthetic outline of a few minutes on how you plan to teach a specific topic.
- The talk is usually a minor part of the interview time (e.g. 15+25 at CNRS), and the **question time is where the most is at stake**. Prepare to answer very non-specialist questions in a **simple, synthetic and short way** (straight to the point)
- Questions are often asked for the candidate to defend him/herself on a specific weakness in the written application. Try to identify the **question behind the question** and seize the opportunity.

Money and career moves

- all the positions are aligned on **civil servants salary grids** e.g. <https://carrieres.cnrs.fr/remuneration-des-fonctionnaires/>
- Starting salaries depend on past experience, about 2200-3000€/month after charges but before tax
- a few bonuses depending on the extra work done (admin, training,...)
- Two 'corps', two 'grades' within each 'corps' e.g. for CNRS: CRCN/CRHC, DR2/DR1.
- Changing 'corps' i.e. access to professeur / directeur de recherches CNRS / Physicien is subject to another competition.
- Moving within a 'corps' is subject to internal evaluation by the CNRS sections, the CNAP section or the CNU (conseil national des Universités) sections.
- End of career salaries near 5500€/month after charges but before tax.

Good luck!