

Guidelines for the expert committee when evaluating candidates for permanent scientific positions

1) General

Focus at IBI and NTNU

At the Department of Biology (IBI) we strive towards a diverse and inclusive research environment. The department has as a strategic aim to recruit more evenly across genders into associate professor and professor positions. This focus has led to a better gender balance in the associate professor (from less than 20% females to 38.5 %) and professor positions (less than 10 % to 19%) over the last five years. In addition, we want to be an inclusive work environment with possibilities to work in research and teaching independent of nationality or cultural background. This is in line with NTNU's [development plan for gender equality and diversity](#).

The expert committee is therefore asked to pay particular attention to biases during the evaluation process, as there is scientific evidence^{1,2} that different people tend to be evaluated differently even if their CVs are similar. For example, a male publishing with many authors may be considered as a good collaborator; while a female with the same publications may be evaluated as lacking independence as a researcher. Similar examples can be found for applicants from other under-represented groups based on gender, age, ethnicity, religion, functional ability, cultural background, sexual orientation, family situation, etc.

It is important to acknowledge that everyone has implicit bias and that it can affect the evaluation process. The administrator of the committee thus plays a central role in keeping an objective eye on the evaluation process and ensuring awareness of this aspect.

Evaluation criteria

NTNU has signed the COARA ([The Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment](#)) agreement and therefore puts focus on diversity in researchers and their contributions. Hence, in addition to paying attention to the publication quality of the applicants, the department wishes to hire academics that have experience in other academic work. Therefore, the evaluation should not be solely based on research output, and active involvement in committee work, international review/advisory boards, teaching and outreach activities must be considered as evaluation criteria. Academic age (years since date of PhD degree) should be considered and not the biological age.

The short-list presented by the expert committee should ideally rank 5-6 candidates for interview and include at least one candidate of each gender and at least one qualified candidate from a minority group when possible. In addition, the expert committee is asked to suggest which other candidates are suitable in case of a high drop-out rate during the evaluation process (which has happened before since the process can take some time).

1. Dutt, K., Pfaff, D., Bernstein, A. *et al.* Gender differences in recommendation letters for postdoctoral fellowships in geoscience. *Nature Geosci* 9, 805–808 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1038/ngeo2819>

2. Tomas Diaz, J. Renee Navarro & Esther H. Chen (2020) An Institutional Approach to Fostering Inclusion and Addressing Racial Bias: Implications for Diversity in Academic Medicine, Teaching and Learning in Medicine, 32:1, 110-116, DOI: [10.1080/10401334.2019.1670665](https://doi.org/10.1080/10401334.2019.1670665)

2) Clarifications of evaluation criteria

Parental leave and caring responsibilities

In Norway, it is determined by law that there cannot be discrimination because of parental or caretaking leave. Applicants that have had children during their research period should be given a deduction of 12 months per child when comparing research output and academic age (active within research). Other substantial types of leave (like military service, caretaking or sick leave) should be considered as the applicant specifies them in time of leave.

Academic work during the past 5 years

This relates to all aspects of academic work, including publications, student supervision, research funding, teaching, mentoring, committee work and outreach. Although the last 5 years (considering parental leave and other types of leave) are useful to evaluate research and academic engagement, the overall CV must be considered.

Interdisciplinary collaboration

Co-authored publications with researchers outside the applicant's main field of research are considered evidence for interdisciplinary collaboration. Funded interdisciplinary grants should be considered even if no publications have resulted from them yet. When present, collaboration beyond academia should also be evaluated in relation to research quality and diversity in research output.

Commitment to teaching

The candidates need to provide evidence of active teaching commitment such as contributing to or overseeing courses, developing course material/new teaching methods or being part of student evaluations. Specific student mentoring and activities that improve the student social environment should be considered too.

Other related skills

These are other skills related to academic work, e.g. scientific strategy development, academic administrative work, science outreach activities, translational science etc.