

24 June 2015

## **Fields of professorships and appointment of professors**

According to University of Helsinki Regulations that took effect on 1 August 2015, the rector provides detailed guidelines for determining the fields of professorships and assistant professorships, and for handling the selection procedure.

The rector has issued guidelines on the fields of professorships and the appointment of professors, appended to this decision.

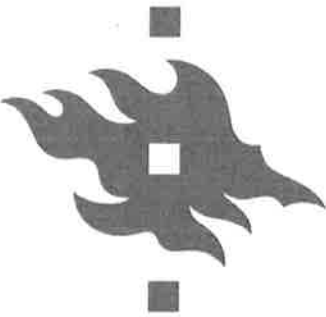
The guidelines will enter into force on 1 August 2015.

Rector

Jukka Kola

Director of Human Resources

Kira Ukkonen



24 June 2015

## **Fields of professorships and appointment of professors**

### **BACKGROUND**

The establishment of professorships in different academic fields and disciplines is closely linked to the achievement of the objectives defined in the University's Strategic Plan. Furthermore, the selection of professorial appointees has a major impact on the results of operations. Consequently, the rector, dean and heads of department play a key role in these matters. In independent institutes that do not belong to a faculty, the chair of the board handles the duties that these guidelines assign to the deans of faculties.

### **FIELDS**

The University no longer appoints professors to public-service posts. Professorships are not established in a specific field. Instead, professors enter into a contractual employment relationship, and the field of the position will be determined before launching recruitment based on the University's and faculties' strategic research fields as well as the faculties' other research emphases and teaching responsibilities.

### **Human Resource Plan**

Previously, the field of the professor to be recruited was specified in the Human Resource Plan. This practice will no longer be followed. Instead, the Plan should indicate more broadly the fields to which freed resources will be allocated. All teaching and research positions known to become vacant will be discussed in connection with human resource planning. At this stage, it is possible to define, for example, that any freed positions of university lecturer will be filled as positions of assistant or associate professor. These may then become positions of professor after the tenure track period.

### **Position overview**

When a position of professor is to be filled, the dean surveys the situation and needs in the faculty's and department's fields. It is important to discuss matters openly throughout the faculty and especially among the professors. Since many fields interface with other faculties, or even independent institutes, the management of such neighbouring faculties and institutes should be contacted to identify potential cooperation opportunities.

The faculty's search committee conducts an international survey to determine whether suitable applicants can be found for the field of the planned position. If this seems improbable, the field of the planned position should be redefined or changed.

The field must be determined in broad terms to attract a large number of applicants. A narrow or wordy definition of the field reduces the number of applicants. The goal is to employ as

professors individuals who are capable of adapting to developments in the field and to the faculty's needs.

### **Fields determined by the rector**

When the faculty and department have made sufficient preparations regarding the field's definition, the dean contacts the rector. After receiving the faculty's presentation and possibly consulting with representatives of other faculties and independent institutes, the rector decides on the field of the professorship.

## **RECRUITMENT METHODS**

### **Application procedure**

Professors are sought primarily through an open international application process. The call for applications must be drawn up to be attractive, and the faculty's own networks will also be used to promote the application process. Search committees work actively to find suitable applicants.

Calls for applications to professorships must be announced in such a way that the appointees may be employed as assistant professors, associate professors or professors, depending on the candidates' merits and career stage.

The new joint approach to recruitment will presumably increase the number of applicants per position. Therefore, careful consideration should be given to the kinds of enclosures requested from the applicants. This applies particularly to publications. It is recommended that applicants be asked to submit a list of publications in which they indicate what they consider to be their key publications. Only the shortlisted candidates are then requested to submit the actual publications, unless they are available in electronic format. The number of requested publications will be defined on a case-by-case basis.

Applicants will be asked to append to their application a brief outline of how they plan to promote their research in the future and what they wish to primarily focus on, should they be appointed to the vacancy.

### **Invitation process**

The Universities Act also permits the position of professor to be filled by invitation without an application procedure if a person of particular merit is available for the position or the position will be filled for a fixed term. The invitation process is faster than the open application process and it may be applicable, for example, when competing over an excellent applicant with another university or if a person of particular merit is available for the position but cannot be reached through the normal application process.

Under special circumstances, the invitation process may also be used to recruit an assistant or associate professor. This may be the case if a person has exhibited particular merit by securing ERC funding, for instance.

## **APPOINTMENT COMMITTEE**

### **Establishment and composition of the appointment committee**

The dean establishes an appointment committee to handle the practicalities of the recruitment process and propose an applicant for the position.

The committee comprises five members, ideally all professors. It is not necessary for all of them to represent the same field. What is essential is that the appointment committee include individuals with experience, insight and understanding of recruitment at this level. Some of the members may be from outside the faculty or University, and emeritus/emerita professors or research professors from state research institutes may also be appointed to the committee.

Under exceptional circumstances, up to two members may be non-professors, but they must nevertheless hold the title of docent and have the experience required for the duties. Assistant and associate professors will not be accepted as members of the appointment committee because the duty is of an exceptional nature. At some future date, the recruited professor may be required to evaluate the assistant or associate professor's success in his or her position. Furthermore, competition could arise between the assistant or associate professors in the future.

In the invitation process, the appointment committee comprises three professors.

Women and men should be equally represented in the appointment committee.

### **The work and duties of the appointment committee**

Since the appointment committee plays a key role in the process, its members must commit wholeheartedly to the task and allocate time for the work.

After receiving the applications, the appointment committee will discuss whether to follow the tenure track approach or announce the position as one for a professor, or whether the level of the position should be decided at a later stage in the process. The dean and sometimes the head of department also participate in the decision-making.

The appointment committee shortlists the candidates whose merits it wishes to receive statements on from the assessors.

These applicants should be interviewed, and statements on their teaching skills should be obtained from the faculty's Teaching Skills Evaluation Committee before the assessors' statements are received. This expedites the process.

### **Overall assessment**

The appointment committee bases its presentation on an overall assessment, which takes into account not only scientific merits, but also all the issues pertaining to the qualifications of professors, assistant professors and associate professors mentioned in the University

Regulations, as well as the assessors' statements, the results of interviews and the opinions of the Teaching Skills Evaluation Committee.

In addition to an applicant's previous work and achievements, attention must be focused on how the applicant is likely to perform in the future, should he or she be appointed to the position.

Increasing the number of international staff among the professors is one of the University's key objectives. As regards Finnish applicants, emphasis is placed on work abroad and the international experience gained from it.

#### **Qualification requirements of a professor (according to the Regulations)**

*An appointee to a professorship shall hold a doctoral degree and have top-level scholarly qualifications and experience in the supervision of scientific research, along with the ability to provide top-level research-based teaching as well as to supervise theses and dissertations. In addition, the appointee shall present documentation of international cooperation in the field of research that he or she represents. Holders of professorships shall also have the skills necessary to serve as academic leaders.*

*When considering an applicant's qualifications, attention shall be given to scientific publications and other research results of scientific value, teaching experience and pedagogical training, the ability to produce teaching material, other teaching merits and, if necessary, a demonstration of teaching skills as well as the applicant's participation in doctoral education. Account shall also be taken of the applicant's activity in the scientific community, success in obtaining external research funding, international research experience and international elected positions as well as leadership and interaction skills.*

#### **Qualification requirements of an assistant professor (according to the Regulations)**

*An appointee to the position of assistant professor in the tenure track system shall hold a doctoral degree, have the ability to conduct independent scholarly work and have the teaching skills necessary for the position. In addition, applicants for assistant professorships shall demonstrate their capability and motivation as regards an academic career through publications and other means.*

*When considering applicants' qualifications, account shall be taken not only of their research work and teaching qualifications, but also of their success in obtaining external research funding, international research experience and other international experience.*

#### **Joint discussion of the appointment committee, dean and head of department**

Once the appointment committee has formed a picture of the top candidates' merits and has possibly shortlisted the candidates, the committee will draw up a reasoned written proposal and use it as the basis for discussions with the dean. If the recruitment is made for a department, and the head of department is not a member of the evaluation group, the head of department must participate in this joint discussion.

### **Presentation to the rector and the rector's decision-making**

The dean, chair of the appointment committee and possibly the head of department will then jointly present the process and the top candidates' merits to the rector. Ahead of this, all key documents drawn up during the process must be submitted to the rector. If required, the rector may request further investigation into the matter.

The rector decides who to employ and, regarding positions of assistant professor, whether to use one or two fixed-term employment relationships.

### **ASSESSORS**

#### **Use of two assessors required by the Universities Act**

The Universities Act stipulates that statements on the qualifications and merits of a person applying for or invited to a post must be requested from a minimum of two assessors if that person is to be appointed to a position indefinitely or for a fixed period of at least two years.

Upon the proposal of the appointment committee, the dean invites two to four assessors of international merit. Where possible, the schools of thought and research fields of the position will be taken into account when selecting the assessors, and overall impartiality will be maintained.

#### **Concise and quickly issued statements**

Assessors will be requested to issue a concise statement focusing on the scientific qualifications of the applicants and, when possible, other merits related to the position of assistant professor or professor. There is no need to review and evaluate individual publications.

Assessors can be requested to group the applicants into recommended, strongly recommended or not recommended candidates.

When following the invitation procedure, the assessors are asked to comment on whether the intended invitee is indisputably qualified for the position.

The assessors are informed of the target process schedule when offered the task. They will no longer be granted many months to issue their statements. Instead, assessors may be promised a larger remuneration for a promptly issued statement.

If appropriate, assessors may be invited to the joint discussion, and they may then issue a joint statement.

## **DISQUALIFICATION**

### **Grounds for disqualification listed in the Administrative Procedure Act**

According to the Universities Act, sections 27–29 of the Administrative Procedure Act will be applied in the disqualification of assessors. The same grounds should also be applied to the members of the appointment committee and to the presenting officials and decision-makers involved in the process.

The most obvious case of disqualification is a situation in which the applicant is a close relative of one of the assessors or other process participant. A list of close relatives is provided in the Act.

### **Disqualification based on collaboration**

Grounds for disqualification may also arise if trust in a person's impartiality is jeopardised for reasons not mentioned in the Administrative Procedure Act. Joint publications or other scientific collaboration within the past three years may constitute such reasons. The University applies the same period as the Academy of Finland in its guidelines on disqualification. The significance of joint publications may differ depending on the field. If a publication involves several authors, and no real collaboration exists between the individuals in question, the publication does not, in this case, constitute grounds for disqualification.

An individual is disqualified if he or she has worked as the applicant's immediate superior (especially if this has also involved research guidance) or has been in the same research group within the past three years. However, the dean or head of department is not automatically disqualified if a member of the faculty or department staff applies for the position. This kind of administrative relationship does not constitute grounds for disqualification.

Serving as the supervisor of the applicant's doctoral thesis disqualifies the supervisor for more than three years. A period of ten years is suitable in this case.

### **Determination of disqualification**

The faculty is responsible for ensuring that disqualified persons do not participate in the recruitment process at any stage.

Questions related to disqualification must be examined and resolved before taking any other measures related to the process.

The potentially disqualified person is expected to take up the matter him- or herself. The appointment committee and the dean will jointly decide on the disqualification of a person considered as a committee member.

When asked to work as assessors, the candidates will also be informed about the grounds for disqualification and requested to evaluate whether the grounds apply to them. The applicants themselves will no longer be asked for their opinion on the assessors or their disqualification.

## **NO POSSIBILITY OF APPEAL**

No appeals procedures apply to the recruitment decision or other process stages. In other words, any letters the applicants may send during or after the process will not affect the final result. Such letters never result in an employment relationship being terminated. However, the University complies with the Administrative Procedure Act, and the appointment process must always be of a high standard. All applicants are treated equally. Any disqualification questions must be dealt with before the beginning of the process.

## **PRACTICAL PROCEDURES**

### **Active managerial work and process scheduling**

The University's and units' management (in faculties, the dean and head of department; in independent institutes, the chair of the board and director of the institute), along with the appointment committee, ensure that the recruitment is successful. The process must be open, efficient and transparent. Members of both the management and appointment committee must allocate sufficient time for the duties.

The recruitment of assistant professors, associate professors and professors should take no more than six months when following the normal application procedure. The invitation process is even shorter. This means that the process and schedule must be planned carefully, and that the schedule must be followed. The appointment committee's meetings will be planned in advance for the entire process, and both the assessors and applicants will be informed about the target schedule.

### **Importance of communication**

The applicants must be kept up-to-date on the progress of the process and notified without delay of decisions concerning them. Applicants who are not shortlisted must be thanked for participating in the process and the assessors must be informed about the final results.

### **Electronic application system and document submission**

Applications are to be submitted through the University's electronic application system, and all the documents generated during the process must also be stored in the system. Persons involved in recruitment preparations and decision-making will be given user rights to the system.

In the case of recruitment processes that have already been initiated and where the applications were not submitted through the electronic application system, the documents must be submitted electronically to Human Resources and Legal Affairs for the rector to process.

The documents that must be submitted to the rector include the applications of the shortlisted applicants, assessor statements, statements from the Teaching Skills Evaluation Committee, the appointment committee's memorandum, as well as a faculty-prepared report on the process stages and measures.