
Use of search committees in connection with the recruitment of academic staff at Health

AT HEALTH, AARHUS UNIVERSITY

Prepared by the faculty management team, Health. In force from 15 September 2018.

Introduction

The use of search committees is incorporated in recruitment to permanent academic staff positions (tenured assistant professors, associate professors and professors incl. clinical professors and clinical professor and chair). Such committees can be absolutely crucial in finding the right applicants to vacant positions. Search committees are appointed for fixed-term as well as permanent positions. Positions, which are not advertised in the public domain, are exempt from the requirements for a search committee. The purpose is to strengthen the faculty's work with the recruitment of new employees, in particular with a view to ensuring that the pool of applicants is highly qualified and gender-diverse.

Appointment of search committees

The search committee is appointed by the Head of Department before the position is advertised and after consultation with the Vice-dean for Research. The Head of Department may consult with the department management team/other relevant research group leaders from the department on the appointment of the search committee. A search committee is composed of at least three professors/associate professors from the research area in question. It is recommended that one of the members is international e.g. in the form of an honorary professor. The committee should be gender-diverse. In practice, the appointment committee can itself comprise the search committee, though it may also have a different composition due to e.g. a desire for strong subject-specific knowledge about the field or the use of external researchers. The search committee refers to the Head of Department who determines the time frame etc.

Use of an external recruitment agency may only take place with the Dean's approval.

The search committee's task

The search committee's work can take place prior to the job advertisement, though it may also take place in parallel with the job advertisement, etc. It is important that the opportunity to attract a wide range of qualified applicants has already been incorporated in the job advertisement, e.g. by preparing a broad advertisement and clear criteria for the position. Clarification of what the department is able to offer possible candidates in the way of e.g. start packages should also be in place. The search committee examines the international market by using their network or similar within the field of research in question. Gender diversity must as far as possible be represented among the applicants, while also taking academic considerations into account. Potential candidates may be invited for a site visit which includes giving lectures etc. Potential candidates receive a unique application link or are encouraged to apply for the position when the position is advertised.

An initial search plan for the position may also be considered. To ensure that there are as many diverse candidates as possible, the search plan can sketch some outreach activities such as e.g. an overview of potential sources of applicants, relevant articles within the area, use of social media, conferences where candidates can be contacted, lists of award winners etc. It should also be agreed whether contact to candidates is to take place via email or directly.

Confidentiality within the committee is compulsory and also crucial in ensuring an honest discussion as well as respecting the input and participation from all those involved in each phase of the committee's work.