Guidelines on equal opportunities in recruitment procedures
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The University of Bern considers implementation of real gender equality one of its key objectives. In its 2021 Strategy, it has set itself the aim of, among other things, having an appropriate percentage of both genders at all levels. In addition, it strives to ensure that «everyone actively implements real gender equality [...]» (2021 Strategy, chap. 5.8). In the University of Bern’s 2013-16 Gender Equality Action Plan, the University has set itself the target of reaching a 25% share of female professors by 2016 (Gender Equality Action Plan, p. 6).

At professor level in particular, the aim of an «appropriate percentage of both genders» is far from being reached. In recent years, it has been possible to increase the percentage of women - the current figure being just under 18% of associate and full professors - however, this is still low and well below the target figure of 25%. A good and fair recruitment process is an important starting point for creating equal opportunities and increasing the percentage of female professors. The following principles in this context are stipulated in the Recruitment Regulations:

Real gender equality is guaranteed in the recruitment processes. Issues relating to the advancement of women must be specifically taken into account. (Recruitment Regulations, Art. 4)

The recruitment procedures shall be structured and applied in a transparent manner. Candidates must be selected carefully and based on sound reasoning. (Recruitment Regulations, Art. 20[1-2])

These Guidelines provide an overview of the legal bases connected to the recruitment procedures at the University of Bern, in particular based on the Recruitment Regulations and the Gender Equality Regulations. They also include recommendations/information on the different phases of a recruitment procedure which are intended to increase equal opportunities.

Further reading on equal opportunities in appeal proceedings:


The transparency and quality of recruitment procedures, i.e. the fair and sound assessment of all applications received, also increase equal opportunities, while ultimately achieving the objective of finding «the best person» for a professorship. In the appendix to the Guidelines, there are examples of the different tools such as a synopsis, lists of criteria and the Committee meeting procedures, all of which can be adapted to suit the specific subject-related context.

The Guidelines are directed at everyone who is involved in recruitment processes, which is exactly what is called for by the 2021 Strategy which stipulates that equal opportunities must be actively implemented by everyone.
Players

The Election Committee, the Office for Gender Equality (OGE) and the faculties' gender equality delegates

All Committee members have the duty to promote and guarantee the transparency of recruitment procedures and with it equal opportunities. In this regard, the Chair of the Election Committee has a particularly important role to play. The Chair manages the process and in this capacity has decisive influence on the framework conditions and the «culture» of a procedure.

At the University of Bern, there is always a representative of the Office for Gender Equality acting as an observer without voting rights in all recruitment procedures (with the exception of the Faculty of Medicine). The OGE must therefore be provided with all the necessary information for its involvement before the start of a procedure (cf. Recruitment Regulations, Art. 20[4]). Following the procedure, the representative of the OGE draws up an accompanying report which is sent to the faculty and University Management together with the Committee’s report and the application for recruitment.

Pursuant to the Recruitment Regulations (in force since January 2013), the representative of the OGE always works alongside «a person from the faculty who is entrusted with aspects of equal opportunities and gender equality» (Art. 21[3e]; Art. 25[3e]). This new practice is intended to ensure that gender equality issues are also represented by a person with appropriate expert knowledge. This person would ideally be a high-ranking Committee member (professor). These gender equality delegates from the various faculties already get involved during the structural phase, which precedes publication of the job advertisement.

In the Faculty of Medicine, the role of the gender equality delegate has long been performed by faculty members who already get involved during the structural phase and have voting rights. The OGE does not become involved here.

Involving gender equality officers in recruitment procedures has a positive effect on the employment of female professors. Cf.

The different phases of the recruitment process

Legal bases and recommendations

The following section takes a closer look at the individual phases of the procedure, legal bases as well as recommendations/central questions to guarantee equal opportunities.

Structural Committee

Every time a professorship is created or has to be filled, the faculty shall compile a structural report for the attention of University Management. It shall define the professor's profile and duties, also in the context of a possible restructuring of the institute (keywords: assistant professors, job-sharing, part-time professors, etc.).

At least one person of each gender must be represented on every structural committee. Furthermore, a person from the faculty who is entrusted with equal opportunities and gender equality aspects must be on every structural committee (Recruitment Regulations, Art. 21[3]). This person should be named in the structural report and is also a regular member of the Election Committee that will become involved at a later date.

In principle, a representative of the OGE shall also be included. If the OGE chooses not to get involved during the structural phase, it must be informed of the Structural Committee’s work. (Gender Equality Regulations, Art. 9)

The following central questions may be helpful:

- Are the objectives of the University and the faculty relating to increasing the proportion of women given due consideration when planning professorships and in the Structural Committee?
- Is the job description formulated broadly yet still clearly?
- Do female academics also meet the job description?
- Is there a possibility of holding the professorship based on a job-sharing arrangement or on a part-time basis, and is this included in the structural report?
- Is the job description formulated in such a way as to include gender research of the relevant department?
Job advertisement
The job advertisement defines what the professorship entails and the requirements for applicants, particularly in relation to teaching, research, supporting junior staff and the acquisition of third-party funding.

Job advertisements shall be expressly aimed at both women and men. If women are underrepresented in the department concerned, they shall be expressly encouraged to apply in the job advertisement. (Gender Equality Regulations, Art. 7[1])

Election Committees shall expressly invite women to apply, in order to counter the under-representation of female professors. (Gender Equality Regulations, Art. 10 [2])

- Is the job advertisement formulated in an open and broad manner (and not already tailored to certain people)?
- Is the job advertisement widely publicised?
- Is the job advertisement formulated in gender-neutral language?
- Is the opportunity of performing the job part-time or based on a job-sharing arrangement explicitly mentioned in the job advertisement?
- Is the advertisement also published on job sites/databases specifically aimed at female academics and are potential female candidates encouraged to apply?
- Has it been clearly defined who gives what information to the candidates? Are the responsibilities, e.g. in the dean’s office, clearly specified, so that one person performs administrative duties relating to recruitment procedures over an extended period and corresponding know-how can be acquired?
- Are candidates informed of the schedule of the procedure? Is there by any chance also an information sheet available to applicants?

The following job sites/databases are aimed explicitly at female academics:

Femdat, das Stellennetz für Akademikerinnen: www.femdat.ch

Femconsult, Rekrutierungsportal für Wissenschaftlerinnen: www.gesis.org/cews/femconsult

Useful reading on searching specifically for female academics:

The presence of women and female professors in particular on recruitment committees and as chairs is very important to female applicants. They often describe a lasting impression of the job interview of sitting opposite only men. Corresponding minimum requirements relating to the composition of recruitment committees are now included in most tertiary institution acts and are specified in detail at tertiary level, but often inadequately in the form of non-binding provisions. Cf. Färber, Christine (2006): Gleichstellungsorientiertes Qualitätsmanagement in Berufungsverfahren – Ergebnisse einer Studie zur Berufungspraxis in Deutschland. In: Wer sind die Besten? Chancengleichheit in Berufungsverfahren. Bern: Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, S. 33ff.

**Composition of the Election Committee**

Following the approval of the structural report by University Management, the faculty shall set up an Election Committee. The latter shall examine the applications in respect of the requirements specified beforehand.

Where the composition of the Election Committee is concerned, it shall be ensured that both genders are equally represented. At least one eligible voter of each gender must be represented on the Committee. (Gender Equality Regulations, Art. 10[1])

As a rule, one member of the OGE must be represented on every election committee and in any case an additional person from the Faculty who is entrusted with aspects of equal opportunity and gender equality. (Recruitment Regulations Art. 25[3])

- Are the members of the Committee independent, i.e. are e.g. non-professorial teaching staff or student representatives not in a relationship of dependence on other Committee members?
- Is the Chair of the Committee from a different department and hence more independent?
- Are there female Committee members at the level of professorships as well?
- Was the faculty member entrusted with equal opportunities and gender equality issues already determined before the Election Committee’s first meeting, in other words during the structural phase?
Selection procedure
In a multistage process, the Election Committee examines applications in respect of formal requirements and academic credentials, didactic suitability, managerial skills and other prerequisites.

When assessing applications, family commitments and resulting interruptions to or reductions in research may not be used to discriminate against applicants. (Gender Equality Regulations, Art. 14)

As many suitably qualified female candidates as possible shall be invited in areas in which women are underrepresented. (Gender Equality Regulations, Art. 8[1])

a) First look at applications
In a first step, the Election Committee views the applications and makes a shortlist of candidates. Depending on the professional culture, they will be asked to submit papers for assessment.

- Are the Committee members informed about the process stages (e.g. in the form of a sample process)?
- Do Committee members have access to a synopsis without prior ranking? (cf. appendix: synopsis)
- Are the criteria and indicators for assessing the applications and papers clearly defined, and was the weighting based on hard and soft criteria (cf. appendix: criteria for assessing applications)? Has it been considered that some seemingly objective criteria can come across as gender-specific?
- Are all applications examined individually in the first round?
- Are any personal and/or professional relationships of Committee members with candidates disclosed (bias)?
- Is the «academic age» considered in the assessment of suitability instead of the biological age? Are academically productive periods minus periods of bringing up and caring

Ages are often listed in general overviews that are compiled on candidates and used as a selection criterion by recruitment committees. In this respect, only rarely is a gender-based assessment of age made (such as a deduction for time spent at home looking after children). Instead of the candidate’s age, generally their «academic age», and academically productive periods should be considered. Cf.


Where the topic of mobility is concerned, it has been shown that partnership, in particular the dual career situations, can make mobility more difficult or even impossible. Cf.

For quantity vs. quality of research work, dealing with impact factors and journal rankings see «DORA – Declaration on Research Assessment»: [http://am.ascb.org/dora/](http://am.ascb.org/dora/)

It recommends largely dispensing with citation indicators as a quality criterion for the assessment of individual research projects and encourages research funders to declare that the academic content of a paper is considerably more important than the bibliometric indicators or the reputation of the journal in which it was printed. The declaration was signed by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), among other institutions.

Also see the following on the topic of impact factors:


- When assessing mobility requirements, are gender equality issues such as the reconciliation of work and family/partnership given due consideration (keyword mobility splitting)?
- Are the papers not above all assessed in terms of quantity, impact factor and journal rankings, but rather in terms of quality in particular?

**b) Reading the papers**

In some departments (e.g. Humanities or Theology), a selection of candidates is asked to submit papers for assessment, on the basis of which the number of candidates is reduced even further.

- Are candidates given clear information on the requirements relating to the papers to be submitted?
- Has the possibility been ruled out that Committee members could give a report on candidates' papers with whom they have personal or professional relationships?
- Are the papers discussed based on clearly defined criteria?
c) Candidates' presentation and interview

Based on the Committee's interim assessment, a selection of candidates is invited to make a presentation and then discuss it with the Election Committee.

- Are candidates given guidelines and information on the topic, structure, content, language, target group and level of complexity of the presentation and on what the interview will entail?
- Have the assessment criteria for the candidates' presentations been agreed by the Committee? (cf. appendix: assessment criteria for candidates' presentations)
- Are non-professorial teaching staff and students able to attend candidates' presentations?
- Does the interview follow a previously agreed structure which guarantees comparability of the interviews? (cf. appendix: structure of Committee interviews)
- Is the atmosphere during discussions objective, friendly and open?
- Are candidates asked about their contribution to equal opportunities at the University and to gender research in their department?
- Are either all candidates or none asked personal or family-related questions?
- Did the Committee discuss beforehand how questions from candidates about support with dual career situations would be answered?

Studies have shown that answers to questions about the personal lives, partnerships or families of female candidates are weighted differently by recruitment committees than those of male candidates. Cf. Färber, Christine. Ulrike Spangenberg (2008): Wie werden Professuren besetzt? Chancengleichheit in Berufungsverfahren. Frankfurt/New York: Campus, S. 220.

The issue of dual career couples at Swiss universities is highly topical. As the study «Dual career couples at Swiss universities» from 2013 demonstrated, 57% of female professors and 31% of male professors live in dual career partnerships. Overall, 28% of all professors surveyed would like greater support from the university with finding work for their partner. Download study here

At the University of Bern, there is no funding available for partners of newly appointed professors. The Welcome Center advises dual career couples on topics like moving, flat hunting and childcare.
d) Assessments

In an international context, it is now common to engage external assessment companies to perform assessments of candidates. At the University of Bern, assessments are carried out in some faculties (above all Medicine and Veterinary Medicine), especially for professorships with a public service mandate.

- Does the assessment give due consideration to gender equality issues such as the reconciliation of work and family/partnership?
- Did the faculty check to see if the engaged external company has expertise in gender issues?

Advice and list compilation

After the presentations and the Committee interviews, the Election Committee discusses and decides whether or not to include the individual candidates in the shortlist. Candidates are selected based on an overall assessment (academic track record, suitability for the position, performances in teaching, third-party funding, leadership and social skills, etc.). External comparative assessments are obtained on candidates who are considered capable of making the shortlist. On receipt of the assessments, the Election Committee compiles the final list and writes a report with an application for recruitment for the attention of the faculty and University Management.

Interruptions to or reductions in paid work as a result of parenthood and family commitments may not be used to discriminate against applicants. (Recruitment Regulations, Art. 28[3])

Women are generally given preference over men if equally qualified. (Recruitment Regulations, Art. 28[5])

- Are the criteria and their weighting called to mind?
- Are the exclusion criteria objective, understandable and transparent?
- Are female assessors also considered when it comes to awarding contracts for external assessments?
- Are the external assessors impartial?
- Are the assessors informed about the criteria to be considered?
- Is the Committee’s report formulated in gender-neutral language?

The requirements of University Management in respect of the Committee’s report are available [here](#) under Point B2.
Legal bases

**Gesetz über die Universität (UniG)**

vom 5. September 1996 (insbes. Art. 12)

**Verordnung über die Universität (UniV)**

vom 12. September 2012 (insbes. Art. 60-78)

**Statut der Universität**

vom 7. Juni 2011 (insbes. Art. 9 und Art. 34, Abs. 2-3)

**Reglement für die Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern**

vom 14. Dezember 1994

**Reglement über die Anstellung an der Universität Bern**

vom 18. Dezember 2012
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<td>Languages, other (awards, etc.)</td>
<td>Amount of third-party funding by source and year; possibly amount</td>
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**Example of synopsis**

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Example of criteria for assessing applications

1. Formal qualifications: Dissertation, habilitation or equivalent to habilitation
2. Research (quality, methodical reflection, innovation) in the main areas of x, y and z
3. Additional main areas of research
4. Teaching experience and tertiary-level teaching (scope of teaching, further training and teaching approach)
5. Other publications (quality and productivity)
6. Reception of research
7. Third-party funding secured
8. University self-government
9. Teamwork
10. Connection with the institute/the University of Bern
11. Gender: Gender of candidate and their experience in gender research
12. Academic age

Assessment of individual points:
3 = excellent
2 = clearly discernible
1 = partly discernible
0 = not discernible
Example of assessment criteria for candidates’ presentations

Presentation
– Language, rhetoric
– Interaction with the audience
– Media, aids
– Adherence to time frame

Contents
– Introduction to topic
– Structure and planning
– Hypothesis, issue and topic
– Execution
– Result
– Plausibility
– Audience-friendliness

Group discussion
– Response to questions
– Form and content of answers
– Interaction between askers and candidates
– Interaction with the audience

Overall impression
Example of Committee interview procedures

Questions of the Committee
General interest
– Motivation for applying in Bern

Research
– current research priorities
– possible research projects and third-party funding

Teaching
– Teaching concept
– How highly the candidate values teaching

Subject of xy
– Understanding of the subject in the wider context
– Potential contribution to raising the faculty’s profile
– Interdisciplinary skills
– Potential contribution to extending the faculty’s international networks

Junior staff
– Concepts/ideas to support junior staff
– Concepts and ideas on the advancement of women

Self-government
– Experience in self-government of universities

Miscellaneous
– other applications
– Connection to Switzerland
– Place of residence, family situation, relocation to Bern

Information for applicants
1) Equipment
2) Salary
3) How to proceed

Applicant’s questions for the Committee