

# **Recruitment of Scientific Staff**

## **Department of Political Science and Public Management**

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### **Strategic recruitment**

Recruitment of scientific staff is a critical activity for the department. We must attract not only the best scholars possible, but also install the best possible mix of scholars with different talents if we want to realize our strategic goals. We believe that scientific, educational, and societal innovation is fostered in diverse academic environments encompassing a variety of intellectual and personal experience. We always hire the best qualified candidate, but recruitment is never a trivial exercise of gauging a one-dimensional measure of excellence. We evaluate applicants' entire academic profile and its fit with existing staff and the current needs in the organization.

Our principals for recruitment of scientific staff is closely related to the department's 2015-2020 Strategy, the Scholarly Qualification Matrix (SQM), and the Gender Equality Policy. Furthermore, the recruitment principals should be understood as a supplement to the general rules and government regulation of announcement of positions and procedures for external assessment. Conferment of appointment always requires documentation of applicants' contributions within their field, to their institution, and to society at large.

Towards 2020 the department will further develop its portfolio of focused and vibrant research communities that are clearly integrated into our study programs. This overarching objective calls for a section specific recruitment plans and job openings. To coordinate and prioritize section specific needs, the management team discusses recruitment plans once a year to qualify the Head of Department's final decision on concrete openings. Thus, the size of the sections is dynamic and the department has no distribution key across sections distributing fixed amounts of resources to sections in turn. Opening positions is – at all levels – motivated by a need to ensure critical mass in specific sections, and/or social impact, research quality, and/or teaching resources at the section and/or departmental level.

### **Active recruitment in international competition**

When it is decided to open a position an active recruitment process begins. The process has one sole purpose, namely to cultivate that strongest possible fields of applicants. To ensure real competition we only fill a vacancy if *at least three applicants are deemed qualified* by the assessment committee and if *we have qualified applicants of both genders*.

These principals call for a *significant and deliberately tailored effort by a search committee* appointed by the relevant Head of Section. As a minimum, the search committee should compile a list of potential applicants, take contact to them, and motivate them to apply for the position. The search might start in existing networks but could also go beyond such by e.g. using scientific conferences and other events to spot (unknown) talents. When motivating potential applicants, the search committee should focus on academic as well as non-academic aspects of a job at SDU (when motivating internationals, the Danish welfare system and the SDU spouse program should be mentioned).

The most promising *potential applicants may be invited to give a talk* and/or a guest lecture at SDU. Such visits are planned in a professional way by the search committee. Apart from the talk/lecture a visit should include a group lunch, a meeting the Head of Department and/or the Head of Section, and if possible a dinner with one or two potential colleagues (i.e. non-managerial personal).

*Search committees are expected to invest resources in the cultivation process* and the official job announcement is only published when the search committee has filed a short report to the Head of Department documenting the measures taken to ensure a strong and competitive applicant pool. In accordance with the department's gender equality policy, the search committee has *a special obligation to counter unconscious bias* in its work and to encourage potential female applicants to apply – and both genders must be represented in the search committee.

We actively recruit employees at all levels (please consult the SQM for further details on our expectations to employees at each level):

- *PhD student*: PhD students obtain their scientific education at SDU. We utilize the Danish 4+4 model as well as the 5+3 model. The former model is used to hire from the top 5% of our master's students *before* they are offered jobs at other institutions. The latter model is used to ensure international competition and helps us attract the best applicants from SDU as well as other universities. As a standard, we open two positions a year, but more positions are opened if the department needs to supplement the PhD program or when required by externally funded projects.
- *Post doc*: We hire post docs to conduct highly qualified research, typically within an externally funded project running for a fixed time-period (with a maximum of four years). Occasionally, we also use short-term (maximum of one year) post doc positions to retain our most promising PhD candidates – when doing so, the PhD candidates must have a concrete plan and a clear potential to attract external funding. A post doc position does not entail pedagogical training and therefore post docs do not qualify for the associate professor level. Long-term positions (more than one year) are advertised in open international competition with due respect for the needs of the research project funding the position. If (co-)financed by the department, post docs might be hired as fixed term assistant professors (with a maximum of six years). In this situation, the employee will have substantial teaching obligations and must enroll in formal pedagogical training.
- *Assistant Professor (tenure-track)*. Assistant professors in tenure track positions may move up to the associate professor level without a formal job opening if deemed qualified after a period of no longer than six years. During the 4-6 years before the associate professor evaluation, the assistant professor is expected to develop his or her academic profile within not only research and teaching, but also pedagogy, knowledge exchange, service to the institution, *and* one of the focus areas defined in the SQM (i.e. external funding, educational management, or societal impact). We open tenure tracks to satisfy strategic needs of the department and specific sections – and we do so in open international competition. We prioritize opening positions at this level over opening

positions at the associate professor level for two reasons: first, we want to attract (and retain) the best junior scholars *before* they get (or prevent that they leave us *to* get) tenure at other universities. Second, we want to level the playing field for female scholars, who to a disproportional extent leave academia before they get tenure at the associate professor level.

- *Associate professor*: Associate professors are hired to help us realize the operational and strategical goals defined in the department and section strategies. Thus, openings may emphasize specific tasks within research, teaching, administration, or societal engagement. Positions are opened in international competition.
- *Professor*: We open full professorships to install academic leadership in the organization. As described in the SQM, professors are expected to build, nurture and develop academic environments in general and facilitate research infrastructure for especially junior scientific staff. As such it is obvious that we expect something quite different from professors than we expect from experienced and well-performing associate professors. It is important to note that the department needs both types of scholars and that we expect most associate professors to remain associates throughout their career. Taking this difference in institutional obligation seriously, we only hire professors when it is deemed strategically necessary by the department and specific sections – and we do so only in international competition.

#### **Active retention and professorial development of selected associate professors**

- *Professor wSR*: We use the special Danish academic title “professor with special responsibilities” (i.e. a fix-term junior professorship) as a retention tool and as an opportunity for associate professors to develop or train competences needed to qualify for a full professorship in the future. Thus, we open wSR positions when we have potential internal applicants, and although positions are opened in international competition, we do not engage in an active recruitment process. Applicants for wSR professorships must present an outline for a specific project that should be completed during the wSR term. The project must include significant elements that hinge one of the three focus criteria in the SQM, i.e. interdisciplinary research, educational innovation, or societal impact. Thus, the wSR project will not only benefit the department in and of itself, it will also help the wSR professor meet the SQM criteria at the full professor level. We do not, however, think of the wSR professorship as a ‘tenure-track’ to a full professorship, because professorships – as mentioned above – only are opened in accordance with departmental needs and in open international competition. Thus, wSR professors may go back to the associate professorship when the wSR term expires.

#### **Three phases of recruitment**

We want to make the recruitment process as transparent as possible. The Danish law on privacy does not allow the department to publish personal information about the applicant pool. We can, however, describe in detail the different steps we take to ensure international competition, gender equality, and publicly known evaluation criteria. We also publish anonymized recruitment statistics in line with the gender equality policy.

Every recruitment process formally starts with an official announcement of the position as regulated by Danish law. However, the process begins several months before because it takes time to cultivate a competitive field of applicants.

#### *Pre-announcement phase*

- The Head of Department, the Vice Head of Department for Education, and the relevant Head of Section discuss and document (using a standard “pre-analysis” form) specific needs regarding the concrete position and draft the official announcement.
- Using another standard form, the Head of Department drafts a detailed recruitment plan outlining all relevant mile stones, actions, responsible, and key actors.
- The relevant Head of Section appoints a search committee tasked as described above.
- Upon publication of the official announcement the chairman of the search committee is obliged to circulate the call in relevant mailing list, networks etc.

#### *Assessment phase*

- The Head of Department is responsible for the appointment of an assessment committee. The compilation of the committee adheres to University and Faculty guidelines. Usually, committees consist of three members; two external and one internal. Both genders must be represented in the committee.
- The Head of Department is responsible for informing all members of the assessment committee about the department’s gender equality policy, the recruitment policy, the SQM, and the specific needs described in the call.
- The compilation of the assessment committee is communicated to all applicants who have one week to comment on the compilation.
- If short-listing is used, the chairman of the assessment committee – in dialogue with the Head of Department – decides which applicants that should be short-listed for full considerations. Standard university procedures are followed in the short-listing process.
- The chairman organizes and supervises the work in the committee. The chairman has a special responsibility to counter unconscious bias and to ensure that the assessments are structured according to the relevant criteria and dimension of the SQM.
- The assessment committee delivers its rapport to the Faculty which returns the individual assessments to the applicants with a one week notice for comments.
- PhD applications are assessed by the department’s PhD committee. To avoid any bias in assessments, the committee performs anonymous assessment of proposed projects.

#### *Interview phase*

- When the hearing phase is concluded the assessments are forwarded to the Head of Department who – upon advice from the relevant Head of Section – decides which of the qualified applicants to invite for a job interview. Interviews might be conducted at the SDU campuses in Sønderborg or Odense. The department pays transportation expenses for all invited applicants and if needed a hotel stay for international applicants. If interviewees are external to SDU and have not been invited for a talk in the pre-announcement phase, the relevant Head of Section plans a guided tour at the university

and a dinner/lunch/coffee with each applicant individually. This task is executed by a non-managerial member of the section.

- The Head of Department is responsible for appointing an appointment committee. The committee is chaired by the Head of Department and counts the Vice Head of Department for Education, the relevant Head of Section, and one additional scholar from another section. Others (e.g. heads of centers or programs, or the chairman of the assessment committee) might be invited as well. When appointing wSR/full professors, the Dean and representatives of the Academic Council also participate in the interview. Both genders must be represented in the committee, and the chairman has a special responsibility to counter any unconscious bias.
- The purpose of the interview is to provide the basis for an assessment of the applicants' personal qualities and academic profile (following the SQM), especially criteria which have not been assessed by the assessment committee. Personal tests are always used at the full professor level, and could be used at lower levels.
- Based on the entire process the Head of Department makes a final recommendation to the Dean and personally informs the interviewed applicants about the conclusions.

## **Appendix 1: Onboarding of new colleagues with no prior SDU experience**

All *new* employees – defined as persons that do not have an employment history with the department – should receive a good welcome. It must be ensured that newcomers experience a sense of belonging to the department and becomes confident with the formal and informal structures of the workplace. This means, among other things, that office facilities and other practicalities should be ready from day one. It also means that the department and the relevant section invest time in onboarding activates for new employee; it is essential that new members of the flock have a pleasant, respectful, and productive first time by us – and thus our onboarding initiatives includes the following elements:

- Using a standard form, the relevant Head of Section drafts a detailed plan for the onboarding process. The plan must be finalized no later than one week before the new employee arrives.
- Before the official arrival at the department, the relevant Head of Section contacts the new employee for a brief talk about any relevant matters. If the section or the department plan a major event before a new colleague officially starts, the person is invited and costs are covered.
- It is strongly advised that the relevant Head of Section prepares a small task for the new employee. A concrete task helps get things started, it creates a natural opportunity to engage with colleagues from day one, and it demonstrates the department's need of the new employee.
- The relevant Head of Section assigns a contact person to the new employee. The contact person must have ample SDU experience and typically, the person is in the same staff category as the new employee. The prime obligation of the contact person is to help the new colleague “plug into” practical matters, but also aiding the newcomer in plugging into department culture. At the first day, the contact person gives a guided tour at the department and the university to show relevant facilities. In the following six months, the contact person is the new employee's ‘go-to person’. This means that no question is too small to ask – and it means that the contact person has a special obligation to check in by the new colleague occasionally (e.g. suggest a coffee, a common lunch or the like). The contact person is especially important when we welcome internationals.
- On the first day at SDU, the new employee receives introduction material from SDU in combination with a welcome folder from the department containing relevant documents about the department as a workplace. Also, we ask new colleagues to write a short personal introduction which is circulated to all via email together with a photo.
- Within six months, the new colleague is invited to the Head of Department's “welcome meeting”. At this meeting, the department head presents the department strategy and related strategies and policies. The Head of the Secretariat highlights what kind of administrative help one can expect and which responsibilities we expect in return. The Vice Head of Department for Education presents the pedagogical strategy, the norm system for teaching, and other relevant information. Finally, the Head of Department hosts short bilateral meetings to discuss the new colleague's experiences so far.

- Being new to the organization can be challenging and often contacts to members of other sections as well as understanding of the wider organization of the department is postponed and perhaps neglected. However, it is crucial to foster a common sense of belonging to the department as such and not just one of its sections and/or study programs. Thus, the new employee is invited to partake in a meeting in the Academic Study Board and at least one section meeting in another section during the first six months of employment. The contact person is responsible for pre-arranging such meetings.