# **Guidance for recommendation of nomination to Phd and Postdoctoral positions**

# Attachment to template for appointment with supplementary explanations for the template text, advice, and tips.

The objective of the evaluation is primarily to explain how to proceed in order to find the best-qualified applicant for the advertised position, and why you have concluded as you do. The appointing authority has a duty to inform the Appointment committee of the evaluation process to the best of their knowledge. The evaluation must contain sufficient information for the Appointment committee to be able to make an independent assessment of the applicants. If a majority of the Appointment committee’s members is of the opinion that the case has not been sufficiently disclosed, the case can be returned to the committee.

Please provide good reasons for the decision, be as concrete and factual as possible! Assessments/justifications must be linked to the qualification requirements in the announcement.

Please note that the Parliamentary Ombud has criticized the government sector for displaying deficiencies in the written documentation in employment cases. It is worthwhile to go thorough recommendation of nomination to avoid complaints and criticism after a recruitment process.

Employment of PhD candidates and Postdoctoral research fellows at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MN Faculty) has been delegated to the Appointment committee at each department at the faculty. This means that it is the Appointment committee at the department that confirms the appointment.

#### *Composition of the interview committee*

The department appoints the committee. Please be aware of any departmental guidelines for appointing members to the interview committees to PhD or postdoctoral positions when suggesting members for the committe.

As far as possible, both genders should be represented in the interview committee. Any other participants shall also be mentioned as e.g. observers/resource persons.

#### Impartiality

The committee must assess whether the members of the committee have any close professional/personal ties to the applicants. A committee member cannot serve on the committee while also being listed as a reference for any of the applicants. This would create a conflict of interest that is unfavorable in terms of impartiality. If a member is disqualified from a particular applicant, they cannot be a part of the committee when evaluating the rest of the applicants.

More information on impartiality can be found at the following link (in Norwegian only):

<https://www.uio.no/for-ansatte/enhetssider/mn/lederhandboka/>

Specific considerations

The government has mandated all government agencies to invite at least one person from each category, including individuals with immigrant background, CV gaps, and disabilities, for an interview, provided that such applicants have applied and are qualified for the position. These applicants can be hired if they are deemed to be nearly as qualified as the most highly qualified applicant. Applicants with specific considerations can be identified in Jobbnorge by selecting Filter/Other criteria.

Only applicants residing in Norway can claim specific considerations.

An applicant with an immigrant background refers to someone who has immigrated from Europe outside the EU/EFTA, Asia including Turkey, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania outside of Australia and New Zealand, or where both parents have immigrated from these countries. Regarding CV gaps, it is required that the applicant has been out of work, education, or training for at least two years in the last five years at the time of application. The absence must be due to substance abuse, imprisonment, illness including mental illness, or the applicant must have actively been seeking employment during the absence.

If an applicant has indicated redundancy, it means they have been laid off by the employer due to the organisation's circumstances and have external preferential rights to suitable vacant positions in the government sector. The applicant must provide a redundancy certificate confirming the preferential rights. If an applicant is redundant, they must be assessed before other applicants, and HR must be contacted for further procedures in evaluating the applicant.

Applicants with specific considerations must be listed in the recommendation.

Grounds for selection of applicants for interviews

All applicants must be mentioned in this paragraph. Internal applicants known to the committee should also be invited for an interview. This is to ensure that both external and internal applicants receive equal treatment throughout the recruitment process. Reasons must also be provided for candidates not being called for an interview.

There may be many applicants who on paper appear to be well qualified, but there is no obligation to call everyone for an interview. It is sufficient that an initial qualification assessment is carried out, where those who, based on the application and CV, are the *best qualified*, are invited. However, one *cannot* fail to call in the best qualified, as this is contrary to the qualification principle and the duty to inform the matter as best as possible. One should therefore document in writing the reason why one of the best applicants was not invited to an interview.

Be careful with reusing information about the applicant:

* As a main rule, you cannot use information from other processes or from other persons.
* If the interview committee has knowledge of a negative character about an applicant from earlier or other employment processes that are decisive for the assessment of the applicant's qualifications, the general rule is that the applicant (if he or she is as well qualified on paper as others who are invited to an interview) is called for an interview. References must be contacted before the case can be considered sufficiently informed.
* Information about the applicant found online cannot be used in the evaluation.
* **Exceptions**: If the knowledge of the relevant applicant is from a previous employment process with the same appointing leader and of a more recent date, the information can be used, but then it must be re-assessed and well justified for the sake of the case's consideration and information.
  + Proposal text:

“Applicant NN has not been called for an interview because the person concerned is known from a previous interview/employment a short time ago/date. NN is not qualified/personally suitable because..." (*Link the justification to the qualification criteria*).

Candidates not invited for an interview can be grouped together and you must be as specific as possible. For example: (specify specific requirements according to the announcement)", "applicant no. xx etc. did not meet the announcement's education requirements", "applicant no. xx etc. does not meet the requirements for relevant experience", "applicant no. xx etc. does not meet the requirements for education and relevant experience".

## ***Mention of relevant candidates***

## If a candidate has been interviewed, but has subsequently withdrawn their application, this should be stated in the report, and it is not necessary to write a description of the candidate.

All candidates who have been interviewed must be mentioned.

#### Introduction

#### Start with a brief summary of the applicant's background, for example highest education level and current position, number of years of relevant experience, and what is most relevant to the advertised position. Remember the employment history if the applicant is employed at UiO.

Remember to always relate assessments and rankings of applicants to the content of the job advertisement regarding qualifications and personal attributes.

#### Evaluation of applicants

Always write the same key points for each applicant, to make it easier for the Appointment committee to compare the competence of each applicant and understand the reasoning behind the final ranking.

Write about:

* evaluation of the relevant competence from earlier job experience and/or education in reference to the announcement text for each applicant
* other relevant evaluation, such as motivation for the position, was the applicant well prepared for the interview, did they understand what the position entailed, did the applicant describe how they organised their workday etc.
* other impressions from the interview regarding personal skills, focusing on the personal skills mentioned in the announcement text

If you have in the interview process used a case, a test or similar, give a short description of the how the applicant solved the case or the test. All candidates must be evaluated using the same score, the same basis for evaluation and be given the same case or test.

When describing the candidates, just write a short recap of the interview, it should not be a detailed minutes of meeting with a verbatim text of what the applicant said in the interview. The text must clearly state who said what; the applicant, the reference or if it is the committee’s opinion.

It is important to always address applicants in a professional and respectful manner, whether they are recommended for the position or not. If there is a need to address negative aspects about the applicant, it should be done critically and with sensitivity. The comments should be relevant to the position and should omit sensitive or distressing information.

Avoid questions regarding sick leave and the applicant’s health. It is only allowed to ask these questions if relevant for the work tasks in the position. It is not allowed to ask a female applicant questions regarding family planning or future pregnancies.

Job applicants and employees with functional impairment has a right to a fitted individual adaptation of the employment process, workplace and tasks, cf. the Anti-Discrimination Ombud Act § 22. The adaptation shall not entail “disproportionate burden” for the employer, but it will take a lot before one can argue that the University of Oslo cannot adapt the workplace due to, for example, increased cost.

One cannot use illness or functional impairment as a justification for not inviting a candidate for an interview or not ranking them. The justification must be factual and related to professional and personal suitability.

* Avoid assumptions about the applicants as this cannot be used in the evaluation of the applicants
* If an applicant is considered “ overqualified”, that is not a good enough reason for them to be excluded from ranking and hiring of the candidate
* Avoid statements that cannot be used to evaluate the candidate in the terms of criteria such as: “she is smiling a lot”, “fairly outgoing”, “he has a good temperament”, “she appears antisocial” and avoid exaggeration such as “very good”
* A late starting date is not grounds for disqualification of the applicant (unless it is stated in the announcement that one must start by a certain date)

#### References

* Write a summary from the reference interview
* Always have permission from the candidate to contact the references (cf. the Personal Data Act § 8). It is not considered proper administrative practice to conduct reference interview without consent and give weight to information gained from the interview without giving the applicant a chance for contradiction.
* We recommend that the candidate submit several references or other references if it is important for the evaluation of the applicant (i.e. a manager, a close colleague over several years that knows how the applicant performed their work tasks.
* If the candidate refuses to submit references, the candidate must then accept that this might have negative consequences for the evaluation of the candidate, because the committee will not be able to get the complete picture of the candidate.
* When writing the reference interview, do not mention the referee by name, but you can refer to the relation/ position they have/ had to the candidate. For example,   
  “current manager/ previous manager”, “colleague” etc.
* Please state if the referee confirms/ strengthens /weakens the impression from the interview, one can also mention some of the points from the interview that is relevant for the position. It is not necessary with quotes from the referee.
* Write a short statement from the reference interview, two – three sentences is enough, unless some of the information from the interview is essential for the evaluation.
* If two reference interviews have been carried out and they differ substantially, we recommend that a third reference be contacted.

#### Conclusion of evaluation of candidates

All the evaluations of the candidates should end with stating the basis for the overall assessment of the education and the formal competence, impressions from the interview and the reference interviews. It should also state if you have found the candidate qualified for the position or not (in relation to the announcement text and the statement above) and whether the candidate will be ranked or not. Be specific and succinct in your argument.

If there are more than one qualified applicant for the position, they must be ranked in the order in which they should be considered. Normally, a minimum of three applicants should be ranked. If the committee chooses to rank less than three candidates, this must be justified separately.

If a score sheet is attached to the evaluation, it must be easy to follow and it must show a complete evaluation, summarised and simplified. And the scoring must be explained.

The conclusion must not come as a surprise; it should be a natural conclusion based on the description of the candidate.

## **Comparative assessment and justification of ranking of nominated candidates**

The best qualified applicant after a complete assessment of qualification criteria, is the candidate that should be ranked no.1. In cases with clear/distinct differences in terms of the level of competency and personal suitability, it should be easy to compare, contrast, and state the reasoning for the ranking.

When there are several candidates with comparable qualification, it might be more of a challenge to clearly state the reasoning behind the ranking.

* Try to state the nuances in the evaluation, what are the distinctions between the candidates (i.e. does one of the candidates have more relevant work experience, higher education etc.)
* The description and the comparison of qualifications must relate to the description of the candidate (no new information on the candidate must be given )
* The arguments that is of a great significance for the ranking must be related to the qualification requirements

## Ranking

Normally, a minimum of three applicants should be ranked. If the committee chooses to rank less than three candidates, this must be justified separately.

## Signature

It is only the section leader with human resources responsibility that signs the report (or if approved by email, it must be attached). The other members of the committee shall not sign the report.

## Further process

Head of Administration sends the evaluation report to the Appointment Committee at the department.