The limits of the concept of excellence in hiring
Interventions at different stages of the process

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Excellence in hiring processes – FESTA

Work package *Monitoring Excellence in Hiring Processes*

- **Time frame:** Feb 2012 – Jan 2015
- **Participating FESTA partners:**
  - RWTH Aachen University (task leader)
  - South-West University
  - University of Limerick
  - Bruno Kessler Foundation
  - Istanbul University of Technology
- **Purpose:**
  Make visible the perceptions of excellence lying behind (in)formal criteria of excellence in hiring and to make transparent the biases inherent in the appointment process
Excellence criteria
Definition of Excellence – quantifiable criteria?

Criteria extracted from: Brouns and van den Brink, 2006; Husu and Koskinen, 2010
Definition of Excellence – non-quantifiable criteria?

- Fitting of the Person
- Acknowledgement in the Scientific Community
- Soft Skills
- Management Skills
- Economic cooperation
- Leadership Skills
- International cooperation
- Research funding
- Scientific Publishing
- Conferences
- Patents
- Prizes

Acknowledgement in the Scientific Community

Fitting of the Person

Management Skills

Economic cooperation

Leadership Skills

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Scientific Publishing

Conferences

Patents

Prizes
Guideline to gender-sensitive recruitment
Appointment Process at RWTH Aachen University

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RWTH Aachen University, Germany

The flowchart gives a general overview of the appointment process at RWTH Aachen University and is typically used to explain the process to new faculty members. The process follows different stages and includes the appointment of the new principal by the university administration. The document also includes the general procedure used in appointment processes in Germany, depending on the specific regulations of the university and the state. The process includes the appointment of the new principal by the university administration.

Overview

01. The faculty council initiates the search or approval process by filing an application. The minister decides on it, based on long-term and current strategic parameters.

02. The appointment committee is established, consisting of professionals, research assistants, and students. The professor at the department, the chairperson, the current members, and the students (if any) are involved as part of the committee.

03. The vacancies are published. Qualified candidates are contacted directly and invited to apply.

04. The appointment committee forwards the selection criteria.

05. The appointment committee pre-selects the candidates.

06. The selected candidates are invited to a oral discussion with the committee.

07. Three candidates are selected by the appointment committee.

08. Internal or external expert reviewers are invited by the committee to do a comparative assessment and suggest a ranking.

09. The appointment committee compiles the ranking and report, including the role of the equal opportunities officer, needs approval by the faculty council and senate, and is checked by the HR department.

10. The candidate ranked first on the list is invited to an appointment with the chancellor (head of administration), a representative of the HR department, and the dean of the faculty.

11. Acceptance or rejection of the appointment offer by the candidate.
Appointment Process at RWTH Aachen University

01
The faculty council initiates the renewal or approval process by filing an application. The rectorate decides on it, based on long-term and current strategic parameters.

02
The appointment committee is established. It consists of professors, research assistants and students. The professors outnumber the other members. The equal opportunities officer has to be involved at an early stage and is part of the committee.

03
The job advertisement is published. Qualified candidates are contacted directly and invited to apply.

04
The appointment committee formulate the selection criteria.
Possible biases during an appointment process

03 Advertisement and recruitment

The advertisement is only spread in a small part of the scientific community.

To post the advertisement in relevant newspapers, journals, mailing lists or newsletters of expert societies or special networks of female scientists etc. ensures a greater publicity.

Female scientists are less often contacted directly and encouraged to apply.

Active recruitment can take place to identify possible female applicants by using public databases like “femconsult” in Germany. Further possibilities would be to ask scientists from different institutions or from expert societies. Explicitly encourage women to apply. An internal recruiter or external agencies could be asked for support at some universities. Guidelines could ensure systematic active recruitment.

The university’s commitment to recruit female scientists should be pointed out in the advertisement.

The active recruitment of scientists can be biased by a person’s fit in the scientific community. This means that mutual recognition in networks and shared rules and behaviors (illusio) can influence the criteria used to identify who should be recruited actively.

The committee should try to identify more scientists who meet the criteria but have less well established networks. If other scientists or expert societies are asked to identify possible candidates, the committee should explicitly ask them to identify not only the especially well known scientists.
Common Recommendations

• Is there a systematic focus on the recruiting of female scientists? Is there a defined recruitment process that specifies how females can be identified and contacted? Are they encouraged to apply?

• The job profile can narrow the number of potential candidates. Does the job profile encourage applications from a sufficiently large number of both female and male researchers?

• Persons with strong positional and/or symbolic power can easily influence the decision making process. Is there a strategy to ensure a meeting culture that allows open discussions and involvement of every participant?

• Are the criteria explicit, transparent and weighted in a standard way? Are they fixed for the entire process?
Thank you very much for your attention!

http://www.igad.rwth-aachen.de/festa