

Recruitment and selection manual for selection committees and supervisors

*Handleiding werving en selectie voor
selectiecommissies en leidinggevenden*

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Introduction

VU University Amsterdam aims for high standards in teaching, research and support. People are our most valuable asset in achieving this aim. They are the measure of the quality of work and therefore of VU University Amsterdam's performance. It is consequently of great strategic importance to recruit and select talented employees who possess the competencies that the organization needs. Diligent and effective recruitment and selection are therefore invaluable.

This 'Recruitment and selection' manual is intended to help supervisors and selection committees approach the recruitment and selection of new staff with transparency and skill. This manual presents recruitment and selection guidelines, which it augments with numerous tips for improving the recruitment and selection procedure. This manual complies with the UFO job profiles and the accompanying competency instrument, both of which are available on VUNet > UFO.

The manual is in accordance with agreements documented in the 2006 Collective labour agreement (CAO) that require employers to aim for a higher proportion of female and ethnic minority academics.

There is a separate procedure for the recruitment and selection of professors, which is therefore outside the scope of this manual. The procedure for professors is available on VUNet > Recruitment and selection of professors.

This manual refers to placing advertisements and writing letters. However, new technology has opened the way to other means of recruitment, such as through a website or job bank, or communicating with applicants by e-mail. These alternatives make no substantial difference to the recruitment and selection process, and are therefore not mentioned explicitly below.

The recruitment and selection procedure presented in this manual complies with the 2006 NVP recruitment code.

The format of the manual was inspired by the 2004 'Recruitment and Selection' specimen protocol of Radboud University Nijmegen.

The manual follows the various phases of the recruitment and selection process in sequence, but it is also possible to consult the text on individual phases directly.

Support from HRM

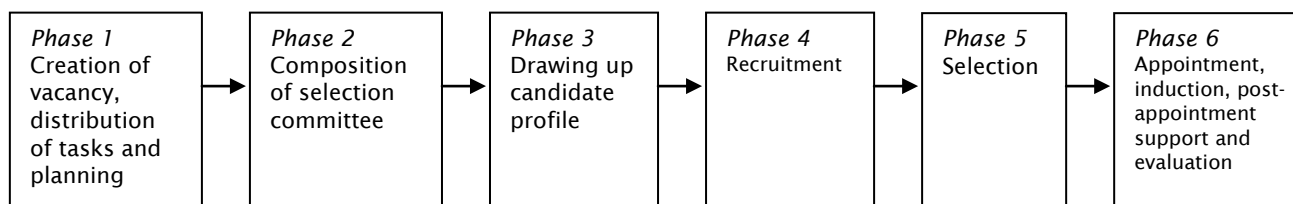
The personnel consultant can be engaged for various activities in the recruitment and selection procedure. The three scenarios set out below illustrate the support available from the personnel consultant in the recruitment and selection process. Faculties and services can use their discretion as to which scenario is appropriate in a given situation.

1. A personnel consultant advises the selection committee in drawing up the candidate profile, preparing the job interviews and discussing the terms and conditions of employment.
2. A personnel consultant is *also* a member of, or adviser to, the selection committee, and attends committee meetings. Personnel consultants' duties are not primarily to assess candidates' professional qualities, but rather to monitor the process and ascertain whether candidates have the required competencies (e.g. for team working or leadership skills that unite rather than divide).
3. Personnel consultants *also* have an important role outside selection committee meetings, such as in candidate preselection and the provision of job-related information. Personnel consultants act as recruitment and selection consultants, and assistants to selection committees and their chairpersons.

If you are in any doubt, you can ask your own personnel consultant which scenario is most common in your faculty or service.

The recruitment and selection process

The chart below serves as a guideline for the phases of the recruitment and selection process .



Phase 1 - Creation of vacancy, distribution of tasks and planning

- A supervisor deliberates about the distribution of tasks and structure within the department concerned, and whether or how the new vacancy can or should be filled.
- Open recruitment is the rule within VU University Amsterdam. However, the supervisor responsible for the vacancy, after informing his or her superior, may decide that a vacancy within their own faculty or service can be filled by an existing employee. This course of action is allowed only if all of the following three conditions are met.
 1. No re-employment candidates anywhere in VU University Amsterdam are eligible for the vacancy. The personnel consultant of the department, service or faculty concerned will ascertain candidate suitability by consulting the Career Centre or in the vacancy meeting (see also Phase 4).
 2. The vacancy demands specialized knowledge or experience that is known to be unavailable elsewhere within VU University Amsterdam.
 3. The job and the candidate profile have been announced throughout the faculty or service concerned, and orally in the departmental progress meetings. This step makes clear how the recruitment is to be conducted and the vacancy filled, and about how applications can be made.
- In the case of open recruitment, the supervisor ensures that there is a realistic recruitment and selection process plan, in order to avoid unnecessary delays.
- He or she involves the personnel consultant at an early stage in the recruitment and selection process. HRM support may differ from one faculty or service to another, as can the kind of staff allocated to certain roles and the way in which some activities are executed.

The same rules apply in filling vacancies with a minor scope in relation to the usual job scope in the faculty or service concerned, and for temporary vacancies. However, it will be more common in practice for vacancies of this kind to be filled internally by the local service or faculty, by increasing the FTE factor. Experience in the job (condition 2) and familiarity with the faculty or service concerned will tend to mean that the individual will be employable sooner, and therefore more productive in the short term.

Phase 2 - Selection committee composition¹

The supervisor assembles a selection committee that is mixed in terms of seniority, and if possible of ethnic origin, including at least one woman if at all possible of the same post level as the vacancy (but possibly from a different department), and appoints a chairperson and secretary. Where committees have more than three members, the aim should be to have equal numbers of men and women. The approval of the Faculty Board or Director of Service may be required for the composition of the selection committee for some positions, and the situation differs according to the faculty or service concerned. The selection committee comprises at least the immediate supervisor and an employee from the department concerned, possibly together with an employee or head of an affiliated department and, depending on the amount of support needed, the personnel consultant.

Phase 3 - Candidate profile

The selection committee consults with the personnel consultant and draws up the candidate profile. The candidate profile ideally comprises the following four components:

- information about the department: the departmental objectives and any expected internal and external changes that may affect the new employee in the near future, the organizational and consultation structure, and the departmental composition and culture;
- the objective, duties and the results to be achieved in the job in UFO profile terms;
- the required educational level and knowledge, experience and competencies for successful job performance;
- the appointment and salary scale: the candidate's salary and fringe benefits and opportunities for development.

It is advisable to seek opinions about, and possible amendments to, the candidate profile in the progress meeting of the department concerned. The candidate profile for a managerial position at the most senior level of the unit (faculty, service, or library) must be submitted for opinion to the subcommittee of the unit concerned.

Tips for drawing up a candidate profile:

- ✓ avoid a bias in the candidate profile towards purely academic or professional criteria; also operationalize the requirements for soft criteria, such as teaching, teamwork and supervising;
- ✓ analyse any impending changes that will affect the department, and make the profile 'future proof';
- ✓ beware of the pitfall of looking for 'more of the same', ensuring instead that all competencies relevant to the department are present;
- ✓ prioritize which qualifications are 'musts' and which are 'nice to have'; do not go in search the proverbial Jack of all trades;

¹ The supervisor responsible for the vacancy has the ultimate authority for candidate selection. Recruitment and selection procedures therefore sometimes refer to an advisory appointment committee rather than a selection committee.

- ✓ avoid irrelevant requirements with a discriminatory effect; these would infringe the Equal Treatment Act (AWGB);
- ✓ include information in the profile about the job's social relevance, alliances, departmental ambitions, and opportunities for development;
- ✓ allow part-time performance of the job wherever possible.

Competencies

Competencies are skills and conduct that jointly determine success in performing the job. VUnet > UFO gives appropriate behavioural competencies for each UFO profile. The definition, behavioural criteria, development tips and test questions are given for each competency.

Tips for using competencies:

- ✓ examine the entire list of competencies and determine which additional competencies are needed for performing the job concerned satisfactorily; add these to the competency and candidate profiles;
- ✓ to help identify important competencies, compare the behaviour of a successful and a less successful colleague, or consider the appropriate kind of behaviour in various situations that are relevant to the job;
- ✓ consider which competencies exist within the department, and which might be missing;
- ✓ also include competencies, such as business development skills, that are important for keeping up with academic developments;
- ✓ use the test questions to formulate specific questions for potential candidates about the job concerned;
- ✓ establish in advance which behavioural criteria and test questions are relevant; different jobs, post levels and contexts may demand a different choice of criteria and questions;
- ✓ supplement the test questions with examples of your own.

Phase 4: Recruitment

Steps in the recruitment process.

1. The selection committee drafts an advertisement text based on the candidate profile. Standard elements in the advertisement text are:
 - the VU University Amsterdam mission;
 - information about the role of the faculty or service concerned;
 - the job title;
 - the FTE factor (plus if appropriate the minimum part-time proportion);
 - the objective, duties and results to be achieved in the job concerned;
 - job requirements: educational level, required knowledge, experience and competencies to perform the job satisfactorily;
 - any relevant particulars of the job;
 - the appointment and salary scale: salary and fringe benefits;
 - additional information will be provided by ...;
 - if known: selection interviews will take place between ... and ...;
 - address your application to

Additional information is requested for academic staff positions besides an application letter and CV, such as published articles, research proposals and course evaluations. Additional information that may be requested for administrative and support staff positions includes a policy memorandum.

The supervisor consults the personnel consultant to determine whether there are any specific reasons for recruiting female or ethnic minority candidates. If so, this is stated in the advertisement text. The advertisement text also mentions whether a psychological test or assessment is to be part of the selection procedure. It is always advisable to arrange an assessment for managerial positions.

2. The supervisor makes proposals for advertising media based on the candidate profile and any specific target group. If advertisements are also to be placed in external media, the supervisor consults with the personnel consultant and provides a core of up to three thought-provoking sentences.
3. The advertisement text is submitted for the opinion of the personnel consultant. The personnel consultant then submits the advertisement text and candidate profile for approval to the director of the unit.
4. The personnel consultant submits the advertisement text to Human Resource Management (HRM). Advertisement texts are discussed with the personnel consultants of the other faculties and services in the vacancy meeting, where one of the agenda items is whether there are any re-employment candidates. If so, the vacancy is blocked while their suitability is assessed.
5. HRM arranges for placement of the advertisement in accordance with the house style. For the first two weeks advertisements are open for internal candidates (i.e. VU University Amsterdam employees) only. Vacancies for which it is assumed that the availability of suitable internal candidates is extremely unlikely (mainly academic staff functions), are announced in external media and on internal notice boards simultaneously. HRM makes a financial contribution to each externally placed initial advertisement of vacancies that are funded directly from the government or from government agencies. Activities related to contract research are charged to the faculty or service concerned.

It should be noted when choosing media that placement in a monthly journal can take four or five weeks, depending on the deadline.
6. All information received from and about applicants is to be treated confidentially.

Tips for recruiting new staff:

- ✓ Exercise transparency in recruitment efforts and wait until the candidate profile is complete;
- ✓ if appropriate, establish a recruitment plan, stating relevant networks, informants etc.;
- ✓ publicize the vacancy in multiple networks, and approach several informants to obtain the names of suitable candidates, or to bring the job to their attention;
- ✓ in addition to newspapers and professional journals, also make use of vacancies sites such as

- ✓ www.academictransfer.nl and mailing lists of subject areas, research schools, conferences etc.;
- ✓ compile an attractive information pack for potential applicants;
- ✓ the selection committee should define numerical targets for the procedure, such as at least x applications from women or members of ethnic minorities, and take action accordingly;
- ✓ consider engaging a specialized recruitment agency to headhunt women or ethnic minorities;
- ✓ it can happen that candidates who were classified as 'suitable' in the recruitment phase decide not to apply for the job, but may then be persuaded to reconsider if presented with the prospect of flexible working hours, a part-time appointment, or a tailored training period.

Phase 5: Selection

Steps in the selection process.

1. The selection committee sets various selection criteria based on the candidate profile. The criteria serve as a guideline for reading the application letters, and can help shape the interviews.
2. The selection committee decides on which candidates to invite for interview following the preselection, which to hold on file, and which to reject with good reason.
3. All female and ethnic minority candidates for academic posts who responded and satisfy the candidate profile are invited for interview, in connection with the aim of increasing the proportion of these two groups. However, if there are so many of them that it would be impractical to invite them all, there will be a second selection based on the quality of the letter and CV.
4. Internal applicants with permanent or temporary employment at VU University Amsterdam who satisfy the candidate profile are always the first to be invited for interview. When filling vacancies, suitable re-employment candidates will be given preference over permanent staff, who, if suitable, will be given preference over temporary staff. External candidates are invited for interview after interviewing internal candidates but concluding that none is able to fill the vacancy.
5. The selection committee ensures that all candidates are informed in writing of the selection committee's decision (see Appendix 2 for the standard letters). The invitation letter for a first interview states who will interview the candidate (names and positions of the selection committee members). Internal applicants removed from the selection after interview are notified of rejection, with reasons, orally and in writing. All rejected applicants in both the first and second selection rounds are also given an opportunity to contact the selection committee or the contact identified in the advertisement to ask any questions about the procedure or the reasons for their personal rejection. The personnel consultant supports the selection committee (if desired) in preparing and conducting the interviews.
6. Permission from the applicants must be obtained before soliciting information about them from third parties. Any information solicited must have a direct connection with the vacancy to be filled.
7. A second selection round may be held if necessary after the first interview round and the assessment of any other information.
8. Any applicants held on file are informed in writing of the outcome of the selection. Candidates rejected after the interview are duly informed together with the reasons. It is advisable to eliminate the second-choice candidate only after agreement has been reached with the selected candidate.

The preselection

A 'pros and cons' chart (see Appendix 3) can be drawn up with reference to the established selection criteria, and completed while reading the letters. It is also recommended to write down any questions that arise while reading the application letters so that the questioned are not forgotten during the interviews.

The relative importance of various selection criteria depends on the position under consideration. Agreements should be made accordingly to guide the preselection based on application letters. The numbers of pros and cons allocated to the letters determines the action to be taken (invite for interview, hold in reserve, or reject). An alternative to using a + or - notation is to give marks out of ten for each criterion and to calculate the average.

Preparing for and conducting interviews

The art in interviewing is systematically to gather information about candidates that will help predict their future value.

Tips for preparing interviews:

- ✓ create a matrix that resembles the 'pros and cons' chart on which to make brief notes about a candidate during the interview for each result area, classification criterion and behavioural criterion;
- ✓ agree on the important items of information to be obtained for each candidate, and which committee member is to ask the related questions. Think about the questions you could ask to obtain the information, and how you might be able to go about asking more probing and persistent questions;
- ✓ have candidates do more than just speak, and in the second selection round have them, for example, present their view of the future of a department or discipline, give a guest lecture, conduct a 'bad news' interview, or type or draft a piece of text;
- ✓ agree on an overall schedule for the interview, ensuring that the main points are given priority and that enough time is allowed for candidates' questions;
- ✓ book a room where the committee will not be disturbed, ensuring a setting that is conducive to a productive interview (i.e. not a long table with the selection committee seated along one side and the candidate on the other) and a space where the applicant can wait.

Tips for conducting interviews:

- ✓ avoid having the selection committee continue speaking for too long, since the important thing is to obtain information about the applicant;
- ✓ a possible interview structure is as follows:
 1. introduction (put candidate at ease, introduce committee members and explain agenda);
 2. the job content and duties;
 3. the candidate's reason for applying, and expectations;
 4. work and educational history and relevant considerations;
 5. use the STAR method (see below) to assess whether the candidate has the necessary competencies;
 6. VU University Amsterdam's objective;
 7. VU university Amsterdam's status as one of the special universities in the Netherlands, for those positions in which the status is directly relevant to the performance of the work or the formulation of policy, or where the status has to be communicated externally;
 8. terms and conditions of employment (make no promises, but do confirm that the candidate looks favourably on the salary level mentioned in the advertisement);
 9. the VU University Amsterdam smoking policy;
 10. the subsequent procedure;
 11. ask whether the applicant has any questions.
- ✓ ask open questions;
- ✓ use the STAR method. This is a behaviourally oriented method that examines past conduct in order to predict future behaviour.
 - **Situation:** what was the situation you found yourself in?
 - **Task:** what did you want to achieve?
 - **Action:** what exactly did you do or say?
 - **Result:** what impact did your action have?

The competency-instrument has examples of questions for each competency. For example, for the competency 'managing on results':

'Have you ever had a plan that had to be adjusted because of unforeseen circumstances? How did you respond?'
'Have you ever had a subordinate whose performance you thought was unsatisfactory? What did you do about the situation, and/or which corrective actions did you take?'

Have the candidate describe the situation clearly: what duties and objectives were involved? What did the candidate do or omit, in detail? What obstacles did he or she encounter, and how were they handled? Did the candidate's actions achieve a result? If so, what were they? If no results were achieved, what did the candidate think were the reasons? Could he or she have taken any corrective action? What could he or she have done themselves, or what could someone else have done? How responsible does he or she feel for achieving the result?

- ✓ ask persistent questions if candidates give the politically or socially 'correct', or a vague, answer. Do not try to prevent the occasional period of silence;
- ✓ also inquire into less successful experiences;
- ✓ observe candidates' behaviour in the interviews. Does the candidate control or follow the interview? How does he or she respond to stress? How does he or she deal with confusing questions?
- ✓ verify impressions and intuition to give candidates a fair chance, and suppress early judgments. *Example:* if a candidate lounges nonchalantly through the interview and you suspect that they are not really interested in the job, you can verify the impression by confronting the candidate with it, and asking for a response;
- ✓ the committee discusses with final candidates for a managerial position the repercussions for faculties and services of the VU University Amsterdam's status as one of the special universities in the Netherlands;
- ✓ allow approximately three quarters or one hour for an interview. Make about a quarter of an hour available for committee discussion immediately after the interview, which will also help avoid having applicants bump into each other.

Tips for the post-interview discussion and assessment of candidates:

- ✓ committee members can influence each other easily, so give every committee member in turn an opportunity to present his or her observations and comments without discussion;
- ✓ then identify any similarities and differences in the assessment of candidates with reference to the ('pros and cons') matrix, and discuss them;
- ✓ make a note of the points to be covered in a second or third selection round (possibly in the form of an assignment or case) or that should be checked with references (always ask the candidate's permission before approaching references).

Phase 6: Appointment, training, post-appointment support and evaluation

- The selection committee reports on its work and nominates one or more candidates, giving a detailed account of its choice.
- If more than one candidate is nominated, indicate a priority in the nomination, if possible.
- The supervisor who is responsible for the vacancy decides on the basis of the selection committee report.
- The supervisor must inform the selection committee of the reasons for any decision that deviates from the committee's recommendation.
- The personnel consultant (possibly together with the director of the unit or the head of department) conducts the conditions of employment interview. With the agreement of the Dean, Operations Director or head of department, the personnel consultant arranges for documentation in an employment contract of any oral and other agreements reached with the candidate. If the new employee has an occupational disability, the personnel consultant deals with the subsidy application through HRM.
- The personnel consultant and the chairperson of the selection committee evaluate the progress of the process

and any possible improvements.

- The personnel consultant can refer to the evaluation in reporting annually on the quality of the recruitment and selection process.
- The supervisor ensures that new employees are invited for the induction day.
- The immediate supervisor is responsible for monitoring agreements about induction, training etc., and for satisfactory working conditions (with any necessary workplace adaptations).

Tips for the post-appointment support of new staff:

- ✓ refer to the candidate profile and draw up a specific development and training plan; new employees benefit from an effective introduction and training plan;
- ✓ provide an opportunity for mentoring or coaching, and ask the personnel consultant about the associated facilities;
- ✓ inform female employees about the women's networks at VU University Amsterdam or in their faculty;
- ✓ Arrange a meeting to discuss progress at end of the trial period, and then plan an annual consultation and assessment interview.

If you should have any questions about this manual, please contact your personnel consultant.

Appendix 1 - Planning the recruitment and selection process

Phase	Activity	Who	Instruments to be used	Expected timescale
Phase 1	Deliberate about the distribution of tasks etc.; plan	Supervisor	This overview	Week 1
Phase 2	Assemble selection committee	Supervisor		Week 1
Phase 3	Draft candidate profile	Selection committee and personnel consultant	UFO and competency profile	Week 2
Phase 4	Draft advertisement text and send to personnel consultant	Selection committee		Week 3
	Discuss aspects of the advertisement text that relate to re-employment candidates	Personnel consultant		Week 4
	Place on notice boards and website	HRM		Week 4
	Interview any internal candidates	Selection committee		Week 4 / 6
	Place in external media			Week 4 / 7 ²
	Approach potential candidates through network (occupational groups)			Week 4 / 7
	Deadline			Week 6/9
Phase 5	Preselection based on selection criteria determined earlier	Selection committee	'Pros and cons' chart, see Appendix 3 Tips on page 7	Week 9
	Interviews			Weeks 9 – 12
	Possible second interview round / obtain references			Week 13
	Any assessment			Week 14
	Nominate candidates / proposed appointment			Week 15
Phase 6	Conditions of employment interview	Personnel consultant in consultation with supervisor		Week 16
	Evaluation	Selection committee		Week 16
	Monitor agreements	Supervisor		From date of commencement of employment ³

² The date of placement in external media depends on several factors, e.g. expected response of internal candidates and nature of the vacancy, see Phase 4 recruitment point 5. As a rule internal candidates are interviewed first if they meet the job profile, followed by placement in external media.

³ Remember that most applicants will have a notice period of 1 or 2 months, and that requesting residence and work permits for international staff can take at least 2 or 3 months. HRM must follow the 'first-day registration' procedure on the day before the employee starts work.

Appendix 2 – Standard letters

Specimen confirmation of receipt of application letter

<p>Dear, *</p> <p>This letter is to confirm the receipt of your application letter. You will be informed as soon as possible of whether you will be invited for interview.</p> <p>For your information, the selection procedure is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· under normal circumstances a limited number of candidates will be invited for interview;· the invitation will state who is to attend the interview;· applicants who are not invited for interview will receive a final rejection or a notification that their application is being held on file for further consideration. <p>Should you have any questions or wish to provide additional information, please contact the selection committee or the contact identified in the advertisement directly.</p> <p>Yours sincerely, on behalf of the selection committee,</p>

Specimen general rejection letter

<p>Dear, *</p> <p>In response to your application for the position of * in the Faculty of...../..... service*, we regret to inform you that we were unable to find sufficient evidence in your letter and curriculum vitae of the credentials we are seeking. We have decided not to retain you in the selection procedure.</p> <p>Our main aim in the preselection process has been to identify candidates who meet the criteria stated in the advertisement (i.e.). *</p> <p>We hereby return your application letter. We would like to thank you for taking the time and trouble to apply, and for the confidence you have shown in the university/faculty/service*.</p> <p>Should you have any questions, please contact the selection committee or the contact identified in the advertisement directly.</p> <p>Yours sincerely, on behalf of the selection committee,</p>
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Specimen holding letter

<p>Dear, *</p> <p>In response to your application for the position of * in the Faculty of...../..... service*, we wish to inform you that we will not be inviting you for interview at this stage.</p> <p>However, we would like to keep your letter in our files, and we may invite you for interview at a later stage of the procedure.</p> <p>We will inform you of the further course of events as soon as possible.</p> <p>Yours sincerely, on behalf of the selection committee,</p>
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* enter missing information and/or delete as appropriate.

Appendix 3 – ‘Pros and cons’ chart for preselection

Letter number	Educational level	Experience level	Key result areas	Classification criteria	Competencies (derived from the key result areas and classification criteria, see competency instrument)			Action	Remarks
					Teamwork	Listening	Initiative		
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									