

Checklist recruitment and selection of female professors

*Checklist werven en selecteren
van vrouwelijke hoogleraren*

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Information

Checklist Recruitment of female professors

1. Take due care when selecting the members of the Appointment Advisory Committee (AAC)

- See to it that the AAC includes at least two female members.
- Assign responsibility to one member for ensuring that recruitment and selection are gender-neutral.
- Express your ambitions in this regard by setting a level for the minimum number of female applicants.

2. Draw up a plan for broad-based, active recruitment

- Identify relevant networks (both domestic and international) and see which informants (both female and male) might be approached for this purpose. Name the two most successful women in the field, as a mental exercise.
- Use existing women's networks to identify potential female candidates, through www.lnvh.nl
- When consulting other faculties, specifically request the names of potential female candidates.
- Consider using recruitment agencies that routinely handle the recruitment of women to senior academic positions, through www.talentnaardetop.nl

3. Opt for open recruitment

- Those involved in scouting for and selecting professors tend to recruit replicas of themselves. Avoid the 'like attracts like' trap by using open application procedures.
- Choose the right media with the appropriate width to reach all potential candidates (ask HRM for advice if necessary).

4. Personal invitation

- Personally invite applications from suitable female candidates. Underestimating their own suitability can play a part in a potential candidate's decision not to apply.

5. Recruit using an effective job profile and an appealing advertisement

- Avoid making the list of job requirements too exhaustive and specific; preferably state no more than four.
- Make sure the language you use is gender-neutral (address the reader directly - 'you') and make sure the same applies to visual material (e.g. feature a woman in the photograph).
- Describe the job in terms of competencies and duties: what behaviour is expected of the candidate?
- Mention the university's/faculty's policy on diversity, which includes supporting women in the professionalization process (mentors, training, women's network).

Checklist Selection of female professors

6. During the interview

- Use the candidate profile as a guideline and ask all candidates similar questions.
- Assign responsibility to one member for ensuring that recruitment and selection are gender-neutral.
- When considering research production, take into account a career break for pregnancy or caring.
- Ask about past actions during the selection interview: this offers a better indication for predicting success in the job than presenting the candidate with a case study.
- As a committee, look at any patterns among the rejected candidates (category/discipline, male vs. female).

7. Unintentional exclusion mechanisms

Research has revealed a number of interesting points about gender and recruitment/selection.

- If a woman is the only female applicant, she is primarily seen as representing her gender and is therefore viewed as belonging to a separate category from the male applicants.
- Women still have to perform better, show greater commitment and have a better CV than men.
- Despite stereotypical prejudices there are no differences in the level of ambition shown by men and women; do not automatically discount talented academics who work part-time.
- When presented with a candidate who resembles successful predecessors (especially male) and/or members of the selection committee, a committee will tend to take the path of least resistance ('replica recruitment').

8. In short

- Be aware of unintentional exclusion mechanisms and make a conscious effort to ensure gender-neutrality. It makes a difference when committee members are aware that people are generally more likely to doubt the capacities of a woman than the capacities of a man.

Information

www.workingatvu.nl > Charter Talent to the Top

Scouting Guideline VU

For the recruitment and selection of women in senior academic positions

Scoutingsrichtlijn VU

Voor het werven en selecteren van vrouwen in wetenschappelijke topposities

Introduction

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3. **Careful and structured selection**

For 2015, VU University Amsterdam has set itself a target of twenty per cent female professors. It is very important to achieve this target, in order to ultimately reach a critical mass necessary to steadily improve the success rate in recruiting women.¹ It is important to be aware of the subtle mechanisms that exclude women from career opportunities. This awareness and clear recruitment and selection procedures are expected to exert a positive influence on the appointment of more women at senior level. Although VU University Amsterdam prescribes open recruitment in its policy on professorial appointments, the preference for a male candidate for such posts is often a foregone conclusion. Talent scouting within the academic world is primarily carried out by men in male-dominated networks.

Research also shows a greater tendency to doubt the commitment, loyalty and leadership qualities of female academics.² VU University Amsterdam wants to help selection committees scout women for top research positions. These scouting guidelines aim to provide recommendations for:

1. creating awareness of mechanisms that exclude women, so that informed choices can be made;
2. engaging in recruitment that is both targeted and broad-based, to give women an equal chance;
3. using a selection procedure that does not exclude women.

1. **Being aware of exclusion mechanisms**

- *Women need to do more to prove themselves*

Kanter's research shows that solitary females ('tokens') are much more visible and are primarily viewed as representing their gender, i.e. as a woman first and foremost. This means they have to achieve more to prove themselves and get ahead. They have to fight hard to refute stereotypical prejudices and expectations about women and careers. Applying this to academic practice, in order to be considered excellent academics and researchers, women have to perform better, show greater commitment and have a better CV³ than their male counterparts. The mechanism that requires women to overachieve in order to prove their worth without requiring the same from men is still very much alive and well.

- *Scouts for professors engage in replica recruitment⁴*

That is to say: like attracts like. Recruitment and selection is all about predicting whether someone is going to perform successfully in the future. As soon as someone resembles successful predecessors and/or individuals from the selection committee, the committee tends to take the path of least resistance. This leads to a tendency among men to appoint other men. The same also occurs vice versa.

- *Watch out for gender stereotyping*

It makes a difference when committee members realize that people are more likely to doubt the capacities of a woman than the capacities of a man.⁵

¹ Kanter makes it clear that existing patterns can only be broken when a critical mass of female professors is reached. She identifies the turning point as approximately thirty to forty per cent.

² M. van de Brink. Behind the scenes of science. Gender practices in the recruitment and selection of professors in the Netherlands, 2009.

³ Kanter, R. M. 1977. Men and women of the corporation. New York: Basic Books.

⁴ M. van den Brink, *Hoogleraarbenoemingen in Nederland* [Professorial appointments in the Netherlands], 2011.

⁵ M. van den Brink, 2011.

2. Recruitment

2.1 Personal invitation

Candidates identified as suitable during the recruitment phase do not always decide to apply for the job. The head of the selection committee can approach these candidates personally to ask why they did not apply, or to explicitly invite them to apply. Sometimes lack of self-confidence is a contributing factor, even though the person in question possesses the qualities necessary to fulfil the job description. Personal circumstances (travel time, caring) may also play a part, with candidates presuming that it would be pointless to negotiate on such matters. Asking the candidate about such issues opens the door to negotiation.

2.2 Broad-based and targeted recruitment via networks

- Draw up a plan for broad-based and active recruitment. Identify relevant networks (both domestic and international) and identify the committee members who have access to these networks. If committee members do not have access to all relevant networks, see which informants (especially female informants) outside the committee might be approached for this purpose.
- Enlist informants (especially female informants) from one's own faculty/cluster or beyond to identify or to bring the vacancy to the attention of suitable female candidates.
- Use open recruitment methods as standard, for example through advertising in newspapers and on Academic Transfer.
- Make specific use of women's networks to identify potential female candidates. For example:
 - the Dutch Network of Women Professors: www.lnvh.nl
 - GAIA Dutch Network for Women in the Earth Sciences: www.gايا-netwerk.nl
 - NIMF Dutch Network for Women Computer Scientists, Mathematicians and Physicists: www.stichtingnimf.nl
 - AWIS Association for Women in Science: www.awis.org
- Ask associated faculties to identify candidates and specifically request the names of potential female candidates.

2.3 Recruit through special agencies focused on women

If necessary, consider using recruitment agencies that routinely handle the recruitment of women to senior academic positions. Details of these agencies can be found on the Talent to the Top Charter website: www.talentnaardetop.nl/Home_NL/HR_Tools/Executive_Search

2.4 An effective job profile and appealing advertisement

The following recommendations regarding job profile and advertising copy increase the likelihood that women will respond to the advertisement. Avoid an exhaustive list of job requirements (the perfect candidate does not exist); instead, select the most important aspects of the job.

- Describe these aspects as competencies and duties: what behaviour is expected of the candidate and what duties need to be carried out?
- Strike a balance between technical, material, managerial and social/ people-oriented/supportive aspects of the job description.
- Clearly state the social relevance of the position and identify any partnerships arising from it.
- Give a vivid description of the atmosphere and culture.
- Mention appealing terms and conditions of employment such as part-time work, flexible hours, parental leave, and on-campus child care facilities.
- Indicate how the core values of VU University Amsterdam are reflected in the position.
- Refer to the diversity policy, which includes supporting women in the professionalization process (mentors, training, women's network).
- Ensure that you create a gender-neutral image of the job: use visual material that shows men and women. Make sure the language you use is also gender-neutral (e.g. by using plural instead of singular).

3. Careful and structured selection⁶

Although not always part of the job profile criteria, a candidate's individual assets form an important criterion for selection. These might be described as the rapport between the candidate and the committee and this represents a more subjective assessment of leadership qualities and ambition. Such qualifications are almost impossible to establish objectively and they therefore leave room for interpretation, allowing gender stereotypes to play a role.⁷

⁶ Please note: For recruitment and selection in general, other important information and regulations are available within VU University Amsterdam: guidelines for recruitment and selection committees and managers can be found on VUNet>Jobs>Recruitment.

⁷ Van den Brink, *Hoogleraarbenoemingen in Nederland* [Professorial appointments in the Netherlands], 2011.

- Set up an Appointment Advisory Committee which has at least thirty to forty per cent women members.⁸ Research has shown that the influence of a minority is only noticeable if it accounts for one third of those present.
- Make one member this advisory committee responsible for ensuring a gender-neutral recruitment and selection process.
- This advisory committee should formulate its own ambition: we will only be satisfied when we receive at least x (or y%) of letters of application from women. Do not go on to select a candidate until it is clear that there are enough available, suitable female candidates under consideration.
- Use the candidate profile as a guideline and ask all candidates similar questions.
- When considering research production, take into account a career break for pregnancy or caring.
- Ask about past actions in the selection interview: this offers a better indication for predicting success than presenting the candidate with a case study.

⁸ Kanter, 1977