

## Some suggestions for members of evaluation committees

*June 2012, Vibeke Videm*

This document is based on experience from administration of evaluations at our Department over some years. Hopefully it will ease the process for future evaluation committee administrators, as well as ensure that the evaluations are not returned to the committee due to formal shortcomings.

### **Background**

The evaluation committee for faculty positions and evaluations of qualifications for professorships usually consists of three members: one professor from our department - who is also the administrative leader, one professor from another Norwegian university, and one international professor.

When the Dean has officially appointed the committee members, they are informed and get access to the relevant papers. The applications are only available in electronic form at [www.jobbnorge.no](http://www.jobbnorge.no).

### **The evaluation report**

The evaluation work should result in a written report, using the following format:

1. A short introduction indicating which position the application is related to, with a short summary of the relevant criteria, e.g. that the candidate must hold a certain diploma, have practical experience with some sort of work or methods, have ongoing research in a specific field, have leadership experience, show high motivation, etc. These criteria are stated in the announcement or the work description for the position. It is important to keep in mind that the evaluation must relate to these criteria, and not be based only on the “generic” requirements.

If relevant, the introduction should then state how many applicants there were, and how many were males and females.

2. The next section contains the specific evaluation. For each candidate, there should be a brief report. First, formal education and relevant work experience is stated. Then, the candidate's merit as a researcher should be evaluated. His or her most central publications as handed in by the candidate should be summarized, using a few sentences on each (what is the topic and findings, what are the implications, scientific importance/merit). If several publications are in the same field, they may be summarized as a group. Then, the candidate should be evaluated with respect to the other criteria, including teaching and supervision, administrative skills, and other specified criteria.

There are separate instructions with set criteria for how to evaluate for a full professorship, even if some personal judgment by the committee is always necessary. For an associate professorship, the general criteria are not very well specified in Norway: The applicant must hold a relevant doctoral degree, and relevant teaching experience must be documented. The specific criteria given in the announcement etc. must also be fulfilled, – and again, the evaluation must correspond to the actual position.

For each candidate, the report often consists of 2-3 pages for a full professorship and somewhat less for an associate professorship, depending on the candidate's experience. The report should end in a brief summary indicating how the candidate's total standing is regarded, concluding with a sentence clearly stating whether the candidate is found competent for the position or not.

The evaluations are made known to the candidates and are usually read very carefully. Therefore the committee should take great care to use neutral language and their conclusions must be based on documentation and sound arguments; otherwise they may cause unnecessary complaints and hurt feelings.

3. In the last section of the written report, the candidates found competent should be weighed against each other, stating the reasons why. This section should end in a list of candidates ordered by qualification from highest to lowest. Even if there are more candidates qualified, the list does not have to be more than three names long. If two candidates are found equally well qualified, they may be stated on the same line/place on the list. If the committee wishes, the list may also be longer, for example if four or five candidates were found to have relatively similar qualifications whereas the remaining candidates were found clearly less qualified. If there are fewer than three qualified candidates, the list may be of only one or two persons.

The report should end in a sentence stating that the evaluation was unanimous. If the committee does not reach an unanimously conclusion, the differing opinions should be stated and explained, indicating which members supported each conclusion.

### **How to divide the work in the committee**

For the Medical Faculty, it is important that our applicants are evaluated by external experts, i.e. that we receive external evaluations to ensure that our candidates hold an international standard, and to be sure that unofficial local standards of evaluation do not develop. This is especially important for positions where there are local candidates / applicants – even if the local committee member is selected as not to have formal reasons to be disqualified (such as common publications). For this reason, the two external members should perform the evaluation of the candidates and write the report regarding each person. Only the external committee members receive monetary remuneration for their work as compensation for carrying the heaviest workload of the evaluation.

It is suggested that the local member/administrator writes the introductory part (1 on the list above) and takes the main responsibility for writing the third part (3 on the list above).

All three committee members should read all applications. The two external members usually divide the responsibility for the written evaluation of the applicants among themselves and therefore read some applications more closely than the rest. It is often helpful if the administrator suggests how to divide the applications between them, ensuring a relatively even workload and optimizing the use of the members' specific expertise. If some applicants are clearly not qualified, e.g. because they lack a required diploma, the administrator can write this report briefly (2 on the list above) instead of the external committee members.

**How to organize the work**

When the committee is appointed, it is advised that the administrator contacts the two external members by e-mail as soon as possible. In addition to thank them for being willing to act on the committee, he or she should outline how the work is done, suggest how the work should be divided among the members, and suggest a time-line for the work.

The committee usually has 3 months to finish their work. This may sound long, but always feels too short in practice. The administrator should thus very clearly state the final deadline from the first e-mail. The time needed to discuss the order of the qualified candidates is very often underestimated, likewise the time needed for everyone to print and return a signed copy of the evaluation report.

A realistic, but firm deadline must be fixed and agreed upon for when the specific evaluations of each candidate should be e-mailed to everyone in the committee. When this deadline is reached, the administrator should immediately contact the other members if all required reports have not been received. Then, he or she should take the lead in organizing the discussion, leading up to his or her writing of a draft to the summary part (3 on the list above). E-mails, phone meetings, or Skype discussions are scheduled as needed to reach the conclusion. On very rare occasions, the committee may suggest a physical meeting with everyone present. The administrator must contact the HR section at the Medical Faculty before a physical meeting is planned. Financing of a meeting, including coverage of travel costs, must be ensured before it is scheduled, as there is usually no money set aside. Thus, there must be extraordinary reason rendering a physical meeting necessary.

When agreement is reached, the administrator should e-mail the final draft to everyone for comments and adjustments before the final version is signed by all members. If time is running short, the external members should e-mail a scanned version of signed last page to the administrator in addition to returning the hard-copy by mail. The administrator may then send the evaluation with the scanned signatures to the Medical Faculty and later forward the hard-copies when they are received.

When all the work is done, the administrator should write an e-mail to the external members, thanking them for their contribution. Any questions regarding the fee etc. should be forwarded to the HR section at the Medical Faculty.