

Equitable Hiring Practices in the Faculty of Science

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Introduction

The Faculty of Science is committed to equitable hiring practices which are designed to increase equity in the hiring process and reduce barriers for scholars from equity-seeking and underrepresented groups in the Faculty of Science. In Fall 2020, we developed equitable hiring practices, which have subsequently been used to guide all academic hiring committees in the Faculty of Science's seven departments. These practices can also be used for hiring people in other positions.

Equitable hiring practices are one part of equity, diversity and inclusivity efforts in the Faculty of Science. Information about our other EDI activities is available [here](#).

It is important to increase the diversity of the academic workforce in the Faculty of Science so that it has characteristics that are similar to those in the student body and the wider population. The pool of qualified candidates is increasingly diverse, so our faculty workforce should represent this diversity. A more diverse workforce will have positive impacts on our teaching and research. For example, if students who identify as women are only taught by men, this will negatively affect the women students' ability to see themselves in a science career^{1,2}. This may lead to female students leaving science programs, usually early in their programs³. The same is true for Black and Indigenous students. Full integration of scientists from equity-seeking groups in an equitable work

¹ Blickenstaff, J.C. (2006) Women and science careers: leaky pipeline or gender filter? *Gender and Education*, 17(4), 369-386. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250500145072>

² Moss-Racusin, C.A., Pietri, E.S., van der Toom, J., Ashburn-Nardo, L. (2021) Boosting the Sustainable Representation of Women in STEM with Evidence-BASed Policy Initiatives. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2372732220980092>

³ Wall, K. (2019) Persistence and representation of women in STEM programs. *Insights on Canadian Society*. Statistics Canada. Catalogue No. 75-006-X

environment has been found to increase creativity, innovation, productivity, and positive status effects⁴.

At the beginning of the hiring process, hiring committee chairs should ensure they have a good understanding of equity-seeking and underrepresented groups within their department.

The Ad

Department chairs should consider the following guidelines when developing a new ad.

- Describe the position as broadly as possible including only the qualifications and skills necessary for the job, to encourage a broad range of scholars to apply.
- Use gender-neutral language such as 'all genders' and the pronoun 'them' instead of 'him/her'.
- Avoid prioritizing those traits and descriptions traditionally viewed as masculine: 'competitive', 'dominant', and others (see [Gaucher et al 2011](#)). Avoid superlatives such as 'exceptional'.
- Include information about the department/faculty/university's commitment to EDI.
- Ask candidates to provide an EDI statement as part of their application. This statement enables applicants to describe their plans to incorporate EDI into their teaching, research, mentorship, and service. Some applicants may choose to use this statement as an opportunity to describe the barriers that they have experienced as a member of an underrepresented group in STEM.

The Vice-Dean will provide the draft ad to the CNAS Associate Dean (EDI) for review.

The Ad will be posted on the UAlberta Careers website. Once the Ad is posted, the Department chair should advertise it as widely as possible and actively recruit potential candidates, through the following tactics.

- Ask faculty members in your department and elsewhere in the university to share the ad in their networks.
- Reach out to colleagues from underrepresented groups or who have a diverse trainee group.
- Post on boards for scholars from underrepresented groups e.g. [CCWESTT](#), [SCWIST](#), [Pride at Work Canada](#), [IPAC](#), [CBSN](#).

The Hiring Committee

The hiring committee chair should try to ensure that the hiring committee will bring diverse perspectives to the hiring process.

There is no University requirement to include students on the selection committee, however the Faculty of Science recommends that students either have a seat on the hiring committee or that the committee ensures that students have an opportunity to participate in the interview process and provide their feedback to the hiring committee.

Any conflicts of interest should be shared/discussed with the committee chair before committee

⁴ Smith-Doerr, L., Alegria, S., Sacco, T. (2017) How Diversity Matters in the US Science and Engineering Workforce: A Critical Review Considering Integration in Teams, Fields, and Organizational Contexts, *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*, 3, 139-153.

membership is finalized.

Hiring Committee Chair

The hiring committee chair is responsible for ensuring that equitable hiring practices are followed throughout the hiring process. They should have a good understanding of how to incorporate EDI into equitable hiring practices. Education resources for hiring committee chairs include:

- The Canada Research Chairs' [Unconscious Bias training module](#). This should be completed at least every two years.
- The [presentation](#) 'Improving Equity in Academic Recruitment' prepared by Dr. Evelyn Hamdon, which is available on the Office of the Vice-Provost (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) [Education and Awareness page](#). In addition to this video, a [companion document](#) is available to assist hiring committee chairs. This should be reviewed at least every two years.
- The [Government of Canada GBA+ course](#). This should be completed every three years.
- At least two of the [Harvard Implicit Bias tests](#). This should be completed every three years.

The University has also prepared an [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion module](#) which provides valuable information about EDI.

The CNAS Associate Dean (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) (Tara McGee, tmcgee@ualberta.ca) is available to provide additional guidance to hiring committee chairs upon request.

Hiring Committee Members

The hiring committee chair should ensure committee members understand how EDI should be incorporated into the hiring process. All hiring committee members should review the following education resources to increase their understanding, as soon as the committee is struck and well before applications are reviewed:

- The Canada Research Chairs' [Unconscious Bias training module](#). This should be completed at least every two years.
- The [Government of Canada GBA+ course](#). This should be completed every three years.
- At least two of the [Harvard Implicit Bias tests](#). This should be completed every three years.

Committee members should save the certificate of completion once they have finished the Canada Research Chairs' Unconscious Bias Training Module and provide this to the hiring committee chair before the first committee meeting.

During the first hiring committee meeting, the committee chair should show the ['Improving Equity in Academic Recruitment' video](#), and discuss EDI issues in the hiring process drawing from questions included in the [companion document](#).

The CNAS Associate Dean EDI can provide advice regarding this first meeting at the invitation of the hiring committee chairs.

Committee Meetings

The hiring committee chair must ensure that all meetings are conducted inclusively. Power imbalance among committee members can influence the discussion and decision-making process when some committee members control too much of the discussion and

decision-making process, whereas others control too little. For example, see the useful guidance provided by [Heath and Wensil \(2019\)](#) and [Bastian \(2019\)](#). It is important for the committee chair to ensure that all committee members are drawn into the discussion and that one or two people do not dominate the discussion and decision-making. Sample practices include limiting committee members to only two or three questions during interviews; and a total of 15 minutes of speaking time for any committee member at hiring committee meetings.

Shortlisting Criteria

Drawing from the ad, the committee should develop 8-10 clear shortlisting criteria, covering qualifications across teaching, research, mentoring and research training, and professional and community service, as appropriate for the position.

It is important that the committee carefully considers their definition of research productivity and scholarly impact. Editorial biases can occur where the decision to accept or reject a manuscript has to do with the authors (their characteristics, the country the article comes from, the academic institution producing it, prior history of work published in the journal, or the author's mother tongue) rather than the quality of the research and manuscript. Be mindful that some applicants may publish in non-peer reviewed journals and include a stronger focus on giving oral presentations and community-based forums. Applicants with non-traditional career trajectories may have fewer publications, presentations, and access to research funding. Be mindful that some applicants may have more opportunities to obtain awards than others.

In addition, the committee should include a criterion about whether the candidate is from an equity-seeking and underrepresented group in the department and faculty, and a second criterion about their plans to incorporate EDI into their teaching, research, and/or service.

Sample shortlisting criteria are included in Appendix A.

The Shortlisting Process

Committee members must be mindful of their biases during the shortlisting process. All committee members must use the same rubric to review applications, review applications independently, and then provide the results of their review to the hiring committee chair. It is important to ensure that committee members have sufficient time to review applications during regular working hours.

Applicants have different career paths and life circumstances which need to be taken into account in the shortlisting process. For example, an applicant who took time away from work or studies for family-related matters may not have as many publications, but the quality of that applicant's work may make them best qualified. Some people may have taken longer to attain senior degrees due to the difficulties of relocating and adapting to a new country and language. Some scholars complete their senior degrees later in life and can take longer to complete them due to familial, socio-economic, or other reasons. Career interruptions due to parental leave, family care, extended illnesses or community responsibilities need to be accommodated. Avoid averaging productive periods across nonproductive periods, such as those required for parental, family or medical leave.

Since 2020, many hiring committees in the Faculty of Science have incorporated brief zoom interviews with a longer list of candidates to help them to decide on the short list of candidates that they wish to invite for an in-person interview. It is good practice to provide candidates with the

questions in advance.

Once a short list has been developed, ensure that no suitable candidates have been overlooked and that the short list includes people from equity-seeking and underrepresented groups who will help to increase diversity in your department. After the shortlisting meeting, the committee chair should provide the shortlist to the Faculty of Science Vice Dean with information about the equitable hiring practices followed by the hiring committee, and whether the scholars on the short list are from equity-seeking and underrepresented groups in your department.

The Vice Dean should consult with the CNAS Associate Dean (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) about the short list.

Once the short list has been approved, the committee chair can proceed to request reference letters for candidates on the short list. When reviewing reference letters, be mindful of reference letter bias. Considerable research and evidence shows that reference letters are often biased. For example, women are often described as helpful while men, especially white men are often described as ambitious. Research has shown that assessors are more likely to use 'grindstone adjectives' (eg. hardworking, diligent, conscientious) to describe women, and to reference these candidates' personal lives, while they are more likely to use 'stand-out' adjectives (eg. outstanding, superb, excellent) to describe men, and to reference their CV, publications or patents. This can reinforce unconscious biases and negatively impact the career progression of women.

Interviews and Campus Visits

The hiring committee chair in collaboration with the department chair is responsible for ensuring that the interview and site visit process are organized appropriately. A diverse group of department members must be involved in the interview process. All faculty members in a department should be invited to participate in the interview process. Graduate and undergraduate students must have opportunities to meet with candidates and provide input into the decision-making process. Introduce the candidate to faculty with similar research interests. As part of the interview process, provide candidates with [information about services](#) available in the Faculty of Science and elsewhere at the University of Alberta. When organizing the interview and site visit process, auditory, visual, physical, and other accessibility issues must be taken into account. Design a schedule for candidates that allows for sufficient rest and nutrition breaks separate from hiring committee members.

The hiring committee chair is responsible for checking that the interview rubric contains sufficient focus on EDI. Keep the interview questions clear and concise. Sample interview questions are included in Appendix B. It is best practice to provide interview questions to candidates in advance.

Appendices

Appendix A: Sample shortlisting criteria

Sample Shortlisting Evaluation Guide. Source: McMaster University Faculty Recruitment and Selection Handbook

https://hr.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2020/07/SPS-A1-Handbook_July-9-2020.pdf

Example 1: Sample Shortlisting Evaluation Guide (Qualitative Rating)

Describe the candidate’s potential and/or demonstration of each of the selection criteria which are aligned with the job requirements/qualifications.

NO-none; LO-low; ME-medium; HI-high

Candidate name	Research productivity and scholarly impact	Research collaboration and interdisciplinarity	Acquisition of research funding	Strategic priorities alignment and enhancement	Attracting and effectively supervising grad students	Effectively teach and supervise UG students	Support and mentor a diversity of students	Contributions to curriculum development	Contribute to increasing diversity	Contributions to advancing EDI in research, teaching, service	Comments	Rank

Example 2 - MSS 2023:

Research:

- PhD degree in Statistics (or equivalent)
- Demonstrated accomplishments and outstanding promise in research in any area of Statistical Sciences
- Focus on methodology, from theoretical underpinnings through computational challenges to innovative applications.

Teaching:

- Strong commitment to graduate and undergraduate teaching
- Relevant teaching experience
- Mentoring experience and/or commitment

Service:

- Professional and community service
- Outreach activities

EDI:

- Quality of EDI statement
- Contributes to the further diversification of ideas and the University
- Account for interruptions (e.g., leaves) in research, teaching, and service

Appendix B: Sample interview questions

Chemistry (January 2022)

1. Summarize your research proposal in a two-slide / 2 min “elevator pitch”.
2. What interests you about working in our university/department/city/province?
3. With whom do you see yourself potentially collaborating in our department or on campus?
4. What are emerging hot topics in your research area that could have significant long-term impacts?
5. What excites you about your proposed research and how will you distinguish yourself from your previous supervisors? Who are the major competitors in your research proposal area?
6. What do you see as obstacles to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in your field?
7. What would an undergraduate research project look like in your lab? How would you like to support undergraduate research?
8. What actions would you take to ensure that students in your own research group are mentally well as they progress through their graduate programs?
9. Describe your philosophy for running your research group. How do you manage postdocs, graduate students, and undergraduate students?