Resources for Decanal Review

This document contains reference materials to support a decanal review.

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Overview: Principles of Equity and Fairness in the Context of a Decanal Review

Why consider equity and fairness?
- UVic’s goal of being an institution of choice depends on its ability to interact effectively in a diverse, increasingly interconnected world. A fair and equitable process both reflects such a world and considers a candidate’s abilities to promote such an environment at UVic.
- Equity and fairness are central to procedural justice: that each person is treated well, that the appropriate steps have been followed, and thus, that the outcome is what it should be.
- Fair processes and an emphasis on equity allow each candidate to feel good about the process and their experience with the university.
- Fair processes focus on facts and objective assessments and thus are more likely to identify a best candidate.

Principles of a fair and equitable process
Fair procedures include the following principles:
- Transparency: clear steps, followed diligently and recorded
- Individual responsibility: assess as individuals before group discussions
- Openness and power sharing amongst members of the committee
- Care and deliberation: take time to ask questions and review materials to ensure common understanding
- Full engagement: attend all meetings; share one’s views; work to understand other perspectives
- Impartiality: develop a collective process to address perceived or real conflicts of interest; make an honest, unbiased decision based on appropriate information
- Trust: each committee member as well as the incumbent should feel that they have been treated “honestly, openly and with consideration” (Taylor & Belliveau, 1995).

Process
The following three areas of work are the cornerstones of an equitable and fair review process.

Review of criteria
Criteria are the core of a good process. With criteria, a committee defines in advance what they are looking for. Without consideration of candidates, establishing criteria at the start allows dispassionate description of ideal candidate. In this way, they bring a committee together to understand what they are evaluating.

Steps to establishing criteria:
  a. Determine the need for revised criteria (What has changed? What is the current research context?)
  b. Ensure the criteria are meaningful and transparent (What are the core responsibilities of the role? Focus on the work, not the labels or qualifications. Watch for vague criteria which allow multiple interpretations and bias to creep in.)
  c. Remove barriers from criteria (Are they open to pathways for candidates?)
d. Consider the incumbent based on the criteria (In what ways does the incumbent meet these criteria?)

**Fair processes and bias**

We all have biases which can manifest as assumptions, filling in gaps and gut feelings. Biases are learned from social interactions, media and many other sources and thus are generally shared within a culture. They affect how we interpret facts by casting a positive halo on those whose identities match positive biases, and a negative halo on those whose identities match negative biases. These biases match the power dynamics of our society and work predictably against marginalized persons.

Steps to establishing fair processes and reducing bias:
- e. Acknowledge the presence and impacts of bias (Acknowledging and learning about bias is a key first step to reducing its impacts).
- f. Take steps to reduce bias:
  - i. Take time: to review; to set up group; to plan direction of work
  - ii. Set and use criteria at each decision point
  - iii. Learn about biases and face individual biases
  - iv. Be consistent: treat each candidate comparably

**Decision-making**

Each decision point provides the opportunity to apply principles on reducing bias, using criteria, and applying fair processes.

Steps to fair decision-making:
- g. Gather and consider information (Be aware of the context and bias of each source and consider how it connects with the criteria)
- h. Attend to entire portfolio (Don’t be swayed by any single item. Consider in totality)
- i. Listen and share (Be open to diverse information presented; be open and honest about your interpretations and perspectives)

**Being fair to an incumbent in a review**

- Ensure that context for reviewing criteria is the desired direction of the faculty and institution and what is needed of its leadership.
- Review criteria before and without considering the incumbent, and use them at each stage of the review.
- Remember that there can be advantages as well as disadvantages to being an incumbent. Unless the search committee has clearly identified a preference for one or the other in reviewing criteria, individual member’s preferences need to be put aside in discussions and decisions.
- If information comes up which is outside of that provided by the incumbent:
  - o If it is a rumour or otherwise unsubstantiated but concerning information, consult with the committee chair about its appropriateness for the committee.
  - o Other knowledge you might have can be brought up for discussion. The point of the discussion is to discern if the information is related to the evaluation criteria. If it is, then
the committee can discuss when and how to weigh it into the discussion. If it is determined that it is not, then it needs to be set aside.

Summary

- Constantly attending to and setting aside biases is vital for fair searches at all levels
- A fair process is based on criteria which reflect the needs of the institution, and reviews candidates through multiple methods on their ability to meet these criteria

Guidelines for Search Committees

Search committee work is enhanced when the committee discusses and agrees on guidelines they will adhere to for the full course of their responsibilities. Discussing what is needed to make the work go well as a group, and building commitment to these collectively, helps maintain focus and smooths further work.

Here are some samples of guidelines to consider

1. Commitment to agree together, prior to the start of our work, how we will come to decisions.
2. Commitment to rise above biases and cognitive errors in discussions.
3. Commitment to develop strong criteria before our search begins that address the most relevant aspects of this particular search, and agree on them as a group.
4. Commitment to use the criteria set for the job as the touchstone for decisions at each stage in the search process.
5. Attendance at all search committee meetings is expected. Attendance includes punctuality and avoiding multitasking and use of electronic devices.
6. Commitment to focus on evidence presented, not on opinions or hearsay.
7. Commitment to strict confidentiality regarding job candidates and the work of the committee.
8. Commitment to use creative and meaningful outreach efforts to expand the diverse pool of candidates.
9. Ensure we facilitate balanced opportunities for every member of the committee to speak and share their views.
10. We will treat every applicant with respect, both interpersonally and with regard to fair processes.
11. Commitment to use consistent procedures with every candidate, including parallel question lists, activities, methods of contact, information provided, and all other processes.
12. Commitment to using a diversity of measure to evaluate candidates, and to consider the full range of information available when making decisions about shortlisting and offering positions.
13. Commitment to provide every candidate with the same information about resources available at our institution and in our community to support partners and diverse social locations and identities.


**Addressing Bias in Academic Decision-Making**

**What are biases?**

- Conscious and unconscious preferences for or against certain persons, experiences, etc.
- We all have biases; part of how the brain organizes information; mainly unconscious
- Different from professional judgments, though they may reflect systemic or historical biases

**How do biases function?**

- Reflect the prejudices and social barriers of our culture(s)
- Affect interpretation of facts by filtering: certain details are emphasized, others excluded
- Produce negative evaluations of members of marginalized groups: social processes that deny opportunity for some groups are supported by negative social narratives about those groups
- Work in our subconscious brain to marshal facts in support of the bias, thus normalizing our biased judgments so that they appear logical
- Not linked with identity: we can be a member of a group and hold a bias against that group

**What are some common biases in academic decisions?**

- Assuming that a person’s identity defines their research interests, teaching style, working schedule, job commitment, competency, etc. rather than reading materials with an open mind.
- Coding some positions as “core” and thus excluding diversity (diverse persons, diverse research, marginalized perspectives) as not relevant. This position ignores the biases in core knowledge, and the intellectually rich critical perspectives that diversity would bring.
- Undervaluing the achievements of persons whose identities have negative biases. This includes not valuing a research area, not recognizing the work involved in achievements, and not including perspectives in decisions.
- Overvaluing the achievements of persons whose identities have positive biases. This includes not questioning achievements, and making favourable assumptions about the roles someone played.
- Preferring a traditional career path and established notions of “excellence” while ignoring evolving criteria for excellence and the biased systems that have limited opportunities for some.
- For members of high status groups, attributing success to abilities or effort. For members of low status groups, attributing success to help from others or luck.
- Focusing on how you like or connect with a person (“fit”) rather than their competencies. “Fit” favours either those who are most culturally similar to us, or those who do not challenge the status quo. “Fit” thus excludes diverse persons and cultures, and those who advocate for equity.
• Assuming that certain persons are not serious, committed, or really interested in a position. This is usually raised about persons whose identities diverge from the incumbent or from the dominant institutional demographics.
• Looking for evidence of diversity work only from racialized or otherwise marginalized academics, rather than expecting it from all candidates.

Research on bias

Name Bias: reduced callbacks for non-White names, even if institutional commitment to equity
• Resumes with White sounding names receive 50 percent more callbacks for interviews than those with African American sounding names. For White names, a higher quality resume elicits 30 percent more callbacks; for African Americans, the increase is far smaller. Employers who list “Equal Opportunity Employer” in their ad discriminate as much as other employers (Bertrand & Mullainathen, 2003).
• Resumes with English-sounding names were 35% more likely to receive callbacks than those with Indian or Chinese names (Oreopoulos & Dechief, 2011).

Unconscious biases influence how we define merit for a job, and thus who we prefer to hire
• Reviewers shifted their definition of merit to support their favoured candidate, whose identity matched stereotypes associated with the position. When they defined criteria before viewing applications, their definitions of merit did not shift (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005).

Bias in the pipeline: More opportunities and responsiveness to male students
• Among 6,500 professors at top U.S. universities from 89 disciplines and 259 institutions, when considering requests from prospective students seeking mentoring, faculty were significantly more responsive to White males than all other categories of students, collectively, particularly in higher-paying disciplines and private institutions (Milkman, Akinola & Chugh, 2015).
• In biology labs at leading academic institutions in the States, male faculty members employ fewer (by 10-40%) female grad students and postdoc researchers than female faculty (Sheltzer & Smith, 2014).

Gender bias: women’s accomplishments undervalued, underrated
• Faculty participants rated male applicants for lab manager as significantly more competent and hirable than identical female applicants (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012).
• 238 male and female academic psychologists reviewed CVs. Both genders were more likely to vote to hire a male job applicant than a female with an identical record; both reported that the male job applicant had done adequate teaching, research, and service experience compared to identical female. When examining a highly competitive CV, equally likely to tenure the male and female candidates and offer similar ratings of teaching, research, and service (Steinpreis, Anders & Ritzke, 1999).
• Study of postdoctoral fellowships awarded by the Medical Research Council in Sweden found that women candidates needed to be 2.5 times more scientifically productive than the average male to achieve the same competence score, unless they knew someone on the panel (Wenneras & Wold, 1997).
Gender bias in letters of recommendation

- In 2 studies on letters of recommendation, women were described as more communal and less agentic than men. Communal characteristics had a negative relationship with hiring decisions in academia that were based on letters of recommendation (Madera, Hebl & Martin, 2009).
- In 300 letters of recommendation for medical school positions, those for women were shorter, had more doubt raisers, lacked superlatives. Women were described in relation to teaching and student roles, while men were associated with research and professional roles (Trix & Psenka, 2003).

Bias in student evaluations: against women and members of visible minorities

- Student evaluations of teaching are biased against female instructors by an amount that is large and statistically significant. The bias affects how students rate even objective aspects of teaching, such as how promptly assignments are graded (Boring, Ottoboni & Stark, 2016).

Negative impacts of advocating for diversity, particularly for women and non-white persons

- Women and nonwhite executives who were reported as frequently engaging in diversity-valuing behaviors were rated much worse by their bosses, in terms of competence and performance ratings, than female and nonwhite counterparts who did not actively promote diversity (Hekman et al., 2016).

Solutions to bias

- **Commit.** Commit to valuing and supporting diversity, equity, and fair processes
- **Bias.** Learn about bias—its ubiquity and impact, your personal biases, and ways to minimize their impact—and apply this knowledge individually and as a group.
- **Prepare.** Prior to the search or process, consult widely and take a broad view to identifying what positions are needed as the department advances over the next years. Set guidelines for group functioning and how you will make decisions at the start of the process, addressing power and diversity.
- **Criteria.** Develop meaningful criteria that describe core and asset qualifications, including what these mean and what evidence you will look for. Check criteria for bias.
- **Integrate equity and diversity.** Ensure that equity and diversity dimensions (including emerging areas of work; changing demographics and needs of students; and expectations for inclusive and respectful teaching and curriculum) are integrated into criteria, job ads, review questions, etc. Ensure diversity in membership among those making decisions and address power imbalances so diverse perspectives are respected and meaningfully integrated.
- **Make decisions.** Use criteria to guide all decisions (including about process), including interview format, questions, and informal conversations with candidates.
Key Equity Practices in Different Stages of a Search

This section summarizes guidance on significant equity practices at each stage of the search.

Key Equity Practices—Overview

- **Prepare.** Prior to the search or process, consult widely and take a broad view to identifying what positions are needed as the department advances over the next years.
- **Learn about and reduce bias.** Learn about bias—its ubiquity and impact, your personal biases, and ways to minimize their impact—and commit as individuals and committees to remove bias from your processes.
- **Develop and use criteria.** Develop meaningful criteria that describe core and asset qualifications, including what they mean and what evidence you will look for. Refer to these when making decisions at each stage about candidates.
- **Integrate equity and diversity.** Ensure that equity and diversity dimensions (including emerging areas of work; changing demographics and needs of students; and expectations for inclusive and respectful professional behaviour) are integrated into position descriptions and criteria. Involve a diversity of people in making decisions.
- **Making decisions fairly and consistently.** Use criteria to guide all decisions, including interview format, questions, and informal conversations with applicants. Set up all elements in a consistent format, and treat all candidates in a comparable manner.

Key Equity Tips for Each Stage of a Search

**Prepare**
- Start well in advance of a search to clarify plans for growth and development of unit
- Research demographics of unit and population served, and explore trends that affect employees and the growth of the discipline or area of work
- Discuss what biases exist about the characteristics of the ideal employee
- Consider what additional diversities would benefit the unit
- As individuals, learn about and work on your own biases and commit to reducing their impact

**Selection Committee**
- Form a diverse selection committee
- Train on bias and fair search practices and commit to avoiding bias and discrimination
- Develop guidelines for participation and decision-making

**Write the criteria & job posting**
- Develop rich, unbiased, well developed criteria that describe the ideal candidate. Draw from existing job ads, research from “prepare” stage, and professional expertise in doing this
- Integrate equity and diversity needs and skills into the criteria
- Use the criteria to develop the job posting, interview questions, and interview structure
- In the job ad, ensure that language is ungendered, inclusive and unbiased. Integrate information about the unit’s equity commitments and welcoming language for diverse applicants
Outreach and recruitment
- Reach out widely into diverse communities to invite applications
- Reach out personally to potential candidates who can add to the unit
- Ask colleagues for recommendations or to circulate the job ad

Review applications
- Take time: at least 20 minutes per application, and enough time as a group for robust discussion of each candidate
- Use the criteria as basis for reviewing and short-listing candidates
- Have individuals review and identify their recommendations prior to group discussions
- Pay attention to power and use the value of diversity: Ensure all voices on the committee are heard and considered

Interviews and site visits
- Design the interviews and site visits around to elicit and assess the criteria
- Ensure consistency and comparability in how candidates are treated, the types of questions asked, information provided to them, and all aspects of their interviews
- Be aware and open to diverse ways of presenting and responding
- Ask all candidates if they require accommodations
- Integrate universal practices like washroom access, personal breaks, food and water, and other elements that can make the process more comfortable for all applicants and tell candidates
- Provide information to all candidates on services at UVic and in the community that support diverse communities in this region
- Ensure that everyone who interacts with candidates understands the criteria and knows about prohibited areas of questioning relating to human rights and identity

Final selection
- Ensure that commentary related to bias does not enter the discussion
- Use the criteria to review information about each applicant as you make the final selection
- Consider the full range of materials in each application; avoid being swayed by any single item
- Facilitate open discussion and fully consider different perspectives raised

Reference checks
- Base questions on the criteria and the materials provided by candidates
- Conduct the reference checks in a comparable manner across candidates
- Be aware of biases that can emerge in reference letters and reference checks and consider these when evaluating what is learned from a reference check

Hire
- Follow all internal processes for approval, including reporting on diversity of applicants and the applicant pool
- Prepare the unit for the new hire, including training on aspects of equity and diversity
- Provide meaningful onboarding and mentoring that helps a new employee integrate well into a unit, that finds ways to draw on the diversity they bring, and that connects them with appropriate mentorship and support
### Criteria Template for Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Criteria (max. 5)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Rank/ Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e.g., excellent communicator</td>
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### Good criteria:
- Reflect the core responsibilities of a position—what are the key things someone needs to do well to succeed in this role?
- Identify what skills are needed within an evolving department/centre/unit/etc.—look to the unit’s future as you identify these.
- Focus on what someone will do, not their qualifications to do it. Integrate transferable skills and equivalencies.
- Are unbiased and open to a diversity of persons.
- Are fleshed out: have a description, evidence, weight.
- Are developed by the committee as a whole and understood by each member of the committee.

### Using the criteria:
- Are the basis for every decision the committee makes.
- Shape the interview process: questions and assessment tools are designed to assess criteria in a robust manner.
- Are shared with everyone who provides feedback on the candidates.
Tracking Criteria Across a Search

This tool can help committees ensure that they pay attention to where each candidate shows evidence of the criteria when they are making decisions about whether that candidate makes it into the next round. Looking at evidence from each stage of the search has numerous benefits, including ensuring that the focus is on criteria rather than the candidates’ personality or “fit”; and balancing out the bias-inducing impact of strong personalities during the interview. The result is a more holistic evaluation of each candidate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate:</th>
<th>Cover Letter</th>
<th>CV/ Resume</th>
<th>Other materials</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Summary: strength of criterion</th>
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Sample scoring:
- For each cell, indicate whether that criterion, within that source, is **strong, adequate, weak or not noted** (you can develop your own scale here) and add notes about details that support
- For example, if the criterion was “ability to use technology to conduct engaged teaching”, you might indicate that on the cover letter this is **not noted**; on the CV/Resume is **strong**; during the interview this is **strong**; and finally, during the presentation this is **adequate**.