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***Personnel Policy Guidelines***  
***at***  
***The University of South-Eastern  
Norway***

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## I. Introduction

The personnel policy guidelines shall support the university's ambitions and goals, promote professional and efficient management and contribute to well-being in the workplace and development of human resources.

USN's personnel policy guidelines reflect subdocuments and aim to facilitate the exercise of good personnel management in line with the university's values.

Employees are obliged to follow up on the positions and objectives of these guidelines.

The personnel policy guidelines are intended to help:

- meet the university's overall academic goals and strategic ambitions,
- promote the university's fundamental values,
- facilitate a good and evolving working environment,
- facilitate good management and proper administrative care of employees,
- recruit and retain talented personnel,
- ensure that USN is dynamic and adaptable to change and is able to meet an ever-changing work- and social environment.

## II. Personnel policy foundation

The personnel policy guidelines are based on applicable laws, collective agreements and political guidance, including the Norwegian act on universities and colleges, the Act relating to the working environment, working hours and employment protection, the Act relating to civil servants (Civil Servants Act), the State Personnel Handbook and the employees' co-determination pursuant to the Basic collective agreement, as some of the most important of these.

The guidelines are intended to help ensure that the premises and conditions for employees of the university are predictable, while at the same time providing latitude and flexibility to adapt to changeable and amended framework conditions.

USN will make provisions for good international researcher recruitment and mobility and will strive to ensure that human resources and R&D systems comply with the standards associated with *HR-Excellence in research* certification based on the EU initiative *Charter & Code (C&C)*.

## III. Fundamental values

Through profession-oriented, working life-oriented and socially relevant education and research, USN contributes to the development of a sustainable knowledge society. USN promotes intellectual formation and critical thinking and teaches students to take responsibility in global society. USN contributes towards shaping its surroundings by remaining close to working and social life. Collaboration across disciplines is the basis of all its ambitions, plans and activities. Students will encounter staff members who both challenge and support them in the learning process.

Our values are based on the premise that knowledge will encourage initiative and provide nourishment for growth.

The university bases its activities on the principle of equality and equal status. All employees, irrespective of gender, ethnic background, functional ability or sexual orientation, shall have individual influence and responsibility in relation to their work duties. USN integrates multiple diversity as a conscious element in all its activities, treating all employees as equals and combating all forms of discrimination and unreasonable differential treatment.

The university's personnel policy and related guidelines shall specify and support these values.

## **IV. Personnel policy guide rules**

### **1. Working environment**

Academic freedom, scientific methodology, the principle of impartiality, critical reflection, source criticism and conflict of opinion are core values in higher education. All communication shall be based on these values.

Employees of USN shall have a polite and respectful form of interaction in their encounter with external partners, colleagues and students.

The working environment shall promote inclusiveness in the workplace and contribute to a positive physical and psychosocial working environment. All employees have a responsibility for the working environment at the university and shall help to ensure the safety and well-being of themselves and others. The working environment is to be characterized by respect for the individual and as a place where discrimination, bullying, and harassment are not tolerated.

Employees who hold leadership positions or who are in an asymmetric relationship to students or employees must be conscious of the imbalance in the power relationship and make provisions for a sound and secure relationship.

Employees have a responsibility to intervene to ensure that antagonisms that arise do not become prolonged conflicts and thereby result in a poor working environment. The university encourages a culture in which we speak to - and with - each other, and not about each other, and we refer to one other with respect.

Guidelines have been developed to prevent adverse events and to establish procedures for implementing and following up measures to be taken in the event that concerns or warnings are notified. USN has a legal responsibility to handle all notifications in a professional and correct manner, hearing all parties concerned.

Participation and co-determination on the part of employees and public servants' organisations is a bearing element that impacts the working environment positively. In cooperation with the working environment committee and the welfare and protection service, USN will plan and conduct working environment surveys. Employee representatives are also important co-players in the effort to implement targeted measures aimed at safeguarding and developing a good working environment.

### **2. Working conditions**

According to the Working Environment Act, all employees shall have a written employment agreement covering their working conditions at the university college. The employment agreement shall describe, among other things, the employee's title, position/work category and salary, as well as the duration of the term of employment. The employment agreement also regulates the main workplace for the employee.

To comply with the stipulations of closeness and availability – closeness to the students, as well as professional development in academic and research groups, the employee's presence on one of the USN's campuses is essential. As a general rule, all employees should be present at the workplace, optionally at one of the other campuses during working hours, unless professional or other compelling reasons warrant

that work be done elsewhere. In such cases, this shall be done with the consent of the employee's immediate superior and in accordance with the applicable rules of absence.

All employees shall use the company's digital calendar and the "shared calendar" feature to be able to easily ascertain where the employee is located. This is especially important when events occur and there is a need to know where the employee can be found.

The USN has the ambition and expectation that employees in teaching and research positions will be engaged in externally funded activities in accordance with the agreed general principles and applicable regulations. It is important that provisions be made to facilitate this.

### **3. Working hours**

Normal working hours for all employees at the university amount to 37.5 hours per week in a 100% position. For academic employees and technical staff, a work schedule is prepared for the academic year. It involves a work schedule with 1687.5 net working hours per year. Upon reaching age 60, the employee's working hours will be reduced up until retirement age.

The Dean is responsible for seeing to it that the work tasks deriving from the current study portfolio can be performed by the academic staff during regular working hours. Activities should not be planned that require working overtime.

Overtime work for employees must be a "last resort" and shall be imposed by the employee's immediate supervisor. This is out of consideration for the employee's work situation and workload as well as the opportunity for good financial management and administration. In addition, reference is made to the prepared guidelines for employees' use of overtime at USN ([link](#)).

Administrative and technical staff shall register hours worked in the university's electronic system according to current rules. Employees in teaching and research positions and managers should, at a minimum, register their absences (vacation, own message, etc.) in the same system.

In the case of co-funded and task-financed (BOA-financed) activities, timesheets are required for the purposes of project management, revenue recognition, accounting and reporting.

### **4. Job and function descriptions**

It is management's responsibility to ensure that the job and/or function descriptions for employees are prepared, including for employees in managerial positions, those with special functions and administrative positions at USN ([link](#)). Job descriptions are based on an approved job announcement text (adopted by the employing body).

As a result of natural development within the various disciplines, in the university and the organization, changes in the position and function descriptions must be expected. Position and function descriptions will be for the basis for the annual employee performance interview.

### **5. External work - sidelines**

As a rule, USN has a positive view concerning sideline work and has therefore drawn up internal guidelines for this. The purpose of internal guidelines is to protect the university's reputation and its employees' trust and integrity, by making provisions for openness concerning potential conflicts of interest and for managing these.

By the term sideline, we mean any work and external commitment that the employee holds in addition to the ordinary position (including specially commissioned positions), whether paid or not, temporary or permanent, and is not considered private life. Work that is performed through an enterprise or company that is wholly or partially owned by the employee is also considered sideline work.

The guidelines also discuss what a sideline may be. Sidelines must be reported and cleared with the employee's immediate superior. In addition, reference is made to the guidelines in their entirety with a more thorough discussion of this [\(link\)](#).

## **6. Rights to leaves of absence**

With the exception of entitled leaves, applications for leave must be decided by the university's hiring body. Decisions are made on the basis of applicable laws and regulations, as well as the policies set forth in the State Personnel Handbook, USN's personnel regulations and the recommendation of the employee's immediate superior.

As a rule, no leave is granted to move to another permanent, internal position at USN.

## **7. Work schedules for employees in teaching and research positions**

The university shall have consistent principles for planning work for employees in teaching and research positions and for technical staff in teaching positions. The work plan is a dynamic tool that clarifies the main tasks and the allocation of work within a planning cycle. Work planning shall be carried out in accordance with institutional principles and guidelines for this work.

The university's principles for planning work shall underpin the university's strategic ambitions and shall be a tool for utilizing the competence and work capacity of the personnel in an appropriate and fair manner.

All staff in teaching and research positions shall have work schedules documenting how the annual work is distributed across task categories and indicating the proportion of the year's work associated with the individual study programme and subject. In line with the Academic supervision regulations, the work plan shall state how the employees' R&D activities underpin the various study programmes to which employees contribute.

In addition, reference is made to principles for work planning at USN [\(link\)](#).

## **8. Organisation and management**

The university has a board of directors for its activities.

USN has a management structure with an appointed rector, a pro-rector and two vice-rectors, respectively, vice-rector for research, innovation and internationalisation and vice-rector for study and education quality. The faculties are led by a dean and the administrative departments are led by a department director. Together with the staff and communications manager, these comprise the university's management team.

The management hierarchy at the university is defined at four different levels, rector and pro-rector (Level 1), vice-rectors, deans and department directors (Level 2), department managers, faculty directors and section heads (Level 3). In addition, a senior level four has been established for section managers corresponding to executive level 3 and for managers in positions or functions that have been delegated

personnel responsibility. The latter, for example, applies to department deputy managers, specialist group leaders, and on-site library managers (Level 4).

Leaders shall contribute to the professional and strategic development of the university by exercising leadership in line with university strategies, personnel policy guidelines, statutes and collective agreements as well as by providing guidance for and motivating employees. Good management shall help to ensure that all employees have an influence on and responsibility for their work duties and shall see to it that they acquire a sense of ownership of the university's goals by highlighting how each individual can contribute to reaching the goals.

Various meeting structures are established at the faculty and department levels to facilitate participation. Managers shall administer and develop the resources in the best interests of the university community and create attractive workplaces. This requires that managers are clear, have a willingness to prioritise and have the necessary perseverance to ensure that the desired results are achieved.

All employees have a responsibility for the development of the workplace and the working environment, so that the university achieves its objectives and so that each individual has the opportunity to use his/her competence.

## **9. Recruitment**

USN aims to be an attractive workplace that is competitive in the labour market. We will use available recruitment instruments to attract the best applicants, develop talent and retain attractive competence.

The university will engage in long-term and holistic planning to recruit and retain talented employees and adapt the university's aggregate competence to its own priorities and the needs of society. The university will make provisions so that teachers, researchers and disciplines can attain a high international academic level.

Within the applicable framework, efforts will be made to facilitate effective recruitment and hiring processes. USN strives to appoint employees in permanent positions and shall comply with applicable statutes and regulations regarding temporary appointment.

The university's values are the basic premises in recruitment of new employees. New employees at USN are welcomed in a positive and inclusive way and provisions are made for training and mentoring as an introduction to their work tasks. Provided it is practically feasible, new employees are also invited to participate in the buddy system.

Provisions shall also be made to receive international researchers who can contribute to the academic community, so that their stay at USN results in a good experience. Diversity among employees is an asset and enriches the academic and working environment. The university shall make a special effort to recruit employees so that the university staff reflects the diversity of society at large.

Recruitment and hiring shall be based on education, competence and relevant practice, experience and personal suitability (including cooperative skills, communication skills, etc.), cf. Civil Servants Act Section 53 the Qualification principle.

## **10. Competence and career development**

The university will facilitate competence and career development for both administrative and technical staff and employees in teaching and research positions. This is to meet changing demands and



expectations, to realise the university's strategic ambitions and objectives and to accommodate the individual employee's need and desire for self-development. Within both teaching/research and management/administration, new technology and digitalisation change work tasks and work processes. Good management and up-to-date knowledge of laws and regulations must be the basis for all work performance and competence development. Competence development in this context is mainly, and in principle, the responsibility of the employer, but all employees must be prepared to develop their competence and to encounter changing work forms and restructuring.

Competence development aims to increase the staff's experience base, add new academic perspectives and facilitate acquisition of up-to-date knowledge relevant to the position. It is intended to support activities that contribute to quality, efficiency and professionalism in all aspects of the university's activities. USN will enable individual competence enhancement through targeted measures for continuing- and further education, professional advancement, creation of specialist environments and research groups and knowledge sharing among employees.

Network building and cooperation in specialist environments and research groups internally and with other institutions both in Norway and abroad contribute to competence development.

The university wants to motivate employees to seek competence development and professional advancement along both career paths for senior positions, namely first lecturer (dosent) and full professor. Requirements for promotion at USN shall be in line with the university's guidelines for appointment and promotion and be based on national guidelines for appointment and promotion. For new employees and young staff members, the career path to associate professor and professor is recommended.

USN values employees who are motivated for career and competence development and will facilitate this to the greatest extent possible in relevant disciplines for both the technical/administrative staff and employees in teaching and research positions.

## **11. Employee participation and co-determination**

Employees shall be given a real opportunity to participate in the shaping and development of the university through information-sharing and dialogue in various forums at the institutional, faculty and departmental levels. USN shall provide employees an opportunity to individually influence the content, scope and performance of their own work tasks. This shall be done in dialogue between the individual employee, the employer and colleagues.

Employees shall be ensured a real possibility of participating and co-determining, and elected employee representatives exercise co-determination in accordance with the Basic Collective Agreement, the adjustment agreement to the basic agreement ([link](#)) and through representation in collegial bodies.

The university shall facilitate the involvement of the civil service organisations at such an early stage in the decision-making process that they are ensured real influence in the decisions taken (Basic Collective Agreement Section 12). This is mainly done through regular IDN meetings (information, discussion and negotiation) at the central level and through faculty and departmental ID meetings.

USN wants to use the knowledge and experience of the employee representatives in the operation and development of the university, as well as in work of designing and implementing personnel policy. The employer shall provide continual follow-up and training of managers and elected employee representatives to strengthen co-determination and cooperative competence, cf. the Basic Collective Agreement Section 5.3.1.

In addition, reference is made to the Basic Collective Agreement and adjustment agreement at USN.

## **12. Wage policy**

The University of South-Eastern Norway shall have a wage policy that is rooted in the university's goals, and it shall be part of the university's aggregate strategies, political guidance, plans and policy instruments.

USN strives to achieve a good wage policy for all its employees. The university's wage policy ambition is that the university will offer competitive wage conditions and will be able to recruit and retain skilled employees and necessary competence. It is a goal that the wage policy will be perceived as transparent and fair. The university's employees are the most important resource for achieving its goals and fulfilling its societal mission. Therefore, there must be opportunities to reward efforts and achievements that help to retain qualified and motivated employees. The wage policy shall ensure coherence between wages, competence, career development and work effort and shall serve as a management and development tool for management executives.

The wage policy shall be easy to implement and put into practice by managers, employees and the civil service organisations. The wage policy must be transparent and familiar to everyone.

Reference is also made to USN's local wage policy ([link](#)), which is adjusted in line with the national collective wage agreement.

## **13. Management positions**

Employees in management positions at USN (levels 1, 2, 3 and 4) and employees in separate, independent positions are exempted from the provisions pertaining to working hours, including overtime and overtime registration, pursuant to Section 13 (4) of the Basic Collective Agreement and Section 10-12 first paragraph of the Working Environment Act. These sources state that employees in these position categories shall generally put their work capacity at the employer's disposal to meet the needs of the employer without triggering overtime. Nevertheless, employers may not impose a workload on managers or employees in separate, independent positions that entails adverse physical or psychological pressures on the employee.

## **14. Life-Phase Policy**

The university shall have a personnel policy that enables employees to use their competence, knowledge and experience in the best possible way for both the university and themselves at all stages of life up until retirement age. USN has successfully negotiated reduced working hours for seniors. USN considers it an asset that its staff consists of employees of various ages and competence background and is relatively equally distributed between women and men.

In a life-phase policy, it is acknowledged that the individual's needs, dedication and aptitudes will vary throughout a professional career. It is important to help to maintain a balance between work and leisure time for employees. This is important in terms of younger, newly recruited employees who have family responsibilities, and for employees who have other caregiver responsibilities. The university's personnel policy shall provide opportunities for lifelong development and learning. It is management's responsibility to address the life-phase perspective in performance interviews with the employee. When employees reach retirement age, conversations should be conducted with the individual seniors regarding the option of remaining in the workforce beyond retirement age. The employee can invite an employee's representative to take part in the conversation if desired.

The university has signed an inclusive employment agreement (the so-called IA Agreement) that lays out a provision that each individual workplace shall prevent sickness absence, increase recruitment to working life for persons who do not have employment, and to make provisions to retain employees for a longer period in their jobs.

The university life-phase policy is based on White Paper Report No. 19 (2008-2009) to the Norwegian Parliament "*An Administration for Democracy and Community*" in which senior policy is an integral part of a holistic life-cycle perspective. The life-phase policy is part of the general and systematic HSE work.

Reference is also made to the university's guidelines on the Emeritus scheme ([link](#)) and welfare schemes at USN as well as applicable statutes and contractual agreements and regulations affecting the life-phase policy in general and on a broad basis within government administration.

## **15. Policy on equality and diversity**

The university's personnel policy is intended to help achieve real equality of the sexes. In addition, we aim to demonstrate that diversity among employees is viable and enriching.

The university will further make provisions so that individuals with immigrant backgrounds and persons with disabilities can compete on an equal basis with other applicants in recruitment processes. USN also offers the option of practical study placement or attending courses as a guest student.

The university has its own equality and inclusion committee and has prepared a plan of action for equality and non-discrimination in line with current statutes and collective agreements.

The effort to ensure equal opportunity and gender equality shall be integrated, in theory and practice, into all parts and at every level of the university's activities. The action plan describes the point of departure for equality work in the individual faculty and department. The measures they choose to implement must be reflected in planning documents and the budget.

The reality and perspectives of diversity are to be visualised in the study and working conditions, in teaching and research contexts and in all administrative activities and with a uniform distribution of age, gender and different backgrounds among the teaching and research personnel, among technical/administrative staff as well as in boards/councils/committees.

## **16. Ethical guidelines**

The university's activities require trust, on the part of both government authorities and education and research communities at home and abroad and in society at large. Trust is dependent on professionalism and skill and that all employees are committed to a high level of ethics. As stewards of society's common values, all civil servants have a particular responsibility to conduct themselves ethically. This applies to both general professional performance and the conduct and behaviour of each individual employee.

Employees at the university, through their actions and behaviour, shall adhere to fundamental values such as openness, respect, loyalty, trust and accountability.

USN expects all employees to act with due diligence, integrity and objectivity and refrain from actions that could undermine confidence in the university. This guideline does not preclude fact-based differences of opinion and argumentation, nor does it imply any restriction on the employee's right to speak out or any constraint on whistle-blowing, etc.

USN has not developed a general code of ethics, but adheres to Norway's *Ethical guidelines for the public service*. However, local ethical guidelines have been developed in special fields such as research, communication and procurement. All employees of USN are personally responsible for performing their work in accordance with these guidelines.

It is emphasised that the provisions relating to disqualification/impartiality in Section 6 of the Public Administration Act apply to all types of decisions, including intermediate, provisional decisions in processes, and internal administrative decisions. Employees are individually responsible for disclosing their own disqualification based on a lack of impartiality and excuse themselves when the case so requires. However, ongoing and/or relationships newly entered into, including family, friendship and amorous liaisons, shall be reported as soon as possible to the employee's immediate superior. This is to create openness and thereby ensure that the trust and loyalty of the working environment remains unimpaired and that the employer is able to assess and undertake any dispositions required to safeguard the working environment and ensure the impartiality of decision-makers.

In addition, reference is made to the USN's guidelines for managing personal conflicts and USN's guidelines for the prevention of sexual harassment.

## **17. Gifts in service**

The university's employees shall not accept nor make arrangements to receive, whether for themselves or others, gifts, trips, hotel accommodation, entertainment, discounts, loans or other assets or benefits that are likely to influence or are intended by the giver to affect the employee's performance in the line of duty. Employees must not, in any way, shape or form, use their position to gain unwarranted advantages for themselves or others. This also applies even when these benefits will not affect their actions in the line of duty, cf. Section 4.5 of the Ethical guidelines for the public service. Reference is also made to «Guidelines concerning gifts received in service» ([link](#)).

When it comes to gifts made to the university from commercial actors, reference is made to the Guidelines for co-funded and task-financed activity (BOA) ([link](#)).

## **18. Restructuring**

An agreement has been entered into for co-determination and restructuring for USN; it went into force 01 January 2017 pursuant to Section 11 of the Basic Collective Agreement ([link](#)).

The term restructuring in this agreement is understood as:

- Organisational changes arising from the institution's division and structure
- Any transfer of work tasks and re-allocation of personnel arising from the above

The purpose of the agreement is to ensure the employees' right to co-determination, rights and obligations under law and collective and individual agreements, as well as key personnel policy guidelines for restructuring work in the government sector in connection with restructuring processes that may result from a merger process or from a general need for organisational changes.

## **19. Time of Entry into Force**

The university's personal policy guidelines take effect from the date they have been discussed and adopted by the university board.