

Guidelines for recruitment positions at the University of South-Eastern Norway

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1. GENERAL

These guidelines apply to appointment in the recruitment positions of research assistant, PhD research fellow and postdoctoral fellow at the University of South-Eastern Norway.

These guidelines apply at a general level and have been prepared within the framework of the Universities and University Colleges Act, the [Regulations relating to teaching and research positions and recruitment positions](#) and the University of South-Eastern Norway's competence assessment matrix (USN-CAM), which is based on the Norwegian Career Assessment Matrix (NOR-CAM).

2. QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AND THE PURPOSE OF THE POSITION

2.1 Postdoctoral fellow

The purpose of a postdoctoral fellowship position is for the employee to build up a research profile and expertise that qualifies them to apply for a position as an associate professor. The position may also provide other competencies that will be relevant to the postdoctoral fellow's future career ([Section 3-18 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).

A doctoral degree is required to be employed as a postdoctoral fellow ([Section 3-18 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).

2.1.1 Length of the fixed term

The length of the fixed term for employment as a postdoctoral fellow is three to four years. No one may be employed as a postdoctoral fellow at the same institution for more than one fixed-term period ([Section 7-6 of the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).

The fixed-term period can be extended up to the maximum time limit, i.e. up to four work-years, if the scope of other career-advancing work has increased significantly after the individual took up the position ([Section 3-17 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).

If the term is extended after appointment on the basis of the scope of other career-advancing work, an application must be submitted for consideration by the appointing board (see Section 9.3).

2.1.2 Career plan and career-advancing work

A career plan must be drawn up for the postdoctoral fellow, specifying the skills and competencies that he or she will acquire during the term of employment beyond the research project itself. The institution is responsible for ensuring that the career plan is followed up and that the postdoctoral fellow has access to careers advice and guidance throughout the entire postdoctoral programme ([Section 3-18 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)). (See Chapter 3 Career plan and career-advancing activities)

If the postdoctoral fellow does not already have teaching qualifications that meet the requirements for employment as an associate professor, the institution must ensure that the postdoctoral fellow acquires the necessary competence during the employment period ([Section 3-18 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)). In this case, the department must assign relevant teaching tasks and make arrangements so the employee can complete courses that provide basic competence in teaching at university level as part of the career-advancing work.

With a view to ensuring achievement of the main goal of qualification for employment in a permanent academic position, postdoctoral fellows must perform research at a high level in accordance with national or international standards. Postdoctoral fellows should also gain experience in writing applications and training in research leadership and management.

If the employee does not have proficiency in Norwegian, Swedish or Danish at level A2 at the time of appointment, USN must offer free Norwegian language training with the aim of achieving Norwegian

language skills at a level of minimum A2 ([cf. Section 3-8 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).

2.2 PhD research fellow

A PhD research fellowship position shall lead to a doctoral degree and help the employee qualify for relevant careers within higher education and research and in other sectors of working life where research expertise is required ([Section 3-19 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).

In order to be eligible for employment as a PhD research fellow, applicants must have admission to a relevant doctoral programme at USN, or there must be a binding agreement on admission ([Section 3-19 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).

A master's degree (normally 120 ECTS credits) with a weighted average grade of B or better is normally required. USN has special guidelines on [calculating the weighted average grade for a master's degree](#). For more information about doctoral education and the admissions process, see the individual doctoral programme.

2.2.1 Length of the fixed term

At least three work-years of the total term of employment must be dedicated to doctoral work. The position may also include other career-advancing work ([Section 3-19 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).

The length of the fixed term for employment as a PhD research fellow is three or four years. No one may be employed as a PhD research fellow at the same institution for more than one fixed-term period ([Section 7-6 of the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)). PhD research fellows are employed in a 100% position.

The fixed-term period can be extended up to the maximum time limit, if the scope of other career-advancing work has increased significantly after the individual took up the position ([Section 3-17 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)). If the length of the fixed term is extended after appointment on the basis of the scope of other career-advancing work, this must be applied for and approved by the appointing board (see Section 9.3).

2.2.2 Career plan and career-advancing work

A career plan must be drawn up specifying the competencies that the PhD research fellow will acquire beyond the doctoral work. The institution is responsible for ensuring that the career plan is followed up and that the PhD research fellow has access to careers advice and guidance throughout the entire doctoral programme ([Section 3-19 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)). (See Chapter 3 Career plan and career-advancing activities).

If the employee does not have proficiency in Norwegian, Swedish or Danish at level A2 at the time of appointment, USN must offer free Norwegian language training with the aim of achieving Norwegian

language skills at a level of minimum A2 ([cf. Section 3-8 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act.](#))

2.3 Research assistant

A position as a research assistant shall form the basis for a future career in academia, through tasks that provide insight into and experience with scientific or artistic work and methods ([Section 3-21 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)). The main tasks will consist of scientific/artistic assistance and assistance with professional development work. The work may include the development of a doctoral project with a view to applying for a PhD research fellowship position. In conjunction with this, the research assistant may be assigned teaching, laboratory work and similar work tasks.

A minimum requirement for employment as a research assistant at USN is a bachelor's degree at the time of starting in the position.

Students on a master's programme may be offered a part-time position as a research assistant.

A full-time position as a research assistant may be offered to candidates with a completed master's degree for a period of up to two years, less any previous work-months spent as a research assistant during the study period.

Individuals who have previously been employed as a PhD research fellow or have obtained a doctoral degree can not be employed as a research assistant ([Section 3-21 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).

The length of the fixed term for research assistants is up to two years. No one may be employed as a research assistant at the same institution for more than one fixed-term period ([Section 7-6 of the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)). This statutory provision is practised in such a way that the total period of employment in a position as a research assistant at USN may not exceed two work-years.

Position code 1019 is used for research assistants who have completed a bachelor's degree, and position code 1020 is used for research assistants who have completed a master's degree.

3. CAREER PLAN AND CAREER-ADVANCING WORK FOR PHD RESEARCH FELLOWS AND POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

3.1 Career plan

The head of department is the line manager for PhD research fellows and postdoctoral fellows. The head of department must conduct the annual performance assessment interview and formally finalises and approves the *Plan for career and competence development plan* for the PhD research fellow/postdoctoral fellow (cf. USN's PhD Handbook). The head of department can delegate this responsibility to the deputy head. The PhD research fellow/postdoctoral fellow's supervisor must be involved in these processes.

After appointment, USN is obliged to draw up an individual career plan in consultation with the PhD research fellow/postdoctoral fellow. The template for the onboarding meeting (employee form) is a tool that the employee and manager can use together to reflect on the employee's long-term career goals and plan relevant activities for academic and professional development.

The PhD research fellow has an annual performance assessment interview with the head of department or the person who has been delegated personnel responsibility. It is recommended that the supervisor and, if applicable, the head of the research group participate in the career planning meeting and the preparation of the *Career and competence development plan* before the plan is approved by the manager. This must be done as soon as possible and within the first three months of the doctoral programme.

For postdoctoral fellows, it is the head of department who invites the postdoctoral fellow to a meeting to discuss career development and helps the postdoctoral fellow draw up a draft *Career and competence development plan*. This must be done as soon as possible and within the first six months of employment.

The career plan must contain a specification of the individual's career goals and measures to achieve these goals. Any needs for language training and/or teaching qualifications should be included in the career plan.

The career plan must be followed up and updated regularly in the annual performance assessment interview. The career plan must be evaluated at the end of the employment period. A distinction is made between career-advancing paid work that is part of the career plan and other career-advancing activities.

Both the manager and the employee are responsible for following up on the measures that have been agreed in the plan.

As far as is possible, and within the financial framework and the unit's strategic focus areas, the employer must make arrangements to enable the employee's development of competencies in line with the specified career goals.

USN has dedicated guides on and a special form for conducting performance assessment interviews and career planning for PhD research fellows and postdoctoral fellows: [Performance assessment interviews and career planning](#)

3.2 Career-advancing work

Other career-advancing work means work beyond the research project and the doctoral education that provides relevant knowledge and experience for further career development at institutions of higher education or research or in other sectors ([Section 3-16 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)). Career-advancing work must also be seen in the context of merit-accruing results as stipulated in USN's competence assessment matrix.

Examples of relevant career-advancing work:

- Contributing to teaching in classrooms, laboratory and practice teaching, academic supervision and examination work within the employee's areas of expertise.
- Training in the use and operation of research infrastructure.

- Norwegian language training, studying for teaching qualifications, occupational health and safety courses, etc. that are necessary for the performance of teaching and research work.
- Participating in dissemination, exhibition and collection work.
- Contributing to the preparation of research project applications or the organisation of conferences.
- Clinical practice.
- Contributing to ongoing research projects, professional development work, consulting and official studies in the academic environment.
- Research-based innovation or dissemination projects.
- Research mobility and/or periods spent abroad.
- Internships or collaboration with public or private partners.
- Offices, positions of trust and committee work.

3.3 Plan for career-advancing work

As far as possible, and within the framework of existing academic activities, financial and personnel resources, the employer shall make arrangements to ensure that PhD research fellows and postdoctoral fellows can be given paid career-advancing work that will contribute to the realisation of the employee's career plan.

Career-advancing work is financed within the framework of funds allocated at the departmental level at USN. Any internal and external scholarship schemes should be used to fund career-advancing work, such as innovation and dissemination projects.

The content and distribution of the career-advancing work during the employment period is determined by the head of department in consultation with the individual PhD research fellow/postdoctoral fellow and their supervisor/project manager. The career plan is updated annually with the status of completed and planned work. The career plan is archived in Public360.

The scope of work is calculated in accordance with the faculty's norms or actual working hours. Extra credit may also be given for other particularly time-consuming tasks based on an individual assessment.

Normally, the career-advancing work for PhD research fellows ought to be distributed such that the final year can be used solely for work that is related to the doctoral programme. The career-advancing work can also be carried out after submission of the thesis and be used for dissemination and innovation projects based on the research work or to gain teaching experience that will be useful in a future career in academia.

If the postdoctoral researcher does not have teaching qualifications at the time of appointment, the postdoctoral researcher must be offered the opportunity to acquire this competence as part of the career-advancing work.

The head of department has overall responsibility for ensuring that the career-advancing work does not delay the progression of the doctoral education and the PhD research fellow's right to at least three work-years dedicated to the doctoral work. In practice, the supervisor and PhD coordinator follow up the

candidates in relation to this (cf. [5.8.1 Work description for the annual progress report](#)) and report to the head of department and the programme committee.

USN has dedicated guides on and a special form for conducting performance assessment interviews and career planning for PhD research fellows and postdoctoral fellows [Performance assessment interviews and career planning](#)

4. PROCEDURES FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF VACANCIES

4.1 Mandatory public announcement

Civil service positions must be advertised publicly. The main rule at USN is that positions are advertised on Jobbnorge, usn.no, NAV and in English on Euraxess. If necessary, this may be supplemented with advertisement in other relevant channels. The costs associated with advertising in other relevant channels are charged to the recruiting unit.

USN has prepared templates for text for job advertisements indicating, among other things, which standard formulations should be included. The templates can be found on USN's [internal recruitment pages](#).

Exemptions from mandatory public announcement:

The same requirements apply to the employer's case processing and assessment of the candidate's competence in connection with appointment without public announcement as for other appointments (cf. Section 2-7 of the Guidelines concerning appointment, promotion and transition to teaching and research posts).

Public announcement is not necessary for the recruitment positions of 1) research assistant (can be advertised internally) and 2) 100% externally funded positions (cf. Section 3 (3) of the Regulations pursuant to the Civil Service Act).

In these cases, the head of the operating unit in question is the recommending authority, and appointing authority is delegated to Director of Personnel and Organisation.

4.2 Job analysis

When a recruitment need arises, a job analysis must be carried out. The recruiting manager is responsible for preparing a job analysis and specification of the requirements for the position as a PhD research fellow or postdoctoral fellow, in collaboration with a personnel adviser and representatives from the academic community.

The job analysis must provide an account of:

- The budgetary and subject-strategic assessments that underlie the vacancy.
- The purpose of the position and the results that the position is expected to help achieve.
- The area of expertise, responsibilities and tasks that will be assigned to the position.

- The competence requirements for the position:
 - requirements regarding education, educational level and subject area.
 - requirements regarding prior professional experience.
 - specification of the personal qualities required to perform the job.
- Other specific requirements, including:
 - Security assessments in accordance with USN's guidelines for export control.
 - Language requirements.
- Frameworks and the level of the position.
The tasks ascribed to the position have an impact on the level and code of the position. Consider which position code should be used based on the tasks the position is to help solve.
- Weighting of the qualification requirements.
- ***The length of the fixed-term period must be seen in the context of the nature of the work and any time specified for other career-advancing work ([Section 3-16 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).***
- USN's competence assessment matrix – USN-CAM.

4.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion

USN wants a broad and diverse range of people to apply for announced vacancies, and the job advertisement texts must be written in a way that supports this.

USN's templates for job advertisements contain a diversity statement, which is standard in all our job advertisement texts.

If one sex is clearly underrepresented within a job category in teaching and research positions, members of the underrepresented sex must be encouraged to apply (cf. [Section 7-1, second paragraph, of the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)). If one sex accounts for less than 40% of the employees in a job category, this is normally regarded as under-representation. Applicants from the underrepresented sex can be appointed if they are almost as well qualified as the best-qualified applicant.

If applicants with a disability, immigrant background or an extended period of absence from work or education apply for an advertised position, at least one qualified candidate from each category must be invited to an interview (cf. [Section 4-4 b of the Regulations pursuant to the Civil Service Act](#)).

Applicants with a disability, immigrant background or an extended period of absence from work and education can be appointed if they are almost as well qualified as the best-qualified applicant.

4.4 The content of the job advertisement text

Job advertisement texts are based on the job analysis that has been done.

- USN's standard templates for job advertisement texts must be used. These can be found on USN's [internal pages for recruitment](#). Here you can see what can and must be included in a job advertisement text based on the various categories of position.
- The job advertisement text must also state what documentation USN requires from the applicants.
 - Application text.

- CV.
 - Diplomas and certificates.
 - Project description.
 - Personal statement.
 - Documentation of language skills if required by the position.
 - Documentation of recognition of foreign education from the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir).
 - List of publications – if applicable.
 - Scholarly works – if applicable.
 - Pedagogical portfolio – if applicable.
 - Documentation of citizenship for positions where this is relevant in connection with a licence and/or authorisation (copy of passport).
- The job advertisement text must be in Norwegian and, as a general rule, also in English.
 - The minimum deadline for submission of applications is two weeks.
 - The manager must write a digital needs report explaining the background for the announced vacancy.
 - The Section for Recruitment and Personnel Management (SRP) in the Department of Personnel and Organisation is responsible for quality assurance of the job advertisement text, and prepares documents to be processed by the relevant appointment board.
 - The advertisement text is circulated for approval to the members of the appointing board for the position in question (i.e. the Appointment Committee for Teaching and Research Positions – TUF or the Appointment Committee for Fellowship Positions – TUS).
 - The appointing bodies have three to five working days to approve the job advertisement text.

4.4.1 Withdrawal of position and/or re-advertisement

Positions must be withdrawn or re-advertised if the recommending authority wishes to deviate from the qualification requirements in the original advertisement, or if errors have been made that might have an impact on who applies for the position.

The position may be withdrawn or re-advertised if it has been a long time since the position was advertised, if circumstances have changed significantly, or if few qualified applicants have applied and it is expected that a new advertisement might change this.

If significant changes are made to the content and requirements of the advertisement, a case for approval of a new advertisement text must be submitted to the appointing board. If it is less than one year since the text was published and there are only minor changes, the text can be published without new approval.

People who have applied for a position that has been withdrawn or is going to be re-advertised must be informed of the decision.

4.4.2 Public access

Applicants for vacancies are considered a party to the case and have access to the case as a party in accordance with [Chapter 5 of the Regulations pursuant to the Public Administration Act](#). The general public's access is regulated by the Freedom of Information Act.

In a recruitment case, the following documents are public:

- The job advertisement text
- The public list of applicants

Applicants for the position have access to the following documents as parties to the case:

- The extended list of applicants, which includes their professional qualifications.
- The expert committee's assessment
- Notes and/or reports from the interview and trial lecture*
- CV and application for recommended candidates
- The recommendation*

*Access applies where notes/reports are available. Access is only granted to factual information about the applicant, which is reproduced in reports and the recommendation. Assessments made by the recommending authority are exempt from disclosure to parties to the case.

USN practises public access for assessments from expert committees on request. Otherwise, public access must be assessed in each individual case.

5. ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS AND PERSONAL APTITUDE AND SUITABILITY

5.1 Disqualification in appointment processes

The provisions laid down in [Section 6 of the Public Administration Act](#) on impartiality and disqualification apply at all stages of an appointment process.

The individuals involved in the appointment process must consider whether they have a close connection to any of the applicants, or whether they may have a particular advantage or disadvantage linked to considering them for the position (cf. Section 6 of the Public Administration Act). However, not all knowledge of an applicant necessitates disqualification.

In cases where a manager considers himself or herself to be disqualified, the matter must be passed on to a higher level for consideration and decision.

The appointing board (the Appointment Committee for Teaching and Research Positions – TUF and the Appointment Committee for Fellowship Positions –TUS) is a collegial board and will not be considered disqualified in the processing of cases even if one or more of the members are disqualified and must resign from the processing of a case. In the appointing board, the decision on a member's impartiality is

made by the board itself, without the participation of the member in question. A replacement must be brought in if a member is disqualified in advance.

Members appointed to the expert committee must assess their own impartiality on appointment. In the assessment, the experts must pay particular attention to the supervisor role, close academic collaboration, and co-publication and co-authorship. The scope of the collaboration, and how recent it was, are relevant factors in an individual's assessment of their own impartiality. Members of expert committees must disclose any matters that may entail possible disqualification on appointment. If a member has any doubt about their own impartiality, assessments must be made in dialogue with the case officer at USN or the recommending authority.

5.2 Weighting of qualifications

When assessing applicants' competence in connection with appointment, a comprehensive assessment must be made of all the qualification requirements that have been defined for the position, in addition to assessing the applicants' personal qualities.

A summary of the assessment of each applicant's overall qualifications must be made.

Weight must be given to the individual's personal qualities in an overall assessment of the candidate, based on documented information obtained in the recruitment process. The assessment must be made on the basis of the requirements set for personal qualities in the job advertisement.

Particular weight will be attached to qualifications that are closely related to the specific subject area and duties associated with the position.

5.3 Sorting committee

The recommending authority may decide to appoint a sorting committee to carry out a rough first sorting (screening) of the applicants based on their competence for the position, before the more detailed assessment is carried out by the expert committee. The sorting committee shall consist of the recommending authority and a member of the expert committee or alternatively an internal expert.

The sorting committee's task is to sort out candidates who clearly do not meet the qualification requirements for the position, due to, for example, lack of formal recognised education, lack of documentation, lack of security clearance, etc., in the light of requirements stipulated in the job advertisement. In a recruitment process with a large number of qualified applicants, the sorting committee can group candidates based on qualifications and make a recommendation concerning which candidates should progress to the next stage of the process. The sorting committee must prepare a written report explaining why less relevant applicants have not been included for further consideration. The head of department has the formal responsibility for the sorting committee's conclusions.

In cases where there is doubt as to whether an applicant ought to be included in the next stage of the process, the applicant must be included in the group of candidates to be assessed by the expert committee. The expert committee may choose to include more candidates than those proposed by the sorting committee.

In its work, the sorting committee must pay particular attention to USN's goals relating to diversity and gender balance in academic positions.

All applicants for positions at USN, including unsuccessful applicants, are parties to the appointment process and are entitled to clear information as early as possible in the process. Applicants who do not proceed after initial sorting by the sorting committee must be informed of this.

5.4 Composition and methods of the expert committee

The appointment of students in part-time positions as research assistants does not require formal assessment and recommendation. For all other recruitment positions, USN sets requirements regarding formal assessment, interviews and checking of references.

In particular cases, the requirement for expert assessment may be waived in postdoctoral fellowship positions, primarily if the position is externally funded. An application for exemption must be included in the needs report at the time of recruitment or in the report submitted when the job advertisement text is to be approved by the Appointment Committee for Teaching and Research Positions (TUF).

The head of department appoints an expert committee to sort and assess the applicants' academic qualifications in relation to the specifications in the job advertisement and the qualification requirements for the position.

Requirements regarding the composition of an expert committee:

- At least two members, one of whom must be external.
- The members must have a doctoral degree in a relevant subject area.
- For assessment of postdoctoral fellowship positions, one of the members must also have qualifications at the professor level.
- Both sexes ought to be represented.
- The PhD research fellow/postdoctoral fellow's main supervisor may not be a member of the committee.
- Experience as a supervisor.
- One member should be appointed as the chair of the committee.

The expert committee is responsible for assessing its own impartiality (cf. Section 6 of the Public Administration Act). Any person who sits on an expert committee for a position cannot be involved in the further process of conducting interviews.

Once an expert committee has been appointed, the applicants must be informed via Jobbnorge about the composition of the committee and when the committee's assessment will be available. The case officer in charge of the appointment does this.

5.4.1 The mandate and working methods of the expert committee

The expert committee must undertake an expert assessment of all the applicants in relation to the requirements and qualifications stipulated in the job advertisement, based in the attachments uploaded

in the job applicant portal. The expert committee must not comment on applicant's personal aptitude and suitability for the position.

- The expert committee should not perform an extensive assessment but must provide an account of the applicants documented academic competence, academic degrees, and the quality of the project description. The committee must rank the qualified applicants on the basis of their documented academic qualifications (cf. the template for assessment by an expert committee).
- For applicants who are not deemed to be qualified, a brief description must be provided of why they are not qualified for the position.
- For applicants for PhD research fellowship positions, the assessment must be in accordance with USN's guidelines on calculating the weighted average grade for a master's degree.
- Applicants who withdraw their application before the expert committee has conducted its assessment will not be mentioned in the assessment.
- The expert committee shall work as a committee and will author a joint assessment based on USN's template for expert assessments.

The expert assessment must be prepared as soon as possible, and no later than one month after the committee was appointed.

Expert assessments are included as part of the overall assessment basis on which the recommending authority bases its recommendation to the appointing board.

The expert report is an internal report and is only sent to applicants upon request.

5.4.2 The recommending authority's assessment of the expert committee's report

The recommending authority is responsible for quality-assuring the expert committee's assessment, which is done in consultation with an advisor from the Recruitment Section of the Personnel Department. It must be ensured that the expert assessment mentions all the applicants and indicates whether these applicants have been assessed as qualified or not pursuant to the compulsory requirements stated in the job advertisement.

In cases where the recommending authority finds that the expert committee's report does not provide an adequate basis for assessing the applicants for the position, the case can be sent back to the expert committee for a new review.

5.5 Interviewing candidates and assessment of personal qualities

If any of the qualified applicants for a position declare that they have a disability (see Section 4 of the Regulations pursuant to the Civil Service Act), gaps in their CV (see Section 4a of the Regulations pursuant to the Civil Service Act) or a non-Western immigrant background (see Section 4b of the Regulations pursuant to the Civil Service Act), at least one applicant from each of these groups must be invited to an interview before a recommendation is made.

- USN uses (partially) structured interviews as a selection method. The interview is used to assess the candidates' motivation for the position and personal qualities, in addition to clarifying the candidates' overall competence, experience and future plans for research. In the interview, the

employer must clarify and discuss expectations and the terms and conditions that apply to the position with the applicants.

- USN generally conducts first and second interviews with relevant candidates. The first interview is conducted as a quick interview to screen candidates who are considered relevant for a more thorough second interview. When recruiting to recruitment positions, an assignment/trial lecture or case study must be considered.
- The recommending authority is responsible for the composition of the interview panel and for conducting interviews. The interviews are conducted by the line manager for the position, an employee from the academic environment to which the position belongs and a union representative. It is recommended that a personnel adviser participates in interviews. For PhD research fellowship positions, it is recommended that a representative of the relevant PhD programme participates.
- Applicants who have been assessed as qualified by the expert committee and who the recommending authority considers to be best suited for the position are invited to an interview and possibly a test of their practical-pedagogical skills or other tasks. In the interview, the candidates' personal aptitude and suitability for the position will be assessed.
- USN has prepared interview templates for use in interviews. These are used as a starting point and are adapted based on the competence profile and requirements regarding qualifications, experience, skills and personal qualities for the specific position. The templates can be found on our intranet pages [Are you hiring a new employee?](#)
- Notes must be kept of the topics discussed in the interview, the information provided by the candidate and any preliminary assessments made by the interview team.
- The recommending authority is responsible for ensuring that applicants present original diplomas in conjunction with interviews (the diploma portal), and that references are checked, in collaboration with the Section for Recruitment and Personnel Management (SRP). If a background check needs to be carried out, the recruitment section can be contacted.

5.5.1 Assessment of personal qualities

The purpose of the interview is to obtain additional information about the applicant's qualifications as an academic, prospective colleague and contributor to the working environment, in order to be able to make a documented assessment. After an overall assessment, personal qualities may be the decisive factor in the final ranking of the candidates.

There are two principles that it is particularly important to consider when assessing a candidate's personal qualities and aptitude for a position:

- Qualities to which weight is attached must have been specified in the job advertisement and be relevant to the work that is to be performed in the position.
- If weight is attached to a personal quality in one of the candidates, the other candidates must be assessed according to the same criteria.

5.6 Trial work/assignment

It should be considered giving the candidates case work or an assignment to perform in connection with the interviews. The assignment should reflect tasks and/or issues that are typical in the position.

5.7 Interviewing referees

Names of referees must be obtained from the candidates in connection with the interview. The recommending authority may only contact referees provided by the applicant. Normally, it will be relevant to contact previous and current employers, such as the manager with personnel responsibility for the candidate or their supervisor. Candidates who do not wish to use their current manager as a referee should be asked about this.

The referee interview will be used to check the information that the applicant has provided about their own competencies, experience, previous employment and the impression the recommending authority has formed of the applicant. Referee interviews will also be conducted for internal applicants.

If the referees provide new information that changes the recommending authority's view of the candidate's qualifications, the candidate should be given the opportunity to comment on the information through dialogue or a new interview.

USN has special reference templates. These can be found on the intranet pages [Are you hiring a new employee?](#)

6. THE RECOMMENDATION PROCESS

The head of department is the recommending authority for appointments to PhD research fellowships and postdoctoral fellowships (cf. Section 5 (1) of the Regulations pursuant to the Civil Service Act).

The recommending authority's recommendation must be justified on the basis of overall assessments of the competence profile for the position and the criteria stated in the job advertisement.

The assessment must be based on the factual information and assessments that have been obtained and documented through the evaluation process. The recommending authority is not allowed to attach importance to undocumented information that has not been investigated during the appointment process.

The recommendation must be based on assessment of the following:

- the applicant's application, CV and attachments.
- the expert committee's assessment.
- the project description (and the quality of the proposed project).
- interviews (including any case study/assignment).
- interviews of referees.
- personal aptitude and suitability.
- any other relevant forms of assessment, such as practical-pedagogical skills.

The best-qualified candidates, who have been interviewed, will be ranked in the recommendation. The recommendation forms the basis for the processing of the case by the appointment committee. The recommending authority submits proposals to the recommending board.

- When assessing applicants for **postdoctoral fellowship positions**, importance must be attached to documented academic qualifications, the project description (where required in the job advertisement), the quality of the proposed project, and personal aptitude and suitability.
- When assessing applicants for **PhD research fellowship positions**, importance must be attached to their perceived ability to complete the doctoral programme. The assessment is primarily based on documented qualifications and project description (where required in the job advertisement text), the quality of the project and the candidate's personal aptitude and suitability for the position.

The assessment must be based on the statutory qualification principle, which means that the best-qualified candidate in light of their education, experience and personal aptitude and suitability for the position must be appointed to the position.

In recruitments where there are multiple qualified applicants, the qualified applicants must be ranked. An account must be provided of the reason for the ranking of the recommended applicants.

If the recommendation deviates from the expert committee's ranking, this must be explained and justified explicitly.

The recommendation must be written using USN's recommendation template. The recommendation is prepared in collaboration with a personnel adviser from the Section for Recruitment and Personnel Management (SRP).

Applicants who have been interviewed must be informed of their ranking in the recommendation.

6.1 Application of the quota rules

If one sex is clearly underrepresented, and the applicants are equally or almost equally qualified, importance must be attached to achieving gender equality (cf. Section 7-1, second paragraph of the Universities and University Colleges Act).

If one sex accounts for less than 40% of the employees in a job category, this is normally regarded as under-representation. The assessment must consider whether the reason for the gender imbalance is systematic or random factors.

Applicants with a disability or an extended period of absence from work and education can be appointed if they are almost as well qualified as the best-qualified applicant.

7. APPOINTMENT AND THE APPOINTING AUTHORITY

Appointments must be made on the basis of a recommendation. **The appointing board** ultimately decides which of the recommended applicants is best qualified and will be offered the position. The appointing board's responsibilities include ensuring that the case has been properly processed in line with the applicable regulations, that equality considerations have been taken into account, and that the qualification principle has been observed.

In particular cases where the appointing board considers that the expert committee's assessment does not form an adequate basis for making a decision on appointment, the appointing board may decide to appoint a new expert committee to carry out a new expert assessment of the applicants.

Pursuant to Section 7-2 of the Universities and University Colleges Act as well as the University Board's decision on delegation of authority to underlying bodies (cf. Board decision 17/00393-1), the appointing authority is as follows:

- **Postdoctoral fellow:** The Appointment Committee for Teaching and Research Positions (TUF).
- **PhD research fellow:** The Appointment Committee for Fellowship Positions (TUS).
- **Research assistant:** The Director of Personnel and Organisation approve appointments of less than one year, on the recommendation of the Head of Department. Extensions that entail total employment as an academic assistant for more than one year must be submitted to the Appointment Committee for Teaching and Research Positions (TUF).

8. EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT FOR APPOINTMENT IN A RECRUITMENT POSITION ON A FIXED-TERM BASIS

An employment contract must be entered into before work commences for PhD research fellows, postdoctoral fellows and research assistants.

When determining the length of the fixed-term period, the institutions must (for PhD research fellows/postdoctoral fellows) ***take into account the nature of the work, and any time specified for other career-advancing work*** ([Section 3-16 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)) and the available funding. The distribution between the research project/artistic development work and career-advancing work must be specified in the employment contract on appointment. Agreements on significant changes in the scope of the career-advancing work in relation to the employment contract must be archived in P360.

If the fixed-term period is linked to a project, the employee (PhD research fellow/postdoctoral fellow) and the institution must prepare a description of the project and a realistic work plan for the execution of the project. ***The description of the project and the work plan must be available no later than three months after the employee's start date in the position*** ([Section 3-16 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)) and must be archived in P360. For PhD research fellows, the project description and work plan are archived in the doctoral folder together with the application for admission to a doctoral programme.

The employee (PhD research fellow/postdoctoral fellow) ***must have access to academic supervision throughout the entire term of employment*** ([Section 3-16 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)). Supervisor agreements must be archived.

If the conditions for appointment are not met – for example: lack of admission to a doctoral programme, work plan, performance or reporting – the basis for appointment lapses and the employer may consider terminating the employment contract and ending the employment relationship (Section 20 of the Civil Service Act and Chapter 15 of the Working Environment Act).

8.1 Academic supervision and mentoring for postdoctoral fellows

At start-up, it must be made clear who is responsible for following up the employee with academic supervision and guidance (cf. the project description and work plan). In addition, the postdoctoral fellow should be offered a mentor, participation in a mentoring programme or participation in a postdoctoral fellow network where this exists.

Both the academic supervisor and the employee have a duty to report any failure to execute the project and/or non-compliance with the work plan to the employer.

8.2 Terms and conditions of appointment for PhD research fellows

It is a condition for appointment that the PhD research fellow is admitted to [a doctoral programme at USN](#) and meets the requirements relating to reporting and other obligations for the doctoral programme.

A complete application for admission to a doctoral programme must be submitted no later than three months after taking up the position (cf. [Section 3-19 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#) on the requirements regarding a “binding agreement on admission”).

Admission to doctoral programmes is decided by the programme committee for the individual doctoral programme at USN.

PhD research fellows are employed at the faculty where they are going to be admitted to a doctoral programme, normally at the faculty where the candidate has their main supervisor and their daily place of work. This faculty has employer responsibility for the PhD research fellow. Transfer to another doctoral programme may only take place by agreement with the employer.

If the PhD research fellow works at another faculty or externally, the parties agree in the doctoral agreement how the necessary equipment and operating resources will be financed and made available to the PhD research fellow.

On direct transfer from a position as a PhD research fellow to another position, the time spent on own doctoral work is not included in the term of employment. Any leaves of absence or extension of the term of office pursuant to Section 3-17 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges are not included in the period of employment. Time spent on other career-advancing work during the fixed-term period is added up and counted as a continuous period ([Section 3-17 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).

9. LEAVES OF ABSENCE AND EXTENSION OF THE TERM OF EMPLOYMENT

This chapter does not apply to research assistants.

Leaves of absence are mainly regulated in [Section 3-17 Leaves of absence and extension of the term of employment](#) in the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act.

The career plan must be updated in the event of a lengthy period of leave, or whenever necessary.

9.1 Statutory and contractual entitlement to leave and an extension

Any leaves of absence and reduced working hours to which the employee in a recruitment position is entitled by law or collective agreement, and sick leave, entitle the employee to an extension of the term of employment ([Section 3-17 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)). Entitlement to leaves of absence includes sick leave, self-certification of absence, absence due to illness and care for children, parental leave and other entitlement leave. Absence is calculated from the first day of absence.

In special cases, institutions may extend the length of the fixed term in the event of unforeseen obstacles related to the work that are not the fault of the employee ([Section 3-17 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).

In principle, welfare leave does not entitle the employee to an extension of the employment period. However, it may be possible to grant an extension on application in particular cases where the period of welfare leave entails continuous absence of five working days or more.

Applying for an extension

Postdoctoral fellows and PhD research fellows who apply for extension of the term of employment on the basis of periods of leave to which they are entitled, such as parental leave, sick leave and other leave entitlement, must send a brief application to the Section for Recruitment and Personnel Management (SRP) via postmottak@usn.no, with a copy to their immediate manager. Such applications are processed administratively by the Section for Recruitment and Personnel Management in accordance with the aforementioned legislation.

9.2 Leaves of absence and extensions up to six months due to temporary replacement appointments

A leave of absence may be granted for absence due to short-term temporary replacement work in teaching and research positions and for periods spent abroad on a scholarship, etc., if this can be done without reducing the progress of the postdoctoral project or doctoral education by more than a maximum of six months. The period of employment must be extended accordingly ([Section 3-17 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).

Leaves of absence for postdoctoral fellows that are not statutory or contractual, such as this leave, is not an entitlement and must be requested by sending an application to the head of department. Leaves of absence that the head of department does not approve must be forwarded to the Appointment Committee for Teaching and Research Positions (TUF) for postdoctoral fellows and by the Appointment Committee for Fellowship Positions (TUS) for PhD research fellows for approval. Nor is the employee obliged to perform work at the department beyond the agreed research project and career-advancing work.

A leave of absence may only be granted when the individual's supervisor deems it academically justifiable, an adjusted plan for the completion of the doctoral education has been prepared, and the

head of department deems it acceptable in terms of staffing and finances. For PhD research fellows and postdoctoral fellows, it is assumed that the person in question will be able to complete the project/doctoral degree by the end of the extension.

If the employee and their supervisor are of the opinion that the work for which a leave of absence is being sought will enhance the expertise and career prospects of the PhD research fellow/postdoctoral fellow, and there is sufficient internal or external funding for the work, it must be assessed whether the work can be included as career-advancing work in a revised career plan.

Applying for an extension

Postdoctoral fellows and PhD research fellows who apply for an extension of the term of employment on the basis of other work must send an application to the Section for Recruitment and Personnel Management (SRP) via postmottak@usn.no with a copy to their line manager, main supervisor and the responsible PhD coordinator. The application must state the type of work that is to be performed. The line manager and main supervisor write a statement concerning the application, which is sent to the Section for Recruitment and Personnel Management (SRP) via p360. The statement must specify whether this can be included as career-advancing work. Applications for PhD research fellowships are processed by the Appointment Committee for Fellowship Positions (TUS) and applications for postdoctoral fellowships are processed by the Appointment Committee for Teaching and Research Positions (TUF).

9.3 Extension for career-advancing work

Institutions may extend the length of the fixed term for PhD research fellows and postdoctoral fellows up to the maximum time limit for the fixed-term position, i.e. up to four work-years, if the scope of other career-advancing work has increased significantly after the individual took up the position ([Section 3-17 of the Regulations pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act](#)).

If the length of the fixed term is extended after appointment on the basis of the scope of other career-advancing work, this must be applied for to the Appointment Committee for Fellowship Positions (TUS). The career plan must also be updated and attached to the application.

Applying for an extension

PhD research fellows and postdoctoral fellows who apply for an extension of the employment period due to the scope of other career-advancing work must send an application to the Section for Recruitment and Personnel Management (SRP) via postmottak@usn.no with a copy to their line manager, main supervisor and/or project manager and/or the responsible PhD coordinator. The application must document the reason for the increased scope of the career-advancing work and must be accompanied by an agreed updated career plan. The line manager and main supervisor and/or the project manager must write a statement concerning the application, which is sent to the Section for Recruitment and Personnel Management (SRP) via p360. Applications for postdoctoral fellows are processed by the Appointment Board for Teaching and Research Positions (TUF). Applications for PhD research fellows are processed by the Appointment Committee for Fellowship Positions (TUS).