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Appointment of docents at the Faculty of Business, Science and Engineering

Policy document Örebro University

Category: Guidelines

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General

Docent is an academic title that primarily indicates that the holder has demonstrated autonomous research ability and teaching competency and possesses a considerably higher level of research expertise than what is required for a doctoral degree.

Those appointed as docents are expected to accept assignments as external reviewers, doctoral supervisors, members of examining committees at doctoral defences and other expert assignments, as well as actively assume responsibility for, and be proactive in, teaching as well as in research.

The vice-chancellor has established the following principles for appointment of docents¹:

- To appoint a researcher as a docent, the appointment must be deemed to benefit research and education at the faculty.
- Docents are normally appointed in a main field of study and/or third-cycle subject area taught at Örebro University.
- A person who has obtained a doctoral degree is qualified for the appointment as a docent.
- Each faculty board determines guidelines with criteria for research expertise and teaching qualifications and experience, as well as any other requirements for the appointment as a docent.

Application and decision

An application for appointment as a docent is made using the official form². The Academic Appointments Committee prepares applications and the decision to grant or reject an application then rests with the faculty board.

To qualify for an appointment as docent, the quality requirements within the criteria research expertise and teaching competency must be fulfilled. When assessing an application, lower quality within one criteria cannot be compensated for by higher quality within the other. Furthermore, the appointment as docent must bring benefits to both research and education within the faculty.

Benefits

The Academic Appointments Committee is tasked with assessing whether the docentship will be beneficial for the research and education within the faculty. Their assessment will be based on documentation provided by the head of subject and head of school, respectively.

The assessment of any benefits will also consider the applicant's interaction with the surrounding community by means of disseminating knowledge and cooperating with

¹ Key principles for the appointment of docents, recognised university teachers and distinguished university teachers, guidelines, ORU 2025/01150.

² An application form can be found on the faculty's webpage on docentships, at www.oru.se/english

authorities, industry and the civil society. Examples of such activities are publishing popular science, giving presentations and media participation.

Based on the applicant's current and planned future activities, the Academic Appointments Committee is tasked with assessing whether the docentship will be beneficial for the research and education within the main field of study or doctoral subject area to which the docentship, under the proposal in question, is linked.

Those appointed docents must be available for assignments as external reviewers, doctoral supervisors, members of examining committees at doctoral defences and other expert assignments, as well as actively assume responsibility for, and be proactive in, teaching as well as in research. This also applies to external applicants.

Docentship subject area

If, according to the Academic Appointments Committee, there are special grounds, a docent may be appointed in a main field of study/doctoral subject area other than those established at Örebro University. This could for example be the case if the subject is a doctoral subject area at another Swedish higher education institution; if the faculty intends to build competency within the field in order to establish it as a main field of study or doctoral subject area; or if the subject is of cross-boundary character.

Docentships at other higher education institutions

For anyone who has been appointed docent at another Swedish higher education institution and is subsequently employed at Örebro University, there is no need to apply to transfer the docentship as the title has full validity also at Örebro University.

An employee at Örebro University who has been awarded a title equivalent to docent in another Nordic country needs to apply for a docentship at Örebro University. Based on the application and the other higher education institution's guidelines and processes surrounding docentships, the Academic Appointments Committee will make an assessment whether or not the applicant fulfils the criteria for a docentship at Örebro University, and whether obtaining an external expert opinion is therefore unnecessary. In all other cases, applications will be processed as per standard procedure.

External applicants

External applicants must meet the same criteria as other applicants, with the exception of the requirement of having completed 10 weeks of qualifying courses in higher education pedagogy, or equivalent. However, the requirement of having completed the course *Supervising PhD Students*, or an equivalent course, remains.

Research expertise

The applicant must be able to demonstrate a considerably higher level of research expertise and ability than what is required for a doctoral degree. Some consideration may be given to ongoing and planned research.

Progression

To be appointed docent, applicants are expected to demonstrate academic progression and that they have contributed to the international research field. Their research output must exhibit sufficient scientific breadth and depth as well as originality.

The works referred to in the application must be published or accepted for publication in renowned international peer-reviewed journals. The different publishing traditions of subjects are, however, to be taken into account when applications are assessed, and the publication criteria are to be adapted to the conditions and publishing practice of each subject.

The number of co-authors and the degree to which the applicant has contributed to the publications will be considered in the assessment. A high number of publications cannot compensate for low quality, but excellent quality can compensate for having fewer publications. The publications listed in the application must not contain significant overlaps, nor must there be significant overlaps between the publications listed and the applicant's doctoral thesis.

Applicants from subjects within the natural sciences or engineering will generally be expected to list at least 10 original publications of good quality, in addition to the studies included in the doctoral thesis. This number should be used as a guideline in the assessment of the publications' scientific quality.

Applicants from subjects within the humanities and social sciences will generally be expected to demonstrate research output equivalent to at least one doctoral thesis of high quality, in addition to the studies included in the applicant's doctoral thesis.

Developed autonomy

Following the award of their doctoral degree, the applicant is to have developed their autonomy as a researcher. This means that the applicant should be principal researcher, without their previous principal or assistant supervisors as co-authors, on at least two of the original publications listed in the application. A person is considered 'principal researcher' with regard to the work that underlies a publication, if they have not been any less responsible for the work than any of their co-authors. Autonomy is demonstrated by means of the applicant describing their contribution to each co-authored publication that is listed in their application.

Research leadership

Following the award of their doctoral degree, the applicant is to have gained experience of leading research activities. If such experience is limited, this can be compensated for by having obtained external research funding as principal applicant or co-applicant.

Teaching competency

Teaching experience is normally to comprise at least 440 clock hours, of which a maximum of 40 hours may consist of supervision on the first (bachelor's) or second (master's) level.

In addition, the applicant must:

- have completed 10 weeks of qualifying courses on higher education pedagogy (15 credits) or equivalent, or be considered to have corresponding competence,
- have completed the course Supervising PhD Students or an equivalent course,
- have been an assistant supervisor for a maximum of two doctoral students for at least one year in total,
- have had course coordination responsibilities, undertaken course development or educational development work, or authored teaching materials.

Moreover:

- the applicant's teaching competency will be assessed based on their own reflections on their role as supervisor, their planned future teaching activities, as well as on the quality and scope of their experience of using various methods of teaching, for example, lectures, seminars, demonstrations and supervision. Teaching experience may include teaching at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels.
- the applicant is to have a good ability to impart knowledge and communicate research findings to students, doctoral students and colleagues within the subject area. This ability will be evaluated specifically in a trial lecture once a positive external expert's opinion has been submitted. The head of subject decides on the content of the trial lecture. When a decision has been made to organise a trial lecture, it falls on the head of subject to make the arrangements, in accordance with Annex 1.

External expert assessment

The applicant's research expertise and teaching competency must be assessed by at least one external expert. The person appointed as the external expert must be a professor (unless there are special grounds) and cannot be employed by, or affiliated to, Örebro University.

External experts should normally be employed at another Swedish higher education institution. Someone working at a higher education institution outside Sweden may, however, be appointed if there are special grounds. In such a case, they must be very familiar with the requirements for appointment as a docent in Sweden. As a general rule, the external expert should not previously or in any other context have assessed the applicant. If the person nominated as external expert has previously been an external expert for the applicant or been the external reviewer or a member of the examining committee at the applicant's defence of their thesis, the head of subject must provide the reasons for the nomination in writing.

Enter into force

These guidelines enter into force on February 15 2024. Applications that have been submitted to the records office before this date will be assessed in accordance with the previous guidelines.

Annex 1, Trial lecture

1. The Academic Appointments Committee instructs the head of subject to propose the topic and date for the applicant's trial lecture for appointment as a docent. The lecture is expected to last 45 minutes and may be given to students at the bachelor's level as part of the regular course activities, or as an open popular science presentation of the applicant's research. The lecture may be held in Swedish or English. The applicant should demonstrate their ability to convey relevant information in a clear way.
2. The Academic Appointments Committee appoints an assessment panel consisting of three members/substitutes from the committee. The assessment panel appoints a chair from within the panel.
3. In consultation with the assessment panel, the head of subject sets the date and books the venue. The head of subject sends out invitations to the lecture and informs the committee secretary of the date, time, venue and lecture title, as well as of the applicant's name. The secretary enters the lecture in the university's web calendar and prepares the assessment document for the assessment panel to use after the trial lecture.
4. Immediately after the lecture, the assessment panel convenes. The meeting is held in two parts. During the first part, the head of subject will be present to answer any questions. The second part is reserved for the assessment panel's closed deliberations and decision whether or not to approve the trial lecture. The head of subject has the right of attendance and to speak during the first part of the meeting.
5. Quorum is reached when at least two members are present. A decision to approve the trial lecture requires the support of at least two members.

The signed minutes are submitted to the university's records office.
6. In the assessment, the following criteria are to be considered:
 - i) Was the topic covered adequately?
 - ii) Was the degree of difficulty appropriate?
 - iii) Was the content well organised?
 - iv) Were any illustrations satisfactory? (Quantity, quality, understanding etc.)
 - v) Was the pace appropriate?
 - vi) Did it end on time?
 - vii) Was the message of the lecture clear?
7. In the event of the trial lecture not being approved, the Academic Appointments Committee will review, on a case-by-case basis, the possibility for the applicant to give a new lecture.