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

Policy document Örebro University

Category: Guidelines

Reg. no: 2025/05947

Adopted by: Faculty Board of Business, Science and Engineering

Adopted: 2016-06-14

Last revised: 2025-12-04

Document owner: Faculty Office



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1 General

‘Docent’ is a title of recognition that indicates that the title holder has a higher level of research expertise than what is required for a doctoral degree and that they have demonstrated both autonomous research ability and teaching qualifications and experience.

Those appointed as docents are expected to accept assignments as doctoral supervisor, external reviewer and member of examining committees at doctoral defences, and other expert roles, as well as to actively assume responsibility for and be proactive in the university’s research environment. Docents employed at the university are also expected to make themselves available for various assignments within the organisation, for instance in preparatory and decision-making bodies.

The vice-chancellor has established the following principles for appointing 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.

1.1 Application and decision

An application for appointment as a docent must be made following special instructions². There are several steps in the decision-making process relating to an appointment and they involve the Academic Appointments Committee, the chair of the Academic Appointments Committee, and the faculty board, in accordance with faculty board delegations.

1.2 Benefits

The Academic Appointments Committee will assess, based on an opinion provided by the head of subject, whether an appointment of the candidate as a docent would benefit research and education at the faculty.

1.3 Subject for the docentship

Docents are normally appointed in established main fields of study/third-cycle subject areas taught at Örebro University. If, according to the Academic Appointments Committee, there are special grounds, a docent may be appointed in a main field of

¹ Key principles for the appointment of docents, recognised university teachers and distinguished university teachers, guidelines, ORU 2025/01550.

² The application form can be found on the faculty website about docentships at www.oru.se.

study/third-cycle subject area other than those established at Örebro University. This could for example be a subject that is a third-cycle subject area at another Swedish higher education institution or if the faculty intends to build competency within the field in order to establish it as a main field of study/third-cycle subject area or if the subject is of a cross-boundary nature.

1.4 Docentships at other higher education institutions

A person appointed as docent at another Swedish higher education institution who is subsequently employed at Örebro University does not need to apply for a transfer of their docentship, as the title will remain fully valid also at Örebro University.

An employee at Örebro University who has been appointed as a docent at a higher education institution 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 it is clear that 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.

1.5 External applicants

External applicants can also be appointed as docents at Örebro University. They 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. However, the requirement of having completed the course Supervising PhD Students, or equivalent, remains.

2 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.

2.1 Progression

To be appointed as docent, applicants are expected to demonstrate scholarly progression, where their research output must exhibit sufficient scientific depth and subject breadth as well as originality. By means of their research output, applicants are expected to have made significant research contributions to their field and have contributed to the international research field.

2.3 Quality of research output

Normally, an applicant's research output must be the equivalent of at least a further doctoral thesis of high quality and have been documented through works that are published or accepted for publication in renowned, peer-reviewed, high-quality, international research publishing channels and archives for long-term preservation.

The different publishing traditions of subjects can, however, be taken into account when applications are assessed, and the publication criteria can be adapted to the publishing practice of each subject. The head of subject must specifically comment on the quality of the applicant's research output in relation to the subject's/research specialisation's publishing traditions.

The number of 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 cited publications may not contain extensive overlaps, something that also applies to the cited publications in relation to the applicant's doctoral thesis.

2.4 Developed autonomy

Following the award of their doctoral degree, the applicant must have developed their autonomy as a researcher. Autonomy here means an ability to pursue their own line of research, which to a significant extent further develops the theme of the doctoral thesis or makes significant contributions in a new direction. This autonomy should be demonstrated through publications where their previous supervisors are not listed as co-authors. The applicant can also demonstrate their autonomy by having been awarded external research funding as the principal applicant or in other specific ways that show that the applicant has further developed their autonomy following the award of their doctoral degree.

2.5 Research ethics

All applicants must have completed a compulsory course on ethics for researchers approved by the faculty board.

3 Research communication

The applicant must have strong skills in imparting knowledge and communicating research findings to a broader audience that are not experts in the research field. This ability is to be demonstrated through a docent lecture on a theme related to the applicant's own research, following a positive external expert opinion. If a decision is made that a lecture be held, the responsibility for organising it lies with the head of subject, as instructed in the annex to these guidelines.

4 Teaching qualifications and experience

The appointment as docent is based on an overall assessment of both research expertise and teaching qualifications and experience. Research expertise is decisive. At the same time, documented teaching qualifications and experience are a prerequisite.

To be appointed as a docent, the applicant must:

- have completed 10 weeks of qualifying courses on higher education pedagogy or equivalent or be considered to have corresponding qualifications and experience.

- have teaching experience that as a rule comprise at least 440 clock hours on first-, second- and/or third-cycle courses and study programmes, of which a maximum of 40 hours may consist of supervision. The applicant should have experience of various teaching formats, such as lectures, seminars, supervision, etc. The applicant's experience is to be verified by a statement from their head of division.
- have completed the course Supervising PhD Students or equivalent.

5 External expert assessment

The applicant's research expertise is to be assessed by at least one external expert. The person nominated as external expert is to be a professor (unless there are special grounds) and may not be employed by or affiliated to Örebro University.

As a rule, external experts should work in Sweden. Someone working outside Sweden may, however, be appointed if there are special grounds; in which case, they must be familiar with the requirements for appointment as a docent in Sweden. As a rule, the external expert should not previously or in any other context have assessed the applicant or otherwise be disqualified from the assignment. 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.

Enter into force

These guidelines will enter into force on 1 January 2026. Applications received by the Records Office prior to that date will be assessed in accordance with previous guidelines.

Annex, Docent lecture

1. The Academic Appointments Committee instructs the head of subject to propose the topic and date for the applicant's docent lecture. The lecture is expected to last 45 minutes and be an open popular science presentation on a theme related to the applicant's research. The lecture is to be held in Swedish or English. The applicant should demonstrate their ability to communicate relevant information in a clear way.
 2. The Academic Appointments Committee appoints an interdisciplinary assessment panel consisting of three members/substitutes from the committee. The panel appoints a chair from within the panel.
 3. In consultation with the assessment panel, the head of subject sets the date, books the venue and issues an invitation to the lecture.
 4. Immediately after the lecture, the assessment panel convenes. The meeting is held in two parts. The first part provides the panel with an opportunity to obtain information from the head of subject. The second part is reserved for the assessment panel's closed deliberations and decision whether or not to deem the docent lecture satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The head of subject has the right of attendance and a right to speak during the first part of the meeting.
 5. The assessment panel members may attend the lecture in person or online. A decision to deem the lecture satisfactory must be supported by at least two panel members.
- The signed minutes are to be submitted to the Faculty Office.
6. In the assessment, the following criteria are to be considered:
 - The applicant demonstrates an ability to make the content accessible to a interdisciplinary audience.
 - The presentation is marked by strong communicative engagement.
 - The presentation is organised in a balanced and effective way.
 7. In the event of the docent lecture being deemed unsatisfactory, the Academic Appointments Committee will review, on a case-by-case basis, the possibility for the applicant to give a new lecture.