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Appointment of docents at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Policy document Örebro University

Category: Guidelines

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1 General

Docent is an academic title that primarily indicates that the holder has demonstrated the ability to independently conduct research that has made a significant contribution to the field of study. A docentship is therefore an intermediate stage between a doctoral degree (basic research ability) and professorship (proven research leadership ability), with the emphasis on the autonomy of research.

Those appointed to a docentship are expected to accept assignments as doctoral supervisor, external reviewer or member of examining committee at doctoral defences and other expert roles, as well as to contribute to and participate in the university's research environment.

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.

1.1 Benefit to research and education

For applicants employed as a teacher/researcher at the faculty, a docentship is generally deemed to be of benefit to research and education at the faculty. For other applicants, the Academic Appointments Committee will make an assessment based on documentation provided by the head of subject in order to determine whether an appointment to a docentship will benefit research and education at the faculty.

1.2 Subject for the docentship

Docents are normally appointed in established main fields of study/third-cycle subjects taught at the faculty.

1.3 Docentships at other higher education institutions

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

An employee of Örebro University who holds a title equivalent to docent awarded in another country may supplement their application for a docentship with their previous

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

application for validation. The Academic Appointments Committee will assess the application in relation to the faculty's criteria for appointment as a docent and make a proposal to the faculty board for a decision on whether to make an appointment. The Academic Appointments Committee may also decide that the application should undergo thorough external expert assessment before a proposal is submitted to the faculty board.

2 Research expertise

In addition to the requirements for a Degree of Doctor, the applicant shall demonstrate a high level of research expertise and ability. For appointment as a docent, the applicant shall be able to demonstrate *progression* in relation to their doctoral thesis in both the depth and breadth of research, in terms of research questions, empirical study, theoretical grasp and methodological and analytical ability. The focus on depth contra breadth may however vary between these various aspects.

In addition, the applicant shall have a proven ability to *independently* conduct research by initiating, planning, implementing and publishing studies that make a significant contribution to their field of research. The cited publications shall demonstrate that the applicant has conducted and published the research autonomously. The division of labour in co-authored publications shall be considered in the assessment. Autonomy of research should be supported by the applicant describing their own contribution to each cited co-authored publication on which their application rests.

It is also important that the applicant has contributed to *research internationally*. The cited publications should therefore primarily include international publications. Deviations from these guidelines are accepted if there are no relevant international publication channels for the field of study in question, in which case the reasons for the deviation shall be provided by the applicant and substantiated by the head of subject.

In addition to the doctoral thesis, the applicant may cite a maximum of nine publications for assessment by the external experts². Publications are to be scholarly, published after the applicant has obtained their doctoral degree and in terms of quality, they are to significantly contribute to the field. The majority of the cited publications shall be published in journals or by publishers that apply external peer-review, for example via the Kriterium platform³. In addition, publications by publishers or in journals with an editorial review process may also be cited.

In scope, the cited research contributions are to correspond to at least one further doctoral thesis and be on par with the research contributions required for appointment as docent in the subject nationally. The cited publications may not contain extensive overlaps, which also applies to the cited publications in relation to the applicant's doctoral thesis.

3 Teaching qualifications and experience

² Published in print or in electronic format.

³ www.kriterium.se

Appointment to a docentship requires teaching and supervisory experience equivalent to 1,600 hours after the completion of doctoral studies. Teaching and supervisory experience shall primarily have been acquired in, or be of relevance to, the subject area for the docentship.

The applicant shall have proven ability to teach and supervise. This ability shall be certified by the director of division or equivalent.

It is also a requirement that the applicant has completed the course *Supervising PhD Students* or an equivalent course.

4 External expert assessment

In assessing the applicant's research expertise, the opinion of at least one external expert shall be obtained. If two external experts are appointed, one woman and one man should be appointed. External experts should normally be employed at another Swedish higher education institution and should not have been employed at Örebro University recently. Someone working at a higher education institution outside Sweden may however be appointed if special reasons exist; in which case, they shall be familiar with the requirements for appointment as a docent in Sweden. Those appointed as an external expert shall be a professor or, under exceptional circumstances, an experienced docent⁴.

The applicant's prospects of having their application assessed objectively shall be assured. The external expert should therefore be directly and indirectly independent in relation to the applicant. The external applicant shall not have had any research collaborations with or assessed the applicant in any other context (for example in connection with employment or as an external reviewer or member of the examining committee for the applicant's doctoral thesis).

In a written statement, the external expert is to substantiate their assessment of whether the applicant meets the requirements for research expertise.

⁴ For this purpose, the term *experienced* refers to a minimum of five years in the post and having published research studies within the field of study/subject to which the appointment relates.

5 Application and decision

An application for appointment as a docent is to be made using a designated form⁵. The Academic Appointments Committee prepares the application for appointment before the decision. The decision to approve or reject an application for appointment as a docent rests with the faculty board.

A person who has applied for appointment as a docent but has not had their application approved may submit a new application at a later date. In such cases, the applicant is expected to have acquired further qualifications and addressed those aspects that were considered insufficient in connection with the previous application.

5.1 Quality review process at the school prior to application

Each subject is expected to have in place an internal, collegial process for quality review prior to an applicant submitting their application for appointment as a docent. In consultation with the supervisors' committee/research committee, the head of subject is responsible for the design of the subject's review process. Each application shall, however, always be reviewed by one or more professors within the subject in question or a closely related one.

The purpose of the internal review is to assess whether someone's research qualifications and experiences are sufficient to enable an application for appointment as a docent. The assessment shall be based on these guidelines and on the subject's/field's publishing patterns and result in a written statement to be attached to the application. The statement shall be written by the head of subject. This may be done in consultation with/based on documentation provided by the professor(s) responsible for the internal review.

The written statement shall contain a description of the quality review process that has preceded the submission of the application. It must state that the head of subject recommends the submission of the application and that it is their assessment that the qualifications cited are of sufficient scope and quality to enable assessment by external experts. Where relevant, the statement shall contain a comment on any deviations from the criteria that the cited publications should primarily include international publications.

6 Docent lecture

Once appointed docent, it is recommended that the docent gives an introductory lecture on their research. The target group may be the local community, fellow researchers or students. It is the responsibility of the relevant head of subject to arrange such a lecture together with the docent.

⁵ The application form for docentships has been approved by the dean and is available on the faculty website, www.oru.se

7 Enter into force

These guidelines will enter into force on 1 April 2024. Applications received by the Records Office prior to that date will be assessed in accordance with previous guidelines.