

Guide to expert committees for appointments to PhD positions

Adopted by the Faculty Board on 24 September 2024, revised 7 May 2025 (foreign degree).

1. Background and governing documents

The following documents form the basis for the work undertaken by the expert committee:

- Act no. 9 of 8 March 2024 relating to universities and university colleges and appurtenant regulations (Regulation no. 1392 of 28 June 2024), Chapter 3.
- “Regulations for appointment to academic positions and technical and/or administrative management positions” (adopted by the University Board on 28 May 2014 with subsequent amendments and included in the University’s Rules and Regulations).
- The wording of the announcement of the post and the detailed description of the position

The chair of the committee is responsible for ensuring that the committee’s recommendations comply with the guidelines.

- First, the committee must determine which applicants are considered qualified for the post.
- If there are several qualified applicants, the committee must then rank the candidates.

The ranking of the applicants must be based on an overall assessment. When assessing candidates for appointments in general, importance must be attached to the individual’s education, experience and personal suitability for the post. In connection with applications for PhD positions, the applicants’ ability to complete a doctorate within the framework for the position must be assessed specifically. This means it must be assessed whether the applicant shows the potential to be able to produce a scholarly work at a high academic level within a time frame of three years.

2. Assessment of whether the applicant is qualified for the position

In its recommendation, the expert committee must provide a reasoned assessment of whether the various applicants are regarded as qualified for the position. In this context, the committee must assess whether the applicant meets the academic criteria for admission to the PhD programme at the Faculty of Law, and whether the applicant meets any additional requirements specified in the announcement of the specific position in question.

The requirements specified below should be understood as independent criteria. The committee must also make an overall assessment of whether the applicant is academically qualified for appointment.

a) Requirements relating to lower degrees

According to the [programme description](#) for the PhD programme, a five-year master’s degree or equivalent education is an absolute requirement. The former Norwegian degrees

“*Cand.jur.*” and “*hovedfag*” are considered equivalent education, and the committee may, after special assessment, also approve other education.

When assessing lower degrees, the committee must pay particular attention to the formulations used in the announcement of the post. If the requirement is a “master’s degree in law or equivalent legal education”, the applicant must have an education that qualifies them to work as a legal adviser. If the requirement is a “master’s degree in law or equivalent education”, this means that other education at a level equivalent to a master’s degree may also qualify the applicant if it can form the basis for embarking on a doctoral thesis in law. In cases where the applicant does not have education within the field of law, the committee must undertake a specific assessment of the applicant’s qualifications and decide whether these provide an adequate basis for completing the PhD programme and the proposed PhD project.

The Faculty stresses that applicants from the EU, EEA and other countries must not be discriminated against on the basis of their nationality. For overseas applicants, the committee must assess whether their education is equivalent to the requirements stipulated in the announcement of the post.

Applicants who document a degree obtained outside Scandinavia will be evaluated by the faculty according to the regulations of the [Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education](#). The committee can ask the administration to obtain such an assessment from HK-dir, if applicable. Applicants with education from outside Scandinavia must include a certified translation to English or Scandinavian if the original diplomas, transcripts, and additional documentation are not in one of these languages. Applicants are usually also requested to submit a *Diploma Supplement* with a standardized description of the structure, level, content, and status of the applicant's education. If these documents – certified translations and *Diploma Supplement* – are not submitted, the education cannot be evaluated, and the application may be considered unqualified.

b) Requirements relating to academic level

According to the programme description for the PhD in law, applicants must provide documentary evidence showing that they have a high academic level. This requirement can be fulfilled in two ways:

- 1) *The applicant has a weighted average grade of B or better.*

In the calculation of average grade, the different grades are weighted according to the number of credits they represent. A slightly lower average grade may be accepted if the grades show progress towards the end of the programme of study and/or in areas that are relevant to the applicant’s PhD project. For overseas applicants, the “diploma supplement” or equivalent document will provide an explanation of the grading system at the relevant institutions and what percentage of students get the different grades as an average over an extended period of time.

- 2) *Through scholarly works on law and/or other experience, the applicant has documented an academic level corresponding to a weighted average grade of B or better.*

For applicants who do not meet the requirement relating to grade level, the committee can assess whether scholarly works on law, experience and/or other factors may make up for the insufficient average grade level. The committee's starting point must be that the lower the applicant's average grade level, the higher the requirements for other documentation that the candidate is able to perform at a high academic level.

The overall assessment can include published and unpublished academic works. The committee must conduct a quality assessment in accordance with the practice established for peer review as to whether the works demonstrate the capacity for independent work and contribute to the development of new academic knowledge. The fact that a work has not been published is of no significance, but the committee must then assess whether the work is sufficiently polished to document a high academic level. In the event of co-authored work, the applicant's contributions must be identified, for example, through a co-author declaration.

Weight may be attached to any additional education in an overall assessment, especially if the education is relevant to the specific project. Limited weight will normally be attached to any additional examinations that are not related to law subjects.

Work experience should not in principle be regarded as documentation of a high academic level. Weight may nevertheless be attached to documented experience of work on assignments and/or topics that are relevant to the project or illustrate the ability to carry out a thesis project, such as work related to official studies, inquiries or reports.

Master's theses or other student works are in principle part of an examination performance and should not be assessed as scholarly work (unless they have been published in recognised channels). An assessment of the academic level of the applicants' master's theses and any other student works is included in the overall assessment of whether the applicant has a sufficiently high academic level.

c) Requirements relating to the project description

Applicants must normally include a project description that conforms to the requirements regarding format and content specified in the Guidelines for applicants for PhD positions. If the wording of the announcement for the post requests a different format and/or content, the requirements in the wording of the announcement apply. In its assessment, the committee must attach importance to:

- The main topic and hypotheses and/or research questions have been clearly explained, and whether topics have been identified that are suitably specific and delimited for treatment in a PhD project.
- The reasoning behind and justification for the project have been explained, and whether the project description shows that the project will contribute to new knowledge in the subject area.

- The project relates to existing research in the field, and whether the project description shows good knowledge of the relevant research area.
- The description of the theory and methods is credible and suitable for the research question of the project, or (as applicable) that it seems feasible to develop appropriate methods and theories during the research project.
- Any risks and/or research ethical aspects of the project have been considered, and whether the project description adequately explains how these challenges will be addressed.
- A work plan has been prepared for the various parts of the research work that shows that it is probable that the project can be completed within the standard time frame and the given funding framework.

If no project description has been submitted or if it contains obvious shortcomings, the applicant must be assessed as not qualified for the position. The same applies in cases where the project description does not satisfy any additional requirements regarding the topic or methodology specified in the wording of the announcement for the post, even if the project otherwise has qualities that might have provided a basis for admission. If the committee finds that a candidate meets all the other requirements for appointment as a research fellow, but that the project outline will require significant further development or reworking to provide a basis for admission to the PhD programme, this must be noted in the assessment report.

d) Requirements relating to language proficiency

In line with the programme description for the PhD programme, a good command of English is expected for applicants without proficiency in Norwegian or another Scandinavian language. If the required language skills are not documented, the applicant may be assessed as not qualified for the position. If the committee is in doubt as to whether the applicant meets the requirements, this must be noted in the assessment report.

e) Other requirements

The announcement of the position may specify requirements for qualifications that go beyond the requirements for admission to the PhD programme. These requirements will often be related to experience in a specific area of law. The committee must clarify whether the applicants meet these requirements.

3. Assessment and ranking of qualified applicants

When ranking multiple applicants, the committee must attach weight to:

- The applicant's academic level
- The quality of the project outline
- The applicant's other qualifications

A PhD degree is a necessary qualification for a career in academia, and recent graduates without other academic qualifications should have the opportunity to become PhD research

fellows. The committee must therefore take into account how long it has been since the applicant completed their education in its overall assessment of the applicant's academic level. The applicant's academic level and the quality of the project outline should normally weigh more heavily than other qualifications.

Academic level

In its assessment, the committee must attach importance to the applicants' grades, the quality of their scholarly work or other written work, and any other relevant factors. The committee must also assess the relevance of their documented education, experience and work to the PhD project and the announced position. The committee has the opportunity to assess specifically the scope, relevance and quality of the applicant's master's thesis.

Quality of the project outline

When assessing the project description, importance must be attached to the level of knowledge and analysis demonstrated by the applicant, awareness of both the potential and the risks of the project, and the academic level generally reflected in the description.

Other qualifications and characteristics

The wording of the announcement for the post may stipulate additional desired qualifications for the position that the committee must take into account. In general, importance can be attached to the following factors:

- Completion of the research option at master's level ("*Forskerlinjen*")
- Teaching qualifications (e.g. work as a study group tutor or research assistant with teaching assignments)
- Dissemination work (for example, authoring reports)
- Academic qualifications of a different nature (for example, experience as a research assistant or other work experience as a legal adviser)
- Administrative qualifications and other relevant experience
- Voluntary positions

4. Form of assessment

The committee's recommendation must be designed so that the following points are covered:

- An account of the committee's formal basis for its assessments: the Regulations, applicable documents from the University of Bergen's Rules and Regulations, the wording of the announcement for the post and job description, guidelines, etc. that have formed the basis for the committee's work.
- An account of all the applications for the position. Each applicant must be listed with their name and personal details, and the committee must state whether the individual applicant meets the formal requirements specified in the announcement for the post and whether all the necessary documentation has been submitted with the application. For applicants who do not meet the requirements, a brief account must be given of where the applicant or application falls short.

- A description of the assessment of the applicants who meet the formal requirements. A brief description must be provided of each applicant, mentioning their education, any professional experience, and other qualifying merits. The project description must be discussed separately, and the committee must assess the project's potential for a PhD in law. The committee must also assess any submitted scholarly works. The assessment of each applicant culminates in a conclusion about whether or not the applicant in question is qualified for the position.
- Finally, the committee provides an overall comparative assessment of the best qualified applicants as a basis for ranking at least three candidates, if this many are found to be qualified.

The committee must provide an indicative assessment and rank the applicants in line with the criteria specified above. If only one position has been advertised, the three best qualified applicants should be ranked. If there are multiple positions, three more applicants should be ranked than there are positions for. The committee must describe the academic distance between the qualified applicants.

If applicants of both genders are similarly qualified, this must be clearly shown in the assessment. The committee must not express an opinion on issues of equality, preferential rights, personal suitability, or other factors that do not concern the applicants' overall documented academic qualifications (cf. section 6.2.3 of the University of Bergen's Regulations for appointments to academic positions and academic/administrative management positions). Nor should the committee consider whether applicants should be offered a 4-year position with teaching duties.