



Academic Searching and Screening Policy

25 February 2020

The distinction of the University of Chicago rests on the research, teaching, and service of the academics who work here. The goal of every academic *search* is to seek out and find individuals who are qualified to make contributions to the University's distinction. *Screening* is a systematic comparison of qualified applicants to one another and, in some cases, to others in the field, with a goal of identifying those applicants in the applicant pool who should be advanced and recommended for appointment. A successful *search* is one which attracts a pool of strong applicants: ideally, the decision about whom to recommend should be hard.

President Zimmer has challenged the University to build a scholarly community comprising a mix of individuals of all backgrounds, nations, and viewpoints, who make unique contributions to our intellectual culture. Search committees may, and are encouraged to, conduct searches where one of the goals is to increase the diversity of the applicant pool and ultimately the research and teaching in the University. This academic search policy guide is intended both to help units attract large and diverse applicant pools for every open academic position at the University, and to enable department chairs, deans, directors, and the provost to monitor the search and screening processes that preceded a request to the provost for authority to offer an academic appointment.

The Provost's Office expects that the documentation of a search for a pool of applicants and of the screening of those applicants will show that the steps outlined below have been followed. The policies and expectations of the Provost's Office are compliant with our compliance obligations (refer to the list at the end of the policy guide) and support search processes that will attract pools of applicants which are diverse across many dimensions.

As a federal contractor, the University is an affirmative action employer, which means it is obligated to take active steps to recruit and advance qualified women, racial and ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities, and protected veterans. At the same time, the University is legally prohibited from considering applicants' race, sex, national or ethnic origin, or other protected class status in making hiring decisions.

Recruiting outstanding academics to advance the missions of the University, including candidates from all backgrounds and nations, requires effort beyond advertising to develop an applicant pool for every open position. Decisions to offer appointments must be preceded, therefore, by actively searching for potential applicants in ways calculated to generate a large and diverse pool. When units act with fidelity to the policies and procedures here established by the University, then one of our central obligations as a federal contractor is met. As a federal contractor, the University is *also* obligated to *monitor and evaluate* our hiring and other employment processes for compliance with the law and University policies, including this policy, the Shils Report, the Provost's Guidelines for appointments, and our Equal Employment Opportunity Policy, and the Policy on Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct.

To support academic search and recruitment processes, the University of Chicago uses Interfolio's search module. Unless an exception has been granted, search administrators, evaluators, and unit leaders should use the module, called Academic Recruitment, to post positions and manage search processes. After hire, other aspects of career progression are managed and tracked through Interfolio's related modules, collectively called the Academic Recruitment and Careers System (ARCS).



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Academic Search Policies

1. Think broadly about department/school/institute hiring priorities

Departments, institutes, and schools are expected to search in the broadest subfield areas possible to increase the diversity and competitiveness of their applicant pools, even when the immediate *preference* may be in one or more particular subfields. The more narrowly defined *required* the field of interest, the more limited and homogeneous the pool of applicants is likely to be.

2. Seek potential applicants routinely and actively

It is completely appropriate to identify and keep in touch with individuals who, when a position opens, will be encouraged to apply and compete for it. Department representatives should also use every opportunity to communicate the teaching and research opportunities available at the University whether or not a search is underway. Broad outreach efforts should be supplemented by personal communications to graduate students and postdocs who might consider an academic career and whose training has prepared them to be competitive for a position at Chicago.

When a position is opened, thoughtful, targeted, and continuing outreach – *searching* – beyond advertising is essential to our efforts to recruit the most talented academics to the University. As search committee members contact colleagues about open positions or plans for open positions, they should make specific inquiries about candidates from all backgrounds. It is crucial to document these activities because the University is required by the federal government to show that those



involved in hiring make good-faith efforts to develop broad and diverse applicant pools. Even more important, search committees are expected *actively* to seek out – search for – people who can contribute on a high level.

All involved in the search process must understand certain basic principles. Outreach may include extra and targeted efforts to search for women, racial and ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities, and protected veterans. However, (1) outreach must not exclude any group, and (2) screening and winnowing down the pool must not prefer anyone based on protected class status.

3. Write position descriptions to include appropriate required and preferred qualifications

For the purposes of this document, “position description” comprises three elements: 1) the details of the job and unit, 2) the qualifications, and 3) the required application materials and how to apply. Within Interfolio’s Academic Recruitment module, these can be divided into three separate sections to aid applicants in locating important information.

A well-crafted position description not only helps attract the broadest applicant pool, but also avoids process problems down the road that could needlessly delay the review of a case or, in exceptional circumstances, require redoing a search. *Position descriptions for academic appointments should never be tailored to fit a candidate who has already been identified.*

“Minimum qualifications” are those without which a person cannot do the job. Examples include: terminal degree in a field or subfield, years of experience in a similar position, licensure, record of publication in peer-reviewed journals, or a record of funding. A job seeker who applies for an open position through the Academic Recruitment module cannot be given the status of “Applicant” (or similar) unless he or she has submitted all required materials by the deadline and meets the minimum qualifications outlined in the position description.

For these and other reasons, qualifications must be drafted with care, combining what is required with “preferred qualifications” in a way that promotes the unit’s and the University’s goals. *It is important to understand that search committees may not legally consider anyone who lacks the stated minimum qualifications, regardless of the jobseeker’s promise, because such a person, by definition, is not an applicant.* If a position description states that a “PhD is required” in order to apply, any jobseeker who does not hold that specific degree at the time of application may not be considered or hired. Moreover, the search committee is required to review any applicant who meets the minimum qualifications. For example, requiring just a “a doctoral degree” obligates the committee to consider individuals with a JD or MD. Since requiring candidates to hold a PhD degree to apply will exclude all job seekers who do not have a PhD degree in hand, many units stipulate that “having the PhD in hand by the start date” is a condition for beginning the appointment. (Note that a new Assistant Professor must have either the diploma or an official letter attesting to the fact that all requirements for the degree have been completed). Likewise, identifying specific subfields of interest as a required qualification means that all jobseekers who do not specialize in one of those subfields will not be allowed to proceed through the applicant system. By contrast, identifying one or more subfields as “preferred” might expand and diversify the applicant pool.

4. Create a Search Plan

Units are strongly encouraged to create a search plan before starting any academic search. A search plan not only helps ensure compliance and shortens the review times in the deans’ and provost’s



offices, but also provides a mechanism for the search committee to plan each person's role in reaching out nationally to attract a strong, diverse pool of applicants. Included in the plan will be the documentation that search committees are currently required to submit to the provost as part of the search narrative at the end of the search, also avoids process problems down the road that could needlessly delay the review of a case or, in exceptional circumstances, require redoing a search.

Please see Appendix A for a sample search plan.

5. Determine what application materials will be required

The position description must state in detail what materials an individual must submit in order to apply, and in what format the materials should be submitted, if relevant. In every instance, the instructions must indicate that a CV is to be uploaded into the Academic Recruitment module during the application process.

Research statements should describe the candidate's research results and aims; where the research is collaborative and publications are co-authored, an explanation of the specific contributions of the candidate is important. Teaching statements should include a summary of teaching activities and an explication of teaching philosophy and goals. Job seekers should not be asked to submit a diversity statement; where applicable, a candidate's experience in teaching diverse students can be addressed in their teaching statement and job postings may give guidance on doing so and should include a link to the University's Diversity Statement ([Diversity Statement](#)) if so.

All other required materials must be uploaded or requested (in the case of confidential letters) through the module to be considered, except in unusual circumstances where a given material cannot be uploaded due to format or size. An application must be given the "Incomplete Application" status if materials are uploaded by an applicant but they are blank or otherwise do not correspond to the requirements. Materials submitted online are made available to all search committee members (and other designated individuals) electronically through the module.

6. Encourage timely application

Although the position description does not need to include the date on which review or screening will begin, in fact this date must be at least thirty (30) days after the first public advertisement has appeared, or for searches that do not require a public advertisement (see [Publicize the position and conduct outreach](#)), thirty (30) days after the posting has been activated on the UChicago Academic Recruitment job board. This thirty-day rule does not preclude using automated tools in the module to determine that some jobseekers do not possess a stated requirement, e.g., a PhD in political science, and therefore do not qualify as applicants at all. But it does preclude screening and comparing qualified applicants: it is the responsibility of the search administrator not to give the search committee access to the pool prematurely. Postings must *not* state that review or screening will begin "immediately." Keep in mind that every applicant who meets the stated minimum qualifications must be fully considered. Therefore, *never* make statements such as, "To receive full consideration, apply by ____."

7. Understand and adhere to deadlines

Deadlines for jobseekers. For jobseekers, a "deadline" is either 1) the deadline selected for the posting by the unit creating the position (which the Academic Recruitment module will explicitly show on the posting), or 2) a date by which the position will stop accepting applications (for



rolling deadlines). If the posting states a deadline explicitly, it must not be removed from the job board before that date. Although postings are not required to state a deadline, search committees should be familiar with the policies that control the timing of phases of the process and should thoughtfully consider how best to communicate with jobseekers.

- a. Search committees *must* plan at the outset whether to announce a deadline for jobseekers to complete their applications, or to allow the applicant pool to grow after the screening process begins. It is permissible not to state a deadline, but units then incur an obligation to *track and consider* all applicants. Using such language as the “Screening of applications will continue until the position is filled or the search is closed” makes it possible for a unit to close the search (removing the posting from the Web) when a candidate is selected and a set of back-up candidates is identified.

Deadlines for units. For units, there is a deadline after which they may not bring forward candidates from an applicant pool. These deadlines are intended to assure that the pool of candidates is refreshed as candidates enter the market each year. Units should be mindful of these deadlines, and plan accordingly.

- a. For faculty positions, recommendations to the provost *must* be received within two (2) years from the initial date of the posting.
- b. For all other academic job groups, recommendations to the provost *must* be received within one (1) year from the initial date of the posting.

Units wishing to continue to search for or screen applicants for a position after this deadline must create a new posting, and begin again to search for qualified applicants.

8. Establish clear screening criteria

The specific criteria used to screen applicants must be stated in the “search narrative,” described in more detail in [Write a “search narrative”](#). An evidence-based screening process depends on forming an early consensus on the specific criteria that will govern the search committee’s screening. For instance:

- What are the qualities committee members will be looking for in an applicant’s research?
- How are those qualities identified and measured?
- What are the expectations with respect to publication?
- What evidence of teaching excellence will the committee be looking for?
- Are there particular markers of quality that will move an applicant to the short list?

Within the Academic Recruitment module, an unlimited number of criteria can be established for a single search in advance of the screening and a “blind review” process is enabled by default. These features allow search committee members to consider the strength that each applicant brings to each criterion without regard to one overall ranking or other members’ reviews. However, any disciplined, evidence-based approach to evaluation can help search committees avoid implicit biases by keeping in view the different strengths that applicants inevitably will have, which may be overlooked if applicants are initially evaluated by relying on impressions of their relative global merit.

9. Create a posting

All academic positions must be posted through the University’s Academic Recruitment module (or an alternative platform that a unit has been authorized to use) and *only* those jobseekers who complete an online application by the deadline may be considered applicants for a position. The



University's posting is the official announcement describing the position, qualifications, and procedures for applying.

All postings for new academic positions *must* be approved by the respective dean's or director's office before the position is published through the system and a search commences. It is the dean's or director's responsibility to review the prepared posting (either before it is entered into the Interfolio or after, as long as the final posting is the version approved) to ensure that it meets our compliance obligations.

Remember, if a deadline is part of the posting, the deadline for individuals to complete all the steps to apply must be *at least* thirty (30) days after posting on Interfolio or, for searches that do not require a public advertisement, thirty (30) days after the posting has been activated on the UChicago Academic Recruitment job board.

10. Publicize the position and conduct outreach

After the posting is approved and published through the Academic Recruitment module, the position must be advertised in appropriate venues outside the University to generate the broadest applicant pool and to meet our obligations as an affirmative action employer.

Appropriate advertising venues are, at minimum, those commonly recognized in the field of study and that are likely to reach potential candidates at the appropriate level of seniority for the position. The text of the position description in the external advertising must be *identical* with the text of the position description in Interfolio, including specific instructions for applying through the Academic Recruitment module (or alternative platform a unit has been authorized to use) and the EEO/AA statement built in to each posting on the job board. Units seeking an exception to the requirement that external advertisements must be identical to the posting in Interfolio must contact the Office for Affirmative Action for approval. In the professional schools, where one advertisement may be used to announce open positions in different disciplines, the advertisement must include links to separate postings for each of these disciplines so that jobseekers can select their field of expertise when applying.

Although a posting is required for every academic opening, advertising is required only if the position is "regular" or, if the position is within a bargaining unit, its incumbent is able to progress to a "regular" position without a competitive process. To be "regular," the job must be at 50 percent effort or more, and for a term of at least twelve (12) months.

Openings may also be publicized on departmental/school/institute sites and the like, in which case they must direct people to make application and provide required materials through the Academic Recruitment module or alternative platform a unit has been authorized to use. Unit channels cannot substitute for the public posting and advertising process. When positions are publicized on departmental/school/institute web sites, the web pages must carry the same non-discrimination statement required in advertisements.

In addition to external advertisements, announcements, and other efforts to publicize the position in appropriate professional association newsletters or journals, search committees should advertise or promote the position to organizations dedicated to advancing the interests of women, underrepresented minorities, individuals with disabilities, and protected veterans in academia



generally or in specific fields, including websites of various professional organizations for women and underrepresented minorities.

11. Review advertisements for accuracy

All advertising must also include the mandatory non-discrimination, Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity tagline, and request for accommodation statements currently in force. These must be identical to those automatically included in the job posting when created through the Academic Recruitment module. Be certain the publisher has included them.

Social media may be effective for advertising your position. If social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn are used, the language must include (1) a link directly to the Interfolio posting; and (2) the required but truncated EEO tagline, “EOE/Vet/Disability.”

12. Evaluate applicants and monitor the screening process

The screening process must evaluate each applicant in an objective fashion, using the specific selection *criteria* developed in advance of the actual winnowing of the applicant pool by the search committee to evaluate the evidence that candidates were asked to submit. To ensure that the particular strengths of each applicant are accurately considered and that the strongest candidates are advanced and proposed for appointment, search committee members should refer consistently to the selection criteria.

Effective screening practices lead to a gradual winnowing of the applicant pool, typically to a short list, then to interviewees, and finally to one or more selected candidates. These decisions to advance an applicant or to remove an applicant from further consideration must be recorded through the Application Statuses available within the Academic Recruitment module. These include, but are not limited to: Longlist, Shortlist, Campus/Offsite In-Person/Remote Interview, Selected, Not Selected. Note that these do not replace the disposition codes that must be attached to each applicant when they are winnowed out of the pool or selected as the final candidate(s).

13. Interview best qualified candidates

Search committees are expected to interview a number of applicants as part of the screening process. Interviews may be conducted by telephone or video conferencing, via email, or face-to-face, but search committees should strive to apply interview practices consistently to all candidates at the same stages of the screening process unless an individual candidate’s personal circumstances require otherwise.

Care must be taken in all interviews to avoid even the appearance of improper bias for or against any candidate; a guide to interviewing practices is available [here](#).

14. Write a “search narrative”

“A Report of the University of Chicago Committee on the Criteria of Academic Appointment,” known also as the Shils Report, says, “Appointive committees should not consider only one candidate at any one time for a given appointment. It should be a firm rule, followed as frequently as possible when there is an appointment to be made, that several alternative candidates be considered.” Therefore, one of the indicia of a successful search is that it has found several applicants who are qualified so that after screening applicants to winnow the pool, the committee



are left with hard decisions. The “search narrative” is supposed to tell the story not only of the outreach that attracted a robust pool of promising or accomplished applicants, but also how the committee applied its criteria to winnow the pool to a few finalists, and the thinking behind the decision to pursue one (or more) but not others.

A “search narrative” is *required* with every recommendation. The narrative should give an account of the outreach, pool acquisition, screening, and selection phases of the process. The account should say who did what at each stage in the process, and how: who screened and winnowed the pool of applicants, who assembled each short list, who decided whom to interview, and so on. It should explain why the selected applicant was thought to be, with respect to the criteria, the best candidate to bring forward, as compared to the other candidates in the final group, whether that be a short-listed group, or a group that made campus visits. If there is no short list, that is, a preliminary winnowing down by application of stated criteria, then the selected candidate must be compared to every qualified applicant in the pool, by name. The narrative is expected to lay out the considerations that were salient for the faculty as they compared all the candidates, who should be named, in the final group to one another. It must be submitted on the form provided by the Provost’s Office. There are no limitations on the length. The goal of the narrative is to enable an independent observer to understand the disciplined process by which the department decided to recommend one or more candidates, and decided not to recommend all the others.

Everyone involved in the search process must understand that although extra efforts to attract, for example, underrepresented minority candidates to the pool of applicants are entirely appropriate and encouraged, once the winnowing or screening process begins, sex, race, ethnicity, political or religious beliefs, membership in a protected class or any other attributes that are legally protected or otherwise irrelevant to participation in the work of the University may not be considered. Everyone should understand that University policy precludes consideration of anything except a candidate’s accomplishments or their promise of future accomplishments in domains included in the position, e.g., research, teaching, service, or clinical care.

15. Maintain records during and after the recruitment and hiring process

Records of all searches (whether the position is filled or not) must be retained by the unit for three (3) years from the date of the last action taken. Such records include copies of all advertisements, all materials sent to and received from individuals who qualify as applicants as well as from all jobseekers who request to be considered for the position but were found not to meet minimum qualifications, any reference letters received, and all documentation of the deliberations of the search committee and the unit, including interview notes and any evaluation records. These materials can be uploaded to a position in the Academic Recruitment module through the administrative features.

At three (3) years, all documents related to the search, in all media, should be securely deleted or destroyed unless subject to a legal hold notice.

These guidelines help to ensure the University’s compliance with applicable non-discrimination and affirmative action legal requirements.



Appendix A: Faculty / OAA Search & Screening Plan

INSTRUCTIONS AND REMINDERS

- Please complete the fields below in full.
- Please submit a copy of this Faculty / OAA Search & Screening Plan along with the appointment recommendation to the Office of the Provost (if applicable)
- *Remember, a search and screening plan not only helps ensure compliance and shortens the review times in the deans' and Provost's office, but also provides a mechanism for the search committee to plan each person's role in reaching out nationally to attract a diverse pool of candidates.*

Unit or Department:

Position Title:

Position Rank (e.g., Assistant Professor, Lecturer):

Proposed Start Date:

Abbreviated Process: Y/N

If so, please state the business case for why an abbreviated search is necessary.

Funding Sources:

Search Committee Chair:

Search Committee Members:

Will a search firm be engaged: Y/N

If so, please identify the search firm and primary contact, with contact information.

Job Description / Advertisement

- Please paste the text of the draft job description / advertisement below.



Advertising

All job postings will include the following language:

We seek a diverse pool of applicants who wish to join an academic community that places the highest value on rigorous inquiry and encourages diverse perspectives, experiences, groups of individuals, and ideas to inform and stimulate intellectual challenge, engagement, and exchange.

The University of Chicago is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity/Disabled/Veterans Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, age, status as an individual with a disability, protected veteran status, genetic information, or other protected classes under the law. For additional information please see the University's [Notice of Nondiscrimination](#).

Job seekers in need of a reasonable accommodation to complete the application process should call 773-702-1032 or email equalopportunity@uchicago.edu with their request.

Efforts to Search For and Reach Out to Potential Applicants

- Describe the search committee's planned outreach efforts to identify and recruit into the applicant pool qualified women, racial and ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities and protected veterans.
- List who on the search committee will make personal contacts with which colleagues and networks to encourage qualified people – and specifically women, racial and ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities and protected veterans – to put themselves forward for consideration. Please keep this list up to date and keep track of the results of the committee's efforts.

Screening Process

- *The screening criteria that the committee uses should be specific, directly related to the job description, reflect the requirements of the title, and be assessable based on the application materials. Applicants will be screened based on the job-related criteria at the commencement of the search.*
- Provide the applicant screening criteria or matrix used by the search committee to winnow down or screen the applicant pool.
- Identify person(s) responsible for initial screening of completed applications:

Selection Process

- Describe the assessment and ranking procedures and the faculty involvement in developing the short list and list of interviewees.
- Describe the full interview process and the determination process of the selected candidate.
- Identify the name and affiliation of any reviewer(s) / interviewer(s) who are not members of the search committee, excluding the Dean, Chair, or Section Head.