

FAQs: Search Compliance, Search Process and AA/EEO

The Search Process

1. What is the role of the Employment Equity unit in the Office of Institutional Equity?

The Employment Equity unit is responsible for monitoring employment transactions by providing consultation to departments and search committee on recruitment strategies and procedure and monitoring faculty and staff hiring decisions. The staff reviews and approves searches at two phases of the search process: pre-interview and pre-offer.

2. Where can I find the University's Search Policy?

While there is no single “search policy,” the University’s search process is governed by the University’s non-discrimination policies in conjunction with state and federal search and hiring laws. Please see the University’s policies on [Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity](#), the [Policy against Discrimination, Harassment, and Inappropriate Romantic Relationships](#), and the [Policy Statement on People with Disabilities](#). These University policies apply to both applicants and existing University employees. The search process is meant to ensure that applicants are not discriminated against during the evaluation of their candidacy. The Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) reviews searches at pre-interview and pre-offer to ensure AA/EEO compliance.

3. Do all positions require a search committee?

A search committee is not required for all positions; however, the use of a search committee in the hiring process is strongly recommended to ensure that the search process is consistent for all applicants and the hiring criteria are objectively applied. Search committees can provide a broad and diverse range of viewpoints, allowing all aspects of an applicant’s candidacy to be considered. Search committees also can act as a safeguard against inherent bias in the evaluation process. Additionally, the utilization of a search committee can support the outcome of a search if the hiring decision is questioned by an unsuccessful applicant or outside party.

Recruiting

4. Is Recruiting required? Why?

Yes. A recruitment strategy is required for all searches for employees at the University. The University does not utilize a quota system in its hiring practices but rather demonstrates compliance with AA/EEO through a good faith effort to reach underrepresented populations and create a diverse applicant pool. UConn can only demonstrate this good-faith effort through documentation of an implemented pro-active recruitment strategy, therefore search

committees must submit evidence of their recruitment efforts before receiving approval from OIE to invite candidates for interviews.

5. Where should I recruit? What is the difference between recruiting and advertising?

Recruiting efforts can take many forms, including networking, job postings on listservs, emails, social media, recruitment efforts made at conferences, and contact with professional associations. Proactive networking among professional contacts and associations is a valuable component of a recruitment strategy. The search committee should document all networking efforts made to reach potential applicants.

Advertising can be utilized if a search committee feels it would be beneficial but is not necessary to satisfy the recruitment requirement. A good faith effort in recruiting can be satisfied through pro-active, nontraditional sources such as networking, listservs, conferences, and contact with professional associations.

6. Is there a minimum number of required recruitment sources? Does HR recruit on behalf of committees?

There is no required number of recruitment sources; however, search committees must demonstrate a good faith effort to recruit the position as broadly as possible. Standard University recruiting and advertising through HR contracted sources does not satisfy the good faith effort requirement. Search committees must still demonstrate they have gone beyond this standard recruiting to target diverse applicant pools specific to the position. The HR advertising coordinator may assist in this process; however, the overall recruitment strategy is ultimately the responsibility of the search committee.

7. Do I have to place a full version of my job advertisement?

Abbreviated versions of job advertisements can be placed in journals and other recruitment sources provided they include a link back to a complete version of the advertisement, including the qualifications for the position, on the department's website or the UConn careers website. Short versions of advertisements must include the required AA/EEO language "UConn is an AA/EEO employer".

8. Should covered veterans and individuals with disabilities be included in recruitment efforts?

Yes. Federal regulations require contractors to take affirmative action to recruit, employ and promote qualified protected veterans, and persons with disabilities. Currently, federal regulations aspire to achieve workforces in which 5.9% of employees are covered veterans and 7% are persons with a disability. Protected veterans include veterans with disabilities, recently separated veterans, Vietnam era veterans, veterans who served on active duty in the

U.S. Military, Ground, Naval or Air Service during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized, or Armed Forces service medal veterans.

Evaluation

9. What are the guidelines for evaluating applicants?

The most important aspect of evaluating applicants is to ensure that each applicant is measured objectively against the stated qualifications for the position and consistently with other applicants. In the evaluation process, search committees may define the qualifications specified in the job description. For example, “excellent teaching experience” may be defined as excellent teaching evaluations or an innovative teaching statement. Additionally, search committees may “weight” qualifications, and count one as more important than another. The choices made by the search committee must be consistently applied to all applicants.

10. What is the difference between minimum and preferred qualifications?

Minimum qualifications are the education level, skills, and credentials that an applicant must have in order to be considered for the position. If an applicant lacks a minimum qualification they are considered unqualified for the position. Preferred qualifications are additional skills and qualifications that would enhance an applicant’s ability to successfully perform in the position. These qualifications are typically used to establish the interview pool. Candidates who meet the minimum qualifications normally must satisfy all or most of the preferred qualifications to be considered for an interview.

11. How should I rank applicants?

Applicants should be rated using one of the following disposition codes:

Interview – Meets all minimum and most preferred qualifications and will be interviewed.

Qualified – Meets all minimum but few or none of the preferred qualifications. Applicants identified as qualified will not be interviewed but may be considered for a future interview if a suitable candidate is not found after interviewing applicants that meet most preferred qualifications.

Unqualified – Does not meet minimum qualifications. Will not be considered for an interview and cannot be hired. Additionally, applicants who do not follow application instructions or submit incomplete applications should be ranked unqualified.

In PageUp, search administrators must first change an applicant’s status to one of the ratings above. To justify the ratings, minimum and preferred qualifications that the applicant lacks must be indicated or a comment added to describe the reason for the rating. It is not necessary to utilize both options.

12. Are there any guides to ensure that the evaluation is consistent?

An [evaluation matrix](#) is a tool to ensure applicants are being evaluated consistently against the qualifications. A matrix can be set up in whatever way best serves the committee, but the most common version includes a listing of applicants, a listing of qualifications, and documentation either through check marks or a numerical scale, of what qualifications the candidates meet or lack.

13. What if I know an applicant?

Cases may occur in which a member of the search committee knows an applicant either personally or professionally. These relationships should be disclosed to the other members of the search committee. OIE strongly recommends that the search committee member recuse herself from the committee's evaluation of that candidate if the relationship is more than casual (including interview). Additionally, members must recuse themselves if they serve as a reference for an applicant. When a search committee member is related to an applicant, the [Office of Audit, Compliance, and Ethics](#) should be contacted for specific guidance.

14. What is required for Pre-Interview Approval?

OIE reviews and approves before the search committee can conduct interviews. OIE approval is the only approval required at this stage. In order to receive approval, search committees must document evidence of a good faith recruitment strategy and complete applicant dispositions. Searches that fail to demonstrate a good faith recruitment strategy will be returned to the department for further recruitment efforts.

Interviewing

15. Is there a minimum number of total applicants, or applicants selected to be interviewed, to receive interview approval?

There is no minimum number of total applicants, or applicants selected for interviews, needed to receive interview approval. The search will meet the good faith effort standard if a substantial recruitment strategy has been employed to attract an applicant pool. Further, it is acceptable to proceed with very few, or even a single interview applicant if the person was selected as the result of an objective and consistent applicant evaluation process.

16. Can search committees do several rounds of interviews?

All applicants who are rated "Interview" and approved by OIE, must be interviewed. Many search committees find it beneficial to utilize an initial phone or virtual interview to identify the final candidates for on-campus interviews. Keep in mind that this initial conversation will count as part of the interview process. An approval for the initial round of interviews

(regardless of interview format) must be obtained from OIE prior to the interview. It is not necessary to obtain additional approval from OIE for subsequent rounds of interviews of the same interview group, including in person interviews.

17. How consistent should interviews be between applicants?

There should be consistency between interviews. Specifically, the same set of interview questions should be asked, and the same interview panel should be present for each interview. Additionally, interviews should be conducted in the same format. For example, if a phone/virtual interview is the first round of interviews, all applicants should be interviewed via the same format, including internal applicants who may be on campus. Occasionally, exceptions may be made when a phone/virtual interview needs to be conducted due to a candidate's geographic location or other extenuating circumstance. These interviews should still follow the same format as the in-person interviews with consistent panels and questions. Additionally, the overall interview experience should be as consistent as possible between applicants, including meals, job talks, or meetings with other University employees and stakeholders.

18. What are appropriate interview questions?

Interview questions should be consistent among all applicants. The search committee should agree to the questions prior to interviews. Questions should be qualification -based and not discriminatory. Behavioral based interview questions are a good way to guide the applicant to a detailed response about the skills under discussion and usually begin with the phrase “tell me about a time” or “describe a situation”.

19. When can I discuss salary with the applicants?

The target salary for the position can be disclosed at any time. Some search committee include it as part of the position announcement, while others communicate it directly to the applicants as part of their correspondence. Questions about expected compensation for the position can be answered but Connecticut state statute prohibits employers from inquiring into job applicants' wage and salary history and the value of previous compensation structures.

Hiring officials, search committees and others involved in the search and hiring process should not inquire into applicants' compensation history. This includes questions about the value of previous supplemental or indirect compensation components, such as “start-up” packages. While the law prevents employers from inquiring into the value of such previous compensation components, the law does not prevent employers from asking about the structure of earlier compensation packages. Applicants can be asked if they had a “start-up” package at their previous position, but it is impermissible to ask the value or how much the employee received from the “start-up” package.

Additionally, former or current employers cannot be asked about applicants' salary history

20. What if none of my interview candidates are acceptable?

If no suitable interview candidates are found, "Qualified" candidates can be re-evaluated to determine if they should be interviewed. Other options include re-advertising the search or, in some cases, re-structuring the job description if the ideal applicant pool did not apply.

21. Why do changes to the interview pool have to be re-approved?

If additional candidates are considered for interview, their rating should be changed to "Interview" and the search should be submitted again to OIE for interview approval. This is to ensure that applicant ratings and dispositions are consistent across the pool and search documentation is compliant with search guidelines.

Offer

22. What do I do when I am ready to make an offer?

All interview candidates must receive post-interview evaluation in PageUp, including candidates that were interviewed by phone or virtually. Candidates who will not be offered, must be moved to the "Reject" status and a 2-3 sentence post-interview evaluation entered. The evaluation should explain why they are not the best candidate for the position, based on the posted qualifications and interview performance. Similarly, the candidate selected for offer, should be moved to a "Preliminary Offer Decided" status. The post-interview evaluation for this candidate, you should describe in 3-4 sentences why the candidate that was selected was the best choice, based on qualifications and interview performance.

The offer request must be submitted through the appropriate PageUp approval workflow.

Other Search Information

23. Who should I contact if I have questions during a search?

For questions related to PageUp and technical issues, contact HR Workforce Solutions, workforce@uconn.edu.

For question regarding the search process, contact OIE Employment Equity, searchcompliance@uconn.edu

24. What is the process for hiring spouses of prospective faculty members?

Hiring the spouse of a faculty candidates permitted under certain circumstances. Please contact the [Provost's Office](#) to discuss the proposed spousal hire.

25. How long should search paperwork be kept?

As a result of records retention requirements, all search records must be maintained for three years from the *date of hire*. This includes the electronic records that are retained by PageUp and any records kept by the search committee and department including emails, notes, evaluation tools (such as the search matrix), and printed materials. A common records retention practice is to designate a note taker of each search committee meeting. This person will summarize the final results of the search committee deliberation and keep the master set of documentation. If this process is followed, individual search committee members may dispose of their personal notes. However, search committee documentation may not be disposed of after you receive notice of a FOI request or other legal request for information. Accordingly, search committees are strongly encouraged to use a note taker during the search process.

Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity

26. How does affirmative action differ from equal employment opportunity?

Equal employment opportunity is an employment practice that ensures that individuals are considered for employment and receive equal treatment with regard to the benefits and conditions of employment without regard to the individual's legally protected characteristic.

Affirmative action is a set of results-oriented practices and programs that eliminate the effects of discrimination and ensure equal employment opportunity.

27. Why does the University of Connecticut collect affirmative action information? Does the University collect data related to disability or veteran status?

As a condition of receiving federal contracts and to comply with federal laws and procedures, the University collects data and maintains an affirmative action plan regarding women and minorities. The University is also required to collect and report non-identifying information on covered veterans and individuals with disabilities.

[The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs \(OFCCP\) regulations](#) require the University to ask applicants and employees to voluntarily self-identify their gender, race, and ethnicity.

The University asks applicants to voluntarily disclose their disability or veteran status as part of the application process. This process is required by Section 503 of the Americans with Disability Act and the Vietnam Era Veteran's Readjustment Act of 1974 (VEVRAA) and is strictly administered to ensure that an applicant's disability or covered veteran status is not used against their candidacy. Information received as part of this disclosure is maintained separately from the applicant's application materials.

28. What is an affirmative action plan?

An [Affirmative Action Plan](#) is an agency or contractor's written plan for future Affirmative Action programs, and a reporting of the previous year's workforce demographics, hiring and promotional activity. The University is required to prepare Affirmative Action Plans for both state and federal oversight agencies, including the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#), [the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs \(OFCCP\)](#), and the [Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities \(CHRO\)](#).

The state Affirmative Action Plan is prepared annually and submitted to the CHRO by March 30 of each year. The federal Affirmative Action Plan is prepared annually and submitted to the OFCCP upon request.

29. What is an Affirmative Action Recruitment Goal? How can good faith efforts towards meeting affirmative action goals be achieved without considering race, ethnicity, or sex?

Affirmative action recruitment goals are reasonably attainable objectives or targets that are used to measure progress toward achieving equal employment opportunity for women and minorities. In contrast, quotas create an enforceable minimum number of minority or female employees that must be employed within specific job group. The University does not have a quota system but rather utilizes recruitment goals.

30. How can good faith efforts towards meeting affirmative action goals be achieved without considering race, ethnicity, or sex?

Good faith efforts and affirmative action recruitment goals are only utilized during the recruitment process. The hiring committee must then focus on selecting the most qualified person for the position, regardless of the original recruitment goal. Race, ethnicity, gender and other protected characteristics cannot be considered during the process of selecting an applicant.

31. What happens if the University does not meet its recruitment goals?

As both a state agency and federal contractor, the University must show that it has taken vigorous, active and measurable steps to ensure that qualified women and minorities are included in its applicant pools and be able to objectively demonstrate that the selection process was fair and consistent. This practice is the good faith effort standard by which the University is measured in its AA/EEO efforts and is therefore the more critical factor than meeting recruitment goals.