Constructing Clear Candidate Evaluation Criteria and Using Rubrics in Candidate Evaluation

Research on hiring indicates bias is common while reviewers evaluate preliminary candidate applications, during interviews, and make final hiring decisions.\(^1\) Search committees can reduce bias by developing consensus around the criteria by which they will evaluate candidates and entering the criteria into a rubric that is applied to each candidate. This brief summarizes best practices for developing criteria and using a rubric.

**CONSTRUCTING CLEAR CRITERIA**

When candidate evaluation criteria are not well defined, committee members may unconsciously favor candidates who are like themselves or others in the department.\(^2\) The strongest evaluation criteria will:

- Be created before candidate evaluation begins.
- Be simple, with 4-8 main criterion
- Include context and examples for the kinds of evidence that committees should use to evaluate candidates within that domain.
- Take into account the multiple roles (research, service, teaching, mentoring, etc.) of faculty.
- Be specific, discussed, and well understood by all members of the committee.
- Consider aspects of quantity and quality.
- Be applied the same way to each candidate.
- Incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion in teaching, scholarship, and/or service.

**USING A RUBRIC**

Work on implicit bias shows that adding concrete templates, checklists, or specific criteria to the evaluation of each candidate facilitates fair assessment and reduces bias.\(^3\) Effective rubrics will:

- Include a simple score strategy (e.g., 1-3; 1-5)
- Prompt evaluators to provide quantitative and qualitative scores.
- Nudge evaluators to review all application materials.

How search committee use the rubric and the information it contains is equally important. Search committees can best leverage rubrics when they:

- Use scoring as a basis for discussion, not the only way to determine which candidates advance.
- Set aside to review candidate materials.
- Discuss scoring inconsistencies between raters.
- Resist the temptation of relative re-scoring.
- Assess the diversity of the candidate pool before and after the rubric is applied to see if criteria may be biased in some way.


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