

# GUIDELINES FOR RECRUITMENT TO STATUTORY PROFESSORSHIPS

Senior Appointments Office: [professorships@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:professorships@admin.ox.ac.uk) or  
telephone 01865 (2)70200

Date: November 2019

Version: 5

*For Chairs,  
Electors,  
Divisional Officers,  
and Departmental  
Administrators*

## Table of Contents

1. <a href="#">Introduction</a> .....	2
2. <a href="#">Confidentiality of electoral board proceedings and potential conflicts of interest</a> .....	4
3. <a href="#">Electoral boards</a> .....	6
4. <a href="#">Role of external electors</a> .....	9
5. <a href="#">Role of the Chair</a> .....	11
6. <a href="#">Overview of recruitment process</a> .....	12
7. <a href="#">Recruitment process in detail</a> .....	13
<a href="#">Stage 1 Agree to fill the post</a> .....	13
<a href="#">Stage 2 Vice-Chancellor appoints a Chair</a> .....	13
<a href="#">Stage 3 Strategy &amp; planning</a> .....	13
<a href="#">Stage 4 Approvals and advertising</a> .....	15
<a href="#">Stage 5 Search</a> .....	15
<a href="#">Stage 6 Approaches to candidates</a> .....	17
<a href="#">Stage 7 Applications and references</a> .....	17
<a href="#">Stage 8 Shortlisting &amp; planning the selection process</a> .....	18
<a href="#">Stage 9 Selection</a> .....	21
<a href="#">Stage 10 Review</a> .....	23

# 1. Introduction

---

The University is committed to the recruitment of high-calibre staff from across the world with the aim of maintaining and enhancing its international position. It is also committed to working towards an increasingly diverse staffing profile, reflecting true equality of opportunity. A key factor is the recruitment of Statutory Professors of global standing to lead the research and education strategies for their discipline. These notes explain the policies and procedures that the University uses to secure the best possible appointments to its strategically important and high-profile Statutory Professorships.

The role of the Senior Appointments Office is to provide University oversight and assurance of the appointment procedures for Statutory Professorships, including checking the recruitment documentation, communications with candidates and acting as secretary to electoral board meetings.

Using a procedure that is consistent with employment law and good recruitment practice helps to ensure that the best person for the post is appointed, as well as to ensure that processes can withstand criticism from disappointed candidates or critical observers, or scrutiny by an Employment Tribunal.

## Definition of Statutory Professorships

Statutory Professorships (or Full Professorships) at the University of Oxford are the most senior academic (teaching and research) posts, often named or endowed Chairs. They are held by academics of the highest calibre, with an international level of academic excellence and a world-leading research reputation. Statutory Professorships exercise broad academic leadership across their department or faculty and college, and more widely in their subject at national and international level. They serve as Head of Department or Faculty Board Chair if asked to do so by the relevant academic division. For a description of the different types of academic posts at Oxford, please see <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/academic/types/>

## Best Practice in Recruitment and Selection

The selection of the best person for the post is greatly facilitated by following the principles of consistency, transparency and objectivity, which will also help comply with legal requirements;

- consistency - achieved by ensuring all candidates are considered against the same selection criteria and given the same opportunities to demonstrate their suitability;
- transparency - achieved by ensuring information about the post is available to all candidates;
- objectivity - achieved when selection decisions are based on consistent assessment at each stage and using the evidence available (e.g. application, references and interview) against the selection criteria.

## Equality and Diversity

The University has set a high level equality objective to increase the proportion of women in senior roles. Council agreed specific targets for 2016-2020 in support of this objective, including:

- to achieve 20% female representation among Statutory Professors by 2020;

- to aim for a representation of at least 1/3 women on selection committees.

For further information on Oxford's Equality Objectives as set out in the Strategic Plan 2018-23 please visit <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/equality-objectives>.

The University has signed up to the Race Equality Charter. The associated Action Plan includes a target to increase the proportion of Statutory Professors who identify as BME from the current 4% to 7%, to match the current figures for Associate Professors.

For further information on the Race Equality Charter please visit <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/race-equality-charter>.

## **Data Protection**

In order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and related UK data protection legislation, all documents sent to electoral boards concerning particular individuals will be password-protected. A single password, supplied by the secretary to the board, will be used for each recruitment. If electors wish to comment on applicants or potential applicants (e.g. during the search phase or to give their views for a meeting they are unable to attend) the same password should be used.

Electors must destroy or delete all data about applicants and potential applicants, both paper and electronic records, once it is no longer required for the purposes of recruitment to the post in question. The Senior Appointments Office will keep records until 6 months after the new postholder's start date (see Stage 9 below).

The University of Oxford takes seriously its responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and associated data protection legislation. Please refer to the instructions attached to emails ('Terms of Use for data recipients internal and external') for handling personal information such as application forms and references. We also provide a Privacy Notice for our Job Applicants with details of our approach to processing their data at: [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/compliance/gdpr/privacynotices/job/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/compliance/gdpr/privacynotices/job/)

## 2. Confidentiality of electoral board proceedings and potential conflicts of interest

---

### Confidentiality

***The proceedings of electoral boards are strictly confidential to their members.***

Sensitive and personal issues will be discussed during the board's deliberations and the whole board needs to feel confident that nothing will be revealed to third parties. The reputation of the collegiate University could be seriously damaged by any leaks.

***Given the sensitivity surrounding this issue, any breach of confidentiality due to the actions of an elector employed by the University will be regarded as a serious disciplinary matter.***

#### 1. Papers

Candidates' dossiers (CVs, covering letters, references etc.) must be treated as strictly confidential and not shown to third parties outside the members of the electoral board and their confidential PAs, must be stored securely and destroyed as soon as they are no longer required, and must be used only for the purposes of recruitment and selection to the professorship in question.

#### 2. Proceedings

All aspects of the proceedings of electoral boards are strictly confidential. In particular, the following information must not be disclosed to any third party outside the membership of the board and its officers (including as appropriate the Registrar and his/her staff):

- The names of candidates or any other individuals discussed by the electoral board;
- The substance of the electoral board's deliberations about any candidate or other individual discussed by the board;
- The outcomes of shortlisting and interviews.

The following exceptions apply:

- Where interview candidates are invited to give a formal presentation to the department/faculty as part of the selection process. Those invited to attend the presentations will as a matter of course know who has been shortlisted for the post, but must not be informed of the name of the successful candidate until the successful candidate has signed a written contract;
- Heads of Division, Heads of Department and Faculty Board Chairs who are involved in negotiations with the successful candidate may on occasion need to reveal the name of the candidate to third parties as part of those negotiations. This must be done strictly on a "need to know" basis.

The Senior Appointments Office will inform electors once the successful candidate has formally accepted the offer and the appointment is in the public domain.

All correspondence (including by email) relating to electoral board proceedings is potentially disclosable to the subject on request in accordance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations and associated data protection legislation.

***Please respect the confidentiality of candidates, many of whom may not wish their candidacy to be known during the recruitment process. This includes after an offer has been made so as not to compromise the board's position should the board return at a later stage to another candidate who may not be aware of previous offers.***

## **Potential conflicts of interest**

Electors must declare any conflict of interests or potential conflict of interest, or any issue which could be perceived as a conflict of interest, either in writing to the Chair of the electoral board in advance of the board's first meeting, or as issues arise in meetings (e.g. as individual candidates are discussed).

All conflicts of interest that are declared must be made known to all electors in a timely fashion and should be recorded in the minutes of the board.

It is likely, given their subject expertise, that there will be electors who have had professional contact with at least some of the candidates. This could range, for instance, from occasional meetings, through having examined a candidate's thesis, having been a regular co-author with the candidate, to having employed the candidate or having been his or her supervisor or close mentor. Such circumstances do not in themselves mean that the elector need stand down: the important thing is that the Chair and other electors are made aware of the nature of the conflict, and the elector should take care to make observations that are as objective as possible and are in the best interests of the University. The Chair might consider it wise to ask such an elector to offer views on the candidate only after the other electors have made their comments. Other potential conflicts of interest could include, but are not limited to, a close personal relationship with a candidate or potential candidate, or involvement in recruitment to a similar post in another institution. Depending on the nature of the conflict, it might be that the elector should stand down. Please see the University's statement of policy and procedure on conflict of interest at: [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/researchsupport/integrity/conflict/policy/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/researchsupport/integrity/conflict/policy/) for further details.

## 3. Electoral Boards

---

General provisions for electoral boards are laid down in Council Regulations 3 of 2004 at: [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/185-084.shtml](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/185-084.shtml).

The specific composition of the electoral board for each Statutory Professorship is laid out in the regulations at: [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/councilregs24/index-24.shtml](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/councilregs24/index-24.shtml).

- (i) At least two electors must be external to Oxford (and not normally from the same institution).
- (ii) At least one external elector must be appointed by the division or department/faculty.
- (iii) Two electors must be appointed by the college of association (the Head of House *ex officio* or his or her nominated replacement, and a second elector appointed by the governing body).
- (iv) Each board should include either the Head of Division or his or her nominated replacement.
- (v) There are three further 'internal' electors - it is usual for one of these to be the head of the relevant department/faculty or sub-department.
- (vi) Each board must contain both male and female members, with the aim that a minimum of one third of members should be women.

It is customary, although not a requirement, for the second external member to be appointed by Council.

There are usually 9 electors, although for clinical professorships there will also be representatives of the relevant NHS Trust and the relevant Royal College. The RC representative usually takes up one of the divisional board slots on the Electoral Board. The Vice-Chancellor can approve additional electors should there be thought to be insufficient expertise on the board as it stands.

The membership of all boards is published in the University *Gazette* as soon as possible after the board is complete.

Electors are appointed as individuals, not representatives of the body appointing them; their role is to bring their personal expertise and judgement to the consideration of the candidates, not to attempt to represent the views of the body which appointed them.

***If electors have any concerns about the processes followed by the board they should raise them in confidence and in writing with the Chair or the officers at the earliest possible opportunity. A written record of the matter and any action taken in mitigation will be kept.***

***Electoral boards*** act on their own authority and their decisions do not require endorsement by either the University or college. Appointments to Pro-Vice-Chancellorships, Headships of Divisions and Directorships of Museums are made by a ***Selection Committee*** which makes a recommendation to Council. Regius Professorships are appointed by an ***Advisory Committee*** (similar in composition to an electoral board) which makes a recommendation to the Crown.

## Who chairs electoral boards?

The regulations governing electoral boards for statutory chairs require the Vice-Chancellor to be a member and therefore to take the chair. The Vice-Chancellor usually appoints either a Pro-Vice-Chancellor with portfolio or a ceremonial Pro-Vice-Chancellor as his or her representative for this purpose. The Vice-Chancellor has a general power under Section 11 of Statute IX to delegate any of his or her functions to any member of Congregation, and, in exceptional cases, it could be expedient for the Vice-Chancellor to appoint the Head of Division to function in his or her stead as Chair of the electoral board. This is seen as a pragmatic approach to widening the constituency of those who might be approached to take on what can be an onerous task.

Where the Vice-Chancellor decides to delegate his or her function as Chair of an electoral board to the Head of Division, the individual regulations governing the statutory professorship may need to be amended. This is likely to be required where the Head of Division is already named as an elector in the regulations or where the balance of electors would be adversely affected. It is routine for the specific regulations to be reviewed for each new appointment process and any amendments to the regulations require approval by PRAC. The regulations must comply with the *General Provisions for electoral boards* in Council Regulations 3 of 2004 and any relevant trust deeds (GPC may also need to review the regulations where there is a trust).

The impact of the Head of Division acting as the Vice Chancellor's delegate on the overall balance of representation on the board should be considered also when appointments to the electoral board are made. The views of all interested parties should be taken into account through consultation to be undertaken by the Division with the normal expectation that an additional external elector be identified.

## Electors becoming candidates

An elector may resign from an electoral board in order to become a candidate, provided that he or she does so *before* the published closing date for applications. In this particular case the nomination of a replacement falls to Council. *After* the closing date an elector may only become a candidate if invited to do so by the other electors.

## Attendance at electoral board meetings

Ideally, all electors should be present at electoral board meetings in order that there be full opportunity for face-to-face discussion. Every effort must be made to ensure full participation at electoral board meetings, and only if it is unavoidable should arrangements be made for electors who cannot be present in Oxford to participate by phone or Skype. If, in the case of the early meetings of the board (including shortlisting) such arrangements do not prove possible, absent electors should be asked to send written comments in advance so that they can be taken into account by the board.

A meeting is quorate only provided more than half of the total members of the board are present (either in person or remotely by a live link) i.e. 5 electors from a 9-member board or 6 electors from a 10-member board.



Every effort should be made to ensure that all electors can be present at the interviews. The attendance of all *external* electors at interviews is especially important, particularly where there are candidates who are internal or who would be seen as internal.

### **Failure to make an appointment**

Providing the board has not run out of time (12 months from the *first formal meeting* – the shortlisting meeting), the existing electoral board may decide that the post should be re-advertised. Approval to extend the board's term may be requested from the Vice-Chancellor.

## 4. Role of External Electors

---

The role of external electors on the electoral board is:

### **To provide specific subject expertise**

Not all members of the electoral board will be subject specialists; in particular the head of the College and the head of the academic Division are unlikely to be subject specialists, and the head of department/faculty board chair may not be an expert in the precise field of the post. The external electors, together with the subject specialists from the department/faculty, are key to ensuring that the eventual appointee is a top, internationally recognised researcher in the field (as well as meeting the other published selection criteria).

### **To provide an objective view of the candidates independent of the Oxford electors, especially when there are internal applicants**

This means that external electors are asked to challenge Oxford electors as appropriate in order to ensure the best possible appointment to the post.

### **To play a key role in search procedures**

While the lead in searching for candidates is usually taken by an internal elector, the external electors have a key role to play in advising on who are the top people in the field, and ensuring that no-one is overlooked, especially women and other under-represented groups. In addition, the external electors' objective views on any internal candidates are especially valuable.

### **To participate in meetings of the electoral board**

Typically there will be two meetings.

- A meeting after the closing date to draw up the shortlist for interview; this meeting can last up to two hours and external electors are encouraged to attend in person but may participate remotely if they are at a considerable distance.
- A meeting to interview all the shortlisted candidates; all candidates are normally interviewed on the same day and the external electors are expected to be present in person.

There may also be a meeting before the closing date to discuss the list of potential candidates drawn up during the search phase and agree which of them should be contacted with a view to encouraging them to apply for the post; this meeting would be reasonably short and external electors would normally participate by phone or skype. However it is more usual for this business to be conducted by correspondence.

### **To be ready to take the lead in discussions of candidates at the shortlisting and interview meetings, particularly with regard to their research standing and reputation in the field**

This is especially important if there are strong internal candidates, where there is a possibility that they might be unwarrantedly favoured by Oxford electors, or alternatively unwarrantedly not favoured by Oxford electors on the grounds that appointing them would bring “nothing new”.

### **To be ready to take the lead in questioning candidates at interview about their research**

At the start of the interview candidates will be asked to give a short presentation on a topic agreed by the electoral board. It is very common for external electors to be asked to lead off the questions after the presentation, especially when the presentation has focussed on candidates’ research.

## 5. Role of the Chair

---

The role of the Chair of the electoral board is to provide leadership to the recruitment process to ensure that the University recruits the best possible academic staff and ensures that candidates from under-represented groups are sought out and fully considered.

Specifically the role of the Chair of the electoral board will include:

1. ensuring at the outset of the recruitment process that there is clear agreement between the University, division, department/faculty and college on the main responsibilities of the Statutory Professorship and its contribution to the leadership of research and education strategies;
2. considering the responsibilities of the Statutory Professor, to agree the balance expected between disciplinary and departmental leadership, research, teaching, graduate supervision, and administration;
3. agreeing essential selection criteria that reflect the agreed role;
4. as may be appropriate, ensuring that communication with donors of endowed chairs is managed in relation to the further particulars;
5. ensuring that a clear recruitment strategy and plan is agreed with key stakeholders;
6. ensuring that a rigorous search process is carried out so that all credible candidates, including those from under-represented groups, are considered and that the whole board has an appropriate level of involvement in the search stage;
7. ensuring that the selection process is fair and transparent throughout, and exercising vigilance to minimise and challenge any potential for bias in all aspects of the process including in the discussion that conflicts of interest are declared and, when declared, are properly managed, by the electors and in the consideration of references<sup>1</sup>;
8. building a common purpose amongst members of the electoral board to elect the best possible candidate – this to include managing any inappropriate conduct by electors, ensuring that any differences of opinion are discussed and resolved, any special interests are made explicit, and that compromise appointments are not made.

If everyone present votes, the Chair may vote with the other electors (but may choose not to vote). If there is a tied result after several iterations, the Chair has a (second) casting vote.

---

<sup>1</sup> Particular care should be taken over the admissibility of evidence which can range from factual reports, through opinion based on academic judgment, to hearsay. To ensure that candidates are treated fairly, evidence should be taken into account only so far as justified by a consideration of its reliability and its relevance to the selection criteria.

## 6. Overview of recruitment process

More detailed guidance on best practice for each stage is provided below.

Stage	Page	What	Who	Meeting
Stage 1	p.13	<b>Agree to fill the post</b>	Division, department/faculty	
Stage 2	p.13	<b>Vice-Chancellor appoints a Chair</b>	Senior Appointments Office (SAO)	
Stage 3	p.13	<b>Strategy and planning</b> (agree post duties, selection criteria, Lead Person for the search, search strategy, selection process, time scales, and SAP process)	Chair, Head of Division, Head of Department/ Faculty Board Chair, Head of House, & others as appropriate	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Meeting (Strategy)</b>
Stage 4	p.14	<b>Approvals and advertising</b> (possibly followed by advertisement, which can be delayed until after the search)	Division, department/faculty (if required), SAO	
Stage 5	p.15	<b>Search</b>	Lead Person for the searches, As many members of the electoral board as possible	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting / or email (Search)</b>
<b>ADVERTISEMENT: to be open for a minimum of 4 weeks</b>				
Stage 6	p.16	<b>Approaches to candidates</b> (possibly concurrent with advertisement)	Lead Person for the search, SAO	
Stage 7	p.17	<b>Applications and references</b> SAO & Lead Person for the Searches obtain salary details/expectations	electoral board	
<b>CLOSING DATE: allow a minimum of 4 weeks between closing and shortlisting if references are required</b>				
Stage 8	p.18	<b>Shortlisting and planning the selection process</b> HoD/FBC to submit SAP case	electoral board	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting (Shortlisting)</b> First formal electoral board meeting
<b>Minimum of 4 weeks between shortlisting and interviews to allow enough notice to candidates</b>				
Stage 9	p.20	<b>Selection</b> (Offer to successful candidate, others receive stand down or hold letters)	electoral board	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Meeting (Interviews)</b>
Stage 10	p.22	<b>Review</b>	electoral board	

# 7. Recruitment process in detail

---

## Before Recruitment

Due to the long timescales involved in recruiting to Statutory Professorships, it is recommended that departments/faculties begin planning for a recruitment exercise at least 18 months to 2 years before an appointee is needed in a post, and let their Divisional Officers know straight away.

## Agree to fill the post

### Stage 1

Division and department/faculty agree that the Statutory Professorship should be filled. Divisional Officer informs Senior Appointments Office, having checked whether the regulations need updating or new regulations created for the establishment of new posts.

## Vice-Chancellor appoints a Chair

### Stage 2

Senior Appointments Office requests the Vice-Chancellor to appoint a Chair for the electoral board, invites the Chair on behalf of Vice-Chancellor and arranges the first strategy meeting.

## Strategy and planning

### Stage 3

(agree post duties, selection criteria, Lead Person for the search, search strategy, selection process and time scales)

**1st Meeting  
(Strategy)  
Chair, HoDiv,  
HoD/FBC, HoH,  
& others**

The Chair of the electoral board facilitates a meeting with the Head of Division and the Head of Department/Faculty Board Chair. The Head of House will also be invited to attend, and the Chair may invite others to attend, for instance the college's nominee for the electoral board and any internal or external individual whose advice the group would value. The Departmental Administrator and/or the Divisional Officer should be in attendance if she or he would normally be involved in drafting the further particulars. (The full electoral board may not yet be established at this stage.)

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss and agree the following:

1. The vision and strategy for the post including:
  - a. the broader strategic position of the role within the University and Division; and
  - b. the nature of the leadership required of the post-holder;
  - c. the balance of responsibility within the role;
  - d. Diversity considerations within the discipline and for this recruitment.
2. Any amendments to the draft further particulars including:
  - a. the job description and selection criteria, ensuring that they reflect the desiderata above;
  - b. avoiding Oxford 'jargon' for external candidates;

- c. generally presented in the most appealing light for a diverse audience, including under-represented groups.
3. The searches including:
  - a. appointing a Lead Person for the Searches (this may be a member of the proposed electoral board, another member of the department/faculty or an external search consultant);
  - b. a strategy for identifying the top candidates worldwide in the field including women and other under-represented groups, and ensuring advice is taken from the external electors once they have been appointed;
  - c. checking for internal candidates and if there are, ensuring that this does not prevent a thorough search for the top external candidates.
4. The time table for the recruitment process including:
  - a. where to be advertised;
  - b. familiarisation visits for shortlisted candidates;
  - c. whether to invite candidates to give informal or formal presentations in the department/faculty before the interview or as part of the interview.
5. To consider the gender balance of the electoral board membership, ensuring that at least a third of electors will be women unless there are extremely good reasons why this is not possible, and that they best possible external electors are appointed.
6. Arrangements for SAP approval before shortlisting stage, including:
  - a. gathering salary details/salary expectations from candidates
  - b. preparing a SAP case (the SAO will provide the Faculty Board Chair/Head of Department with guidance)

It can be helpful to have draft further particulars and a list of proposed electors at this meeting if these are available. A template advert and further particulars for clinical and non-clinical professorships can be found at: [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/academic/appreapp/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/academic/appreapp/).

Following the meeting, the Senior Appointments Office will circulate notes from the meeting to all attendees and copy them to the Divisional Officer. The department/faculty will draft further particulars and circulate them (copying in the Senior Appointments Office) for agreement to the division and college, with a statement of the search strategy, the Lead Person for the search, the advertisement, and the search and selection process that has been agreed.

The division and department/faculty will brief the Lead Person for the search phase about the post and the selection criteria. The Senior Appointments Office can provide briefing and support to the Lead Person on carrying out effective searches and on equality and diversity including the potential for unconscious/implicit bias.

*It is important that the further particulars accurately reflect what is required of the postholder, and that careful thought has been given to the selection criteria to avoid any problems at the shortlisting or interview stages. It is also important that the further particulars present the post in the most appealing light for a diverse audience including under-represented groups, and that Oxford "jargon", which can be off-putting to external candidates, is avoided.*

Guidance on the preparation of further particulars is available here at:  
[www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/recruit/recruitproc/planapprove/jobdesc/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/recruit/recruitproc/planapprove/jobdesc/).

## Approvals and advertising

### Stage 4

The Senior Appointments Office will seek approval from the Vice-Chancellor for the appointment of the two Council electors.

***The post may be advertised as soon as the further particulars are signed off by the division, the closing date has been agreed, and any other necessary approvals are completed. Alternatively, the advertisement may be delayed so as to coincide with approaches being made to individuals chosen in the search process.***

The Senior Appointments Office will arrange for the advertisement and further particulars to be posted on the University website and will also place the advert with jobs.ac.uk, the University Gazette and the Cambridge Reporter. The Office will arrange for any paid-for advertising via the University's advertising agency. The cost of any paid-for advertising is to be borne by the department/faculty. The department/faculty may place the advertisement on subject specific mailing lists, websites, etc.

Evidence shows that paid-for adverts do not usually find the successful candidate. At Statutory Professorship level, the most successful candidate pool is attracted by way of a thorough search process and personal approaches/word of mouth.

## Search

### Stage 5

### Scoping: the initial gathering of names of potential candidates

The Lead Person for the search will consult with all electoral board members (possibly through a meeting if that is the most appropriate way to do so without undue delay) in order to agree the search process and to gather initial suggestions for potential candidates. The Lead Person will further seek suggestions from department/faculty members and from others, including external experts who could have useful views. The Lead Person will identify potential candidates by researching the known world-leaders in the field against the agreed selection criteria, with particular care to identify women and members of other groups under-represented in the professoriate. Consulting female and BME colleagues may be helpful here. The Senior Appointments Office can support the search and may involve external search consultants if requested on a case by case basis (see below). The result of this scoping stage will be a list of names with biographical notes for consideration by the electoral board.

Potential candidates should not be approached during this scoping stage.



## **Search**

*All search procedures must be agreed with the Chair of the electoral board.*

*It is important that the widest and most diverse pool of potentially suitable candidates is sought in order to secure the best possible appointee.*

*All those involved in search procedures must make themselves familiar with the University's Code of Practice on Staff Recruitment and Selection at:*

[www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/recruitmentmonitoring/recruitmentcodepractice/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/recruitmentmonitoring/recruitmentcodepractice/).

*They should also be mindful of the possibility of unconscious / implicit bias.*

## **Search Consultants**

The department/faculty may wish to consider the services of external search consultants to work with the electoral board. The (often substantial) costs should be considered as these are borne by the department/faculty.

Fees can be negotiated directly by the individual department/faculty, but the University's Procurement Policy should be followed. The Purchasing Team will be able to advise on preferred suppliers status. They can be contacted on 01865 (6)16022 or [purchasing@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:purchasing@admin.ox.ac.uk).

Where the University's own terms and conditions are not being used, please consult with the Purchasing Team. The University's terms and conditions can be found at [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/finance/ppt/purchasing/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/finance/ppt/purchasing/).

The Senior Appointments Office should be involved in the procurement process of external search consultants.

## **Decision on which potential candidates to approach**

When the list of initially suggested names has been assembled, the electoral board must be consulted on the list (***well before the closing date if the post has already been advertised***).

**2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting or  
correspondence (Search)  
Lead Person for the  
searches and as many  
members of the electoral  
board as possible**

This may be done at a meeting of as many members of the electoral board as possible, but including at least the Head of Division, Head of Department/Faculty Board Chair, the Head of House or the other college elector, and the Lead Person for the search. Any elector who cannot attend or take part in the search meeting should be invited to submit their views by other

means. Usually, however, it is done by correspondence: N.B. lists of names and comments on individuals must be password-protected for email circulation.

The purpose of this consultation is to:

- review the list of names gathered at the scoping stage;
- agree which candidates should be approached and by whom, and how the approaches will be carried out to avoid raising unhelpful expectations;
- agree the timing for the advertisement (if the post has not already been advertised).

The Chair of the electoral board will confirm that individuals from groups traditionally under-represented among Statutory Professors have been included in the search. The search may be continued if that is considered desirable in the light of the number individuals identified, their quality, or the lack of diversity among those identified.

*If no women are on the list to be approached the electoral board must submit a report to the Vice-Chancellor to explain why this is and seek approval to proceed.*

## Approaches to candidates

### Stage 6

(and advertisement if this has not been done at an earlier stage)

In all cases, when potential candidates are approached, great care must be taken to ensure that no individual is given the impression that they will be offered the position, or even that they might be a strong contender.

The Senior Appointments Office can advise and supply text for approaching potential candidates.

## Applications and References

### Stage 7

Salary expectations of candidates would be gathered at this stage in order for the Faculty Board Chair/Head of Department to prepare a SAP case for approval before the interview meeting. (Current salary/salary expectations can be gathered by the Lead Person for the Searches, the Faculty Board Chair/Head of Department, or SAO). The SAP case must be approved by the Head of Division.

Shortly after the closing date, applications are circulated to the electoral board. References can be taken up at this stage, but are usually taken up only on those candidates shortlisted for interview. Occasionally it is deemed desirable to take up references before shortlisting for those judged to be credible candidates; a request from only one elector will trigger the seeking of all three references for that candidate, except where the candidate has asked that her or his referees should not be contacted.

**Electors must judge all candidates consistently and objectively against the selection criteria.**

*On the rare occasions that references are being sought before shortlisting and there are no women on the list, a report must be submitted to the Vice-Chancellor to explain why this is and seek approval to proceed.*

The search may be re-opened if the quality or diversity of the candidate field is not considered optimal.

## Unconscious/implicit bias in references

When reading references, it may be helpful to be aware of research findings ([Trix & Psenka \(2003\) Discourse & Society, Vol 14\(2\): 191-220](#)) that show a difference in letters of recommendation between male and female candidates. Letters recommending men (whether written by men or women) are longer, mention status terms more, focus on proactive behaviours (“Professor X successfully led his research group”) and quantify and endorse achievements more – research, collaborations, colleagues etc. Letters recommending women are shorter, focus on ‘communal’ behaviours (“this lady makes a valuable contribution to departmental teaching”), have more references to personal life and irrelevant material and more ‘doubt raisers’.

The research also found that the most common semantically grouped possessive phrases referring to female and male candidates (her teaching, his research) reinforce gender schema that tend to portray women as teachers and students, and men as researchers and professionals.

## Electors acting as referees

Electors who are named as referees should provide a written reference. Electors who know, or have known in the past, any of the candidates personally should make a declaration of interest and connection at the shortlisting meeting. In such cases the elector concerned may wish to let other electors share their views first. Please refer to Section 2.

## Applications arriving after the closing date

All late applications will be passed on to the board for consideration. Whether such an application is accepted is at the discretion of the electoral board. However, if an application arrives when the proceedings are far advanced, (e.g. when an offer has already been made) the timing may make it impossible for the late application to be considered.

## Shortlisting and planning the selection process

Stage 8

The electoral board will meet to shortlist candidates and finalise plans for the selection process.

3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting  
(Shortlisting)  
First formal  
meeting of the  
electoral board

**Electors should bear in mind that the university has an Employer Justified Retirement Age which may not be varied for the purpose of recruitment.**

The Chair of the electoral board will ensure that its members are briefed on the potential for bias and that any obvious bias in a particular candidate’s references is brought to the attention of the electoral board.

*If no women are shortlisted a report is to be made to the Vice-Chancellor to explain the reasons: the report will identify the women who were considered strongest when judged against the selection criteria and indicate why they were not shortlisted (with reference, for instance, to their ranking against the criteria).*

**All applications must be judged consistently and objectively against the selection criteria.**

When considering a candidate's research and publication profile relative to the selection criteria, any career breaks should be taken into consideration in assessing the size of that candidate's body of work. To note, for clarity, that particular personal circumstances may result in the quantity of applicants' outputs being less than might otherwise be expected, but that the quality of the outputs should be judged in the usual way.

See MRC guidance on career breaks at: <https://www.mrc.ac.uk/documents/pdf/career-breaks-and-flexible-working-guidance/>

At the shortlisting meeting the following will be decided:

- which candidates best meet the selection criteria and should be interviewed;
- whether there is a sufficiently diverse pool of shortlisted candidates;
- length of interview and what form the interview will take (topic for presentation at the start of the interview and how long, and whether PowerPoint will be available or not);
- a plan for familiarisation visits to the department/faculty and college and agree who the candidates should contact to arrange such visits;
- whether there should be formal presentations to the department/faculty;
- what information reserve candidates should receive;
- whether and when all other candidates should be stood down.

### **If there is only one candidate to consider**

If there is only one candidate at the shortlisting stage, the electors must review the application to make sure that the candidate meets the selection criteria, and a majority of electors must agree that further candidates need not be sought and that it is appropriate to proceed to interview. The Chair may decide whether this should be done by correspondence.

### **Planning for the selection process**

In all cases, consideration will be given to appropriate selection methods in addition to a board interview to ensure that evidence about the candidates can be gathered in a variety of ways. The process should also ensure that the candidates, the department/faculty, and the college have time to get to know each other either before or during the selection process. This is unlikely to be less than a full day, and will often be longer. All candidates should be given equal opportunities to engage and familiarise themselves with the department/faculty and college. Visits should be

arranged by the department/faculty and college. Candidates will be informed which elements of their visit(s) are part of the selection process and which are familiarisation.

### **Familiarisation visits (informal)**

Visits and other activities aside from the interview can be an important opportunity for the University to offer a warm welcome. Visits can be helpful for candidates, providing the opportunity to meet potential colleagues, ask questions, and see the department/faculty and college, particularly for candidates unfamiliar with the collegiate system. Any such opportunities to visit must be offered equally to all candidates, and they should be informed in advance that the visit is not part of the formal selection process.

If all candidates are being invited to attend the same event, e.g. a college meal, they must be informed when being invited that other candidates may be present. This allows candidates to decline should they wish to keep their application confidential.

The purpose of informal familiarisation visits is to provide information about the Department/Faculty/College, and answer questions from the candidates, it is not expected any questions would be asked of candidates.

### **Presentations/Seminars (formal part of the selection process)**

The electoral board may decide to ask candidates to give a formal presentation or seminar to the department/faculty, usually centred around their recent research work. Presentations/seminars should be arranged by the department/faculty. Any such presentation or seminar would be part of the formal selection process and candidates must be informed in advance that this is the case.

The audience at a formal presentation would be asked to give feedback in writing on relevant selection criteria only (the Senior Appointments Office will supply a template feedback form). It should be made clear to audience members that any written comments are potentially disclosable to the candidates under the GDPR and related UK data protection legislation, and that their feedback is only one of the pieces of evidence which the electoral board will consider in deciding whom to elect to the professorship. In the interest of fairness to candidates, audience members must attend all presentations. Not all electors have to attend, but those who do must attend all presentations. Feedback will not be considered from those who have not attended all presentations.

Electoral boards should note that very senior candidates may be deterred from accepting an interview invitation if they have concerns about confidentiality when a presentation to the department or faculty is part of the selection process.

Electoral boards should note that there are particular sensitivities in asking candidates to give formal presentations to the department/faculty where there are internal candidates on the shortlist for interview.

### **SAP case**

The Faculty Board Chair/Head of Department submits a SAP case to the SAO who will forward on to SAP for approval before the interview meeting. The case must be approved by the Head of Division via a cover letter.

## Selection

Stage 9

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting (Interviews)  
electoral board

At the interview meeting, candidates will give a short presentation as agreed at the shortlisting meeting, followed by questions from electors based on the published selection criteria.

***All candidates must be judged consistently and objectively against the selection criteria.***

At the interview meeting the following questions will be addressed:

- Which interview candidate best meets the selection criteria and thus should be appointed?
- Who will informally contact the successful candidate in the first instance?
- What is a reasonable deadline for conclusion of negotiations with the successful candidate?
- Are there second and third choice interviewees (who would automatically be approached if the first choice declines)?
- Are there any other interviewees not considered appointable, or any reserve candidates not interviewed and should they now be stood down?
- What information will any 'reserve' candidates (not appointed but not stood down, whether interviewed or not) be given? They should not be left without information at this stage.
- Are the interviewees (other than the successful candidate) also to be informally contacted in the first instance? If so, who will do this?

No election is valid unless a number of electors equal to a majority of the full board is present (electors participating by telephone or skype count as "present" and may vote) and vote for the same candidate. Electors who do not participate in a meeting either in person or by telephone or skype are not able to vote. Elections must be made at a meeting and may not be made by correspondence.

### Signing the record book

Decisions are recorded by hand in a bound volume at the meeting. By signing this book, electors are indicating that they were present when the decision was taken and that it has been recorded correctly, not that they necessarily agree with the decision. The secretary of the board can sign on behalf of electors attending remotely.

### Confidential Papers/Note Taking/Record Keeping

All records of candidates, correspondence (including emails), decisions including rationale for selecting or rejecting (relating to the selection criteria), relating to electoral board proceedings are potentially disclosable to candidates on request under the GDPR and related UK data protection legislation. They

will be kept securely by the Senior Appointments Office for 6 months after the new postholder's start date.

## Negotiation with the successful candidate

Successful candidates should be encouraged to keep their success confidential, as far as possible, to avoid embarrassment for other candidates who might not have yet received formal notification about their application, or to whom the board may subsequently return if the first offer is not accepted.

Once the successful candidate has been notified informally, the PVC (People and GLAM) will make a formal offer of the post in writing. There will then be a period of negotiation with the appointee and the Faculty Board Chair/Head of Department or sometimes the Head of Division to agree matters such as salary, start date, family relocation, lab space, research staff, etc. The Head of Department/Faculty Board Chair will take the lead in negotiations, involving the Head of Division and PVC (People and GLAM) as appropriate. Once negotiations are at an advanced stage the appointee will be invited to meet the PVC (People and GLAM) (or speak by telephone) to discuss any outstanding issues, after which a final contract will be drawn up for the candidate to sign. When the signed contract has been received, the Senior Appointments Office will notify the electoral board and publish an announcement in the *University Gazette*. At that stage the name of the appointee is public.

If the first choice candidate declines the offer of the post, an offer will be made to any second choice candidate whose name has been recorded in the record book without further reference to the electoral board. If there is no second choice, the board will meet again to agree the next steps.

## Feedback

Feedback is not offered automatically to unsuccessful candidates but will be provided on written request. Any such requests will be handled by the Senior Appointments Office. Feedback will be given in writing from the Chair of the electoral board against the selection criteria. The Senior Appointments Office will liaise with the Chair and relevant subject electors to draft an appropriate letter.

### ***Reminder about Confidentiality***

*Electors are reminded that the proceedings of the board are strictly confidential and should not be revealed to third parties even once an offer has been made. The Senior Appointments Office will inform electors once the offer has been formally accepted and the name of the successful candidate (but no other details) may be made public. If questioned before that point has been reached, electors should say that the matter is confidential and they are unable to share any information at all: in particular, they should not indicate that any offer has been made.*

## Review

### Stage 10

Following each recruitment exercise, and after the successful candidate has formally accepted the offer, the electoral board will be invited to give written feedback about the recruitment process to the Senior Appointments Office.

### **Travelling and accommodation expenses**

Travelling expenses and hotel accommodation for external electors and candidates are paid for by the department/faculty.

Hotel accommodation for electors and candidates is booked by the Senior Appointments Office, to ensure that they stay in separate hotels. Electors and candidates are asked to book their own travel and claim reimbursement within two months of the expenses being incurred.

Electors are asked to note that hard copies of the signed expenses claim form and accompanying original receipts or print-outs of email receipts are required. Scanned copies are not acceptable.