

SCHOOL OF INFORMATICS

Strategy Committee

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Proposal to Recruit Academic Staff as a Pool

Author

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Background

There are currently 20 female academic staff (including University Teachers) in the School, out of about 130 academic staff. Professor Lynda Hardman, from the University of Utrecht, and Bob Fisher discussed how Utrecht is increasing its percentage of female academic staff.

Action requested from the committee

Strategy Committee is asked to agree that most/all of the upcoming appointments be bundled into a pool, where we specify some example topics, but also say that any area of Informatics/Computer Science is suitable.

Main subject text

What Prof. Hardman reported was that, when recruiting, as well appointments targeting specific topics (which males often dominate), also have an open call. Among the applicants are often a number of outstanding women whose strengths are in unexpected areas, niches not covered by the call, or less typical areas. And the women can more easily succeed in getting appointed in these open calls, based on what they had achieved.

Utrecht recently recruited to six tenure-track academic posts, which were advertised as a pool. They received 150-200 applications (50% unsuitable), interviewed about 25 in three thematic areas, and appointed six including three females. There was a higher than typical percentage of female applicants, possibly because the recruitment criteria were not so tightly prescribed.

For context, Utrecht Computer Science and Informatics has about 50 academic staff, and the university is in the THES top 100. They are one of 20-ish universities in LERU (League of European Research Universities), which also includes Edinburgh (at least for now).

This kind of pooling is also a very good idea for the sake of intellectual diversity. Researchers doing truly original work do not always easily fit into narrowly defined themes and win competitions in terms of those definitions.

Equality and diversity implications – Aims to help address gender imbalance amongst academic staff within the School.

Resource implications (staff, space, budget) – Would apply to currently planned posts – no additional resource required.