

# Academic Affairs Guidelines for Recruiting and Hiring Instructional Faculty

Office of the Provost and  
Vice President for Academic Affairs

James Madison University

This document is in use for the  
2024-25 academic year.



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# 1. Introduction

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The James Madison University [Division of Academic Affairs](#) strives to be “an inclusive academic community committed to excellence in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.” Faculty are at the cornerstone of our mission, and as such, recruiting and hiring exceptional faculty are among the most important responsibilities for administrators and faculty alike.

Consistent with the norms of shared governance, instructional faculty have primary responsibility for recruiting and vetting new instructional faculty hires. Because faculty hiring is informed by the broader strategic needs of the university, and because hiring can establish long-term relationships between new faculty members and the university, deans and the provost have primary responsibility for making hiring decisions and negotiating offer terms.

These guidelines help facilitate a robust recruitment and hiring process that allows JMU to build a thriving academic community and reflect the values of inclusive excellence, collaboration, and transparency. This document supersedes previous faculty recruitment guidelines. Guidance provided in the [2024-25 Faculty Handbook](#) supersedes this document.

## 1.1 Terminology and Usage

Throughout these guidelines:

- *Must, should, and will* indicate mandatory actions.
- *May* and *recommend* indicate optional actions.
- *Hiring Authority*: The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs is the designated hiring authority for Academic Affairs, holds direct responsibility for positions, and has ultimate oversight of the search and hiring process. For instructional faculty searches, the provost typically delegates hiring authority to the dean; the dean typically delegates hiring authority to the academic unit head.

## 1.2 Operational Principles

Throughout the recruitment process, the provost can grant exceptions to the guidelines as needed to meet unit needs.

No candidate can be added at any stage of the interview process or advance to the next level of the search without the review and approval of the search committee.

## 1.3 Revisions to the Document

To ensure the hiring guidelines remain current and relevant, the Office of the Provost will:

- Formally seek feedback from stakeholders at the end of the year
- Compare included content with the Faculty Handbook, university policies, AA policies, etc., annually
- Continue to have a [feedback option online](#) throughout the year
- Continue to correct and list errata as needed

## 2. Seeking Authorization To Recruit

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### 2.1 Departmental Deliberation and Request

Areas in Academic Affairs seeking authorization to recruit should start the process with a department-wide conversation about the needs of the department and whether and how a new hire complements the university and divisional strategic plans. The department should consider how to best attract potential faculty representing a full range of experiences, intellectual viewpoints, and expertise. In addition, areas must consider how they will establish a healthy, welcoming, and inclusive environment for a new hire.

Informed by departmental discussions, the AUH or supervisor should then submit a Request to Recruit form, which includes the components below, to the dean.

- A description of the new hire's areas of specialization in research and teaching
- An explanation for how the proposed new hire supports the university and divisional strategic plans
- An explanation of how the proposed hire serves the department's immediate and long-term needs
- Proposed rank, tenure-eligibility, range, and minimum qualifications
- If more than one position of the same type is requested
- A rank ordering of proposed positions based on departmental need

### 2.2 Dean-Level Prioritization and Provost Authorization

The dean will develop a list of open instructional faculty lines (including lines anticipated to be open) and rank requests to recruit based on the needs of the college, then submit the ranked list to the provost for consideration by an established deadline. Please note:

- If the dean amends a departmental request (e.g., adjusting the salary range), the dean will discuss this with the AUH.
- The dean may determine that a departmental vacancy does not need to be filled, leaving the line vacant or recommending to the provost that the line be moved to another department within the college.

The provost will review all search requests, weighing the contribution of proposed hires to the university and divisional strategic plans, contributions to the General Education Program, available budgetary resources, enrollment patterns, and other strategic considerations. Informed by their review, the provost will authorize all or a subset of search requests and authorize searches for the following academic year. At this stage, the provost may reallocate lines as needed.

The provost will notify deans of their decision by a specified date, and deans will inform AUHs. After college creation and review, Request to Recruit ePARs are submitted to the Provosts Office approval. Once the ePAR is approved, the hiring unit creates the posting in [PageUp](#).

If an unexpected and emergent vacancy occurs, the dean may request authorization to recruit immediately, outside of the regular authorization cycle. Such requests will typically only be approved if the vacancy compromises accreditation or core departmental functions, though other department-level exceptional circumstances may be considered.

## 3. The Search Process

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### 3.1 Timing

Searches conducted in the summer months should be avoided unless there is strong justification for conducting a search during those months.

See Appendix II for a search and hiring process checklist.

### 3.2 Developing the Search Committee

#### 3.2.1 Search Committee Composition

Search committee assignments are considered part of faculty members' service loads and, as such, are made by the AUH, with final approval by the dean. The AUH must solicit nominations (including self-nominations) and consult broadly with the academic unit before finalizing the composition of the search committee. The AUH should ensure that the committee includes faculty whose area of expertise aligns with the desired expertise sought in the recruitment process, when possible.

For searches involving more than one academic unit (e.g., joint appointments), a balance of representatives among academic units must be created. The recommended size of a search committee is 5-7 people. Proportionally smaller committees are permissible for smaller units, with approval from the dean. The search committee must represent a range of diverse positions and perspectives within the hiring unit, including faculty rank, experience, and identities.

Search committees may include tenure or tenure track instructional or A&P faculty, and they may include staff as needed. Committees hiring instructional faculty should include primarily instructional faculty. Search committees may not be comprised of all the faculty within an academic unit. The search committee may include non-field experts whose work is relevant to the position or whose participation may contribute to our commitment to inclusive excellence. If the committee does not appropriately reflect the field of practice, individuals from other areas within Academic Affairs or from other areas of the university, as deemed appropriate by the AUH and dean, may be asked to serve.

Graduate students may be included on a search committee to provide students' perspectives, as well as benefiting students who are interested in future faculty positions by giving them insight into the academic job market. In some cases, due to the time constraints of reviewing initial applications, graduate students may begin their committee service at a later point in the process at the discretion of the AUH. Graduate student committee members must be non-voting and must meet the same confidentiality requirements as other members. Undergraduate students, including teaching assistants, may not serve on search committees.

In limited circumstances, it may be useful to include someone that is not employed by JMU, such as a college advisory board member, to serve as an ex officio member of the committee. For a non-JMU individual to serve, they must:

- Have an affiliation with the university through their association with the college and/or academic unit in which the search is occurring;
- Attend all interviews with search committee members; and

- Preserve any recruitment materials they create during the search, such as interview notes, and provide them to the search committee chair or hiring authority at the conclusion of the search, as they become part of the search’s permanent record.

All search committee members are held to the same standards, responsibilities, and expectations throughout the search process, which includes completing search committee training via the [Search Toolkit](#) where confidential requirements are discussed. Committee members external to JMU are subject to the same confidentiality requirements as other committee members.

### **3.2.2 Impartiality and Conflicts of Interest**

All members of the search committee and the hiring manager must maintain impartiality throughout the search process and objectively evaluate all candidates, both internal and external. Committee members must disclose to the search committee chair their previous personal and/or significant relationships with candidates prior to beginning their review.

In addition to prohibitions identified in [University Policy 1106. Conflicts of Interest](#) and [University Policy 1301. Nepotism and Employment of Family Members](#), all members of the search committee must be impartial or recuse themselves from the process.

Having a collegial, working relationship with an applicant does not mean that committee members cannot be impartial in a review. Committee members can enhance objectivity by carefully following the criteria specified in the search grids and rubrics that map applicant skills and experiences directly to the requirements and preferred elements articulated in the job description against the applicant’s submitted materials.

See Appendix I for information on enhancing objectivity related to internal candidates.

Search committee members concerned about impartiality in deliberations should bring the issue to the attention of the search committee chair privately so that it can be appropriately assessed and addressed in a timely manner; if there are still concerns, the search committee member can reach out to the hiring manager or to Human Resources for guidance. It is the chair’s responsibility to address situations in which a committee member shows a lack of impartiality. A committee member may be removed for inappropriate conduct.

See Appendix I for resources on reporting suspected wrongdoing.

### **3.2.3 Search Committee Chair**

The search committee chair is appointed by the AUH and must be of an academic rank that matches or exceeds the academic rank of the position being hired. The Office of the Provost recommends that search chairs have prior search committee experience and, in the case of tenure-system searches, be tenured. If no tenured faculty of the department are available to serve, the chair may be a tenured faculty member from outside the academic unit.

See Appendix II for a list of chair responsibilities.

### **3.2.4 Search Committee Training**

Prior to reviewing applications, the entire search committee must complete a review of the [Search Toolkit](#). The toolkit was created as a resource to supplement the hiring guidelines and covers topics such as best practices in hiring, implicit bias, and employment laws.

Those who are actively serving on a search committee must review the materials annually and certify that they understand and will adhere to the content within the toolkit. Not all sections of the Search Toolkit may be updated each year; after an initial certification, faculty should review only the new sections. Recertification will be required every three years.

All faculty and staff members of the hiring unit who will likely interact with the applicants in any way, including meals and accompanying the candidate while on campus, are encouraged to complete the search training prior to on-campus interviews but are not required to certify. This requirement does not extend to faculty and staff only attending the job talk presentation.

### **3.3 Search Firms**

Some searches may benefit from the use of a search firm. If the use of a search firm is proposed, the following details must be considered.

- Be aware that some search firms require payment for applicants who are hired for a period of time regardless of whether the applicant takes the position for which they were initially recruited or accepts an offer from JMU for another position.
- HR Recruitment and Employment Services can be an excellent resource when considering a search firm.
- The consent of the provost is required to employ a search firm.

[Procurement Services](#) must be contacted before executing an agreement with a search firm. If a search firm is employed, the head of the search committee should initiate a meeting with the search firm and [HR Recruitment and Employment Services](#) to discuss and clarify goals, expectations, and responsibilities. The university's recruitment policies and processes apply even if a search firm is used, including collecting and tracking confidential reference letters.

## 4. Creating the Job Posting and Beginning Recruitment

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### 4.1 Development

In consultation with the dean and AUH, the search committee should review the position description and create a draft job posting to support the recruitment of qualified faculty. The job posting may require several revisions, and search committee members should be prepared for this collaborative process. In some cases, such as in [JMU Libraries](#), these documents may be created through a different process, as detailed in the JMU Libraries guiding documents, and given to the search committee.

The job posting must be approved by the AUH and dean in consultation with HR. Note that the job description and advertisement must not be tailored to specific people.

### 4.2 Key Components

The job posting must be constructed based on the priorities and needs of the hiring academic unit and university, and expectations for teaching and scholarship contributions must be clearly described. It is advisable to seek input from relevant constituents (such as program directors, department faculty, and the dean) as the advertising materials and advertising strategy are developed.

Job postings consist of several sections:

- Description of the position, including title, rank, status (tenure-system or renewable/fixed term appointment, joint appointment)
- Position responsibilities
- Required and preferred applicant qualifications
- Anticipated search timeline

Keep in mind that the screening criteria and interview questions created by the search committee that will be used to evaluate applicants must be based on criteria provided in the job posting.

See Appendix I for best practices in creating a position description.

### 4.3 Standard Language

Standard information about the university is included in all faculty job postings and cannot be modified. These fields are pre-populated in [PageUp](#):

- About James Madison University statements, including “Who We Are”
- Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE) statement
- Reasonable Accommodation Request statement

### 4.4 Required Materials

The job posting must clearly describe all documents and information required in the application. A candidate may not advance unless all the materials required in the posting are appropriately submitted.

The following list of items is suggested to the committee as they are typically included for faculty applicants, but the required materials may be modified.

- Cover letter or letter of interest
- Current CV

- Minimum of three professional references. Letters cannot be uploaded in [PageUp](#). Search committees may ask the applicant to provide the names and contact information for their references via [PageUp](#) or ask that letters be sent to the search committee chair. [PageUp](#) functionality does not collect letters directly from references through the system.
- Statements on teaching philosophy and research or scholarly interests, as appropriate to the position
- Unofficial graduate transcripts

#### **4.5 Publicizing the Job Posting**

It is important to widely publicize every new hiring opportunity. Past practices, which relied on placing job advertisements in a few select journals, are obsolete in an era of rapid internet-based communication.

The search committee is responsible for developing a broad and diverse advertising and strategy for the specific position, which must be approved by the AUH and dean. The strategy may include advertising in discipline-specific publications and databases, professional organization listservs, and [advertising sources for employment positions](#). This must be done in addition to sharing the announcement across disciplinary communities and through professional connections with colleagues, graduate programs, or other avenues, such as conferences.

See Appendix I for strategies to attract a broad pool and hiring resources for publicizing job postings.

As noted previously, the job posting must be approved by the AUH and dean in consultation with HR. The search committee chair or their designee then enters the posting in [PageUp](#). Once the posting is created in [PageUp](#), it may take HR up to two business days to complete their review and post the position.

Instructional faculty positions must be advertised on [PageUp](#) for 30 days. The full-length description must be used for the [PageUp](#) posting; abbreviated ads containing the [PageUp](#) URL may be used for listserv and social media posts.

## 5. Screening Applicants

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### 5.1 Establishing Screening Criteria

The search committee must develop screening criteria they will use to evaluate applicants. The criteria should only include items directly related to the requirements of the position and described in the position posting. The criteria and priorities must be clearly understood and accepted by all members of the committee, and the criteria must be reviewed and approved by the AUH. Assessments of candidates' commitment to inclusivity as described by their field of practice, inherent in JMU's commitment to inclusive classroom practices, and outlined in the university strategic plan must adhere to the screening criteria.

Keep in mind that the questions the committee will develop for candidate interviews must be in alignment with the screening criteria. Candidates cannot be evaluated on items that were not part of the position posting. Following the criteria specified in the search grids and interview questions that map applicant skills and experiences directly to the requirements and preferred elements articulated in the job enhances objectivity.

See Appendix II for a sample screening matrix.

The committee can only review applicants who have submitted a completed application and all required documents. No candidate can be added at any stage of the interview process or advance to the next level of the search without the review and approval of the search committee.

### 5.2 Internal Applicants

Internal applicants, i.e., applicants who currently hold positions at JMU, must be evaluated in the same manner as all other applicants. Reviewers who have prior knowledge of an applicant must take appropriate measures to mitigate bias; suggested measures are provided in Appendix II. Internal applicants must not receive a priority preference based on their internal status. If an applicant indicates a previous status as a state employee, HR will obtain appropriate documents to support credit for preferred qualifications as needed.

The search committee must establish methods to ensure confidentiality for all searches involving an internal candidate, such as allowing the internal candidate to work from another location to ensure they are away from campus during the on-campus interviews of other candidates in the pool, and securing all candidate materials in separate locations that require e-ID access and allow access to the materials to be tracked. See Appendix II for more information.

Internal and external applicants must have an identical experience, within reason, throughout the search process. Search committee members must take particular care to maintain strict confidence and the highest ethical standards when considering internal applicants.

The search chair can serve as a facilitator to provide balance and keep deliberations on track, making sure that information that is talked about in the search committee meetings remain focused on the agreed upon screening grid and requirements (for the first round); to the answers to the standard questions (for the Zoom interviews); and to the encounters with each of the finalists on campus. This helps to ensure all applicants have the same experience.

### **5.3 References**

Search committee members may not serve as references for either internal or external applicants in a search.

### **5.4 Managing Information**

During the initial review, only the search committee members, AUH, and the dean or dean's designated representative will have access to applicant materials. It is essential for the integrity of the search process to maintain strict confidentiality. Failure to maintain confidentiality can erode trust in the integrity of search committee members, lead to loss of top applicants, result in a misconduct charge, or cause the search to be failed or canceled.

Moreover, it is not appropriate to seek additional information on an applicant through internet searches or any other means.

The search committee chair must periodically update the academic unit on the status of the search, while being mindful that updates should include general information such as number of applicants, timeline, and the next stage in the interview process rather than confidential information as detailed in the [Search Toolkit](#).

### **5.5 Reviewing the Pool**

After the position has been posted for 30 days Human Resources will provide the dean with collected demographic information. The dean will review the applicant pool to ensure:

- The pool is representative of the field of practice
- The pool is large enough (fewer than 15 applicants is considered a small pool and may not suffice)
- Recruitment efforts outside of marketing ads were conducted to increase the number of applicants

The dean determines if a pool is adequate and notifies the search committee chair and AUH. If the pool is not adequate, the AUH will provide further instructions.

### **5.6 Identifying First-Round Candidates**

The search committee chair will convene the full committee to review the compiled screening grid information and identify top applicants. The committee must construct three categories for rating individual applicants: Highly Qualified, Qualified, and Not Qualified. The committee must carefully discuss any applicants for which there exist differences of opinion, as these may reflect applicants with unconventional qualifications meriting further consideration.

Based on committee deliberations, committees typically identify 7-10 applicants to advance to the first-round interview. The list of candidates is then shared with the AUH and dean. The AUH or dean may ask the committee to provide their reasoning related to the inclusion of applicants on the list of top applicants and/or may ask the committee to reconsider applicants not on that initial list. Once approved by the AUH and dean, the list of first round candidates may be shared confidentially with members of the department.

## **6. Planning and Conducting First-Round Interviews**

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### **6.1 Planning First-Round Interviews**

The search committee must develop a list of questions, determine the order of the questions, and decide who will ask each one. The initial set of questions must be developed using the screening grid and derived from the job description. These questions must be structured and asked consistently of each applicant. Follow-up questions by the search committee are permissible depending on the applicant's answers.

The committee and others interacting with the applicant must avoid developing questions that delve into personal and protected characteristics, as shown in Appendix II.

### **6.2 Scheduling First-Round Interviews**

Once the first-round list has been approved by the dean and AUH, the search committee chair should contact those applicants to invite them to participate in a first-round interview. It is recommended that each applicant be contacted with a personalized email message that conveys interest and excitement in the candidacy of each applicant.

The search committee chair or the designated administrative assistant may schedule the interview with the applicants. As a best practice, offer each applicant multiple dates to choose from to account for potential schedule conflicts.

### **6.3 Recording Interviews**

The search committee chair must obtain the applicant's written permission, using the JMU HR recording release form, in advance if planning to record any part of an applicant's interview. Any recordings must be done using a JMU-vendored platform. Prior to providing the form to the candidate, the search committee chair must explain how the recording will be used and by whom, as well as how it will be stored and deleted. Contact the appropriate [HR Recruitment Specialist](#) to discuss if recording the interviews is advisable and for a copy of the latest release form and advice on securing permission to record.

### **6.4 Recommending Applicants to Advance to Second-Round Interviews**

Once all first-round interviews are concluded, the committee must meet to identify which applicants to recommend advancing to the next stage of the process. This determination must consider the attributes and potential of each applicant as assessed from both the application materials and the initial interview. The committee must carefully consider key qualifications for the position, the current and long-term needs of the academic unit, and the unique attributes each applicant can contribute as an educator, scholar, and faculty colleague.

No candidate can be added at any stage of the interview process or advance to the next level of the search without the review and approval of the search committee.

If no qualified applicants are identified, the AUH and dean in consultation with the search committee chair will determine whether to extend or cancel the search.

Once the second-round candidates list is created by the search committee and approved by the AUH and dean, the search committee chair and designated administrative assistant may start scheduling on-campus interviews.

## **6.5 Hiring Multiple Positions**

For searches which involve hiring three or more positions, it is not required that all first-round interviews be concluded when the initial list of names is put forward for second-round interviews. Two lists may be submitted at different times for these positions.

## **7. Interviewing Second-Round Candidates**

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### **7.1 Preparing for Second-Round Interviews**

Once the AUH and dean have approved the list of second-round candidates, applicants may be notified of their status and invited to campus for an interview. The search committee chair must reach out to each applicant to invite them to campus for a second interview. The chair, in collaboration with the applicant, must identify a suitable date for the interview and provide a general description of the interview plan. Candidates must be given their interview schedule at least one week prior to their interview. If necessary, an updated, final copy of the itinerary can be provided when they arrive on campus.

Each applicant must have the opportunity to provide information about how to make the campus visit as comfortable and accessible as possible. Applicants must be asked about any dietary restrictions, accommodations, and additional requests as needed.

### **7.2 Creating the Itinerary**

Once the date for the applicant's visit is set, the applicant works with the designated administrative assistant and search chair to develop travel and accommodation plans. Second-round interviews typically include separate meetings with the AUH, dean, and search committee; meetings with unit faculty and students; and teaching and/or research presentations. Each second-round candidate must meet with a knowledgeable person designated by the dean's office to learn more about campus climate and JMU's ongoing work to advance equity and inclusion. The search committee should include other interactions that will provide opportunities for the applicant to learn about the department and university (e.g., JMU Libraries, Center for Global Engagement, Center for Faculty Innovation).

Occasionally, applicants may choose to invite someone to accompany them to Harrisonburg for the duration of the visit but they may not participate in the interview. While this is allowable, applicants must be informed that JMU will not cover expenses for a visitor.

### **7.3 During the Interview**

The interview is an opportunity for the applicant to learn about the institution and its people. All efforts must be made to ensure a smooth, well-organized, and positive interview experience for the applicant.

- Applicants should be met upon arrival. If candidates are arriving by air, arrange for a JMU driver to meet them at the airport and transport them to their hotel. If they are driving themselves, a host must be present to greet them briefly when they arrive at the hotel, or plan to call shortly after their arrival.
- Applicants must be escorted from one event to another, usually by one of the search committee members. Ask applicants their preferences related to walking or other physical activities.
- Be sure to build in refreshment breaks for each applicant and take note of the location of restrooms in each building.
- Provide details for follow-up if the applicant has questions or concerns after the interview. Provide information as quickly as possible in response to any requests they make.

## **7.4 Participating in the Second-Round Interview**

The search committee chair and AUH must inform department members of all opportunities to participate in the interview. Remind all faculty, staff, and students that the interview comprises the applicant's complete itinerary, including scheduled social functions and meals. Interactions outside of the itinerary may not be considered in the evaluation of applicants.

The committee may share materials including an applicant's CV, cover letter, teaching philosophy, and research statement with members of the academic unit. Providing these materials must be done in a manner that protects the privacy of the applicant and respects the confidentiality of the documents. For example, materials may be posted on a secure website, which must be accessed using a JMU eID, or hosted in Teams behind password protection.

See Appendix I for suggestions on sharing materials.

The committee must not share reference letters, results of reference checks, or other applicant information or materials with anyone outside of the search committee.

## **7.5 Providing Feedback on Candidates**

During and shortly after each applicant visit, the search committee must establish an anonymous and confidential means for faculty, staff, and students who interacted with each applicant to provide feedback, in addition to any other opportunities for comments. This includes anyone who reviewed candidate materials. Typically, the search committee will develop a short electronic survey that can be sent out to all participants, including all faculty from the academic unit into which the faculty member will be hired.

The survey must be made available soon after each interview and must provide space for both quantitative (e.g., Likert scale queries) and qualitative feedback. It is also helpful to collect information from each respondent about the nature of their interaction with the applicant, e.g., reviewed application materials, attended a one-on-one meeting with applicant, attended public presentation, etc.

Only the search committee, AUH, dean, and provost should have access to the feedback gathered through the surveys. The AUH and dean may summarize the feedback and share it generally with faculty in the academic unit.

## 8. Checking References

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The search committee chair, in consultation with the AUH, will determine the process for conducting reference checks. Reference checks may begin as soon as second-round candidates are determined and conducted at any time until shortly after the second-round interview. Checking references earlier may help ensure the ability to make a timely offer.

Below are some important considerations for reference checks:

- The AUH or dean may conduct reference checks or delegate this task to the search committee chair and/or search committee members.
- The search committee, in consultation with AUH and dean, must develop the script for reference checks that refers to a description of the position being sought and a list of standard questions which invite the reference to evaluate the applicant on specific qualifications for the role.
- Applicants must be notified by the search committee chair that references will be checked in advance of conducting the reference checks.
- Off-list references are individuals who are not named by the applicant as references and who you choose to contact in addition to the provided references. Only professionally relevant off-list references should be contacted. Contacting people off-list is only permissible after providing notice to the applicants that references other than those provided will be checked. It is not required to tell the candidate the names of intended off-list references.
- It is appropriate for the person conducting the reference check to ask follow-up questions for responses to the questions asked during the reference conversation. Thorough and consistent records must be kept of each interaction.
- If there are any questions about the use of information obtained through the reference check, the AUH, dean, search committee chair, HR, and/or legal must consult.
- All reference check notes are confidential to the dean and AUH (or their designee). General information from these checks must be summarized for the search committee. The search committee must keep this information confidential.
- If committee members other than the chair have conducted reference checks, they must submit their notes to the search committee chair soon after completion of the check.
- The AUH must retain records of each reference call, including the reference's name, their contact information, and all notes taken during the call. Candidate reference check records must be submitted to HR for archiving once the search is concluded.

## **9. Selecting and Recommending Applicants**

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### **9.1 Committee Assessment**

The search committee is charged with making recommendations about the suitability of each second-round candidate. Committee recommendations are informed by a holistic assessment of applicants' submitted materials, interview(s), and reference checks (where applicable). Everyone who has interacted with the candidate must have an opportunity to provide feedback. The results of search committee discussions, screening matrix completion, and faculty, staff and student feedback inform the process.

As subject matter experts, feedback from academic unit faculty comprises crucial information for evaluation of second-round candidates. The search committee must facilitate various ways for feedback to be gathered. The committee may facilitate open discussions with unit faculty to receive faculty insight. In addition, unit faculty must have the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback.

Once all interviews have been concluded, the search committee must convene to discuss the attributes and potential of each applicant and to determine collectively whether each candidate is acceptable.

### **9.2 Hiring Proposal**

The search committee chair must convey to the AUH and dean a written hiring proposal that includes the committee's overall evaluation of each second-round candidate as acceptable or not acceptable, as well as the holistic strengths and challenges of each applicant. If a candidate is deemed not acceptable, the explanation provided must be based on job qualifications or concerns that were realized during the on-campus interview.

The AUH and dean will consider the search committee's assessments as presented in the hiring proposal. The dean selects who will receive an offer from among the acceptable candidates. Where assessments are not unanimous, the committee may provide a dissenting report or note in the committee report that there were dissenting views. The search committee may request a meeting with the AUH and dean to discuss aspects of the hiring proposal prior to making an offer.

For searches involving three or more positions, offers may occur on an ongoing basis.

The dean must obtain final approval from the provost prior to any offer.

## 10. Making the Offer

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### 10.1 Engaging with the Applicant

The AUH must make the initial offer to the selected applicant. The AUH must describe the terms of the offer including salary, type of faculty line, and specifics regarding teaching, scholarship, and service responsibilities. In addition, the AUH must begin a discussion about the applicant's specific needs such as dedicated space, equipment, summer schedule, and start-up.

The AUH must maintain a record of negotiations by sending a follow-up email after each conversation outlining the terms discussed and requesting that the applicant confirms within a specified timeframe. AUHs may need to confer with the dean about any terms that require resources outside the control of the academic unit.

In negotiating with the selected second-round candidate, the AUH should keep in mind the following:

- The AUH may not ask the applicant if they will require immigration or work authorization sponsorship; this information is collected as part of the initial PageUp application. After an offer has been accepted, the AUH may ask if sponsorship is required.
- The AUH may offer relocation support as prearranged with the dean.
- Applicants may have questions related to campus culture, living in the Harrisonburg area, childcare or eldercare support, cultural interests, or other topics not directly related to their professional faculty role. These factors may significantly impact an applicant's decision to take the job. The AUH must be ready to respond to requests for such information by putting the applicant in touch with someone who can address their questions. This may include an HR staff person; an administrator; a faculty member, or a person knowledgeable about campus climate and JMU's ongoing work to advance equity and inclusion designated by the dean's office depending on the question. At this point, the applicant's offer is still confidential so all contacts must be advised not to discuss their interactions with the applicant or reveal any information that is shared.
- Searches for faculty at an advanced stage in their careers may attract applicants interested in being hired with tenure or with an expedited tenure clock. The AUH must discuss this possibility with the dean prior to making the offer and must not make such an offer without dean approval. In the case of offers with tenure or time toward tenure, and bound by confidentiality, the unit's PAC, AUH, and dean must affirm the applicant has credentials appropriate to the rank and tenure status into which they are being hired according to the academic unit's approved promotion and tenure guidelines. All details regarding commitments of tenure or years toward tenure must be approved by the provost and must be carefully documented in the offer letter.
- The AUH must discuss with the dean prior to making an offer any proposed modifications to promotion requirements that differ from an academic unit's approved promotion guidelines and must not make such an offer without dean approval. In the case of offers with promotion eligibility modifications, bound by confidentiality, the unit's PAC, AUH, and dean must affirm the requirements. All

details regarding modifications to promotion requirements must be approved by the provost and carefully documented in the offer letter.

Hiring offers are confidential personnel interactions involving only the AUH, dean, and provost. It is not appropriate to release any information about the status of any candidate to search committee members or faculty colleagues until negotiations are concluded and a signed offer letter is in hand. The AUH will update the full faculty as significant benchmarks in the process are reached.

## **10.2 Drafting the Offer Letter**

Once all terms are negotiated to the satisfaction of the university, the AUH must draft an offer letter describing all terms as discussed. See Appendix II for a list of the required content and recommended language for the letter.

- The dean must sign the offer letter before it is sent to the applicant for signature.
- No negotiations may begin with other applicants during the negotiation period with a candidate.
- The applicant must sign and return the offer letter by a stated deadline.
- The failure of an applicant to accept an offer within the timeframe specified by the AUH is sufficient basis for notifying an applicant that the offer has been withdrawn.
- After the signed offer letter is returned, the department initiates the formal contract and ePAR.
- New faculty may submit their official transcripts at the time of contract signing and must submit transcripts no later than the beginning of their first semester teaching in keeping with [University Policy 2101](#). Candidates who have not submitted their transcripts by a specified deadline may have their position offer withdrawn.
- If the applicant declines the offer, the AUH must immediately inform the dean to discuss next steps. The dean and AUH will determine whether an offer will be made to another second-round candidate, or whether the search will be extended or failed.

# 11. Closing the Search

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## 11.1 Contract

The AUH should review the [contract](#) and ensure all signatures have been obtained and an ePAR is sent to the dean for processing and submission to HR.

## 11.2 Notifying the Interviewed Candidates

After the applicant returns the signed offer letter, the search committee chair must individually contact all individuals interviewed at any stage by telephone or email to notify them that the position has been filled.

## 11.3 Notifying Other Candidates

The search committee chair works with the designated administrative support staff member assisting with the recruitment to update applicants' statuses and change the position status to Filled in [PageUp](#). All applicants with a status of "Not Interviewed" will receive an automated email to let them know the position has been filled as soon as their status is updated in [PageUp](#).

## 11.4 Keeping Records

All information from a search and selection process must be retained by the hiring authority in the academic unit office for a minimum of three years in a manner that the complete recruiting effort for any position can be reconstructed, if necessary, for review by the Office of Equal Opportunity, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Department of Labor, or any other regulatory agency. This includes screening grids, interview questions and notes on all applicants interviewed from all search committee members, feedback from departmental faculty surveys, any correspondence to or from the applicants, reference check forms, and reference letters for those applicants that were not hired.

After three years, the records are subject to the regular records retention schedule for the university, as detailed in [University Policy 1109](#).

## 11.5 Debriefing

The hiring authority and the search committee chair may choose to debrief with the search committee and unit faculty to share information related to the success of the search process and make suggestions for improving that process. Confidentiality of this information is of paramount importance.

To protect the privacy of interviewees and the integrity of search and hiring processes, the hiring authority and the search chair cannot share detailed information about the offer or any negotiations. The dean may communicate that they were unable to move forward with an applicant but may not disclose the reason behind the decision.

## 12. On-Boarding New Faculty

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Once the signed offer letter has been returned, the AUH and dean may announce the hire to the department. It is appropriate for academic unit members to reach out to their new colleagues to establish a connection and welcome them to JMU and the unit. The AUH may share the successful applicant's current email address, with permission of the new hire. Faculty and staff from the academic unit must not contact the candidate before this point.

Throughout the period between the applicant's decision to accept the offer and their start date, the AUH must maintain regular contact with them. This may include regular interaction to arrange for academic unit accommodations upon arrival, relocation logistics or responding to other questions that arise. During this time, the AUH should keep the following points in mind:

- The AUH may also connect them informally to departmental or other campus networks. These might include faculty familiar with the courses the new hire will teach, faculty who can assist with the initiation of anticipated laboratory or research needs, and a faculty member who can serve as a general mentor for the newly hired individual.
- The AUH and department must not expect participation from a new hire until their contract officially begins, which, for instructional faculty on ten-month contracts, is two weeks prior to the start of classes in the fall.
- For faculty starting in August, the AUH ensures that new faculty members are aware of university-wide orientations and relevant upcoming events, including any divisional, college and academic unit meetings or retreats. The AUH may alert new faculty about the programs and services of the [Center for Faculty Innovation](#) and [JMU Libraries](#).

Upon the arrival of the new faculty member, the AUH or a designee must ensure that they have the resources needed to initiate their position, including an orientation to basic needs such as how to obtain keys, get mail, use the copier, etc. The first few days and weeks are a challenging time for all new employees as they may undergo time-consuming and sometimes frustrating experiences to become integrated into university systems. The AUH may designate a point person to provide support and assistance to the new hire during the first weeks to mitigate difficulties and facilitate their transition to JMU.

# Appendix I. Resources

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## I. A. Best Practices in Creating a Position Description

To effectively recruit and attract a wide variety of qualified faculty, departments must be intentional in making it clear to applicants that they will be valued and supported within the academic unit and at JMU. Integrating the following best practices can assist in meeting this goal.

- Use broad terms so that applicants can see themselves within the position description
- Provide a sense of the department /division climate
- Allow for flexibility
- View from the applicant's perspective
- Keep the ad up to date, avoid using old ads that do not capture the current environment
- Do not be overly creative with the job description or title
- Avoid using subjective terms, opinions, or recommendations in ads
- Avoid jargon and technical terms
- Avoid the inclusion of future duties
- Be aware of discriminatory language i.e., able bodied etc. Consult with a knowledgeable person designated by the dean's office for assistance in developing equitable and inclusive language.
- Use language consistently throughout the document to reflect commitment to inclusive excellence
- Consider including a description of the department's commitment to inclusivity in its faculty

## I. B. Strategies to Attract A Broad Candidate Pool

Employing multiple recruitment strategies can assist in widening and increasing underrepresented populations in the applicant pool. In addition to advertising on [PageUp](#), national publications and/or job-listing databases appropriate for your discipline, consider the suggestions below.

- Publications that are read by underrepresented applicants
- Listservs that are followed by underrepresented applicants
- Personalized letters or e-mails to potential applicants or to colleagues who might refer potential applicants
- Attendance at conferences within your field associated with diverse cultural groups, such as the Asian American Psychological Association
- Attendance at conferences specific to diverse cultural groups, such as Faculty Women of Color in the Academy Conference
- Consultations with underrepresented faculty on campus about the type of outreach they would find most effective
- Collaboration with caucus leadership and JMU conference hosts to share job ads, as well as other strategies that may be specific to the discipline(s) in a particular unit

## I. C. Hiring Resources

The list below is not exhaustive. Additional suggestions are welcome and can be emailed to [provost@jmu.edu](mailto:provost@jmu.edu).

- [Access & Inclusion at James Madison University Diversity Advertising Sources](#)
- [Accessible Educational Materials \(AEM\)](#)
- [American Association for Women in Community Colleges \(AAWCC\)](#)
- [American Association of Blacks in Higher Education \(AABHE\)](#)
- [American Association of University Women \(AAUW\)](#)
- [American Indian Higher Education Consortium \(AIHEC\)](#)
- [Americans with Disability Act \(ADA\)](#)
- [Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education \(APAHE\)](#)
- [Association of Black Women in Higher Education \(ABWHE\)](#)
- [Association of University Centers on Disability \(AUCD\)](#)
- [Association on Higher Education and Disability \(AHEAD\)](#)
- [Association on Higher Education and Disability \(AHEAD\)](#)
- [Campus Pride](#)
- [Coalition for Sexuality and Gender Identities \(CSGI\)](#)
- [Consortium of Higher Education](#)
- [Council of College and Military Educators \(CCME\)](#)
- [Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking and Technology \(DO-IT\)](#)
- [Dual Career and Community Resources Program Faculty Handbook](#)
- [Faculty Recruitment Diversity Strategies](#)
- [Faculty Search Audit Process & Checklist Form](#)
- [Handbook Faculty Searches and Hiring – University of Michigan](#)
- [Higher Education Resources Services \(H.E.R.S\)](#)
- [Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities \(HACU\).](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign \(HRC\)](#)
- [LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education](#)
- [Military.com](#)
- [National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education \(NAFEO\)](#)
- [National Association of Student Personnel Administrators \(NASPA\)](#)
- [National Association of Veterans Upward Bound \(NAVUB\)](#)
- [National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education \(NCWGE\)](#)
- [National Organization of Gay and Lesbian Scientists and Technical Professionals \(NOGLSTP\)](#)
- [National Organization on Disability \(NOD\)](#)
- [National Resource Directory \(NRD\)](#)

- [Society of the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science \(SACNAS\)](#)
- [Strategic Initiatives and Global Affairs at JMU](#)
- [Students Veterans of America \(SVA\)](#)
- [The National Association of HBCU Students and Alumni](#)
- [The National Registry of Diverse and Strategic Faculty](#)
- [The PHD Project](#)
- [Women in Higher Education \(WIHE\)](#)
- [Women Leaders in College Sports \(WLCS\)](#)

### **I. D. Enhancing Objectivity in the Case of Internal Candidates**

Understand that every member of the search committee will likely have some bias with regard to an internal candidate; it is natural and unavoidable. There are a number of methods that the committee can use to enhance their objectivity:

- Bracketing the bias: Each member of the committee can take time privately to think about their areas of bias with the internal candidate(s) and “bracket them” in their minds so that they are visible and readily identifiable. As a result, committee members can be aware and take steps to objectively evaluate assessments that may be skewed.
- When reviewing the materials of an internal candidate, be mindful not to fill in details that are not represented in the materials. Also be aware of when bias may cause you to miss details in the materials.
- Be careful to avoid comparing external candidates against the internal candidate as a known standard.
- Take the time needed to review each candidate, since rushing encourages a default to bias. There should be a clear method for review so that there can be accountability in following it.
- The search chair can serve as a facilitator to provide balance and keep deliberations on track, making sure the information that is discussed in the search committee meetings sticks to the agreed upon grid and requirements (for the first round); to the answers to the standard questions (for second-round interviews); and to the encounters with each of the finalists on campus.

### **I. E. Reporting Suspected Wrongdoing**

The Division of Academic Affairs strives for a culture that promotes lawful and ethical behavior. Employees who suspect wrongdoing in the context of the recruitment and hiring process as detailed in these hiring guidelines and other university policies should report their concerns to their AUH or the appropriate office, which may include:

- Human Resources
- Office of Equal Opportunity
- Title IX

Misconduct may also be addressed following [Faculty Handbook](#) sections III.A.8 and III.A.26 and/or the appropriate [university policy](#).

Retaliation against employees raising good faith concerns will not be tolerated.

### **I. F. Sharing Candidate Materials Options**

When posting candidate materials, the search committee has a responsibility to maintain candidate confidentiality. Here are two options for electronically sharing materials in a way that protects the candidates.

#### **Secure Website**

- Create separate secure websites, which must be accessed using a JMU eID.

#### **Teams**

- Host all files on Teams with links in the websites (behind password protection).

## Appendix II: Samples and Forms

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### II. A. Search and Hiring Process Checklist

- Dean, AUH, and faculty discuss and determine the need for a new faculty hire
- AUH submits justification for a new hire to the dean
- Dean reviews the justification and submits the position request form to the Office of the Provost by the established deadline
- Academic Resources prioritizes faculty hiring requests
- Provost confirms approvals and notifies the dean
- If approved, the dean notifies the AUH to proceed with the search
- AUH completes and submits a Request to Recruit ePAR to Academic Resources
- AUH establishes the search committee and selects a chair
- Search committee members complete required search training and begin meeting
- Search committee reviews job description and creates job announcement; to HR for review via [PageUp](#)
- HR reviews and posts job announcement, typically within two business days of submission to [PageUp](#)
- Search committee members publicize the search through their networks
- HR provides dean with applicant pool information; dean certifies the pool prior to application review beginning.
- After 30 days, application review begins
- Search committee uses the criteria of the job announcement to create a screening matrix
- Search committee evaluates applications using the screening grid
- Search committee determines first-round candidates
- Search committee uses the criteria of the job announcement to create first-round interview questions
- Search committee conducts first-round (typically phone or virtual) interviews
- Search committee meets to discuss the first-round interviews and determine candidates for second-round (typically in-person) interviews
- Search committee creates questions for second-round interviews
- Search committee creates an itinerary for second-round interviews
- Faculty and staff outside of the hiring committee who plan to interact with the candidate complete search training
- Search chair informs their HR Recruitment Specialist once all second-round interviews have been scheduled
- Search committee conducts second-round interviews
- Search committee collects anonymous feedback from faculty, staff, and students who interacted with the candidates
- AUH or designee conducts reference checks, if not already completed
- AUH or designee who conducted reference checks shares general information from the checks with the search committee

- ❑ Search committee discusses candidates and prepares a hiring proposal
- ❑ Search committee chair and AUH review the hiring proposal
- ❑ AUH and dean consult on second-round candidates; dean consults with the provost
- ❑ AUH makes an offer to the candidate

## II. B. Search Committee Chair Checklist

- ❑ AUH establishes the search committee and selects a chair
- ❑ Search committee chair discusses the search strategy with the AUH
- ❑ Search committee chair meets with the designated administrative assistant assigned to the search
- ❑ Search committee chair convenes the search committee to discuss the search strategy
- ❑ Search committee chair ensures all search committee members complete the required search training
- ❑ Search committee chair works with the individual within the hiring unit who will be creating the posting (often the administrative staff member who will support the search) to submit the job announcement to HR via [PageUp](#)
- ❑ Search committee chair collects completed screening grids after the search committee evaluates applications using the screening grid
- ❑ Search committee chair convenes the search committee to discuss the first-round interviews and determine candidates for second-round (typically in-person) interviews
- ❑ Search committee chair shares the second-round interview itinerary with the designated administrative assistant to begin planning campus visits
- ❑ Search committee chair convenes the search committee discuss the second-round interviews and feedback and to determine second-round candidates
- ❑ AUH or designee conducts reference checks; may be delegated to the search committee chair
- ❑ AUH or designee who conducted reference checks shares general information from the checks with the search committee
- ❑ Search committee chair writes the hiring proposal on behalf of the search committee after discussion with search committee
- ❑ Search committee chair and AUH review the hiring proposal
- ❑ Search committee chair collects all materials related to the search from committee members

## II. C. Sample Screening Matrix

Screening Criteria Key	
Position Number: XXXX	Criteria 1 Significant leadership in K-12 public schools
	Criteria 2 Significant classroom experience in K-12 public schools
Screened By: XXX	Criteria 3 Demonstrated commitment to access, inclusion and diversity
	Criteria 4 Demonstrated ability to communicate and collaborate
	Criteria 5 Potential for scholarly activity
	Criteria 6 Demonstrated record commensurate with teaching at the university level
	Screening Grid Key: 0 = No Evidence                      1 = Evident, but not impressive 2 = Evident and impressive        3 = Very Impressive

Applicant Name	Criteria 1	Criteria 2	Criteria 3	Criteria 4	Criteria 5	Total
	Not eligible					
	3	0	3	2	1	1
	Not eligible					
	Not eligible					
	3	2	3	3	3	3
	Not eligible					
	0	0	2	2	3	1
	Not eligible					
	2	2	2	3	1	1
	3	2	0	1	0	1
	Not eligible					
	Not eligible					
	3	3	3	3	2	2
	Not eligible					
	3	3	2	2	2	3
	0	2	2	3	3	2
	Not eligible					
	3	2	1	2	2	3
	Not eligible					
	3	0	3	3	2	3

## II. D. Developing Appropriate Questions

Do not ask questions related to protected classes, which include:

- Age
- Color
- Disability
- Gender Identity
- Genetic Information
- National Origin
- Parental Status
- Political Affiliation
- Race
- Religion
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Veteran Status

The table below details types of questions to include and avoid.

Category	Acceptable Questions	Unacceptable Questions
Arrests and Convictions	Questions about convictions specific to the qualifications of the position are acceptable.	No inquiry may be made into arrests that did not result in convictions.
Citizenship	Only ask if the applicant is authorized to work in the U.S. Ask every candidate or none.	Any questions about whether the applicant is a natural-born citizen or a naturalized citizen or about the citizenship of their spouse are not relevant to the selection process.
Disability	Only ask if the applicant is able to perform essential job duties with or without accommodations.	Any further questions are not relevant to the selection process.
Education	It is acceptable to ask about degrees and the nature and extent of academic, professional or vocational training.	Don't ask questions that would reveal nationality or religious affiliation of the schools where training occurred.
Family Status	No questions should be asked regarding a candidates' marital or family status.	No questions should be asked regarding a candidates' marital or family status.
Organizations	Questions may be asked about membership and offices held by the applicant if relevant to the position qualifications.	Don't ask questions about memberships, office or organizations that would reveal race, color, religion, sex, nationality, disability, age, sexual orientation, parental status, genetic information or ancestry of the applicant.
Military Service	When military service is relevant to the job qualifications, questions concerning the service may be asked if an applicant indicates an affirmative Veteran status.	Avoid questions about military service in any country other than the United States. Do not request military records. Do not ask questions concerning military discharge.
Relatives	It is acceptable to ask if any relatives are JMU employees.	Except for nepotism policy ( <a href="#">University Policy 1301</a> ) concerns, the applicant's relatives are not relevant to the selection process.
Work Schedule	Questions about the applicant's willingness to work the required job schedule may be asked.	Don't ask about things that might interfere with the applicant's willingness to work, such as parental status.

## II. E. Offer Letter Requirements

The Offer Letter Must	Suggested Language
Include detailed information about start date and employment term.	The effective date of your contract is XX/XX/XXXX. Your obligation as a faculty member includes being available two weeks prior to the first day of class in the fall semester and through the two weeks following commencement in the spring semester.
Detail the formal position title and reporting structure.	<p>I am very pleased to extend this offer to assume the position of [position title here].</p> <p>As an Instructional Faculty position, [position title]s report to the [supervisor position title], are evaluated annually by the [supervisor position title], and serve at the request of the dean with the Provost's approval.</p> <p>Refer to the Faculty Handbook regarding <a href="#">instructional faculty appointments and related contract types</a>.</p>
Include detailed information on salary.	The salary will be \$xxxx per year, paid out in 24 payments over a 12-month period.
Detail the faculty evaluation process and timeline. If early promotion or tenure consideration has been negotiated, the specifics of the arrangement must be described here.	<p>This is a tenure-track position as Assistant/Associate Professor, and you will be eligible to apply for tenure and promotion in 20XX.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>This is a Renewable-Term Appointment as Lecturer/Senior Lecturer/ Lecturer, and you will be eligible for promotion in 20XX.</p> <p>As an instructional faculty member, you will be evaluated by your AUH annually as prescribed by the <a href="#">Faculty Handbook</a>. Promotion and tenure evaluations will be conducted according to the Faculty Handbook and the T&amp;P guidelines for the Department of XX which can be found here <a href="#">[link]</a>.</p>
Include faculty-specific considerations such as moving expenses, office and laboratory space, equipment, supplies, professional travel, summer teaching, etc. as they are applicable.	A moving and relocation provision for moves greater than 50 miles is available and contingent upon further discussions with my office and the JMU <a href="#">moving and relocation policy</a> . <a href="#">[insert contact here]</a> will reach out to you regarding your moving and relocation needs.
Include a deadline for submission of the applicant's official transcript and any other materials required for verifying their teaching credentials.	You must submit your official transcripts for your highest degree earned by <a href="#">[insert date]</a> . NOTE: If any outstanding professional experience or demonstrated contributions to the teaching discipline have been considered in addition to formal academic preparation, include a list of required documents and their due date.
Include information on their promotion and tenure timeline if it differs from the standards shown in the <i>Faculty Handbook</i> .	As negotiated, you are eligible to apply for early tenure/promotion, and accomplishments completed in the last XX years of your employment at <a href="#">[former employer]</a> will be considered in the evaluation.
Include a description of departmental expectations for teaching or other duties.	Your standard teaching load will include <a href="#">[sections per semester]</a> of <a href="#">[class type, as appropriate]</a> . In addition, you are expected to <a href="#">[additional expectations and deadlines, as appropriate]</a> .
Include next actions to finalize the hire.	If this offer is acceptable to you, please sign and return it to me by 12:00 p.m. on <a href="#">[insert date here]</a> . Once you have done so, we will generate a formal contract (turn-around time is 2-3 weeks). We will then work together to develop a plan of transition for the period of time between now and <a href="#">[insert date here]</a> .

## **Hiring Guidelines Errata**

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10/7/24: PDF republished to update broken links

11/4/24: Section 3.2.4 Search Committee Training updated to reflect timing of recertification and clarify expectations for faculty interacting with the candidate.