Hiring and Admissions Policies for University of Alberta

Pod Name: Grace Anne Stewart Speaker Series Pod from the University of Alberta

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This is what was found by Grace Anne Stewart Series pod at the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, University of Alberta on Policies for Hiring and/or Admissions

- **What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement[1] is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available[2]?**

New employment equity statement approved by the Board Of Governors on Dec 16, 2016:

"The University of Alberta is committed to an equitable, diverse, and inclusive workforce. We welcome applications from all qualified persons. We encourage women; First Nations, Métis and Inuit persons; members of visible minority groups; persons with disabilities; persons of any sexual orientation or gender identity and expression; and all those who may contribute to the further diversification of ideas and the University to apply."

However, other statements could be against diversity:

"All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply; however, Canadians and permanent residents will be given priority. If suitable Canadian citizens or permanent residents cannot be found, other individuals will be considered."

Other EEO statements publicly available at the University of Alberta or EAS department:

All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply; however, Canadians and permanent residents will be given priority. If suitable Canadian citizens or permanent residents cannot be found, other individuals will be considered. The University of Alberta is committed to an equitable, diverse, and inclusive workforce. We welcome applications from all qualified persons. We encourage women; First Nations, Métis and Inuit persons; members of visible minority groups; persons with disabilities; persons of any

sexual orientation or gender identity and expression; and all those who may contribute to the further diversification of ideas and the University to apply.

Recommendations on EEO statements and advertisements:

❏ Move the EDI statement to the top of the document to convey that it is a strong value of the department and add a link to the EDI department of the University or the EDI section of the departement.

❏ Set up a "tracking" system to verify that committees are indeed promoting this diversity during the admission/hiring process (some universities ask for gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation… in a dedicated section during the application process online. These data are confidential and used to track any systematics).

❏ If the committee assesses a lack of diversity in the pool of applicants, it might have to consider re-advertising after reformatting or delay the deadline to find the time to advertise on more appropriate platforms.

❏ Job advertisements should not ask for a highly specific profile that might discourage most applicants. Always write a set of required skills and then the preferred skills. Make it accessible in terms of language/phrasing/application.

❏ Include a link to the scholarships that might be available to the candidates to encourage candidates from unfavorised backgrounds.

❏ Include a list of the support offered by the university/departement (i.e. Mentorship program, EDI training, accessibility resources, etc…)

● **Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?**

Earthworks: https://www.earthworks-jobs.com/
Professor positions: https://professorpositions.com/
AGU jobs: https://findajob.agu.org/jobs/
Specific mailing lists (ask recommendation to academics to subscribe)
Direct emails to professors
Informal graduate and postdoctoral offers made at scientific conferences

Suggestions of alternative strategies:

❏ Job posting on Social Media: twitter, instagram, facebook (i.e. @blackingeoscience on twitter)

❏ Make a dedicated webpage for graduate/postdoc projects available at the department on the EAS website. You would include the numbers of positions

available, the professor's name and research profile and a clear indication on how to apply for each type of position. e.g., McMaster Physics & Astronomy has a letter to grad students written by each professor who has open positions in their lab.

- **What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g. letters of recommendations, fees/test scores[3]/grades? Is providing any of these a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed? Are there any problematic questions asked?**

Current requirements:

- ❏ <u>Student admissions:</u> grades, standardised testing for foreigners (diploma equivalence between countries), recommendation letters, application fees, whether or not research interests align between supervisor and student.

- ❏ <u>Faculty hiring:</u>
  Application is composed of: CV, research statement, research plan, teaching statement, teaching philosophy, EDI statement.
  Interviews: Oral presentations for the departement, meeting with students (undergraduates and graduates), one-on-one interviews with faculties from the departement

Potential barriers:

- ❏ It can be difficult to develop relationships with professors who may be writing reference letters (i.e. working in their lab)
- ❏ Some potential students can't afford the application and/or transcript fees

Recommendations:

- ❏ Offer independent projects as an undergraduate program requirement. That would allow a student to show their potential to a specific professor and build that relationship with labs.
- ❏ Committee that can meet with undergraduate students and interview them and then provide a recommendation letter based on that interview
- ❏ Teaching assistants spend a decent amount of time with the students. They could co-write the recommendation letter in collaboration with the professor in charge.

- ❏ Selectively subsidise the admissions fee (i.e. based on country of origin, socioeconomic background…)
- ❏ Build a platform online where potential applicants can find a way to get their transcripts/paperwork translated at low cost and/or Create a fund available to pay for application cost for unfavorised applicants
- ❏ GPA shouldn't be adjusted based on the prestige of the institution. Make sure that "GPA can be waived under the request of the supervisor" is clearly stated.
- ❏ Make the Grad student page more user friendly to make sure that international, first generation students have an easy time applying.
- ❏ Value a work experience as an additional and candidate-specific criteria for admission/hire. It assesses the motivation and the maturity of the candidate.
- ❏ Creation of an application forum where applicants can volunteer their information and status of admission (i.e The Grad Café- https://www.thegradcafe.com/survey/index.php?q=university+of+alberta)

- ● **How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric[4,5] public? What kind of biases are introduced in this process and what strategies are used to address these, e.g. removing applicant names?**

Current evaluation process:
1. Student contact potential supervisor(s). Supervisor evaluates the applicant based on a subjective checklist based on the group and research needs.
2. Once the student has identified a supervisor willing to support MSc or PhD, student applies to the university (transcripts, letter of interest, application fee, etc)
3. Associate Chair Grad in EAS (or Melissa Dhillon) contacts potential supervisor ; supervisor gets a survey about student qualifications (past academic performance, ability to TA, English language if it is a second language), and secondly about what parts of the program supervisor is willing to fund (Fall/Winter, the 4 summer months, the costs of the research).
4. If finances, the survey and GPA looks good, the student is accepted. Higher GPA required to secure a Teaching Assistant position.
5. FGSR intervention is rare but may happen if the student has a big red flag (i.e GPA is too low) and may ask for further documentation. If unsatisfied with the applicant, FGSR has the right to reject the student.
6. Scholarship applications: based applicants profile, research, and number of published articles in high-ranked journals.

Comments:
- ❏ Not everyone is evaluated the same, different P.I's may value different characteristics when hiring.

❏ The supervisor's criteria are not public and are specific for each position
❏ Connections make or break the admission

Potential biases introduced during evaluation:

❏ It is ultimately up to the supervisor to decide who they hire. As long as the hiring professor is fair/unbiased than hires should also be fair
❏ If the professor knows the applicant, either because they already worked together, or met at conferences or the professor knows the current supervisor of the applicant
❏ It can be difficult to fairly evaluate experience, spirit and hard work with a score for each applicant
❏ Acquiring data takes a different amount of time depending on the project and this will affect the amount of article published for each candidate
❏ There is a minimum GPA to be able to be a Teaching Assistant. That might influence the professor's choice.

Recommendations:

❏ Mandatory EDI training for all faculty. First step can be to take the "Unconscious bias training module" available online on the Government of Canada website: https://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/bias/module-eng.aspx?pedisable=true
❏ Add a mandatory flowchart on how the decision is made with all factors considered disclosed
❏ Remove the minimum GPA criteria for TAs.
❏ Evaluate the quality/context of the articles of a candidate rather than just the quantity.
❏ During the application process online, make specific areas for each information. For the first screening of applicants, only disclose part of the filled information to the professor (i.e. no name, no name of the institution etc…)

● **Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?**

❏ For a student application, the selection committee is composed of the supervisor and the graduate committee. The PI makes the final decision.

❏ For a postdoc application, the selection is completely done by the PI.

❏ For a professor hire, the selection committee is composed of mainly faculties from the department. Students are asked for their opinion on the candidate as a group. The Dean of the Faculty of Science has stated that there has to be an EDI representative committee for all faculty hires.

Recommendations:

❏ Have a faculty level EDI officers come to sit in on some of the admissions process to check whether the committee is meeting the EDI consideration requirements
❏ Limit the amount of committees each faculty can sit in, to avoid overload of some faculty and balance every faculty implication

● **Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?**

The department undergoes an extensive external review process once every 10 years, where all aspects of the department are evaluated. This is not "consultants" (which I believe has been done in the past), but rather a board of external academics from other institutions who get a lot of information and do an extended site visit.

Recommendations
❏ Release this information to the department to increase transparency
❏ Create an explicit EDI section that is released to the public that current and prospective students and staff can access when making their decision.
❏ Increase the frequency of these reviews, potentially to every five years.

● **Has your university or company implemented or considered strategies like cohort hiring, mentoring, dual career support and partner hires, re-visioning your work culture, or other considerations outlined in "Leveraging Promising Practices"[6]?**

Current policies:

❏ The recruitment process for academic staff can be found in the [recruitment process for academic staff](#) where the requirements to get the provost to approve the position and the guidelines for the creation of a job posting are outlined.
  ❏ There is no mention of EDI or hiring strategies

❏ The partner hire is part of the negotiation during the job offer.

Potential bias:

❏ Considering partner hires, it seems like it is often the man that gets the position first and negotiates the woman hire.

Recommendations:

❏ EDI should come before spousal hires - while spousal hires can be important, communities that have been underrepresented for reasons out of their control should be considered. Especially if this is for faculty positions. Filling two positions can limit opportunities for others.

● **Additional considerations on hiring and admissions**

Socioeconomic status consideration:

Biases include:
❏ Cannot pay for application/transcript fees
❏ Might prefer the security of a job than the precarious condition of grad students
❏ Funded positions may require the selected applicant to move, this can become a roadblock for those who aren't able to pack up their lives so easily (moving can be expensive, they may have families, etc)

Recommendations:
❏ Allow more scholarships to applicants from minorities
❏ Make sure than these scholarships are given to who they were intended to (There is a record of scholarships supposed to be attributed to BIPOC/Indigenous/women that were allocated to white males in the past). The selection process should be available to the public.
❏ The funds available for minority students should not be limited in time (if no student fits the profile, the funding is kept for the next year).