

Encourage female candidates to apply

What

Encourage female candidates to apply for PhD positions

Why? – Gender perspective

Women might not consider themselves as possible candidates for PhD positions in science and technology academia. Greater diversity, especially gender diversity can lead to the development of innovative ideas.

Recommendations for good practice

Contact possible female candidates personally and pay attention that the language appeals to female researchers. Show that diversity is appreciated:

- If you identify a qualified female student in your lectures and seminars or among your student assistants, ask her personally. Less self-assured students may need to be asked more than once, so do not be discouraged if your first enquiry is denied. Be aware that there are different styles of self-presentation and some qualified students may need time to think
- Every team has a specific team culture which is influenced by the gender dynamic of the team, by the structure of the work group and by the style of interaction. Potential candidates compare themselves to the perceived culture and when the possibility of a good fit seems too low it is less likely that the candidate will apply. So check if your team is perceived as a heterogeneous group who is open to new and diverse members. This perception is created both on an interactional level as well as by the representation of your team in promotional materials. Show the diversity of your team and/or former team members on your website
- Give attention to the wording of job advertisements – language can be stereotyped – be aware of gender sensitive wording to attract the widest pool of applicants:
 - o Use verbs rather than traits
 - o Check if words are stereotypical for “male” behaviour and use “female” associated or neutral words
 - o Stress that all genders are welcome. Write about your institution’s support for family care (if there is some kind of support)

From literature and other sources

It is important to encourage female candidates to apply for PhD positions. Due to the low proportion of women in STEM fields, in particular at high levels, women often lack role models. There is evidence that potential applicants are discouraged from applying if they feel they might not fit in with the employer’s culture (Roberson et al 2005). One reason female candidates might not feel they will fit into the employer’s culture is the male-dominated nature of STEM fields. However, this can be overcome; in particular, it has been shown that being asked by another woman raises a woman’s probability of applying (Hentschel 2014).

On average, women are less self-confident and underestimate their abilities in application processes (Sieverding 2003). Additionally, they have engaged in less clear career planning than male researchers (Dever et al. 2008).

While science and technology academia is still a male-dominated environment (Schmidt and Umans 2014), the integration of several different people, with different profiles can be a first step to a transformation of the dominant culture and can lead to the development of innovative ideas.

Dever, Boreham, Haynes, Kubler, Laffan, Behrens, Western (2008): Gender Differences in Early Post-PhD Employment in Australian Universities. The influence of PhD Experience on Women's Academic Careers. Final report.

Hentschel, T. and Braun, S. (2014): Erfolgsfaktor Personalauswahl: Talente für die Wissenschaft gewinnen [Personnel selection as a success factor: attracting talents for science]. In: N. Hille & B. Langer (Hrsg.), *Geschlechtergerechte Personalentwicklung an Hochschulen. Maßnahmen und Herausforderungen*, 173-195.

Roberson, Q. M., Collins, C. J. and Oreg, S. (2005): The Effects of Recruitment Message Specificity on Applicant Attraction to Organizations. *Journal of Business and Psychology* 19, 319-339.

Schmidt, M. and Umans, T. (2014): Experiences of well-being among female doctoral students in Sweden. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 9, 23059.

Sieverding, M. (2003): Frauen unterschätzen sich: Selbstbeurteilungs-Biases in einer simulierten Bewerbungssituation. *Zeitschrift für Sozialpsychologie*, 34, 147-160.

Other useful resources

Handbook with Guidelines on recruitment and appointment processes

<http://www.festa-europa.eu/public/deliverable-512-handbook-gender-issues-recruitment-appointment-and-promotion-processes>

Marieke van den Brink (2011) on recruitment and selection for professorship positions in the Netherlands:

<http://media.medfarm.uu.se/play/video/2528>