



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet  
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

*Only the Swedish version is the official version.*

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Annex to: Vice-chancellor's decision on guidelines for the appointment of docents at SLU, ID: SLU.ua 2018.1.1.1-4553

## Guidelines for the appointment of docents at SLU

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## Introduction

These guidelines set out the criteria that an applicant must fulfil in order to be appointed docent at SLU. They also describe the process of assessing the applicants. The guidelines are intended for applicants, heads of department, members of faculty and docent boards and administrative officers. Detailed instructions for applicants and external reviewers are available in the Reachmee system, where applications are processed electronically.

Being appointed docent at SLU is a step on the academic career ladder, proof that the person has developed their academic expertise after being awarded their doctoral degree and that these skills are of a quality required to act as principal supervisor. Academic expertise is defined as teaching skills and scientific, or artistic, expertise of such quality and at such a level that is relevant to the third-cycle subject area in question. Assessing future docents is an important part of the university's quality assurance of research and education.

Appointing docents is an important aspect of the skills provision for departments and faculties. An SLU employee who fulfils the criteria can apply to be appointed docent and have their eligibility assessed. The faculties decide whether the third-cycle subject area in question requires one or more docents. Such a needs analysis should be made before assessing the eligibility of an applicant. A person appointed docent at SLU is awarded this title, otherwise their position remains the same.

According to the SLU Board's delegation of authority, the faculty board at each faculty is responsible for assessing and approving applications to be appointed docent. The faculty board may delegate all or part of this task to the docent board (DN). In these guidelines, it is assumed that the faculty board has delegated all responsibility, including assessment and approval, to the DN. All references, therefore, are to the DN. If responsibility has not been delegated, all instances of DN in these guidelines should be read as referring to the faculty board.

## Fundamental provisions

Docents are appointed in one of the university's third-cycle subject areas. These subject areas are selected by the faculty board after consultation with the vice-chancellor.

Normally, only SLU employees may be appointed docents. In addition, the head of department must clearly justify why the person in question should, or should not, be appointed docent and what added value such an appointment would bring with it.

A person employed elsewhere, with an employer who is strategically important to the university, may also apply to be appointed docent, provided they have clear links to an SLU department and take part in long-term cooperation in research and/or teaching. Regardless of where the applicant is employed, the faculty must

assess the need for one or more docents in the subject in question. The head of the department concerned must justify the need and describe the importance of their cooperation with the applicant.

A decision to approve or reject an application to be appointed docent must be based on a combined appraisal and assessment of the board's own assessment, the external reviewer's assessment and the quality of the trial lecture. The latter is assessed by the docent board, the subject assessor and the pedagogical assessor. An approval or rejection cannot be appealed. A person who has retracted their application, or whose application has been rejected, can acquire further qualifications and submit a new application at a later date.

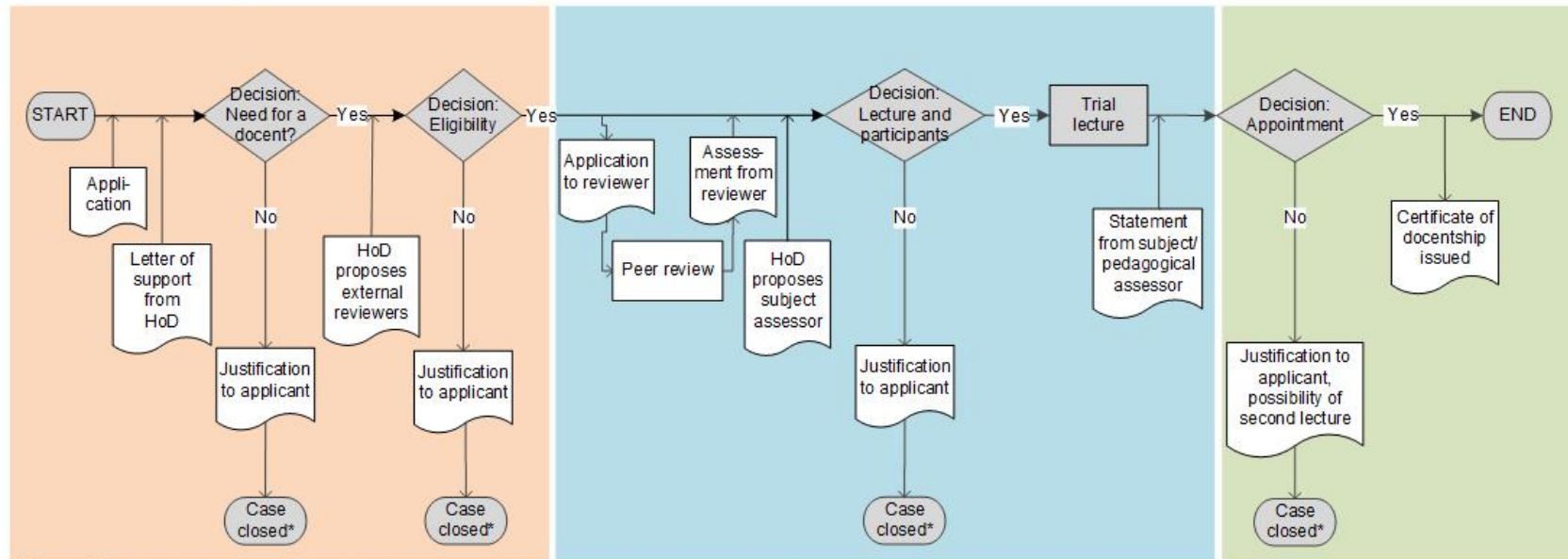
A person who takes up a post at SLU and is already a docent at another higher education institution in one of SLU's third-cycle subject areas can apply to be assessed in the same subject at SLU but without the peer review or the trial lecture. In such cases, the faculty concerned nevertheless has to decide whether the third-cycle subject area in question requires one or more docents. The DN then decides if a peer review and/or trial lecture are necessary to approve the application. If the application is for a different subject than the applicant already holds a docentship for, the regular application procedure applies.

### Process for appointing docents at SLU

Figure 1 shows the appointment process for docents at SLU. You will find more information on the different steps in the sections to follow. Applications are submitted through the electronic application system Reachmee, which has detailed instructions for how to fill in the application forms and what supporting documents to submit.

Figure 1. Process for appointing docents at SLU

○ = start/end    📄 = document    □ = process    ◇ = decision



**Preparation**

The applicant submits their application electronically. The head of the department (HoD) submits their needs analysis and justification for appointing a docent.

The faculty assesses the need for a docent in the subject in question.\*\* If the faculty finds an appointment is justified, the HoD proposes external experts.

The DN assesses the applicant's eligibility regarding research and teaching expertise. If the applicant is found eligible, the DN appoints an external expert for the scientific assessment, if necessary also an expert for the artistic assessment.

If there is no need, or if the applicant is not eligible, a written justification is provided with the decision and the case is closed.

\*) The applicant can retract their application at any point during the process. The case will then be closed.

\*\*) The faculty board (FN), or the dean or the DN by delegation, is responsible for the needs analysis.

\*\*\*) Not all faculty boards have delegated the right to make this decision to the DN. If this right has not been delegated to the DN, the FN decides.

**Assessment**

The application is forwarded to the reviewer together with instructions for how to assess the applicant's research expertise. The teaching expertise is assessed by the DN as part of its preparations.

When the reviewer has submitted an assessment and the HoD has proposed a representative of the subject (subject assessor), the DN decides whether a trial lecture will be held, and if so which subject assessor will attend. The Unit for Educational Development appoints a pedagogical assessor.

After the lecture, the assessors submit written statements on the scientific content and the pedagogical execution. Based on the trial, they also propose to reject or approve the application.

**Rejection or approval**

The DN decides to reject or approve the application. In the latter case, the applicant is appointed docent.\*\*\* Once the application has been approved, a certificate of docentship is issued.

If the quality of the trial lecture is deemed insufficient, the applicant has the option of repeating the lecture before a decision to reject or approve the application is taken.

## Eligibility and duties

In order for an application for docentship to be approved, the applicant must have a degree of doctor as well as teaching training and experience, including a course in research supervision. In addition, the level and quality of the research or artistic expertise and independence must be considerably higher than what is required for a degree of doctor. The specific assessment criteria are described below.

The title of docent signifies that the holder has the necessary qualifications to serve as principal supervisor and faculty examiner at undergraduate, Master's and doctoral level at SLU in the subject area concerned. The task of a docent is to support university operations by for example supervising doctoral students, serving as external reviewer at thesis defences or taking on the role of external reviewer in various scientific contexts.

## Assessment criteria for academic competence

### *Research expertise and independence*

To be appointed docent, the applicant must have subject-matter knowledge that is considerably deeper and broader than what is required for a doctoral degree. The applicant is expected to have developed, through their publications, a clear, coherent, proven and independent research profile; they should also have published without their doctoral supervisor as co-author.

Their scientific publications, in addition to their doctoral thesis, must have been published in well-reputed scientific journals with a peer review system or corresponding arrangement. In the case of co-authorship, the applicant must describe the art and scope of their own contribution.

The scientific expertise and independence required to be appointed docent can be demonstrated e.g. through:

- the ability to initiate, run and lead research activities;
- the ability to independently formulate and solve research issues;
- a clear line of research in addition to the thesis work;
- the ability to attract external research funding, in competition and as the main applicant;
- the ability to describe their research vision for the future;
- the number of review assignments, e.g. from scientific journals;
- the ability to collaborate with business and industry as well as other activities outside the university;
- having spent time, after receiving their doctoral degree, in a different research environment than where they produced their thesis.

### *Artistic expertise and independence*

Artistic expertise and independence are only assessed for applications to be appointed artistic docent.

To be appointed artistic docent, the applicant must have subject-matter knowledge that is deeper and broader than what is required for a doctoral degree. The applicant is expected to have developed, through their post-doctoral production, a clear, coherent, proven and independent research profile. The applicant must be well recognised in their field and their artistic expertise must be of a high professional standard.

The applicant should have conducted their own artistic research after receiving their doctoral degree, where the applicant as a senior, independent practitioner must be able to demonstrate a high degree of artistic expertise through a wide selection of artistic works created over time.

The artistic expertise and independence required to be appointed docent can be demonstrated e.g. through:

- the ability to initiate, run and lead artistic research activities;
- the ability to independently formulate and solve research issues;
- active artistic work of a high quality;
- the ability to describe their research vision for the future;
- the ability to initiate, run and lead artistic development;
- national and international recognition in their field;
- being awarded expert assignments linked to the applicant's own artistic research and its development outside academia;
- the ability to collaborate with business and industry as well as other activities outside the university.

### *Teaching expertise*

To be appointed docent, the applicant must have the knowledge, expertise and approach required to work professionally as a teacher within higher education. Experience of developing courses, supervision or communicating popular-science information to students, businesses or society in general may also be required. Experience of supervising doctoral students will be given particular consideration, but supervision of Master's students will also be taken into account. Teaching skills should be demonstrated through a description of the applicant's own teaching values and a vision where the applicant reflects on issues related to teaching and didactics, as well as through proven teaching skills at different levels.

Completed training in teaching in higher education (corresponding to 10 weeks full time) is required, at least 3 weeks of which should be training in doctoral student supervision at SLU. The DN may, after consulting with the head of the Division of

Learning, Media and Digitalisation, approve training in teaching in higher education other than that offered by SLU.

The teaching expertise required to be appointed docent can be demonstrated e.g. through:

- the ability to independently take responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating the applicant's own courses and for examining course participants;
- assuming management tasks (such as director of studies) with responsibility for a degree programme or part of a programme;
- development work in teaching, or other experience of relevance to teaching skills;
- the ability to and interest in disseminating research findings in society.

### Application and supporting letter from the head of department

An application to be appointed docent should be submitted to the faculty concerned. The application should specify artistic or scientific docentship. The application should be submitted in English using the template provided in the university's electronic application system.

Once the application has been submitted, the head of department should give a clear justification as to why the department wishes, or not, to appoint the person in question docent and what this would bring to department activities. If the applicant is not an SLU employee, the head of department must also describe the importance of the collaboration with the applicant.

If the faculty finds there is a need for a docent in the third-cycle subject area in question, the head of department then submits proposals for two external experts and encloses their CVs. Before proposing external experts, the head of department must ensure that they are prepared to take on the assignment. The head of department must take into account gender equality as well as any conflict of interest, and the competence of the proposed experts should be described in relation to the scientific profile of the applicant. The same applies to the subject assessor proposed by the head of department at a later stage in the process (see figure 1).

Applications for docent are processed twice a year. Applications together with the head of department's justification must be submitted no later than 1 March and 15 September respectively.

### The external reviewer's assessment

The DN appoints one external reviewer and provides electronic copies of the description of the assignment and the supporting documents.



The external reviewer's assessment should highlight the applicant's research or artistic expertise and independence, both strengths and weaknesses. The external reviewer should conclude whether the applicant has reached the level of research expertise required to be appointed docent in a particular subject. The external reviewer should also propose an approval or rejection of the application. The justification for this proposal should be clearly stated in their assessment.

### Trial lecture for appointment as a docent

The purpose of the trial lecture is for the applicant to show their ability to hold a scientific lecture in an instructive and clarifying manner. The lecture should be targeted at doctoral students from the whole faculty – not only those from the applicant's own subject area.

The lecture should cover topical and scientifically founded issues within the subject, discuss them using relevant and appropriate methods, place the subject and the applicant's own research in a bigger scientific context and convey central thoughts and ideas within the applicant's subject field that they find important to develop. The lecture should consequently contain components where the applicant presents their future research vision.

The lecture should take place during the semester, in the subject in which the applicant wishes to be appointed docent. The lecture should be 30–35 minutes long and held in Swedish or English. The language is decided in consultation with the DN. The lecture should conclude with a scientific discussion between the applicant and the subject assessor, and a discussion on teaching between the applicant and the pedagogical assessor, as well as any questions from DN members or the audience.

The applicant submits a short (maximum 1 A4 page) popular science summary of their lecture, in Swedish or English, to the DN no later than three weeks before the lecture date. This summary will be published on the SLU web together with the announcement of a new docent.

The DN must be present at the lecture and have a quorum. A subject assessor (appointed by the DN) and a pedagogical assessor (appointed by the head of the Division of Learning, Media and Digitalisation) must also be present. After the lecture, the assessors submit written statements on the scientific content and the pedagogical execution. These statements should propose an approval or rejection of the application to be appointed docent.

## Approval, rejection or retracted application

The DN decides to approve or reject the application.<sup>1</sup> After a decision to approve an application, a certificate of docentship is issued.

If an application to be appointed docent is rejected, the DN must justify their decision. If the trial lecture is not approved, the applicant can submit a request to the DN to re-do the lecture again at a later date. If a trial lecture is not approved, the DN must justify this in such a manner that the applicant can understand what aspects need to improve at a second lecture. If the second trial lecture is also rejected, the application as a whole will be rejected.

A decision to reject an application cannot be changed or appealed.

The applicant can retract their application at any time during the process. The case will then be closed.

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<sup>1</sup> Not all faculty boards have delegated the right to make this decision to the DN. If this right has not been delegated, the faculty board approves or rejects an application based on a proposal from the DN.