The assessment of teaching competence at Tampere University

1. The scope and purpose of the guideline

This guideline describes the purpose, aims and principles of assessing teaching competence at Tampere University and the measures related to assessment. The guideline harmonises and systematises the assessment of teaching competence and improves the openness, transparency and reliability of assessment.

The guideline is applied at Tampere University in

1. the recruitment of employees to teaching posts (eg University Instructors, University Lecturers, Professors, tenure track posts)
2. conferring the title of adjunct professor
3. assessing an employee's advancement in the tenure track

The guideline is also used in filling the post of a professor by invitation without public notice of vacancy (Universities Act, Section 33). A person invited to a post must unquestionably fulfil the teaching competence requirements for the post (President's policy decision on "Titles and qualification requirements for teaching and research staff" 28 January, 2019).

In this guideline, *teaching competence* refers to a person's pedagogical skills, for which the term *teaching skills* is used in the Universities Act (558/2009; Section 89, Adjunct professors) and the President's decision on "Titles and qualification requirements for teaching and research staff". More clearly than the term teaching skills, teaching competence underlines the comprehensive conception of different ways to undertake and develop teaching duties. When teaching competence is assessed at universities, the social nature of a teacher's pedagogical competence should be acknowledged. It is enabled, constructed, realised and can be described as being specific to the context of a particular teaching community.

For their part, *teaching merits* refer to a person's teaching experience and know-how gained by teaching. However, this term does not directly refer to the teacher's pedagogical philosophy (his/her views on teaching and learning), plans to develop his/her teaching skills or not necessarily even to the level of his/her teaching skills.

In this guideline, *a teaching post* refers to a job in the University's personnel structure or the title of adjunct professor, which include teaching duties (including, for example, supervising a student and groups of students, assessment of learning and skills, giving developmental feedback, curriculum design, production of teaching materials, the development of learning methods and environments, and leading education) and whose teaching competence requirements are defined in the President's policy on the "Titles and qualification requirements for teaching and research staff" (TAU/231/100/2019).

This guideline lays out the framework for assessing teaching competence. Tampere University has signed the DORA declaration (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment) and is also committed to the responsible assessment of teaching

competence. Faculties and the Language Centre may issue their own specific guidelines that take into account the needs and demands of the different fields of science. It is necessary for the legal protection of applicants that the weighting of the criteria specific to the field and the vacancy are clearly communicated to the applicants, assessors and decision-makers before recruitment.

2. The purpose of assessing teaching competence

The assessment of teaching competence is used to implement the goals of the Tampere Universities' education and research strategies for the pedagogical renewal of the community, the close ties between education and research, and the support and appreciation of teachers. The assessment of teaching competence supports the University's long-term pedagogical renewal by ensuring that there is expertise in the development of teaching and supervision as well as educational development and leadership.

The University's most important resource for fulfilling the strategic goals is competent and motivated staff and students who are enthusiastic about building their expertise. The assessment of teaching competence supports students' learning, the smooth progress of their studies, and the development of skills in accordance with the students' own goals. In the constantly evolving higher education community, staff and students develop education, pedagogy and learning environments jointly and purposefully.

Well-executed assessment provides the applicants with information that helps them develop their teaching competence. At the same time, the University gains reliable in-depth knowledge about potential applicants and markets itself as an attractive employer to merited teachers who are interested in developing their skills.

3. The process of assessing teaching competence

Below is a description of the teaching competence assessment process and key procedures that apply especially to the recruitment of employees for teaching posts.

1. A description of the competence required in the post
Before drafting the job announcement, the teaching competence required for the successful undertaking of the post (eg the required pedagogical training based on the University's policies and President's decisions), and the weighting of teaching in relation to scientific and other merits are defined by taking into account the nature of the post (teaching competence is weighted at 30–70%, for instance).

The assessment matrix of teaching competence attached to this guideline may be used to define and describe teaching competence. In addition, other aspects of teaching competence that are also found as merits are defined.

In the definition, the different areas of teaching competence can offset one another. Information on how the different aspects of teaching are weighted must be communicated to the applicants.

2. Planning and describing the teaching competence assessment

Before preparing the job announcement, it must be decided how the applicants' teaching competence is assessed and the different competence areas weighted.

When Tampere University fills vacancies, makes assessments on the employee's advancement in the tenure track, and grants the title of adjunct professor, it uses pertinent and various methods to assess teaching competence. The methods are
- predictable and reliable
- treat the applicants justly and fairly
- do not excessively burden the applicants or the recruiters
- are efficient time wise and financially

Teaching competence may be assessed, for example, with the help of a teaching portfolio, demonstration lecture, and an interview. Applicants may use the teaching portfolio to highlight many different aspects of their teaching competence. The portfolio enables recruiters to assess the elements of teaching competence and the applicants' abilities to develop their teaching based on feedback as well as their professional development.

In the teaching portfolio produced in order to facilitate assessing teaching competence, the applicants present their skills in the following areas (3-5 pages depending on the post):

1. Thoughts on teaching (pedagogical philosophy): applicant's conception of learning and how teaching can support it
2. Pedagogical skills: pedagogical training and research, awards received for good teaching, other recognition and merits
3. Experience of teaching and supervision: courses taught, theses supervised, working as academic tutor, using different teaching methods and learning environments, teaching and supervision practices that promote learning and skills development
4. Development of teaching and supervision competence: development of and making use of teaching materials and learning environments, using students' feedback to develop teaching, basing teaching on research
5. Social development of teaching: cooperation with teachers, students and employees, multidisciplinary cooperation, curriculum design, internationality, pedagogical leadership
6. Other teaching merits
7. Previous assessments of teaching competence

In the recruitment of teachers to the first stage of the tenure track (Assistant Professor, Postdoctoral Research Fellow), the assessment of the applicants' teaching competence is conducted based on only the teaching portfolio. Attention is paid to the applicants' potential as teachers and their interest in teaching and the development of teaching.

The purpose of a teaching demonstration is to exhibit the abilities presented in the teaching portfolio and to give the assessors an idea of how the applicant handles an interactive situation. Where possible, teaching skills are demonstrated in an actual teaching situation or as a separately arranged demonstration lecture. An interactive online course, supervision session or other suitable teaching situation may be used to

demonstrate teaching skills. The teaching demonstrations of all the applicants to a post are assessed in the same way.

The purpose of the interview is to clarify and ensure details provided in the application documents, such as the practical application of one's pedagogical philosophy, as well as to chart the applicants' interest in teaching development and their abilities for being active developers of social modes of action.

In the assessment, the attached assessment matrix is applied as is suitable for the post in question.

The assessment process

A pool of teaching and learning experts supports the evaluation of teaching competence in the recruitment of personnel to teaching posts and the advancement assessments of employees in tenure track posts. Pool members are called upon to support recruitment when necessary. The pool consists of pedagogically merited professors, other teaching staff, and students.

In the job announcement, applicants are informed of the required teaching competence and its assessment. The assessment is based on the criteria set out in the preparatory phase; the weighting of the different aspects cannot be changed after the vacancy is opened for application. Only the top applicants' teaching competence is assessed. Members of the assessment pool are invited to the assessment of teaching competence.

When a person applies for
1) an openly advertised vacancy his/her teaching competence is assessed in relation to the eligibility criteria and conditions specified in the job announcement.
2) the title of adjunct professor his/her teaching competence is evaluated according to the eligibility criteria and conditions specified for the task of an adjunct professor as presented on the faculty's website.
3) advancement assessment to move forward in the tenure track and the request is accepted: his/her teaching competence is assessed according to written criteria and the teaching competence (teaching skills) requirements defined in the decision "Titles and qualification requirements for teaching and research staff" (TAU/231/100/2019) for each position in the tenure track.

The teaching portfolio provides a written basis for the teaching demonstration and interview. The portfolio is assessed in relation to the criteria defined for a portfolio. In applicable parts, the attached assessment matrix is used as the basis of assessment. The main goals of the assessment are to evaluate each applicant's special strengths as well as the aspects where they still need to develop, and to get a full picture of the applicants' teaching competence.

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3. Recording and justifying assessment results and feedback to applicants

The task of teaching competence assessment is to produce a good and well-grounded picture of the applicants' teaching competence and their motivation to develop as a teacher. Applicants approved for giving a teaching demonstration also have the opportunity to get a feedback summary issued by the assessment pool that participated in the recruitment. The purpose of the feedback is to support the development of the applicants' teaching competence.

Appendix 1: Tampere University's assessment matrix of teaching competence