RECRUITING
without
discrimination

**Advice for individuals
involved in recruitment procedures
for members of faculty**

Unil

UNIL | Université de Lausanne
Bureau de l'égalité

A guide to recruiting without gender bias

Recruiting without discrimination is a statutory obligation but also a question of institutional effectiveness: only recruitment that respects equality of opportunity will allow you to identify the best person for a particular post. At UNIL today, women and men do not always have the same chance of becoming a professor. The proportion of female professors is still too low, particularly in terms of core faculty, in spite of the significant number of highly qualified female academics. In addition, women are still under-represented in the competitive examinations for recruitment to professorship.

While we may have a firm belief in the importance of equal opportunities for women and men, our behaviour is influenced by stereotypes and unconscious gender bias. Bias of this kind has a negative impact on applications from women, but it is not a foregone conclusion. Awareness-raising campaigns and well-designed recruitment procedures can reduce its impact.

The Rectorate's Strategic Plan for 2017-2021 confirms its determination to increase the number of female professors. Specifically, UNIL has set itself a target to have at least 40% women among newly hired professors by 2020.

The Equal Opportunities Office's support in recruitment procedures for new professors and statistical monitoring are both ways of achieving this. We also want to raise awareness among the hiring committees and train their members in non-discriminatory recruitment. Commitment from everyone involved in recruitment is essential!

By following the advice in this guide, members of the committee will be contributing to UNIL's aim of promoting equality of opportunity at every level. Half of our PhD students and post-docs are women: now it is time to guarantee that everyone, male or female, has the same chance of becoming a professor.

It's in your hands!
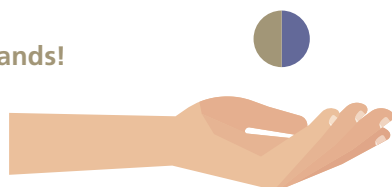
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for Career Development and Society

Prof. Nouria Hernandez
Rector of UNIL

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A statutory commitment

Art. 8 of the Federal Constitution prohibits discrimination on gender grounds. The Swiss Federal Act on Gender Equality (LEg) is the tangible expression of this in the professional arena, in all aspects of the working relationship, starting with recruitment.

Rectorate Directive 0.2 Promoting Equality at the University of Lausanne aims, among other things, to promote women into faculty posts and supervisory positions. The directive states that faculty recruitment procedures must be monitored by equality officers. It indicates that as a rule, when recruiting members of faculty, preference should be given to the person belonging to the under-represented gender, if it is a matter of deciding between candidates with equivalent academic and teaching qualifications, and who are an equally good match for the profile required.

Stereotypes: not me, surely?

Our brains automatically record and categorise other people based on their gender, alongside other characteristics such as age, skin colour, etc. These are what we call **"stereotypes"**. This cognitive process of categorisation allows us to sort and reduce the mass of information we receive, interact and take decisions rapidly. It is a natural, unconscious mechanism.

Nonetheless, stereotypes can have negative consequences, since most of the time they are erroneous: they simplify to an extreme degree the groups they claim to describe and ignore individual complexity and diversity within the group. Critical reflection is needed to challenge them.

Gender stereotypes relate to socially constructed beliefs about femininity and masculinity, and the distinct skills and characteristics men and women are supposed to have. For example, men are generally believed to be more brilliant and more competent than women, with a rational mind and a propensity for leadership. Women, on the other hand, are viewed as less competent, more emotional and caring.

PATIENCE

SENSITIVITY

EMPATHY

AMBITION

LEADERSHIP

SCIENTIFIC
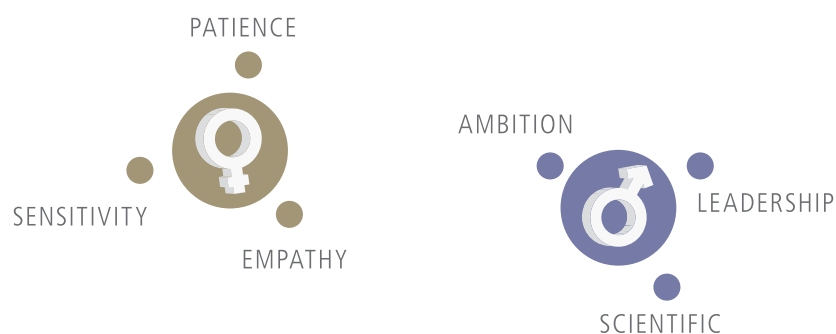
Gender stereotypes of this kind not only create a difference between men and women, but also suggest the existence of a hierarchical relationship in how these differences are assessed. As a consequence, female candidates have intrinsically fewer chances than men of being perceived as fulfilling the criteria of academic excellence and leadership associated with professorship.

Gender stereotypes are problematic insofar as they interfere with the selection criteria established for recruitment and the candidates' supposed merits. They can lead to biased decisions, which run counter to the meritocratic and egalitarian principles advocated by the university.

Everyone is influenced by gender stereotypes, both men and women, even those who believe firmly in the importance of equality of opportunity. But bias of this kind is not a foregone conclusion. Increased attention paid by members of the standing committees, well-defined, transparent selection criteria and well-designed selection procedures all help to reduce its impact.

Examples of gender bias in academic recruitment

A double standard of assessment

The notion of a "double standard" refers to differences in how individuals' competences are assessed based on the fact that they belong to a particular social category (Foschi, 2000). Characteristics such as gender, social class or ethnicity can result in differentiated treatment. People who belong to a group that is less highly valued or has lower status are assessed more strictly. Conversely, individuals in a social category that is more highly valued are assessed more positively, and against lower standards. Since the competences that are generically attributed to women are not those that are valued in academic careers, women tend to be viewed as less competent than men in this area and their applications may be assessed more strictly. Given that both men and women are subject to gender bias, both male and female assessors can make biased decisions.

31 years old   29 years old
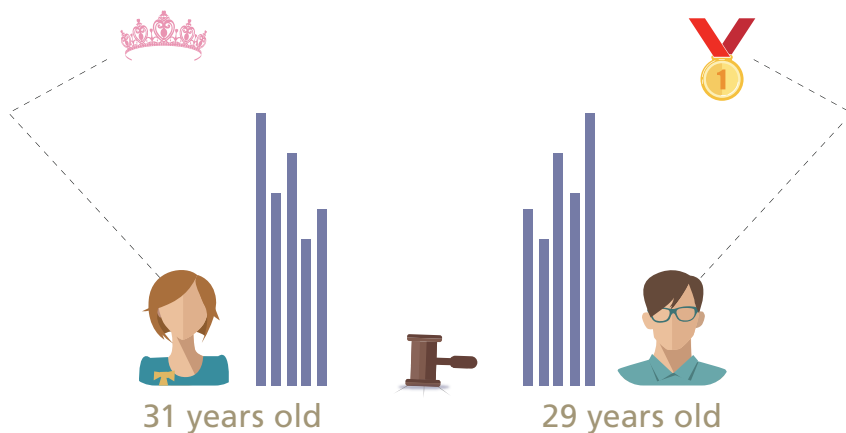
In one study in the United States (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012), science professors in US universities were asked to assess an application for a job as laboratory manager. Each assessor (both male and female) was given the same application, but the research team varied the gender of the candidate by randomly assigning them either a male or female first name. The professors viewed the application with a male first name as significantly more competent than the same application with a female first name. Both male and female assessors also chose a higher starting salary for the male applicant. The same result was found, regardless of the gender of the person assessing the application.

Think leader, think male?

When we picture a leader, our stereotypes tend to mean that we think of a man rather than a woman. Traditionally, the characteristics associated with leadership, such as confidence, ambition and rationality, are seen as male traits. Conversely, sensitivity, cooperation and empathy are more often associated with women. A woman who displays a typically masculine leadership style transgresses gender norms and exposes herself to criticism: she may then be judged negatively, because she is viewed as unsympathetic, aggressive, etc., which in turn affects her career development prospects (Heilman, 2001; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004).

Gender stereotypes of this kind risk introducing bias into recruitment procedures for faculty posts. Not all men are necessarily ambitious and not all women are necessarily sensitive. Moreover, characteristics that are viewed as typically feminine, such as sensitivity, cooperation and empathy are also advantages for faculty posts. The university has a lot to gain from these competences being valued in both female and male candidates.

Heilman and Haynes (2005) invited participants in a study they ran to read the descriptions of teamwork carried out by pairs made up of a man and a woman in male-dominated professional environments. The participants were asked to assess the performance of each member of the team, without any information about their personal contribution to the success of the task. Women were systematically judged to be less competent, less influential and less likely to have played a leadership role in the work, unless clear evidence of their previous professional competence was provided.

Do geniuses always have beards?

Science and excellence are traditionally associated with the figure of a male researcher. If we think about famous scientists, we are more likely to picture a man than a woman (Banchefsky, Westfall, Park, & Judd, 2016). We are also more likely to associate genius and "pure" intelligence with men than women (Leslie et al., 2015). Moreover, the "typical" scientific career reflects a male career path, where research activities are intensive and uninterrupted, and progression is linear (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001). However, this ideal puts female researchers at a disadvantage, as they are more likely to experience interruptions for family reasons, work on temporary or part-time contracts, or have relatively high teaching workloads (Studer, 2012; van den Brink & Benschop, 2011). That does not mean the quality of their application is necessarily lower. Questioning the linear career as the only model for success is a useful approach for ensuring that the merits of both male and female candidates are examined more equitably (Garforth & Kerr, 2009).

In the collective imagination, femininity is rarely perceived as compatible with science. In one study (Banchefsky, Westfall, Park and Judd, 2016), 80 photos of male and female science professors were selected from the internet and shown to participants, who were asked to assess the photos based on their appearance (more feminine or more masculine) and how likely they were to be a scientist or primary school teacher. It was found that the more feminine a female researcher looked, the more likely she was to be identified as a school teacher. The men's appearance had no effect on the participants' judgments.

The spectre of motherhood

The figure of the scientist, built around the idea of total, uninterrupted devotion to research, is at odds with the image and societal norms associated with parenthood, which is also viewed as an intensive activity, particularly for mothers (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008). During recruitment procedures, supposed or actual family responsibilities are often raised when examining applications from women, but are invisible in analyses of applications from men (Carvalho, 2010). Indeed, fatherhood is not viewed as involving as significant a commitment as motherhood.
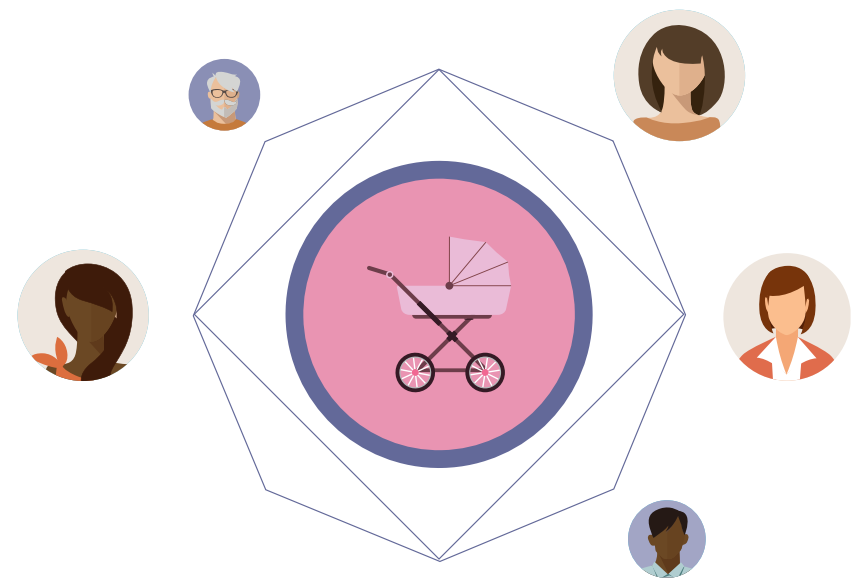
Female researchers are viewed as potential mothers, for whom parenthood will have a negative impact on their scientific output (van den Brink & Benschop, 2012, Fassa, Kradolfer & Paroz, 2010). However, research shows that female scientists, whether or not they have children, attach just as much importance to their work. Among the younger generations, male and female researchers have comparable levels of scientific productivity (van Arensbergen, van der Weijden, & van den Besselaar, 2012; van den Besselaar & Sandström, 2016). When we take into account the number of actual years of research, the bias introduced by the phenomenon of self-referencing, and the position and institutional resources available to individuals, the differences in publication between men and women disappear (Cameron, White, & Gray, 2016; Xie & Shauman, 1998).

The participants in one study (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007) assessed the applications of two people of the same gender who were equally qualified, one of whom was a parent while the other was not. The experiment revealed that mothers were penalised on an analysis of several criteria, including perceived competence and the initial salary recommended. Fathers were not penalised, and in some cases benefited from a more positive assessment than non-fathers.

The preference for "people like us"

Homophily is the mechanism that means we are likely to feel more comfortable and form relationships with people whose characteristics are similar to our own, and with whom we can identify (for example, in terms of gender, age, social class, or national or ethnic origin) (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). As a result, there is a risk that applications with a similar profile to that of the assessors (both male and female) will tend to be viewed more favourably, regardless of their academic merit, and to the detriment of other high-quality applications.

Since senior university posts tend to be occupied by men, female candidates tend to be at a disadvantage as a result of these dynamics, because they are less well integrated into the social networks concerned and are less able to count on such forms of support (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001). Ensuring that the composition of the standing committees is sufficiently diverse is therefore particularly important to avoid this kind of "gatekeeping" (van den Brink & Benschop, 2014).

Using empirical data relating to faculty appointments in the Dutch academic landscape, van den Brik and Benschop analyse how male professors find it easier to maintain networks with young male researchers and how all professors (women and men) prefer the (male) candidates who most resemble the (masculine) model of success. This preference is demonstrated through informal support, recommending a candidate and helping them to build their reputation, and encouraging them to apply for a job vacancy.

The solo and halo effects

The solo effect refers to being the only member of a social category in a group, for example, a woman in a group of men. The person in the group who is in a minority is disadvantaged, since they become particularly visible: their work is judged more critically, differences from the majority group are accentuated and they are restricted to stereotypical roles (Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2002 and 2003, see box).

In the context of faculty recruitment, the solo effect means that a single application from a woman in a pool of applications from men risks being defined solely by that particular trait (the fact of being a women becomes the outstanding characteristic of the application) and may be assessed on the basis of gender stereotypes. Conversely, applications from men will be assessed based on the traits and qualities that make them distinctive. Moreover, the performance of female candidates, for example, during an interview with the standing committee, can be affected when the committee consists solely of men.

In one laboratory experiment (Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2002), men and women were placed in a "solo" situation during an oral examination. The women performed less well than the men when confronted with an audience made up exclusively of people of the opposite sex. In another study (2003), the authors found that this effect was more marked if the competences associated with the task were stereotypical (such as mathematical skills, which tend to be more associated with men).

The halo effect introduces another type of cognitive bias: based on a general positive impression of an individual or their competences in a particular area, there is an unjustified tendency to assume they have skills in other areas (Balzer & Sulsky, 1992).

In the context of faculty recruitment, the consequence of this mechanism is a more favourable view of certain applications that make a good impression overall, which have a good reputation, or which are particularly excellent from the perspective of one of the assessment criteria. Given that women are exposed to gender bias, are judged according to double standards and generally have a more limited support network than men, there is a risk that their application will be viewed less positively. Being aware of this mechanism is important: a candidate who has been recommended because of their excellent network will tend to be evaluated more positively for other assessment criteria (for example, scientific production or teaching). It is therefore crucial to consider each selection criterion independently and assess the qualities of each application and the nuances that characterise them.

What to do?

Three key principles

Define and challenge the assessment criteria

- Make sure you ask the same questions about each application.
- Also, check that none of the pre-established criteria is prejudicial to a particular group of people.
- Ensure you avoid relying on informal criteria to the advantage/disadvantage of a particular application.
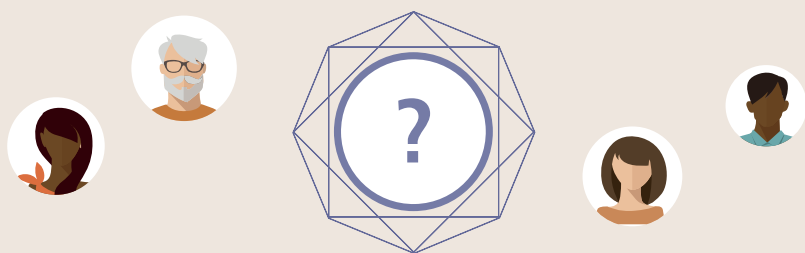
Monitor the discussion

Make your colleagues aware if you think there could be bias in the assessment of applications or there is a reliance on stereotypes, which could unjustifiably put a particular application at a disadvantage.

Take time to make the decision

- Take the time to examine the applications carefully.
- Make sure you pay equal attention and spend the same amount of time on applications from both women and men.
- Take a step back: slowing down the process allows you to move from unconscious stereotypes to rational reflection.
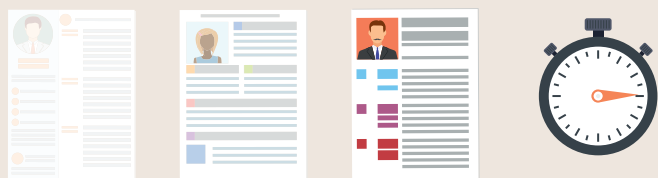
Best practices for recruitment based on equality of opportunity

When planning for academic posts or when a vacancy arises

- Discuss the faculty or department's long-term strategy. Reflect on how a more diverse make-up, particularly with more female professors, could contribute to the quality and development of the academic community as a whole.

- Inform members of the planning committee about the University and faculty's aims in relation to equality. When a vacancy arises in the faculty, find out about the proportion of women at the various academic grades, particularly PhD students, post-docs and professors.

- Include women in academic planning committees.

- Be flexible about the level of the position, if you think this will help to attract excellent applications from women.

- Define the post as openly as possible, while taking into account the needs of the department or faculty. Requirements should focus on essential rather than desirable elements, which could limit the pool of candidates (male and female) excessively.

Composition and information provided to members of the standing committee

- Include as much as possible female professors in the membership of the committee. External experts can be particularly helpful. Ideally, at least a third of the members of the standing committee should be women.

- Ensure that the committee is made up of people with different perspectives and areas of expertise. Make sure it includes men who are aware of equality issues.

- Ensure an equality officer is present, by making contact with the Equality Office.

- Inform members at the first meeting of the committee about the University's and faculty's objectives in relation to promoting equality in recruiting professors.

- Ensure that different points of view are heard throughout the process, in a climate of trust, where everyone is invited to express their view, regardless of status. Produce a realistic timetable for the various stages of the procedure and ensure that everyone participates.

## Defining the job profile and assessment criteria

- Produce a clear, concrete definition of the minimum level of qualifications and experience required for a candidate (male or female) to be considered eligible for the post.

- Discuss and define all the criteria against which the candidates will be assessed. Set out all these criteria in an assessment matrix and if necessary, specify their relative weight. The commission could consider the following criteria: scientific impact, quality of research, productivity, level of funding secured, supervision of PhD students, teaching, ability to work in a diverse environment, collaborative ventures, services to the scientific community, contribution to the working environment, contribution to society.

- Make sure that none of the criteria selected automatically excludes certain candidates. Be aware of the fact that certain criteria, such as mobility or age, tend to put applications from women, in particular, but also from people who have taken a non-standard career path, at a disadvantage. As part of this reflection, remember that non-standard career paths can be just as excellent and that skills that might be useful for a university professor may, for example, have been acquired in a non-university setting.

- Discuss the relevance of assessing candidates' potential, not just their past achievements.

- Take account of career breaks, for example for maternity leave or illness, when assessing the level of scientific production.

Job advertisement and cut-off period for applications

- Write the advertisement using neutral, gender-inclusive language.

- Make an explicit distinction in the advertisement between essential and desirable qualifications. Avoid the use of superlatives (such as "exceptional") and avoid describing qualifications in the form of a list, so that you do not discourage people from applying.

- Use a sufficiently wide range of communication methods to guarantee an adequate number of applications, particularly from women. Make use of relevant academic and community institutions and networks, both nationally and internationally. Post the advertisement via e-mail distribution lists, websites and forums.

- Identify female candidates who might apply and write to them personally, to let them know a post is being advertised. Contact colleagues who are experts in the field, particularly women, to identify potential female candidates. Identify promising profiles from members of the editorial boards of academic journals, authors of academic articles in the area of specialisation you are looking for, and at conferences or symposia.

- Extend the deadline for applications and intensify your communication efforts if a minimum number of female applicants has not been reached.

Examining the applications

- Clarify possible conflicts of interest between members of the committee and the candidates.

- When assessing applications, take account of previous employment conditions (full-time or part-time, number of contracts, whether employment has been continuous or not).

- Allow the same amount of time to read each application and assess them using the previously defined matrix of assessment criteria.

- Approach the assessment of the applications systematically, starting with the applications from women. Ask the same questions about all the applications.

- Assess each criterion based on concrete facts and avoiding interference from informal evidence. As far as possible, try to disregard the candidate's identity and gender, institutional affiliation and reputation, and any links you may have with their colleagues or superiors, and concentrate on assessing the qualities of the application and the candidate's potential.

- Be open to diversity: the profiles of excellent male and female researchers can be surprising in several ways, such as their original location and institutions, research subjects, how they have approached them, etc. Reflect on how profiles of this kind could enhance the faculty's research and teaching.

- Avoid taking the candidates' family situation into account; do not assume, in principle, that a candidate will be unable or unwilling to move house.
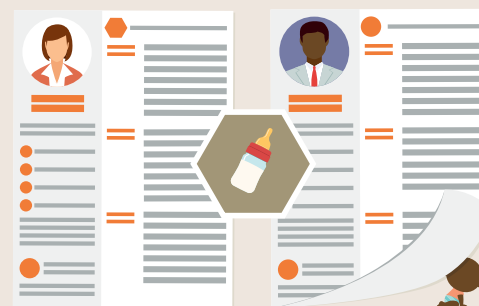

- Consider young male and female candidates from the same point of view, i.e. their development potential.

- In terms of scientific production, do not rely exclusively on bibliometric indicators, but also take the quality of research into account. Select and assess a specific number (e.g. five) of the candidates' best publications.

When producing a shortlist

- Produce two lists, of the same size, of applicants who could be invited to an interview. The first should consist of the best applications from women and the second of the best applications from men. The committee will then discuss the applications selected, starting with the ones submitted by women.
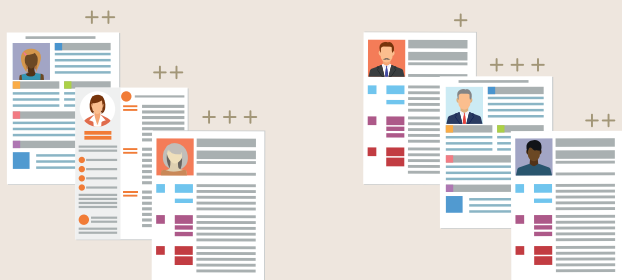
- Try to explain the reasons for each decision in objective terms. Point out if the applications are being discussed according to different standards or if stereotypes have involuntarily crept into the discussions.

- Try to maintain the same proportion of women as at the start and ensure that as many women as possible are auditioned. Avoid the "solo" effect as far as possible, by inviting at least two women to the trial lesson.

> *Two applications may look equivalent based on the overall criteria. In this case, prioritise the applications from women.*

During interviews and trial lessons

- Set the date for the trial lessons to allow as many members of the department to participate as possible. Avoid times that conflict with family responsibilities. Avoid scheduling too many interviews/lessons on the same day, to ensure that all the candidates experience similar conditions.

- Use the same protocol and allow the same amount of time for trial lessons and interviews for all the candidates. Produce a set of questions in advance to use in the same order with all candidates.

- Ask work-related questions only. Do not ask the candidates about their family situation or family organisation (how they balance their work and family life).

- As far as possible, avoid the assessment of the candidates' performance being influenced by considerations related to their physical appearance, dress, voice or way of speaking.

- Avoid expressing opinions during breaks and informal moments that might influence other members of the committee, particularly the junior members. Above all, keep your own views to meetings of the committee.

When the appointment is made and the committee's report produced

- Allow enough time for each member of the committee to express their opinion before the final vote is taken.

- Make sure that gender bias and personal impressions that are not relevant to the post do not influence the discussion. Refer to the assessment criteria and assessments of the trial lesson and the interview with the candidates.

> *The committee's report should include a passage that analyses how equality of opportunity has been taken into account in the selection process, in particular by including the statistics on applications from women and men, and all the measures taken to attract a variety of applications, notably from women.*

50 %   **50 %**
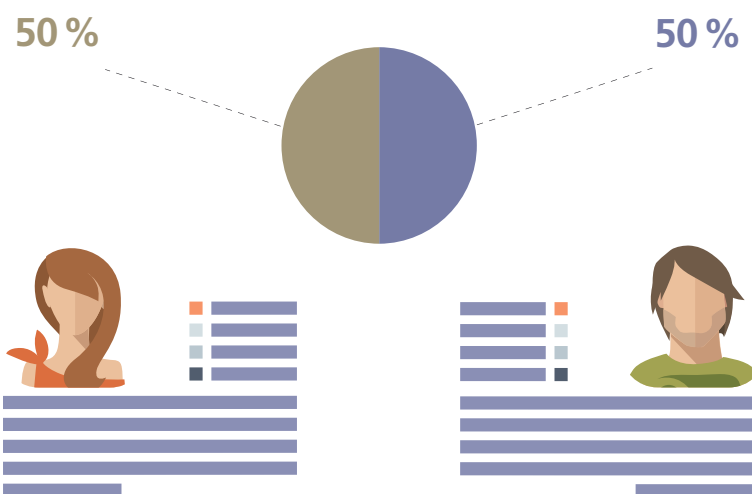
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Writing

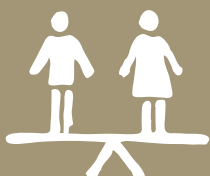Equal Opportunities Office, in collaboration with Isabel Valarino.

Acknowledgement

To find out more

Scientific references, tutorials, examples of other institutions and other resources can be found at the following address:

www.unil.ch/egalite

www.unil.ch/egalite

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