



# Kwantlen Faculty Association

Your KFA – Knowledgeable, Fair, Approachable

## Quick Reference Guide: Serving on a Search Committee as a KFA Representative

### Collective Agreement Terms:

The Collective Agreement ensures that the KFA has faculty members on all search advisory committees for administrators. From the Agreement:

#### 4.10 SEARCH FOR ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS

- (a) Whenever the University establishes a Search Advisory Committee (SAC), the Union shall have the right to appoint:
  - (i) three (3) regular faculty members for the following positions: University President, Vice President Academic and Provost.
  - (ii) two (2) regular faculty members for the following positions: Vice Provosts, Associate Vice Presidents (Academic and Research), Deans, University Registrar, University Librarian, Associate Deans, and other Senior academic positions as may be determined from time to time. Specific titles of positions may change over time.
  - (iii) two (2) regular members for any administrative position with faculty oversight.
- (b) The Employer may make acting or temporary administrative appointments for period of six (6) months or less and lateral re-assignment of administrative personnel as needed.
- (c) In the event that an administrative position is filled by a faculty member of the University, the position vacated by the faculty member will be filled with a one-year non-regular type 2 appointment. If the administrative position is confirmed, then the vacated position shall be treated as a normal University vacancy.

### Your Role:

If you are appointed to a search advisory committee by the KFA, you are there to represent the KFA in the search process.

### **The Search Process:**

You have the right to participate fully in the search process. Normally, search advisory committee members

- participate in the crafting of the posting and of the selection criteria
- participate in the crafting of questions for the interviews
- review CVs to help create a longlist of candidates
- participate in the longlist interviews and in the shortlisting of candidates and in the shortlist interviews
- take part in final deliberations on the recommendation of 1 or more candidates

### **Sample Questions for Interviews or Interview Templates**

- What experience do you have working within collective agreement terms?
- What are some of the advantages of a unionized working environment?
- How would you proceed if performance concerns were raised about a faculty member?
- What are your experiences working in a multi-union environment?
- What experience do you have in building positive relationships with union leadership?

### **Notes About the Process:**

The job description, selection criteria, and interview questions should take into consideration that this is a unionized working environment. When appropriate, for example when there is a manager who will be supervising members of the KFA and BCGEU, they should take into consideration that this is a multi-union environment.

There is no need to longlist or shortlist candidates that you do not think are qualified for the position. In other words, if there are no candidates who are qualified, you should not feel pressured to agree to longlist any of them. Similarly, if the longlist interviews indicate to you that none of them should be shortlisted, you should not feel pressured to agree to shortlist any, and if there is no one among the shortlisted candidates who you think should be offered the position, you should not feel pressured to make recommendations for the position. Failed searches can occur, and a failed search only means that the process should continue until such time as a person is found to fill the position.

If at any point during the search committee/interview process you feel that some aspect of the collective agreement or due process is not being fairly applied, please contact the union office so that one of the Table Officers can pursue this further with senior administration.

### **Be Aware of Unconscious Bias**

A good description of unconscious bias and how to become aware of it can be found in [Harvard University's Best Practices for Conducting Faculty Searches, Version 1.2, pages 10 - 11](#):

## **What is Unconscious Bias?**

An enormous body of literature confirms that we all have biases—some explicit, many implicit. These biases have an effect on how we view others and how we make decisions, including decisions about faculty hiring. Perhaps most disturbing, implicit bias can be at odds with our own conceptions of ourselves and our conscious values and standards. You may believe yourself to be open-minded and you may be determined to select the most meritorious candidate before you. But a good deal of evidence from the behavioral sciences—some of it conducted on university professors themselves—demonstrates that actual achievements are often set aside in favor of those who fit some group stereotype of those likely to succeed.

## **Recognize Your Own Unconscious Biases**

Acknowledging and understanding your biases and those of your colleagues can minimize the influence they have on the search. Spending sufficient time on evaluation can also reduce the influence of assumptions that may not be warranted.

[...]

## **Take an Implicit Association Test (IAT)**

Professor Banaji [of Harvard] and colleagues have developed an online set of tasks designed to assess associations between personal attributes (e.g., gender, race, or sexual orientation) and your positive or negative views about them. Project Implicit, hosted at Harvard, includes dozens of IATs that allow you—in the privacy of your office or home—to explore your implicit biases.

We strongly encourage every search committee member to take at least one IAT. (Registration is free, and the first test takes no more than 15 minutes.) The tests are not meant to challenge your conscious attitudes, but to reveal the extent to which you may nevertheless associate groups like “female” with “family” and “male” with “career.” As members of this intellectual community, you will surely find it of some interest to discover that your mind contains associations of which you are unaware. You can find the IATs at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>.

## **Beware of How Unconscious Bias Can Affect Candidate Evaluations**

Search committee members often give preference to applicants they know, whose advisors or mentors they know, or who hold a degree from their own alma mater or one of a small number of elite institutions.

- Women, minorities, and candidates from institutions other than traditional peers can be held to higher standards. Search committee members may scrutinize their records in an unconsciously dismissive way, evaluate the same achievements as others to be less important, and fail to notice unexpected achievements.

- Search committee members—and sometimes letter writers—can inadvertently, or even overtly, minimize the contributions by women and minorities, and may unfairly attribute success to mentors and collaborators. It can be helpful to explicitly ask and discuss—as a committee—if a letter writer is unduly shaping a view of a candidate in a positive or negative direction based on scant or unreliable evidence.
- Letters of recommendations often reflect stereotypic views of demographic groups. A man’s research will be described as seminal. A woman will be described as warm and collaborative. These implicit cues can influence decision-making.
- Be especially vigilant about statements concerning “fit.” This euphemism is often used to exclude individuals whose demographic characteristics don’t match the demographics of the department or field. If “fit” were the best driver of decision making, the Harvard of today would be identical to the Harvard of the past.
- Another concept to scrutinize is “potential.” Since decisions about early career stage scholars often depend upon predictions about potential, superficial qualities such as dress or style of speech should not color assessments of actual achievements.
- For women especially, it is important to not let the concept of family commitments enter the evaluation. Here are some excerpts from recent letters of recommendation: “She balances work and life in a way that detracts from her career.” “And what’s more remarkable is that she did all of this while having three children.” [NOTE: the same person who wrote this last sentence also wrote a letter for the candidate’s husband and did not mention the three children, although they were indeed his too.]
- Recent studies document that the achievements of women and minorities tend to be evaluated less positively than white men of equal accomplishment. Ask yourself whether you unconsciously read the dossiers of candidates differently? You will be impressed with your own ability to correct your assumptions once you become aware of their contaminating influence.

If you have any questions about representing the KFA on Search Committees, please contact any of our Table Officers at <https://yourkfa.ca/about/executive-representatives/>



**In Solidarity,  
Your Kwantlen Faculty Association**