

GUIDELINES ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF SELECTION BOARDS

University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria



Guidelines on equal opportunities for staff selection boards

This department of the Mediterranea University of Reggio Calabria is actively engaged in ensuring equal opportunities avoiding asymmetries in the evaluation processes for access to academic and working positions of its competence (career progression of teaching staff, research contracts and grants, fixed-term employment contracts of the PTA, etc.). To this end, the department reaffirms, in accordance with the "Code of Ethics of the University of Studies Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria (approved by Rector's Decree No. 204 of 27/07/2011), to work so that the members of the staff selection committees, which fall within the competence of the department, assess the skills of candidates without applying less favorable treatment on the basis of gender, race, color, ethnic or social origin, language, religion, personal beliefs, political opinions, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age and sexual orientation.

The purpose of these indications is "to inform and raise awareness" among board members of the existence of unconscious prejudices which may make decision-making more difficult and which should therefore be considered when assessing candidates.

In fact, unconscious association processes, known as Unconscious Bias, studied through rapid association tests [1], have been developed during the course of human

evolution and have proven their usefulness in making quick decisions with a good degree of correctness. These decision-making processes are based on the past experience, knowledge and cultural context of the decision maker and/or the unconscious processing of information that the decision maker makes at every moment. All this leads to greater confidence in making decisions with regard to people who appear to us to be similar and vice versa. In the latter case, there is also an increase in the perception of risk compared to the decision to take [2].

As a result, decisions taken quickly can often be influenced by prejudices and stereotypes of which one is not necessarily fully aware (on the contrary, one tends to believe that one is immune or less prejudiced than others, a phenomenon known as Bias Blind Spot). All this could mislead the evaluation process when it has to be based on a rational and considered analysis.

For example, tests of unconscious associations show that concepts such as career and science are more easily associated with men than with women. Studies carried out in scientific academic contexts, in recruitment procedures based on the examination of curricula, where equal curricula were associated alternately with women's names or men's names, have shown that, with equal curricula, women are disadvantaged in recruitment or promotion procedures in a scientific environment. Similar studies have shown that the disadvantage of women increases when it comes to selecting people in institutions of

excellence, or promoting women to the highest career steps; this is the "meritocracy paradox" [3]. Excellence is a category that is not well defined in an analytical sense and therefore suffers more from prejudice and is associated at an unconscious level with male categories. These processes and their conclusions can also be extended to other categories and subcategories.

In this context, some initiatives can mitigate the effect of unconscious prejudice, for example:

- It is important to recognize and accept that the problem exists. It is not possible to have access to unconscious cognitive processes, but the quality of decision-making processes can be improved if one is aware and willing to counteract stereotypes.
- Prejudices take precedence over the control of our decisions, especially in cases of lack of time or stress.
- It is known that it is easier to identify the prejudices of others than one's own; a comparison with others helps in the recognition of one's own.
- Take objective facts into account when analyzing curricula without being influenced, for example, by assertive styles.
- In light of the above, this department of the University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria, in addition to the obvious compliance with all relevant laws and provisions, requires all commissioners of his appointment:

- Having read this document
- The commitment to ensure equal opportunities for every candidate.
- The absence of discriminatory prejudices leading to asymmetries in the handling of evidence and in the drafting of judgements, ensuring that the candidate is assessed on objective principles regardless of his or her beliefs in terms of gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc.
- The use of a language respectful of gender and differences in accordance with the "Indications for a use of language in respect of differences" of the University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria (approved by Rector's Decree n.352 of 21/12/2018).

Bibliography

1. Implicit association test (IAT). Project implicit. Available at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cognitive_biases
3. Hurst, Charles E., Heather M. Fitz Gibbon, and Anne M. Nurse. Social inequality: Forms, causes, and consequences. Routledge, 2016.



Funded by Horizon 2020 research and innovation program, grant agreement No 741128

www.geecco.unirc.it; www.geecco-project.eu