Guidelines of the Presidential Chair for the interim evaluation of junior professors (with and without tenure track)

In Lower Saxony, all junior professors are legally required to take part in an interim evaluation. Pursuant to Section 30 (4) of the Niedersächsische Hochschulgesetz (Lower Saxony Higher Education Act, NHG), interim evaluations must take place in the third year of junior professor contracts that initially have a fixed term of three years. The interim evaluation is a legally defined intermediate step for all junior professors (with and without tenure-track) and forms the basis for extending the employment contract by a further three years ‘if a teaching evaluation and an external review of the candidates’ achievements in research or art justify this’. In practice, the interim evaluation is mainly used for personnel development. It serves as orientation for the progression of the professor’s career.

The contract shall be extended by the Presidential Chair at the recommendation of the Faculty Council pursuant to Section 30 (4) NHG. The School is responsible for coordinating this process.

1. Evaluation criteria

The interim evaluation is based on evaluation criteria in six areas. These have already been formulated in the in the profile paper for the approval of the professorship and are communicated to the junior professor at the latest upon appointment. In the interim evaluation the criteria serve to identify any development needs with respect to the junior professor’s future employment.

While the criteria for junior professorships with a tenure track are also used for the later evaluation of granting a tenured professorship (see Tenure-Track Regulations), for junior professorships without a tenure track they serve to evaluate the requisites needed by the junior professor to compete for a tenured professorship at the end of the term of the junior professorship.

The criteria in the six areas listed below are therefore intentionally comprehensive. In general, the evaluation focuses on significant achievements in research and teaching performance. Assessing the nature of outstanding achievements is subject-specific and must be confirmed by external review (e.g. by peer review procedures, high-ranking publication media, external evaluation in third-party funding procedures, etc.).

In order to advise the junior professor in all matters concerning her or his career development, the School must appoint a suitable person to act as a mentor to the junior professor. The mentoring relationship is subject to strict confidentiality on both sides (mentor-mentee). It is not affected by rank. In addition to the support provided by a mentor, a consultation based on the evaluation result will be held regularly between the member of the Presidential Chair responsible for this task (currently the Vice President for Early Career Researchers and International Affairs) and the junior professor.
Evaluation criteria (sorted by topic)

Research:
Sustainable research activities and their reflection, especially in:
- Publications: This includes, for example, monographs, journal articles, editorships, editions, etc.
- Lectures: proven participation in conferences with personal contributions (lecture, poster presentation, moderation), guest lectures or similar
- Acquisition of third-party funding:
  - Application for individual funding (submitted) to the DFG or to a similar institution with a quality review by an external scientific body
  - Application for a collaborative research project including an individual project with a similar scope
- Prizes/awards

Teaching:
- Successful teaching record, especially in tutoring-supervising students:
  - Supervision and assessment of Bachelor’s and Master’s theses (first and second reports)
  - Participation in training courses for lecturers
- Positive student feedback on teaching proven by regular participation in teaching evaluations (the faculty is responsible for carrying out regular teaching evaluations)
- Prizes/awards

Administration:
- Adequate involvement in administrative affairs, such as:
  - Consistent participation in academic administration (e.g. committees, development of degree programmes)
  - Membership in committees of the institute/department or the faculty (e.g. Institute Council, Faculty Council, Curriculum and Teaching Commission)

Promotion of early career researcher(s):
- Support of doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers demonstrated by, for example:
  - First supervision of a doctoral project approved by the doctorate committee
  - Involvement in doctoral procedures

Leadership, ability to work in a team and interpersonal skills:
- Demonstrated through participation in qualification programmes, mentoring programmes, coaching programmes etc.

Outstanding innovative contributions:
- University development (e.g. contribution to the establishment of a new degree programme or collaboration)
- Transfer: Transfer of research (regional, national, schools)
- Internationalization: verifiable international contacts, e.g. through stays abroad, supervision of guest researchers and doctoral candidates or similar
2. Self-assessment by junior professors

The self-assessment consists of three parts:
- CV
- Personal statement
- Supporting documentation

In the personal statement (max. 6 pages), the junior professor describes past activities and plans for the future. Candidates are expected to relate their activities to the evaluation criteria. In the personal statement, the candidate has the opportunity to describe and assess his or her main research areas, research collaborations and other research activities, to outline his or her role in teaching and to describe the teaching concept. In addition, potential obstacles to the fulfilment of the evaluation criteria should be identified.

The personal statement is supplemented by supporting documentation (max. 8 pages) which sets out supporting evidence for the personal statement in a table or the like, and includes a compilation of further material/items that the candidate deems relevant (see appendix).

3. Dean of Studies’ report (Teaching evaluation)

Junior professors take part in regular internal teaching evaluations and, if applicable, external evaluations of the academic programme and teaching. Based on the candidate’s self-assessment (teaching) and the teaching evaluation results, the Dean of Studies submits a short report with a recommendation. Recommendations for evaluation questions include:
- How do you rate the teaching activities of the candidate with regard to teaching, the range of subjects covered and the contents?
- How do you rate the candidate’s ability to support early career researcher(s)?
- What recommendations do you have for future course designs?

4. External expert reports (research evaluation)

Two external expert reports must be obtained on the activities and results of the candidate’s research. The School is responsible for choosing the reviewer. The faculty may consider up to four reviewer proposals from the junior professor. Based on the achievements during the first phase of the junior professorship, the expert reports should include an evaluation of the candidate’s prospect of obtaining a tenured appointment by the end of the second phase. The reviewers should base their report on the questions recommended in the appendix. The reviewers shall answer the central questions listed in the appendix. They shall also be provided with the candidate’s self-assessment and the evaluation criteria.

Reviewers will be asked to agree to the report’s disclosure under strict anonymity. Alternatively, reviewers can prepare their own summary to be forwarded to the candidate. The attached form can be used for feedback. The full report or rather the comments by the reviewers entered into the feedback form serve as the basis for the consultation between the junior professor and the member of the Presidential Chair responsible for this task (currently the Vice President for Early Career Researchers and International Affairs).

The reviewers must usually be university professors and from different institutions.

If the expert reports are not conclusive, a third independent expert report must be obtained by the School. The Presidential Chair shall be informed of such action.

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1 The recommendations of the Presidential Chair for avoiding conflicts of interest in the appointment procedure must be observed.
5. The School’s statement

The School’s statement is written by the dean and should contain a reasoned recommendation for extending or terminating the employment contract based on the candidate’s self-assessment, the teaching evaluation, the Dean of Studies’ report and the expert reports. The statement should be structured as follows:

1. Summary (main findings, recommendations) and conclusion, taking into account the following questions:
   - How do you rate the junior professor’s starting conditions with respect to material and personnel resources as well as institutional support?
   - How do you rate the junior professor’s activities with regard to the evaluation criteria?
   - What are the junior professor’s prospects for being appointed to a tenured professorship after six years?

2. Dean of Studies’ report

3. External expert reports

4. Resolution of the Faculty Council on extending or terminating the employment contract

The School’s recommendation, including the candidate’s self-assessment, the Dean of Studies’ report and the external expert reports, is to be sent to the Presidential Chair via official channels for the attention of the Vice President for Early Career Researchers and International Affairs. These documents must be submitted to the Presidential Chair no later than three months before the end of the employment contract. A decision will be made by the Presidential Chair at the earliest possible opportunity.
Appendix: Template for documentation supporting the self-assessment

A. Research
• List of publications (indicating 5 key words) in the reporting period (distinguishing between peer-reviewed publications and others)
• List of scientific presentations during the reporting period
• Editorships for scientific journals, series, etc.
• Review activities
• Applications for third-party funding and third-party funding raised in the reporting period (list)
• Awards and prizes during the reporting period
• Memberships in scientific committees
• Other relevant activities

B. Teaching
• List of courses held
• List of theses supervised
• Involvement in examinations
• International activities (supervision of exchange students, international doctoral candidates, courses in English or other foreign languages, etc.)
• Involvement in university-wide teaching projects
• Proof of participation in regular internal teaching evaluations and, if applicable, external evaluation of the degree programme and teaching.

C. Academic administration
• Short description of role in academic administration and list of individual contributions

D. Support of early career researchers:
• Supervision of doctoral projects
• Further activities supporting early career researchers

E. Personal development
• Evidence of participation in qualification programmes, mentoring programmes etc.
• Participation in university teaching courses

F. Outstanding innovative contributions:
• University development (for example, contribution to the establishment of a new degree programme or international collaboration) and/or
• Transfer activities (knowledge and technology transfer, patents, licenses) or applied collaboration and/or
• Internationalization: verifiable international contacts, for example through stays abroad, supervision of guest researchers and doctoral candidates
Appendix: Recommendations of central questions for reviewers evaluating the performance of junior professors at the Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg

Guidelines for reviewers

Ausgangssituation / Starting conditions

- Wie beurteilen Sie ausgehend vom Selbstbericht die personellen, materiellen und institutionellen Startbedingungen der Juniorprofessorin bzw. des Juniorprofessors? Based on the self-assessment, how do you assess the junior professor’s starting conditions with respect to material and personnel resources as well as institutional support?

Forschung / Research

- Welchen Beitrag zur Forschung des entsprechenden Fachgebiets im nationalen und internationalen Kontext leistet die Arbeit der Juniorprofessorin bzw. des Juniorprofessors? What is the contribution of the candidate’s research to the specific field in a national and international context?
- Wie beurteilen Sie die methodische Fundierung und den innovativen Charakter der Forschungsvorhaben der Juniorprofessorin bzw. des Juniorprofessors? How do you assess the methodological foundation and the originality of the candidate’s research projects?
- Wie beurteilen Sie die Qualität und Quantität der Veröffentlichungen der Juniorprofessorin bzw. des Juniorprofessors? How do you assess the quality and quantity of the candidate’s publications?
- Wie beurteilen Sie die Fähigkeit der Juniorprofessorin bzw. des Juniorprofessors hinsichtlich der Einwerbung von Drittmitteln (Umfang, Institution)? How do you assess the candidate’s ability to attract research funds (with regard to quantity and the funding institution)?
- Wie beurteilen Sie die Leistungen der Juniorprofessorin bzw. des Juniorprofessors in der disziplinübergreifenden Forschung? How do you assess the candidate’s achievements in interdisciplinary research?
- Wie beurteilen Sie die wissenschaftlichen und außerwissenschaftlichen Kooperationen der Juniorprofessorin bzw. des Juniorprofessors? Welche weiteren Kooperationen bieten sich Ihrer Ansicht nach an? How do you assess the candidate’s scientific and non-scientific cooperation? Which other cooperation activities would you recommend?
- Welche Empfehlungen und Anregungen für die weiteren Forschungsarbeiten können Sie geben? Which recommendations and suggestions can you give concerning further research activities?

Gesamiturteil/Overall Assessment

- Wie beurteilen Sie die Fähigkeit der Juniorprofessorin bzw. des Juniorprofessors zu eigenständiger Forschung? How do you assess the candidate’s abilities concerning independent research?
- Welche Berufungschancen ergeben sich ihrer Ansicht nach für die Juniorprofessorin bzw. den Juniorprofessor nach Ablauf von sechs Jahren? What are the junior professor’s prospects for being appointed to a tenured professorship after six years?
Appendix: Rückmeldung der externen Gutachterin/des externen Gutachters an die Kandidatin/den Kandidaten / Reviewer feedback for the candidate

Name der Kandidatin/des Kandidaten/Candidate’s name:

Gesamtfazit – Empfehlung / Result – Recommendation

☐ uneingeschränkte Empfehlung/Unconditional recommendation

☐ eingeschränkte Empfehlung/Conditional recommendation

☐ Ablehnung/Rejection

Weitergabe des anonymisierten Gesamtgutachtens an die Kandidatin/ den Kandidaten Forwarding the full report in anonymous form to the candidate

☐ einverstanden/I agree

☐ nicht einverstanden/I do not agree

oder/or

Feedback für die Kandidatin/den Kandidaten / Feedback for the candidate

