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Internal guidelines for the Swedish Research Council's Strategic Recruitment of Associate Senior Lecturers

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SLU internal guidelines for nomination to the Swedish Research Council's third call for "Strategic Recruitment of Associate Senior Lecturers" (VR-BUL 2027:1)

Based on a government mandate, the Swedish Research Council (*Vetenskapsrådet, hereafter VR*) has launched a programme for the Strategic Recruitment of Associate Senior Lecturers (*hereafter the VR-BUL*). The programme is open to researchers in all disciplines up to seven years after obtaining their PhD, ensuring that they meet the requirement that applicants must be eligible to be employed as an Associate Senior Lecturer (*Biträdande universitetslektor, BUL*) for five years. There will be two calls each in 2026 and 2027.

The third VR-BUL call (VR-BUL 2027:1) is expected to open in early 2027, with a **tentative deadline in mid-February 2027**. Based on the guidelines for the first call (VR-BUL 2026:1), it is expected that the **Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) will be able to nominate up to six researchers** in this call. Among these, at least 50% of the candidates must be external, i.e., have an international background (not active in Sweden in the last four years).¹ The university must also ensure an equal gender distribution, meaning that at least 40% of the candidates must be men and women, respectively. Candidates may already be employed as an Associate Senior Lecturer, but for a maximum of six months by the application deadline.

According to VR's guidelines, all applications submitted to the VR-BUL call must be selected via a prioritisation process at the nominating university. This document describes the internal process for nominating researchers for the VR-BUL at SLU.

Internal prioritisation process for the VR-BUL at SLU

- Once VR publishes a call for nominations to the Strategic Recruitment of Associate Senior Lecturers programme, the SLU Grants Office, in agreement with the faculties' research officers, prepares a document with a timeline, updated information about the VR-BUL guidelines and the internal nomination process at SLU. The information is then sent to all department heads and research officers, and is published on the SLU staff web.
- Each faculty invites its departments to nominate a maximum of two candidates each, of which at least one must be an external candidate, and preferably one man and one woman. Candidates put forward at the department level should complete a pre-proposal according to the instructions given in the SLU template for writing a VR-BUL pre-proposal

¹ For detailed information on how an international candidate is defined, please consult <https://www.vr.se/english/applying-for-funding/calls/2025-10-08-strategic-recruitment-of-associate-senior-lecturers.html>.

([Template for pre-proposals to VR-BUL at SLU](#)). The pre-proposal must be sent to the nominating faculty's research officer, with cc to the head of the nominating department, by **15 September 2026**, at the latest.

- Together with the applicant, the head of the nominating department is responsible for ensuring that the pre-proposal is complete and that all information is correct.
- Each faculty may submit a maximum of four nominations to SLU's central prioritisation group.² The faculties can collaborate to ensure that the candidates put forward to the central level meet the requirements of a minimum of 50% international candidates and a gender balance of at least 60/40 (n = max. 16). Each faculty is responsible for ensuring that the candidates they nominate meet all the requirements.
- SLU's internal prioritisation group evaluates and ranks all pre-proposals based on VR's assessment criteria (Appendix 1). The group makes a recommendation, with accompanying motivation, concerning which candidates should be nominated by the Vice-Chancellor.
- The Vice-Chancellor decides which candidates will be nominated by SLU for the VR-BUL programme.
- The Grants Office contacts all nominees prioritised by SLU. Information is provided about the VR-BUL guidelines, internal deadlines at SLU, and the support offered by the Grants Office.
- The prioritisation group's motivation for not prioritising a project is communicated to the researchers concerned.
- In collaboration with the head of the department, the candidate prepares a draft version of the Vice-Chancellor's support letter, according to a provided template. The Grants Office finalises the letter, after which the support letter is signed by the Vice-Chancellor.
- The call is expected to open in early 2027, with tentative deadline in mid-February 2027. Nominated candidates are responsible for submitting their own application via the application portal Prisma (<https://prisma.research.se/>) before the deadline.
- SLU's leadership encourages faculties to use the VR-BUL programme as a strategic tool for recruiting promising early career researchers from abroad and highlights that suitable candidates may be identified among the candidates who have applied in the call for a BUL position within *SLU Futures*.

VR's guidelines for applications to the Strategic Recruitment of Senior Lecturers programme

VR has developed this programme to give the most promising junior researchers the opportunity to develop independence and to build scientific and teaching merits for employment as a senior lecturer. The programme supports international mobility and allows higher education institutes to make strategic recruitments in relevant areas. Based on the guidelines provided by VR in connection with the first VR-BUL call, we can assume the following guidelines for VR-BUL 2027:1:

² The prioritisation group consists of internal evaluators from SLU, with an appropriate balance regarding gender, career stage, and research profile. The group is appointed by the Vice-Chancellor after candidates are nominated by the faculties. Please see the document "Uppdrags-beskrivning för prioriteringsgrupp för forskningsansökningar och karriärbidrag" for further information (SLU ID: SLU.ua.2025.1.1-1343).

- The VR-BUL call is open to researchers in all academic disciplines. The applications will be assessed by international panels of experts in three broad areas: 1. Medicine and Health, including Pharmacy; 2. Natural Sciences, Engineering Sciences, Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine; 3. Humanities and Social Sciences, Educational Sciences, and Artistic Research.
- VR supports basic research of the highest international standard.
- Candidates who are nominated to the VR-BUL programme in the 2027:1 call must have obtained their PhDs after February 2020 (exact date in relation to the deadline, TBA). Please note that eligibility is calculated from the date of the successful PhD defence and *not* the date of the award. Candidates who received their PhDs before the cut-offs can be nominated if they provide documented evidence of deductible time, according to the rules applied by the Swedish Research Council, and provided that the associate senior lectureship can be extended so that five years remain from the start of the grant period.³
- Candidates may or may not be employed by the administrating organisation at the time of applying, but must be employed as Associate Senior Lecturer (biträdande lektor) at the start of and throughout the grant period and any further availability period. The employment must equal at least 70 per cent of a full-time equivalent.
- Nominated candidates must ensure that if funded, they will dedicate minimum 50 per cent of a full-time equivalent to the project throughout the grant period.
- The administrating organisation (the nominating HEI) must finance at least 50% of a full-time salary for the researcher, including indirect costs, from its own funds, regardless of the level of employment. External funding may not be used for this part of the salary.
According to an agreement made between SLU's Vice-Chancellor and the Faculty deans, it is the faculties that guarantee the co-funding of researchers awarded a VR-BUL grant.
- The VR-BUL grant is paid out in a standard amount of 3 000 000 SEK per year.
- After evaluation, continued funding at senior lecturer level may be granted for up to five years.

Complete guidelines for the VR-BUL 2027:1 call will be published on VR's website, at the latest when the call opens, which is expected in early 2027. However, but potential candidates are advised to read the guidelines for the VR-BUL 2026:1 call for further information, available at: <https://www.vr.se/english/applying-for-funding/calls/2025-10-08-strategic-recruitment-of-associate-senior-lecturers.html>

URL for downloading the template for pre-proposals to VR-BUL at SLU:
https://internt.slu.se/globalassets/mw/externfinansiering/vr-bul_2027_call_1_slu_pre-proposal_template_final.docx

³ For detailed information on deductible time and requirements for employment conditions, please consult information on the Swedish Research Council's web pages:

- <https://www.vr.se/english/applying-for-funding/calls/2025-10-08-strategic-recruitment-of-associate-senior-lecturers.html>.
- <https://www.vr.se/english/applying-for-funding/applying-for-a-grant.html>

Timeline (2026/2027)

Date	Responsible person/unit	Task
18 June 2026	Grants Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sends updated information about guidelines for the VR-BUL, SLU's internal nomination process, and timeline to all department heads and faculty research officers. • Publishes this information on the SLU staff web.
15 September	Candidate, in agreement with department head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline for applicants to submit pre-proposals for the VR-BUL to the faculty research officer (see contact information below), with the head of department in cc. • The department head is responsible for ensuring that the applications comply with prevailing faculty strategies.
7 October	The faculties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculties submit their candidates' pre-proposals to the Grants Office via forskning.planeringsavdelningen@slu.se. • Each faculty is allowed to nominate up to four candidates. • The faculties can collaborate to ensure that the candidates put forward to the central level meet the requirements of minimum 50% international candidates and a gender balance of at least 60/40 (n = max. 16).
12 October–9 November	Prioritisation group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prioritisation group makes a proposal to the Vice-Chancellor concerning which candidates should be nominated for the VR BUL.
13 November	Vice-Chancellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Vice-Chancellor decides which candidates will be invited to submit a complete application to VR.
16 November (at the latest)	Grants Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacts the candidates nominated for the VR-BUL by SLU with relevant department heads and research officers in cc. • Provides information about the VR guidelines, internal deadlines at SLU, and the support offered by the Grants Office. • Communicates decisions and rationales to candidates whose applications were not selected.
16 November–call deadline	Researcher & Grants Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominated candidates complete their VR-BUL applications with support from the nominating department / faculty and the Grants Office.
c. 15 January 2027	Head of department, in agreement with the researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate on a proposed text for the Vice-Chancellor's support letter (according to a provided template). • Send the draft letter to forskning.planeringsavdelningen@slu.se.

c. 10 February 2027	Vice-Chancellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Grants Office sends out support letters signed by the Vice-Chancellor, the Dean and the Head of Department to the nominated VR-BUL candidates, from forskning.planeringsavdelningen@slu.se.
Mid-February 2027 (expected deadline)	Researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deadline to submit the final VR-BUL application to VR. The candidates are responsible for submitting their own applications via the application portal Prisma. Emails a copy of the final application to forskning.planeringsavdelningen@slu.se, with the research officer of the nominating faculty in cc.

Contact information

Name	Role	E-mail	Phone
Caroline Grabbe, SLU Grants Office	Research Coordinator providing support for excellence grants Responsible for organising the VR-BUL nomination processes	caroline.grabbe@slu.se	+46-72-236 56 70
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Appendix 1. Assessment of applications to the "Strategic Recruitments of Associate Senior Lecturers" (VR-BUL)

How applications are assessed

Scientific quality is the fundamental criterion when the Swedish Research Council allocates grants to research. All applications are evaluated in competition with the other applications on the basis of the evaluation criteria below, as described by the Swedish Research Council ([link](#)).

Evaluation process

Applications submitted to the call for Strategic Recruitment of Associate Senior Lecturers are evaluated by a review panel where the members are international researchers.

At least three members review and grade each application individually. If additional expertise is needed, applications may also be evaluated by one or more external reviewers. The entire review panel (not including any external reviewers) then meets at a review panel meeting to discuss and prioritise the applications, and to make a proposal for a decision to the Director General.

List of review panels:

- Medicine and Health, including Pharmacy
- Natural Sciences, Engineering Sciences, Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine
- Humanities and Social Sciences, Educational Sciences and Artistic Research

Evaluation criteria and guiding questions

The evaluation of the scientific quality of your application is made based on four basic criteria (Scientific quality of the proposed research, Novelty and originality, Merits of the applicant, Feasibility). The purpose of using several components is to achieve a multi-faceted evaluation. The criteria are assessed on a seven-grade scale, except for feasibility, which is assessed on a three-grade scale.

In addition to the basic criteria, applications are also evaluated using an additional criterion, Internationalisation and mobility, on a 7-grade scale.

For each criterion, there are guiding questions to support the panel members' evaluation of your application. These can also function as guidance for applicants when writing their application.

1. Scientific quality of the proposed research (1–7)

- To what extent are the aims and research questions relevant, clearly stated and well justified in relation to the research frontier?
- To what extent are the theoretical foundations and methodological choices well described and appropriate for addressing the research questions?
- To what extent is the research plan realistic and systematically structured, including timeline, implementation and risk management?
- To what extent is the proposal positioned to strengthen a priority research area at the host HEI and build long-term research capacity and quality (as motivated in the nomination letter)?

- When applicable, how are issues relating to sex and gender perspectives justified and handled in the research plan?
- When applicable, are the ethical considerations properly described and addressed? Does the applicant adequately consider potential suffering of humans and animals, and the balance of risk and value to nature and/or society?

2. Novelty and originality (1–7)

- To what extent does the proposed research advance or renew the research field and/or challenge existing knowledge, theories, methods, or practices?
- To what extent does the proposed research combine concepts, approaches, methods, and/or material/data in a novel way?
- To what extent could the proposed research generate new knowledge with significant scientific impact in the short or long term?

3. Merits of the applicant (1–7)

- How significant are the applicant's scientific productivity and impact from an international perspective, considering the field and academic age?
- To what extent has the applicant demonstrated independence and the ability to establish a distinct line of research?
- To what extent are previous results and outputs of high quality and relevant to the proposed research?
- To what extent do the applicant's qualifications and outputs confirm competence to lead the proposed research and to develop into a future leading researcher capable of building/leading a sustainable research environment?

4. Internationalisation and mobility (1–7)

- To what degree does the applicant have research experience from other HEIs nationally and internationally?
- To what degree have mobility and internationalisation contributed to the applicant's scholarly development, competence and independence?
- How relevant and valuable are the applicant's mobility experiences to the proposed research, and to what extent are they leveraged to create strategically valuable networks and capabilities at the host HEI?
- To what degree are the experiences and networks characterised by high quality (e.g., activity in prominent environments or new research fields)?

5. Feasibility (1–3)

- To what extent do the host HEI's commitments (including resources, integration and career-development) credibly support the proposed research, the applicant's progression towards senior lecturer level and the strategic strengthening described in the nomination letter?
- To what extent is the research plan feasible within the stated timeframe and resources?
- To what extent is the project organisation (including the applicant's role and activity level and, when relevant, the roles of other key persons) appropriate for successful implementation?
- To what extent are the necessary infrastructure, equipment, and collaborations in place?
- Does the applicant adequately consider relevant legal and formal requirements (e.g., ethical permits)?

Overall grade (1–7)

The subsidiary criteria are weighed together into an overall grade reflecting the application's overall quality.