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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

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Annex to: Vice-chancellor's decision of 16 June 2025, rules for the appointment as Distinguished University Teacher at SLU, SLU.ua.2025.1.1-1844

Rules for the appointment as Distinguished University Teacher at SLU

1. Introduction

The title of *Distinguished University Teacher* is awarded to promote teaching quality at SLU and encourage educational development. Quality and development are encouraged by:

- rewarding skilled and pedagogically informed teachers, recognising them through a title reflecting their level of competence and consequent salary increase. Investing in quality teaching and learning pays off.
- The title Distinguished University Teacher serves as confirmation that those awarded the title hold the expertise required to take responsibility for tasks within the department related to the development and quality assurance of teaching. Just as a docent can take on the role of principal supervisor, distinguished teachers can, for example, lead course and programme development. Line managers should bear this in mind when allocating work at the department.

Generally, SLU processes applications for the title of Distinguished University Teacher every two years, following calls from the Board for the Appointment of Distinguished University Teachers, Nex. Calls and applications follow the administrative procedures established by the university's chief operating officer.

2. Eligibility requirements for the title Distinguished University Teacher

Teachers employed at SLU for an indefinite period who belong to one of the categories specified in the Appointment procedures for teachers at SLU and as heads of research may be awarded the title of distinguished university teacher.

For an application to be considered, applicants must:

- compile a portfolio fulfilling the requirements established in the procedure for applicants for the title of distinguished university teacher, as established by the board for the appointment of distinguished university teachers at SLU;
- can demonstrate that they have completed a minimum of 10 weeks of teaching and learning in higher education training or equivalent;
- include the contact details of at least two referees who have insight into the applicant's pedagogical work, and
- have completed SLU's workshop on writing an educational portfolio, or the equivalent.

3. Criteria for teaching expertise to be met by those awarded the title Distinguished University Teacher at SLU

Teachers must demonstrate expertise as summarised in the following criteria or areas of knowledge. To be awarded the title, all five criteria must be met. Each criterion lists several indicators. In this context, 'indicator' refers to a specific activity that helps demonstrate how a teacher fulfils the more general, or overall, criterion. To obtain the title of distinguished university teacher, the applicant must meet the following criteria or areas of knowledge:

1. teaching expertise;
2. scientific and developmental approach to pedagogy;
3. collaboration with colleagues and leadership in teaching and learning;
4. holistic perspective and collaboration both within the university and with society at large;
5. a firm critical basis in the subject.

3.1 Teaching expertise

Teaching proficiency refers to the skill demonstrated by a teacher in their interaction with students. This includes creating a safe, open climate and favourable conditions for learning. Clear communication, relationship building and collaborating with students when developing courses, teaching and learning are other elements central to a teacher's teaching proficiency.

Indicators:

- Have a clear picture of students' prior knowledge and expectations.
- Clearly understands the role and importance of their own teaching in courses and programmes.
- Builds a good rapport with students and establishes effective communication.
- Clearly links and explains course objectives, learning activities, and assessment in the context of the programme, and engages in a discussion about it with the students.
- Teaches in a way that encourages interaction and cooperation between students.
- Delivers high-quality instruction in a way that engages students and is appreciated by them.
- Prepares their teaching based on students' needs but can spontaneously and consciously adapt their instruction to a student group and learning environment to best support student learning.
- Uses a well-considered and broad range of student-centred teaching and assessment methods.
- Thoughtfully balances the formative and instrumental aspects of the programmes and trains students' critical thinking.
- Works actively with different forms of constructive feedback on student performance in relation to the learning objectives.
- Develops an inclusive approach, drawing on and adapting teaching to students' diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- Views every teaching session as an opportunity to develop their own learning.

3.2 A scholarly and development-oriented approach to pedagogy

A scholarly and development-oriented approach is a prerequisite for successful teaching as well as for research and collaboration with the rest of society. Their approach to teaching and learning constantly changes as they reflect on their experience and research in higher education pedagogy. Their teaching practice continually adapts as they acquire new knowledge and the composition of student groups and their prior understanding changes.

Indicators:

- Demonstrates a clear link between their teaching practices and pedagogical philosophy.
- Can support their choice of course content, teaching methods, and modes of assessment in relation to a course's place in a programme and student needs and expectations.
- Demonstrates continual development of teaching practice.
- Investigates and evaluates students' learning within their own teaching practice.

- Discusses and reflects upon their personal teaching practice and students' learning with reference to higher education pedagogy research and proven experience.
- Welcomes peer scrutiny of their teaching practice.
- Shares their experiences through conference contributions or publishing reports/papers.

3.3 Collaboration with colleagues and pedagogical leadership

Both the department and teaching collective should reflect upon the relationship between the form and content of the teaching and students' learning. Collaboration and exchange of experience between colleagues, together with responsible pedagogical leadership, are important for well-functioning programmes and educational development.

Indicators:

- Actively supports colleagues in their role as teacher, course coordinator, programme coordinator or director of studies.
- Contributes to course and programme development.
- Participates in and initiates discussions on teaching and learning throughout the organisation.
- Initiates pedagogical development projects.
- Exercises active pedagogic leadership in roles such as course coordinator, programme coordinator or director of studies.
- Actively participates in teacher days, further training and courses or conferences on teaching and learning in higher education.

3.4 Holistic perspective and cooperation both within the university and with the rest of society

University education is to develop both critical-thinking members of society and a diverse and skilled labour force. To perform their role, university teachers therefore need to understand the wider context in which they work and be able to respond to students' expectations of their programmes and the demands of prospective employers and society.

Indicators:

- Has a clear understanding of how their teaching contributes to students' personal development and ability to think critically, communicate with different social groups and address ethical and societal issues in the relevant field of study.
- Continually develops and reassesses course and programme objectives in relation to societal and industrial changes.

- Actively interacts with business and community organisations to provide students with examples of how they can practically apply their knowledge and skills in their future professional lives.
- Actively collaborates with other parts of SLU and other universities to develop the course or programme in ways such as bringing in knowledge and experience that are missing in the local learning environment.

3.5 Critical engagement with the subject

A clear topic is almost always at the centre of their active teaching. To contribute significantly to relevant and research-oriented learning, a teacher must have good knowledge of the subject and its current research areas. The teacher also needs to be able to see the subject in a wider perspective, recognise its boundaries and relationships with other areas of knowledge.

Indicators:

- Updates their teaching to reflect the latest developments in their field and/or new research findings.
- Critically analyses and reflects on the selections made from the subject area in relation to its learning outcomes. Discusses how this selection affects pedagogical work, thus student learning.
- Uses deliberate strategies to give teaching a clear scientific and/or artistic basis.
- Stimulates a scientific, reflective and critical approach in students.
- Acquires fundamental knowledge in areas related to their teaching subject
- Describes and reflects on the opportunities and difficulties of interdisciplinary work.

4. The assessment process

4.1 The assessment

The Board for the Appointment of Distinguished University Teachers, Nex, prepares the applications and assessment of teaching expertise. The applications are assessed based on:

- Documents submitted as part of the application
- Two expert opinions
- Contacts with referees
- Interview with the applicant.

4.2 External experts

Two external pedagogics experts should further review shortlisted applications. Subject specialists should be based at other Swedish higher education institutions than SLU, to ensure credibility and an impartial assessment without internal influence. At least one of the subject specialists must be based outside of SLU. Ideally, the chosen subject specialists should reflect gender diversity.

4.3 Referees

The application for the title of Distinguished University Teacher must include two named referees with documented teaching experience and good insight into the applicant's teaching work. The contact details of each referee must be included, alongside a brief description of how they are familiar with the applicant's pedagogical practice.