

# **OTHER ACADEMIC POSITIONS**

December 12, 2025

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS DOCUMENT**

This document is a description of academic positions outside career systems and associated processes at Aalto University. Aalto University reviews and updates these rules and procedures regularly.

The version history is available at the end of this document.

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# 1 THE ACADEMIC POSITIONS AT AALTO UNIVERSITY

## 1.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

This document describes the policies and key guidelines for recruitment processes and contracts for other academic position and assignments, i.e. professor of practice, adjunct professor, post-doctoral researcher, research fellow, staff scientist, senior scientist, visiting, and in-residence positions, and student positions.

In addition to this document, the general guidelines and principles set down in the Aalto University HR policies, the Aalto University Code of Conduct, principles of responsible researcher assessment [such as National Recommendation on Responsible Researcher Evaluation in Finland, the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), and Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)], and regulations of disqualification are to be followed.

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF USING OTHER ACADEMIC POSITIONS

The other academic positions, presented in Figure 1, enable the university to employ individuals for special purposes on a full-time or part-time basis. In general, the positions are fixed term, except for staff scientist and senior scientist.

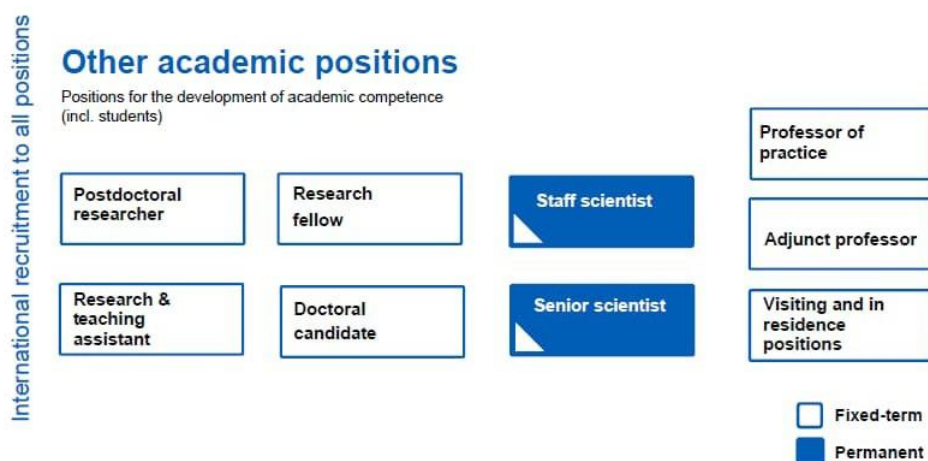


Figure 1. Other academic positions at Aalto University.

### Employment contracts

Fixed-term employment contracts are used only when justified in accordance with the employment contract law. The appointment terminates upon expiration of the period without a notification.

The fixed-term period for positions that support the development of academic competences (doctoral candidate, postdoctoral researcher, research fellow) may be extended for parental or other types of acceptable leaves according to current HR policies. The minimum length of absence for extending the period is three months.

## 1.3 RECRUITMENT

Each recruitment is based on a careful consideration of the candidates, where the appointee is evaluated to be an outstanding candidate among peers in tasks related to the position in question. The evaluation is conducted from three evidence-based perspectives – research and/or artistic and professional work, teaching, and impact and service – as applicable for and weighted according to the planned work profile. Further information on the elements of evaluation in research (and/or artistic and professional work), teaching, and impact/service is available in the Aalto University tenure track policies and procedures document. Schools and departments are responsible for defining the exact evaluation criteria for each position.

Aalto University's HR instructions related to recruitment, principles of responsible researcher assessment<sup>1</sup>, and objectivity and impartiality in decision making are to be followed. Aalto applies the 'one level above' approach to all decisions, that is, the closest superior never makes the final decision on recruitment.

### Diversity

Diversity is to be considered in all recruitments. Recommended ways for enabling diversity include (i) diversification of the candidate pool through wide-ranging open marketing of positions, (ii) making position descriptions welcoming to all with inclusive job advertisements, (iii) sharing knowledge on equality and diversity with the committees involved in the candidate evaluation for increased awareness, and (iv) implementing fair evaluation practices. Special attention should be paid to diversity in invitational recruitments, taking into account talent potential in underrepresented candidate segments.

### Code of Conduct

The Aalto Code of Conduct summarises the principles of fair play and integrity that govern our activities and sets out guidelines for the kind of behaviour we expect of each other. It is based on Aalto's values and establishes a common operational culture. We expect everyone to be familiar with the Code of Conduct and commit to its principles.

#### 1.3.1 Competitive recruitment process

The process for competitive recruitment has four steps: 1) proposal for recruitment, 2) open call 3) review of the candidates, and 4) decision.

The department/unit initiates the competitive recruiting process based on its strategic needs. The recruitment proposal is approved following the 'one level above' principle. An HR representative assists in the process, including determining the salary level and other terms of employment.

After the open call is closed, department/unit representatives review the candidates. After a careful pre-screening, the most qualified candidates (2–5 candidates) who fulfil the pre-defined criteria are invited to an interview. If required, the teaching competence of the candidates is evaluated. Based on the review, the head of department/unit prepares the recruiting proposal. The final recruitment decision is made according to the 'one level above' principle of decision making.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information, please visit: [Recommendation for the responsible evaluation of a researcher in Finland](#), [The Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#), and [Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment \(CoARA\)](#).

### **1.3.2 Invitational recruitment process**

The invitational recruitment process can be used for justified reasons only. The decision to use an invitational recruitment process is made according to the 'one level above' principle of decision making.

The process steps are similar to those in the competitive recruitment process, including making sure that the candidate's merits are reviewed by peers.

If required, the teaching competence of candidates is evaluated. If a candidate's teaching competence was assessed at Aalto University within the last three years, this previous statement can be used in the evaluation.

The invitational recruitment requires that the proposed candidate be unquestionably able to fulfil the requirements of the position.

## **2 PROFESSOR OF PRACTICE**

The professor of practice position provides departments with an opportunity to engage highly qualified, business, or public-sector leaders and experts with an academic background, or professionals with an artistic background. The professor of practice brings practical expertise and societal knowledge to the university community, particularly for teaching and impact purposes.

### **2.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR THE POSITION AND RECRUITING PROCESS**

The dean is responsible for determining the specific requirements and the recruitment process. The recruitment is either by open competitive call or by invitation. A doctoral degree or comparable artistic qualifications are required. Furthermore, a commitment to develop the field through teaching and impact activities is necessary.

The candidate is evaluated from three evidence-based perspectives: research and/or artistic and professional work, teaching, and impact and service as appropriate. These are weighted according to the work profile of the position.

The head of department proposes to the dean the initiation of the recruiting process, presents the grounds for the competitive or invitational appointment, and proposes 2–3 tenured professors of the department to be appointed to the departmental committee. The dean appoints the committee and its chair.

The departmental committee starts the review process, defines, and collects the necessary material, requests a minimum of 2 external peer reviews, and defines how teaching competence is evaluated.

The dean makes the final decision after consulting the school tenure track committee.

### **2.2 CONTRACT AND DUTIES**

Professor of practice contracts are primarily part-time contracts (up to 40% of full-time) between two and six years. A typical percentage of working time is 20%. The dean makes the final recruitment decision after consulting the school tenure track committee. The contract can be renewed for a second term (six-year maximum) with the provost's approval.

In exceptional cases only, a 50–100% position is possible for a term between two and six years, and the decision requires the provost's approval. A 50–100% professor of practice position cannot be renewed, regardless of the length of the initial contract. The dean makes the recruitment decision after consulting with the school tenure track committee and the provost.

Responsibilities for research and/or artistic and professional work, teaching, and impact and service are agreed separately with each candidate.

### 3 ADJUNCT PROFESSOR

The adjunct professor position allows highly qualified researchers external to Aalto University to engage in teaching in Aalto's strategic focus areas.

The adjunct professor position is distinct and different from the honorary title of docent (*dosentti* in Finnish). The policies and procedures concerning the title of docent are described separately elsewhere.

#### 3.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR THE POSITION AND RECRUITING PROCESS

The position of adjunct professor is by invitation only. The requirement for the position follows the criteria set for associate professors in the Aalto University tenure track policies. The candidate is evaluated from three evidence-based perspectives: research and/or artistic and professional work, teaching, and impact and service. The minimum requirements are:

- excellence in research and/or artistic work and high-quality teaching, or
- excellence in teaching and high-quality research and/or artistic work.

The head of department proposes to the dean the initiation of the recruiting process and presents the grounds for the appointment. In addition, the head of department proposes 2–3 tenured professors of the department to be appointed to the departmental committee. The dean appoints the committee and its chair.

The departmental committee starts the review process, defines, and collects the necessary material, requests a minimum of 2 external peer reviews, and invites the candidate for a site visit to the university to give a teaching demonstration and be interviewed by the committee.

Based on a review of the candidate's merits and competences, the departmental committee prepares a proposal to the dean for inviting the person to the position. The dean makes the decision after consulting the school tenure track committee.

#### 3.2 CONTRACT AND DUTIES

The appointment of an adjunct professor is always a part-time contract of 40% or less, and between two and six years. The contract may be renewed by the dean's decision. The decision is made after careful assessment of the results and impact achieved during the adjunct professor's first term.

Responsibilities for research and/or artistic and professional work, teaching, and impact and service are agreed separately with each candidate.

The percentage of working time allocated to Aalto University is determined when making the appointment. Typically, the percentage is 20% of full time. Adjunct professors may also be paid separately for their contributions to the department, school, or university.



## **4 POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER**

Postdoctoral positions enable outstanding, recent doctoral graduates to strengthen and develop their research and teaching competencies, for their future academic careers.

### **4.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR THE POSITION AND RECRUITING PROCESS**

In general, successful applicants will be at the early stages of their academic career (having earned their doctorate within the past 0–5 years, excluding possible parental leaves or similar absences) and show the potential to reach the next level of their academic career within the contract term. A doctoral degree in a relevant field is required. Successful candidates demonstrate evidence of high-quality research and/or artistic work. In the selection process, a research plan for the postdoctoral period is required. Special attention is paid on successful progress in doctoral studies and the international experience of the candidate.

Postdoctoral researchers are recruited from outside Aalto. In exceptional cases only when hiring a person with a doctoral degree from Aalto offers a clear and specific benefit to the university, recruitment is possible with the dean's approval. The recruitment process follows the competitive or invitational processes described in section 1.3.1. Open competitive recruiting is recommended. If required, the department may use a nomination committee, which reviews the candidates and makes a proposal on recruitment.

The candidates are evaluated from the evidence-based perspectives of research (and/or artistic and professional work) and teaching, as applicable for and weighted according to the planned work profile.

The final recruiting decision is made according to the 'one level above' principle based on the decision-making policies of Aalto University.

### **4.2 CONTRACT AND DUTIES**

Postdoctoral researcher contracts at Aalto University are granted for one to five years depending on strategic goals and available funding. The total time in the position of postdoc cannot exceed the maximum of five years. Unnecessary short-term working contracts should be avoided.

Responsibilities for research and/or artistic and professional work, teaching, and impact and service are agreed separately with each candidate. Work time is allocated following principles similar to those recommended for assistant professors (1<sup>st</sup> term) in the Aalto University tenure track policies.

## **5 RESEARCH FELLOW**

The research fellow position is for qualified researchers who have significant postdoctoral research experience (or equivalently significant artistic merits) and who are developing their academic competence further to advance their academic career.

### **5.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR THE POSITION AND RECRUITING PROCESS**

A qualified candidate holds a doctoral degree in a field relevant to the position and has experience as a postdoctoral researcher at another university or has equivalent merits if in arts. The candidate has demonstrated research and teaching competence and merits, and the academic community has recognised the candidate's scholarly contributions. Research fellows are always recruited from outside Aalto.

Research fellows are recruited from outside Aalto. In exceptional cases only when hiring a person with a current academic position in Aalto offers a clear and specific benefit to the university, recruitment is possible with the provost's approval. The recruitment process follows the competitive or invitational processes described in section 1.3.1. Open competitive recruiting is recommended. If required, the department may use a nomination committee, which reviews the candidates and makes a proposal on the recruitment.

The candidate is evaluated from an evidence-based perspective on the candidate's research (and/or artistic and professional work) and teaching, as applicable for and weighted according to the planned work profile.

The dean makes the final appointment decision based on a proposal by the head of department.

### **5.2 CONTRACT AND DUTIES**

Research fellow contracts are made for a fixed term between one and five years. A fixed-term contract cannot be renewed, regardless of the length of the initial contract.

The work profile for the research fellow is set in accordance with the strategic needs of the school and the hiring department/unit. Responsibilities for research and/or artistic and professional work, teaching, and impact and service are agreed separately with each candidate.

## **6 STAFF SCIENTIST AND SENIOR SCIENTIST**

Staff scientist and senior scientist are positions for scholars focusing on specialised tasks in research and/or artistic work. These positions support the work of personnel who are in tenure track and lecturer career systems, professors of practice, and postdoctoral researchers. Typically, the positions involve the use and development of research infrastructures and complex research equipment or support the main academic faculty through specialist expertise in methodology or in other areas.

### **6.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR THE POSITION AND RECRUITING PROCESS**

A qualified candidate for a staff scientist and a senior scientist position holds a doctoral degree (or comparable qualifications if in the arts) in a field relevant to the position, has special expertise in research and/or in an artistic field, and demonstrates successful research and/or artistic work. In addition to these, considerable academic merits are required for a senior scientist position.

The recruitment process follows the processes described in section 1.3.1. Invitational recruitment cannot be used for a permanent staff scientist or senior scientist position.

If required, the department may use a nomination committee. The committee reviews the candidate and makes a proposal on the recruitment. The dean makes the final appointment decision based on a proposal by the head of department.

The candidate is evaluated from an evidence-based perspective on the candidate's research (and/or artistic and professional work) and teaching, as applicable for and weighted according to the planned work profile.

### **6.2 CONTRACT AND DUTIES**

Staff scientist and senior scientist contracts are either permanent or fixed term. A fixed-term contract can be made for one term only, the length of which must be between one and five years, regardless of the length of the initial contract.

The individual work profile is set in accordance with the strategic needs of the school and the hiring department/unit. Responsibilities for research and/or artistic and professional work, teaching, and impact and service are agreed separately with each candidate.

## **7 VISITING PROFESSOR AND OTHER VISITING POSITIONS**

Individuals holding a professor position at their home university or institute may be given the title of visiting professor. Visiting doctoral candidates are given the title of visiting doctoral candidate, and other visiting teachers, researchers and/or artists are given the title of visiting scholar.

Appointments to visiting positions are accepted according to the 'one level above' principle and based on the decision-making policies of Aalto University, except for visiting professors, for which the dean makes the final decision based on a proposal by the head of department.

When inviting academic visitors, the instructions regarding inbound academic visits must be taken into account. These instructions can be found on the Aalto website at <https://www.aalto.fi/en/services/academic-visitor>.

### **7.1 VISITING PROFESSOR'S CONTRACT AND DUTIES**

The contracts for visiting positions are primarily part-time contracts (up to 40% of full time) for up to 2 years. The contract may be renewed for a second term with the provost's approval.

In exceptional cases only, a 50–100% position is possible for up to 3 years. A 50–100% position requires the provost's approval and cannot be renewed, regardless of the length of the initial contract.

Any compensation for a visiting professor is agreed separately and approved by the dean. Office support is provided for each visitor in line with Aalto policies. General Aalto policies apply for other potential expenses.

### **7.2 OTHER VISITING POSITION CONTRACTS AND DUTIES**

The positions are always for a fixed term of up to 2 years. Responsibilities for research and/or artistic and professional work, teaching, and impact and service are agreed separately with each candidate. The potential compensation for a visiting position is agreed separately according to the 'one level above' principle.

Office support is provided for each visitor in line with Aalto policies. General Aalto policies apply for other potential expenses.

## **8 IN-RESIDENCE POSITIONS**

An in-residence position may be given to a distinguished senior executive, an academic leader, or a distinguished expert or artist invited to Aalto University for a special purpose. Such purposes include the building of new teaching and learning modules, development of business or societal relationships, or the development of relevant scientific or artistic collaboration.

Appointments are approved by the dean based on a proposal by the head of department or head of unit.

### **8.1 CONTRACT AND DUTIES**

The contracts for in-residence positions are primarily part-time contracts (up to 40%) for up to 3 years. The contract may be renewed for a second term with the provost's approval.

In exceptional cases only, a 50–100% position is possible for up to 3 years. A 50–100% position requires the provost's approval and cannot be renewed, regardless of the length of the initial contract.

## **9 OTHER POSITIONS**

The positions below are for doctoral candidates and degree students with employment contracts at Aalto University. The contract is always for a fixed-term and may also be part-time or based on an external scholarship.

### **9.1 DOCTORAL RESEARCHER**

Persons who are employed at Aalto University and are pursuing doctoral degrees are called doctoral researchers. Their main duty is to complete the doctoral degree. Participation by doctoral researchers in research projects and teaching must support their work on the doctoral degree.

### **9.2 RESEARCH ASSISTANT AND TEACHING ASSISTANT**

A research assistant or a teaching assistant is a person appointed to assist a faculty member in research or in courses, respectively. Research assistants and teaching assistants are typically master's-level students.

## 10 VERSION HISTORY

This policy document, along with its principles and procedures, is subject to review. It replaces the policies and procedures document dated September 2021.

The current version includes the following changes:

- Section 1: A statement regarding compliance with the CoARA principles has been added to the sentence on responsible researcher assessment.
- Section 4: A note has been added stating that postdoctoral researchers are typically recruited from outside Aalto.
- Section 5: A note has been added stating that research fellows are typically recruited from outside Aalto.
- Section 7: A note has been added indicating that when inviting academic visitors, the Aalto Visiting Guidelines must be considered.
- Section 7: The duration of the academic visitor contract has been shortened from three years to two years to align with the Aalto Visiting Guidelines.
- Section 9.1: The title 'doctoral candidate' has been changed to 'doctoral researcher' in accordance with current practice.

### **Previous updates:**

August 2022

- Wording of postdoctoral researcher contract has been updated (p. 9).

September 2021

- The professor of artistic/design/architectural practices (PxP) position is removed.
- Major updates are made to the sections on the contract and duties of professors of practice and adjunct professors.
- Updates to wording throughout the document