

ASSESSING CANDIDATE CONTRIBUTIONS TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION (DEI)

Asking about DEI

Requesting a statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion from all applicants indicates that the department is interested in and committed to this area, which can be particularly important for candidates who want to join an institution that shares their values in this area.

Suggested language for application instructions:

“Please submit a 2 - 3 page statement on your contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion, including information about your understanding of these issues, your record of activities to date, and your specific plans and goals for advancing equity and inclusion if hired at Columbia University.”

Applicants can also be asked to include information about their contributions to DEI, their understanding of the issues, and record of activities in a cover letter rather than a separate statement.

What does the DEI rubric assess?

The sample rubric envisions the evaluation of DEI as encompassing three main areas: knowledge and understanding (section 1), track record of activities to date (section 2), and plans for contributing at Columbia (section 3). Committees may wish to adjust these categorizations to reflect their particular needs and goals or disciplinary needs, either by altering the categories, adjusting the scores to be awarded among the categories, or adding additional categories.

We recommend that you consult with EOAA if you wish to add additional categories, to ensure that the assessment follows best practices and falls within permissible legal parameters.

How is the DEI rubric scored?

Search committees have found it very useful to assign numerical scores to each section of the DEI rubric. This is helpful in identifying and analyzing specific areas of agreement or disagreement as the committee discusses each candidate. The current template suggests assigning an equal points value to each of the three sections (with a score from 1 to 5 for each section). Some committees may, however, decide that one

section or another should be weighted more heavily. Or, committees may decide that a different scoring system for each section more accurately reflects their departmental or disciplinary needs.

If a scoring range becomes too wide or a scoring system too complicated, it is difficult to achieve reliability in assessment. The system recommended for this rubric has worked well for past searches.

How should I interpret the examples in each section of the rubric?

The rubric assists committees in scoring each of the three areas by providing examples of what is commonly seen in DEI statements submitted by applicants to faculty or staff searches.

These examples are offered as illustrative suggestions and not an exhaustive list. They can be modified to fit the academic and disciplinary backgrounds or department of applicants in a particular search. Faculty or staff members in individual units should use their disciplinary expertise to understand what examples are likely most appropriate for their particular department or search.

How can search committees make sure they are using the rubric properly?

To best make use of the DEI evaluation rubric, we strongly suggest conducting a calibration exercise in advance of reviewing the entire candidate pool.

The purpose of the calibration exercise is to be able to apply the tool equitably, consistently, and reliably across all applicants. (A similar exercise is also recommended for teaching and research statements.)

How can search committees calibrate their scoring?

We recommend the following calibration exercise, which past search committees have found useful:

1. Discuss, as a committee, the importance and evaluation of contributions to DEI as one aspect of excellence across research, teaching, and service. As a reminder, candidates do not need to belong to a particular group or demographic, or to hold particular viewpoints, to be successful in this regard. DEI efforts described by candidates from international institutions may look different from DEI work conducted in the U.S. but can be equally compelling.

2. Adapt the rubric for use in the particular search, including categories, examples, scores, etc. Please consult with EOAA for advice if major changes to the rubric are contemplated. EOAA will be able to help you avoid common pitfalls.
3. Discuss ahead of time the kinds of evidence that could motivate low, medium, or high scores.
4. Select a random sample of 8-10 statements from the applicant pool, redacted for candidate name.
5. Apply the rubric to the statements, with each committee member scoring the statements separately.
6. Analyze the scores assigned to each statement across all categories and by all committee members.
7. Discuss interpretations and discrepancies between reviewer scores.
8. Recalibrate the scoring/assessment system as needed.
9. Apply the agreed upon rubric to the entire applicant pool.

After you have finished the calibration and scoring processes, it is very useful for the search committee to share with the rest of the faculty or staff what was learned during this process of assessing DEI contributions. EOAA also welcomes hearing from search committees about how the calibration and assessment process went.

These materials were developed based on the work of UC Berkeley and other institutions that have created resources for Faculty Search Committees and Faculty Candidates.