

The background of the page is a vibrant blue with a pattern of wavy, concentric lines that create a sense of depth and movement. The lines are more densely packed in some areas and more spread out in others, giving it a dynamic, organic feel.

# Compelling job advertisements for academic roles

Tips and examples of structure, content and language

These guidelines are intended to help you formulate a complete and attractive job advertisement that appeals to qualified candidates.

The first part contains [recommendations concerning content](#) in line with our [corporate design](#). These are supplemented by specific examples used in practice for academic roles. The tips in the second part will help you to promote [diversity](#). Finally, you will find ideas for publicising your job advertisement on [additional channels](#).

More useful information about recruitment can be found at [www.ethz.ch/recruitment](http://www.ethz.ch/recruitment).

## Best practices (summary)

- Spark curiosity with an informative job title.
- Use the pronouns "you" and "we".
- A mixture of lists and running text is particularly appealing.
- Emphasise what makes the position unique and attractive.
- Ensure a balance between what the job offers and what you require.
- Distinguish between essential and optional selection criteria.
- Avoid repeating sentences and words, and ensure the length of the job advertisement is appropriate (max. 800 words or 1 DIN A4 page).
- Use lively, active language.
- Promote equality of opportunity, integration and diversity by using inclusive language.
- Plan the publication of your position and look beyond your network.

# Structure and content of a compelling job advertisement

## Informative job title

To make a job title informative, include both the name of the role and the field or the most important skills required, e.g. "Postdoctoral position in Climate Modeling and Data Science" or "Researcher in Foreign and Security Policy".

The job title should:

- Be comprehensible to an international audience (avoid internal names and abbreviations)
- Have a maximum of 80 characters (including spaces)
- Contain the keywords that candidates use when searching for jobs

An accurate job title is crucial to ensuring that relevant candidates find and read the job advertisement. A job title without detail (such as "PhD student") does not spark curiosity and is rarely accessed in job emails and on job portals.

## Interesting introduction

In one or two sentences, describe who you are and what makes the research group stand out. Talk about the contribution your research or work makes to society or the organisation. This makes it more likely that candidates will identify with the position.

### Example D-MAVT

Doctoral student – Extent and markers of trash burning

"The Global Health Engineering group in the Department of Mechanical and Process Engineering considers how engineered tools, the natural environment, organisational systems and human health are interconnected. Our work looks at ways of reducing the negative impacts of modern life while addressing equity and social justice, particularly in urban areas of over-exploited countries. Methodologically, we conduct applied research by working with interdisciplinary partners and relevant stakeholders, at the interface of engineering and economics."

## Project background

"Project background" is an optional section that can be integrated into the job advertisement. For longer ads in particular, separating the project background from the job description can improve readability.

### Example D-MTEC

PhD Position in Software Development for Sustainable Consumer Decisions

"The project goal is to develop a novel, scalable and tailored approach for consumers to track and monitor the sustainability of their groceries and food waste to mitigate climate change. More specifically, we plan to process consumers' digital receipts from grocery purchases to analyse the sustainability of their purchases, to estimate households' food waste behaviour, and to develop adaptive interventions to change consumer behaviour. The project is in collaboration with the Chair of Marketing at the University of Zurich, the Center for Artificial Intelligence at ETH Zurich, the Bits to Energy Lab Nuremberg, and Zurich University of Applied Sciences."

## Job description

One of the most important criteria for candidates when considering a position is whether they can work in their field and make meaningful use of their qualifications. Invest sufficient time in careful and complete formulation of the job responsibilities.

### Example SEC

Project Manager and Team Leader

"You will be responsible for the whole project management (planning, implementation, monitoring, and controlling) and will work in close collaboration with the different module leaders. The main duty is to ensure the project meets its objectives within the budget and scheduled timeline.

Specific duties:

- Plan project scope, work breakdown structure, schedule, budget, resources, communication and stakeholder engagement
- Coordinate research work and manage quality across all modules in close collaboration with the module leaders
- Monitor and control the project progress, change control, deliverables, and work quality
- Communicate with and report to project sponsor, project partners, and other project stakeholders
- Team leadership and potential conflict resolution
- Organize technical meetings, progress report meetings, and workshops to provide forum for regular review of the work progress, both internally and externally"

Candidates skim an advertisement before deciding whether to read it in detail. That's why it's important that the text is clearly presented.

- Roughly a third of the job advertisement should consist of bullet points. A description of the responsibilities and requirements are particularly suitable for this.
- Avoid repeating sentences and words.
- The job advertisement should be no longer than 800 words (roughly one DIN A4 page).
- Use lively, active language.
- Ask one or two questions to make the advertisement appear more animated.
- Communicate enthusiasm by including one or two sentences with an exclamation mark!

Take the opportunity to make your job more attractive by including the following information:

### Responsibilities, goals and competences

Describe not only the specific responsibilities of the job, but also how the role is embedded in the team/organisation and the higher-level goals. In addition, describe the competences the person has and the relationship to other positions.

### Development opportunities

Identify opportunities for further training and [career development](#) perspectives. Many applicants look for a job based on personal and professional development opportunities. Emphasise these in the job description.

### Employment conditions

Be transparent! State the desired start date, the contract length (with option to extend for temporary positions, if applicable) and the working hours. You can link to ETH Zurich's [pay scale](#) in job advertisements for doctoral students and postdocs. Accentuate special information that candidates should know before applying (e.g. several places of work or work under special safety conditions).

### Culture and work environment

Describe what it's like to work in your team and at ETH Zurich. In advertisements aimed at international candidates, include information about the place of work, infrastructure and available recreational activities.

### Example D-GESS

Postdoc on the Economics of Privacy, IT Security & Automated Decision-making

"At our Center for Law & Economics, researchers can conduct internationally oriented fundamental research as part of a highly motivated team at a leading research university. We offer an interdisciplinary environment, close interaction, and excellent contacts with leading scholars at U.S. universities. Our Center organizes various seminar series and conferences which enable our group members to regularly interact with internationally leading researchers. Our broad international network offers attractive career prospects.

We offer excellent working conditions and an internationally competitive salary (paid according to ETH standards). Teaching and administrative duties are limited. We provide support for attending international conferences and workshops, and for research stays abroad. Our offices are located in downtown Zurich, and the working language is English. The initial appointment will be for two years and can be renewed. The starting date is flexible."

## Requirements

The requirements in the job advertisement should include all important recruitment qualifications. Describe the degree, professional experience, knowledge, skills and personal characteristics required or desired for the position.

### Example D-USYS

Postdoctoral Research Fellow in conservation agriculture and participatory modelling

Essential experience, skills and characteristics:

- A relevant PhD in agronomy, geography, environmental science, social science or related fields
- Familiarity with the concept of Conservation Agriculture or Agroecology
- English and French proficiency
- Strong team work and communication skills
- Cultural sensitivity working with diverse stakeholders
- Readiness to travel to Togo in remote places
- Good track record of publications in international journals
- Ability to work independently, with flexibility, humour and critical thinking

Desirable criteria:

- Familiarity with, and interest in, games, their development and research use
- Familiarity with Agent-based modelling
- Familiarity with the rural African context
- Experience with field work in tropical environments
- Experience with transdisciplinary projects
- A keen interest in stakeholders' engagement and communication"

Take into account the following points:

### Weighting of selection criteria

Distinguish between essential and optional criteria, so that candidates can form a realistic idea of how well their profile matches the job. Keep in mind that many technical skills can be learned on the job.

### Proportionality

Ensure that the required level of qualification and competence matches the demands of the job. Too many or too restrictive requirements quickly become an obstacle and suitable candidates may choose not to apply.

### DORA

ETH Zürich has signed the [Declaration on Research Assessment \(Dora\)](#). The declaration is directed at the excessive use of publication metrics when evaluating academic work. Please make sure that no journal-based metrics, such as the journal impact factor, are used as a substitute for assessing the quality of individual research articles by applicants.

If you expect a large number of applications, it is even more important to write an informative, complete and authentic job advertisement. This will draw in candidates in a more targeted way. The more care you take in describing the job and your expectations, the more likely you are to reach your target audience.

Ensure you strike a balance between what the job offers and what you require.

## Information about applying

Transparency creates fairness. In the final section of the job advertisement, discuss all elements that candidates need for their application.

### Application documents

Identify all documents that must be submitted together with the application (such as letter of motivation, diplomas, transcripts, work samples, outline of research project, portfolio). Only request documents that are absolutely necessary for fair, transparent and performance-based selection of candidates.

### References

If references will be obtained at a later stage, the contact information (name, email address, organisation) of two to three references can be requested with the application documents.

### Contact

Ensure that candidates can get in touch if they have any questions; give the name, email address and/or phone number of a contact person.

### Links to websites / social media

Integrate links to the official websites and social media channels of the research group, institute or department.

### Application deadline

Give candidates a reasonable application period. State whether applications will be reviewed as they are received or only after a specific date. An application deadline should only be included if there is a clear timeline for the selection process and the number of applications can be realistically estimated.

### Selection process

Do not leave candidates uncertain of what to expect. Describe the selection process, including a rough timeline, in the advertisement.

### Example

We look forward to receiving your online application until 30 April including:

- Curriculum vitae
- Copies of BSc and MSc educational records
- A statement of research interest
- Names and contact details of two references

The selection committee will review all applications within 3-4 weeks after the application deadline. As soon as a decision has been made, we will inform you about the next steps in the selection procedure.

Please note that we exclusively accept applications submitted through our online application portal. Applications via email or postal services will not be considered.

Further information about the institute can be found on our website [www.website.ethz.ch](http://www.website.ethz.ch). Questions regarding the position should be directed to [Title/Name], phone [...] or email [...] (no applications).

# Promote diversity



Studies show that diverse teams are more creative, innovative and resilient. Diversity, integration and equality of opportunity should be addressed and credibly communicated in all job advertisements. The following tips will help you write a job advertisement using inclusive language that does not exclude anyone.

## **Use direct language.**

People are less interested in impersonal ads. Be personal and use the pronouns "you" and "we". This reduces the distance between you and the applicant and includes everyone. Using formal or indirect phrases such as "the suitable candidate" may make fewer people feel as though they are being addressed.

## **Use welcoming language.**

Avoid competitive language. Cooperative language is more effective and does not exclude anyone. Do not use superlatives (such as outstanding, excellent or impressive). This creates unrealistic expectations and scares off more modest applicants.

## **Be careful of word choice.**

The right word choice can be decisive in whether candidates apply for a job. Certain words are associated with masculine or feminine stereotypes. Examples of words with a masculine connotation are "assertive" and "decisive". Examples of words with a feminine connotation are "dedicated" or "responsible".

Use technical resources to review and balance the language of your job advertisement. A gender decoder can review it before you release it for publication, e.g. from the [Technical University of Munich \(DE\)](#) or [Kat Matfield \(EN\)](#). Both decoders mark terms with masculine or feminine connotations.

Contact the [Recruiting Support Team](#) for information on other tools.

## **Emphasise your commitment to diversity.**

All job seekers perceive organisations with a supportive culture as attractive. For example, mention part-time work opportunities, flexible working hours, job sharing or the suitability of the job for people with disabilities, if these apply to your team and work environment.

**Only state relevant selection criteria.**

Women are more likely than men to see selection criteria as mandatory and are therefore somewhat more conservative in their job applications. Consider removing non-essential selection criteria or identify them as optional.

A note can be helpful in convincing more reticent candidates: "Candidates who do not possess all the listed skills are also encouraged to apply."

**Address all genders consistently.**

Use a gender-neutral job title and take care to use gender-neutral expressions throughout the text of the job advertisement. Follow the advice on the [website of Equal! – Office for Equal Opportunities and Diversity](#).

**Describe your culture.**

Make sure you describe your culture and express the human side of your research group. A description covering only goals, skills and outputs may appear professional, but is very impersonal.

**Focus on personal growth and learning.**

Candidates are looking for positions in which they can expand their horizons and learn from other people. Make it clear that you are not looking for perfect employees, who already know everything and possess every skill. Emphasise opportunities for personal growth and mention the skills and knowledge that can be learned and developed.

**Do not discriminate.**

Avoid expressions that indirectly exclude certain groups of people. For example, the requirements "native German speaker" or "young and dynamic" are subtly discriminating and should not be used.

Ask other people (female and male) with a variety of backgrounds (e.g. age, nationality, from different teams) to read the job advertisement. This way, it will be reviewed from different perspectives

**Emphasise diversity and equality of opportunity.**

An Equal Opportunity Employer Statement may increase the number of applicants. For this reason, the text below is included in all ETH Zurich job advertisements. Ensure that diversity is reflected in all parts of the advertisement, otherwise the statement will appear inauthentic.

**Equal Opportunity Employer Statement ETH Zurich**

"In line with our values, ETH Zurich encourages a culture of inclusivity. We promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and nurture a working and learning environment in which the rights and dignity of all employees and students are respected. Visit our [Equal Opportunities and Diversity website](#) to find out how we ensure a fair and open environment that allows everyone to grow and flourish."



# Targeted publication of your position

If you manage your position using the ETH Zurich recruitment tool, the Recruiting Support Team will publish it on [selected job portals](#). In order to reach candidates, it makes sense to share the position on channels specific to the target audience.

## Planning the publication

Define your target audience exactly and choose the right way to address them before publicising your position. On which channels do you want to share the position and who can help you?

Channel	How
ETH Zurich job portal	Human Resources
Standard job portals	Human Resources
Specialist portals	Administrative assistants
Official social media channels of the group (or institute or department)	Communications officer
Specialist conferences	Team
Personal mailing list	Team
Personal social media channels	Team

- When recruiting, don't just rely on recommendations from people you know. Look outside your network to avoid forming silos and do not choose the "first that comes along" without the opportunity for comparison.
- Ask colleagues in the field where they would look for a job.

## Too many applications?

If you expect a large number of applications (see info box on page 5), it's particularly advisable to use channels specific to your target audience. Contact the [Recruiting Support Team](#) if you don't want to use standard job portals that are less appropriate to your position. The use of [hard factors](#) also allows you to identify particularly suitable candidates more quickly in the pre-selection stage.

## Social networks

Use social networks (such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram) to publicise your position. This will help you reach people who are not actively looking for jobs. The best way to proceed is as follows:

- Combine the link to the job ad on the [ETH jobs portal](#) with a short text that will spark the interest of potential candidates. Good topics include conference attendance, awards, team excursions, fieldwork and other insights into the professional environment.
- A photo of the ETH main building is usually displayed for texts on LinkedIn and Twitter. Alternatively, you can choose your own image (ideally showing authentic situations from the work environment).
- You can find more social media tips and tricks [here](#).

### Example CSCS

Computational or Computer Scientist

