

PROFESSORSHIP POLICY AT THE NATURAL RESOURCES INSTITUTE FINLAND

Guidelines and practices for filling research professor positions and their five-year evaluations in accordance with the principles of predictability, transparency and international comparability.

In Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke), research professors have a key role in promoting scientific competence, boosting progress and excellence in research, identifying new openings, executing Luke's strategy, fostering scientific and societal impact and promoting international visibility. The number of professorships at Luke is significant, the goal is that 5 to 8% of Luke's researchers are professors. With changes in the fields of operation, the research areas of the professorships will be specified in connection with performance management. The Executive Vice President for Research (EVP Research) is responsible for the impact of research carried out in Luke, and in charge of setting the goals for the research professors.

Luke's professorship policy ensures the transparency and quality of filling research professor positions and their five-year evaluations, as well as the uniformity of the processes. Specific attention is paid to scientific merits and related capacity development, research plan, international competitiveness and impact of research, leadership of research projects and groups, mentoring of early-career researchers, capability to attract competitive international funding, collaboration at the customer interface and the principles of responsible science.

The tenure track of research professors is Luke's academic career path, the aim of which is to ensure high-quality research at Luke's strategic fields and the usability of research results in the business sector. The tenure track recruitment decision is always based on the applicant's previous merits, development potential, ability and insights to further develop the research field, as well as the evaluations conducted by independent experts.

Research professors – national and international experts in their research fields

The position of a research professor is established in a key area of research at Luke. The President and CEO makes the decision based on the proposal of the EVP Research and the discussion in Luke's Management Team. The steering groups of research programmes proactively and continuously seek to identify research topics on which Luke should establish a research professorship to promote Luke's impact. The research focus of professorships originating from the institutes fused to Luke will be re-evaluated in relation to Luke's research strategy and development needs after the current holders of the professorships have retired or their fixed-term employment contracts have expired. The preparatory work is carried out in the Research and customer relationships coordination group (TUAKO) led by the EVP Research. Based on the work in TUAKO, the EVP Research makes a proposal to initiate the recruitment process for a new research professorship, or to change the research focus of an existing professorship to align it with the current strategy of Luke.

At Luke, the research professor leads, develops and directs research in the field of the professorship. The research professor is responsible for the content development and international competitiveness of the research field, for publishing research results, and for strengthening external research funding. The research professor develops stakeholder relationships, leads large-scale jointly funded research projects and mentors early-career researchers at Luke. In addition, the research professor fosters competence in the research field at Luke and works closely with customers when relevant.

The responsibilities of Luke's research professors include:

- high-quality research and new openings in the scientific field of the professorship, and acting as a leading scientific expert in the field
- publishing research results in high-quality peer-reviewed journals
- supervision of early-career researchers
- creating a broad-based project portfolio consisting of national and international funding for research and/or customer projects
- leading, coordinating and promoting national and international research collaboration, as well as cooperation with industrial partners and other stakeholders
- promoting the use and applications of research results, and disseminating research results to the general public (e.g. policy makers, business actors and consumers)

Procedure for filling a research professor position

Research professor positions are announced through open, public calls. A research professor is expected to have the scientific qualifications of a professor and a doctoral degree, a history of peer-reviewed scientific publications on a relevant topic, vision and capacity to develop the research field, experience in building, resourcing and leading large jointly funded research projects, as well as demonstrated evidence of international cooperation and activity in the research community.

Research professors are appointed for a fixed five-year term at a time. There can be two five-year-terms at maximum. Successful performance of the position as assessed by Luke is the prerequisite for the second five-year term and the subsequent permanent professorship. However, if the applicant has a permanent professorship at a university, they may be appointed to a permanent research professor position at Luke, as a deviation from the fixed term appointment.

The President and CEO nominates an appointment committee for each research professor call, upon the proposal of the EVP Research. The appointment committee is chaired by the EVP Research. In addition to the EVP Research, the appointment committee consists of the Vice President(s) of relevant unit(s) and other potential members. The President and CEO invites the secretary for the appointment committee.

Tasks of the appointment committee:

- To process and evaluate the applications and to carry out an overall evaluation and a mutual comparison of the applicants
- To prepare the proposal of the external evaluators for the EVP Research to propose to the President and CEO for decision
- To compile a shortlist of top applicants and to submit their applications for external evaluation
- To review the evaluation statements prepared by the external experts
- To select applicants for the interviews based on the evaluation statements, to interview and rank them
- To prepare the nomination proposal for the EVP Research to propose to the President and CEO for decision

The evaluation statements by at least three external professors, most of whom are international, are used as the basis for the overall evaluation of the top applicants. The external evaluators will assess the competency of the candidates with regard to the call announcement and rank them in the order they should be considered for the professorship. The competency of the candidate to be nominated for the professorship must be indisputably demonstrated in the evaluation statements of the external experts.

The evaluation is carried out in accordance with good scientific practice. When selecting external experts and members of the appointment committee, Luke's policy on conflict of interest and confidentiality is followed (Reg. no. 1023/00 01 02/2016).

Five-year evaluation of tenure track research professors

Upon the proposal of the EVP Research, the President and CEO nominates an appointment committee for each tenure track research professor undergoing the five-year-evaluation process. The five-year evaluation is carried out as for applicants for research professorships. The evaluation statements by external experts are used as the basis for the overall performance assessment, with emphasis on scientific publications, research plan, international research collaboration, research networks, success in attracting external funding, mentoring early-career researchers, working at the customer interface and developing the research area. After the second five-year term, the person may be appointed to a permanent position as a research professor. This requires that the research professor has actively maintained their competence and performed successfully in the position. In case the evaluation statements by external experts and the overall evaluation based on them do not support the person continuing in the professorship, i.e. significant deficiencies have been identified in the successful performance of the professorship, the person may be assigned another post if they have a background position in Luke.

The five-year evaluation of a research professor may be skipped if their scientific merits are indisputable, and they will be retiring within the next five-year term. The appointment committee nominated for the purpose by the President and CEO of Luke makes an overall assessment of the merits, performance and research plan of the research professor and decides on the need for the scientific evaluation on a case-by-case basis. If the scientific merits are considered remarkable and the research significant, and the evaluation by external experts is therefore not of substantial added value, the appointment committee may propose inviting the person to a fixed-term research professor position for less than five years. Otherwise, the scientific evaluation will be carried out as for applicants for a research professorship.

Associate professor – taking the tenure track to research professorship

A research professorship can be announced also as a position for an associate professor, or alternatively, a promising researcher may be appointed to the announced research professorship as an associate professor for a fixed 5-year term. The responsibilities of associate professors correspond to those of research professors, and they are expected to strengthen especially the international scientific visibility of Luke, network strongly with international partners, and build a strong international project portfolio at Luke in their respective research area. Applicants for an associate professorship are evaluated for their scientific merits as applicants for a research professorship. The person nominated for the position is to be a highly talented researcher who clearly has the ability to achieve the qualifications of a professor during the term as associate professor.

The performance of the associate professor is evaluated at the end of the five-year term, based on which the position can be changed to a fixed five-year term research professorship. After this second fixed term appointment, the position can be made permanent based on the same criteria as described above for the research professors.

In case the scientific merits and performance of an associate professor are considered exceptionally good, the Vice President of a unit may propose to the EVP Research that the five-year evaluation of the associate professor is preponed. The decision on preponing the evaluation is made on a case-by-case basis by the EVP Research. If the EVP Research considers early evaluation justified, an appointment committee is nominated for the purpose and the scientific evaluation is carried out as for applicants for a research professorship. In

case the external evaluators consider the qualifications, scientific merits and research plan of the associate professor excellent, they may be appointed to a research professor position for a fixed five-year term. Otherwise, the associate professorship will be re-evaluated in the end of the five-year term.

Research professor appointment by invitation

Appointment of a research professor in Luke's strategic focus areas by invitation is possible only in special cases and requires the approval of both the EVP Research and the President and CEO of Luke. The precondition for the invitation procedure is that the scientific merits and the performance of the person intended to be invited to the position are considered significant and to clearly meet the requirements set for research professors at Luke. The decision on using the invitation procedure is made by the President and CEO of Luke upon the proposal of the EVP Research. In case the invitation procedure is considered justified, the President and CEO of Luke nominates an appointment committee for the purpose and the scientific evaluation of the proposed invitee is carried out as for applicants for research professorships. The prerequisite for appointing a research professor by invitation is that the competency of the candidate is indisputably demonstrated in the evaluation statements of the external experts. The research professor appointments by invitation are for a fixed 5-year term and the decisions regarding the continuation of the positions are made as for Luke's tenure track research professors.

Professor with a joint appointment – strengthening strategic cooperation

Luke has also the option of appointing joint research professors with strategic partnerships. The aim is to strengthen the partnerships via academic research within areas of common interest. The initiative for a joint professorship can come either from a partner organization or from Luke. The joint appointments are prepared in TUAKO and further discussed in the Management Team.

As a rule, if the professorship is more Luke-driven, the principles and selection procedures applied to research professors at Luke are met also by the professors with a joint appointment. If the professorship is partner-driven, the partner's professorship policy will apply. With joint professorships, it is important to ensure that Luke always appears as the affiliation of such a professor. Also publication policy, applying for funding and management practices (incl. allocation of time between the partner organizations and projects) need to be agreed upon prior to selecting a professor for a joint appointment.

Visiting professor – strengthening international cooperation

Visiting professors representing Luke's key research areas are welcomed on a fixed-term basis. Visiting professors should strengthen competence at Luke or build completely new competence in accordance with Luke's strategy and strengthen international cooperation. A visiting professor is to hold a professorship at a foreign research institute or university, and demonstrate evidence of high-quality scientific activities, research project leadership and management of collaborative relationships. The President and CEO appoints visiting professors upon the proposal of the EVP Research. The initiative for inviting a visiting professor may come from the units or programmes. The proposals are discussed in TUAKO before being proposed to the President and CEO.

Decision

This professor policy enters into force on 1.5.2025, superseding the decision on 25 January 2023.

Signatures

Johanna Buchert
President and CEO

Antti Asikainen
Executive Vice President, Research