FAQs - Restricted & Preferential Hiring in the Canada Research Chair Program at UBC

Context
The Canada Research Chair Program has announced that nominations for new chair positions will not be peer reviewed, except in the case where a nomination involves someone who has self-identified within one or more of the following federally designated groups: women, visible minorities (members of groups that are racially categorized), persons with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples, unless the university nominating is within 10% of achieving each of its equity targets for proportional representation of the federally designated groups as of 2017. Therefore, UBC is currently in a period of restricted recruitment, selection, and nomination for Canada Research Chairs until it can achieve, and continue to achieve, those targets.

In May 2017, the Canadian Research Chair Program (CRCP) advised universities that there was a need for greater transparency and accountability in the processes used to allocate, select, and support chairholders to ensure that institutional equity and diversity targets were met. With over 200 Canadian Research Chairs (CRCs), UBC has developed the CRC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan (EDIAP) to address any inequities that are currently experienced by individuals and to ensure greater transparency in the allocation, selection, and renewal processes for chairholders. For more information about the EDIAP, see UBC’s Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion within the CRC Program.

On July 31, 2019, the Tri-agency Institutional Programs Secretariat released an Addendum to the 2006 Canadian Human Rights Settlement Agreement. This Addendum outlines a number of measures that will be implemented in the Canada Research Chairs Program over the coming years. In addition, Employment and Social Development Canada published Canadian Workforce Availability data for the last three census years on June 27, 2019, including national data for designated equity groups: women, visible minorities (members of groups that are racially categorized), persons with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples.

As of September 2019, UBC is not meeting equity targets for representation of persons with disabilities among the 2017 targets established for Canada Research Chairs. With updated equity targets (expected in April 2020), the fluctuation of people in the program, and the disaggregation of Tier 1 and Tier 2 chairs, UBC will have a deficit in representation for all four equity groups.

Within a restricted hiring process, preferential hiring can also be used – and in UBC’s context this strategy will be focused to address significant under-representation among particular equity groups. Restricted and/or preferential hiring at the University of British Columbia are strategies that are being implemented to help address systemic under-representation experienced by individuals within the CRCP. These strategies are implemented in accordance with the BC Human Rights Tribunal special programs.

What is restricted hiring?
In a restricted hiring competition, only applicants who have self-identified as belonging to one or more of the equity groups designated for the restricted hiring process will be considered for the position. For the Canada Research Chair Program, there are four federally designated groups:

- Women
- Visible minorities (members of groups that are racially categorized)
People with disabilities
- Indigenous peoples

Can I preferentially hire within a restricted hiring program?
It is possible to preferentially hire within a restricted hiring process. In a preferential hiring competition, specific equity groups are preferred (e.g., persons with disabilities). Qualified applicants who have self-identified as belonging to that specific designated equity group will be preferred. For instance, in a restricted hiring process we will only consider the applications of those who have self-identified in at least one of the four designated groups. Additionally, if we need to address a specific area of under-representation (e.g., persons with disabilities), applications from individuals identifying as having a disability would be considered first.

If none of the preferentially considered applicants (in our example, persons with disabilities) are successful, qualified applicants who are from other designated group(s) will then be short-listed and assessed. Under the current Canada Research Chair Program, this means that only after considering applicants who have self-identified from the preferentially designated group would applicants from other designated groups be considered.

When does UBC conduct restricted or preferential hiring competitions?¹
Restricted or preferential hiring may be implemented under one or more of the following conditions:
- There is a serious under-representation of a designated equity group in the relevant unit, occupation, or program and it is expected that there will be few opportunities in the near future to address this under-representation.
- Other attempts to reach equitable representation through an equity plan or other means have not been sufficient.
- External funding programs require that equity and diversity targets or commitments be met.
- A program requires the special expertise or knowledge of members of a designated group.
- It is a strategic decision to develop a broad range of perspectives to build diverse scholarship and work at the university.
- The university requires diverse leaders and faculty members to support diverse students and staff envisioning leadership roles for their own futures.

What is UBC’s process for restricted hiring?
As outlined in the CRC Appointments Guide, in a restricted hiring process, only those who have completed an Applicant Equity Survey in which they self-identified as belonging to one or more of the designated equity groups, and provided their names, are eligible to be considered for the position.

What happens if no one from a designated equity group applies or is qualified to be shortlisted?
In a restricted hiring competition, if no one from the designated equity group(s) applies, or if no one from the designated equity group(s) who applies is successfully short-listed, the job posting must stay open until a qualified candidate from the designated equity group(s) has applied and been successful.

Do all applicants have to agree to self-identify and to provide their names in a restricted hiring process?
No. Applicants do not need to self-identify in any way if they choose not to. However, only candidates who self-identify as belonging to one or more of the designated equity groups and provide their names can be considered.

¹ Adapted from UVIC’s policy of preferential/limited hiring at:
https://www.uvic.ca/universitysecretary/assets/docs/policies/HR6110_3100_.pdf
FAQs - Accommodations During the Hiring Process

What do I do if someone requests accommodation during the hiring process?
A candidate may ask for accommodation at any point during the hiring process. The purpose of an accommodation is to help remove barriers and allow the candidate to be properly assessed on the essential duties of the position.

Requests are typically simple and inexpensive to accommodate, and can vary according to the candidate’s needs.

What kind of accommodations might someone ask for?
Accommodation requests could look like:
- Ensuring that the interview space is accessible.
- Using video conferencing instead of a phone interview.
- Access to gender-neutral washrooms.
- Hiring a sign language interpreter or a captioner.
- Scheduling the interview later in the day and/or scheduling a longer interview period that provides time for breaks.
- Access to a breast-feeding space.

What are UBC’s responsibilities to provide accommodations to a candidate during the interview process?
According to UBC’s Employment Equity (Policy #2):
"The University of British Columbia has established a program of employment equity to provide a fair and equitable workplace and to offer all individuals full opportunity to develop their potential. Accordingly, the University will identify and eliminate any discriminatory barriers that interfere with employment opportunities in all jobs and at all levels throughout the University. Both current and prospective faculty and staff will receive equitable treatment in hiring, training, and promotion procedures."

UBC has an obligation to accommodate candidates, and failure to provide reasonable accommodations is discrimination.

What if I’m not sure an accommodation request is ‘reasonable’?
Under the BC Human Rights Code, an accommodation request must not present “undue hardship” to take steps to grant it. If you have any questions or concerns about how to appropriately provide accommodations during the hiring process, please contact the Human Rights Advisor at the Equity and Inclusion Office.

Sources:
UBC’s Employment Equity Policy (Policy #2)
UBC’s Discrimination Policy (Policy #3)
Disability and Accommodation under British Columbia Employment Law