



## PhD Research Fellow in Educational Measurement

### Job description

Applications are invited for a full-time (100 %), three-year position as PhD Research Fellow at the Centre for Educational Measurement (CEMO), Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Oslo. The contract can be extended by up to one year, conditional on the assignment of teaching, and other compulsory duties. The preferred starting date is fall 2021.

CEMO provides a stimulating research environment by bringing together internationally renowned experts in methodological and substantive research fields to solve core educational problems. The Centre also contributes to the development of measurement competence through teaching and outreach and offers a Master of Science program in Measurement, Assessment and Evaluation. The Centre is part of a broad international network and comprises about 30 employees from 15 countries. For more information about CEMO, [see this website](#).

### More about the position

The PhD position relates to ongoing research on the validity and fairness of grading in the Norwegian school system. The Norwegian system of summative assessment relies heavily on teacher made grades, combined with sitting a limited number of exams at the end of lower and upper secondary school. These grades are the basis for selection into the next higher educational level. As such, fairness of the grades becomes a critical issue to support the validity of such a merit-based system of selection. There is indeed a sparsity of research on both teachers' grading practices and on the system of exams. Recently, a governmentally appointed board evaluated the current system of exams and strongly recommended that studies of reliability and validity should be conducted. The reports from this group (in Norwegian) are of high relevance for this project and can be accessed from [this website](#).

The project will be part of a larger umbrella of related projects at CEMO (with partners from other institutions). One characteristic feature of this umbrella project is the application of very rich public register data, including also detailed grade data for students at important transition points for a large number of cohorts. The person selected for the PhD-position will also take part in further development of the database. Familiarity with register data would be an advantage but is not a requirement. More information about the wider context for the PhD project is available on request.

Of particular relevance for this PhD position, are issues of fairness. Some examples of issues that may be addressed by register data are:

- Teacher-made vs exam grades: How do scores and distributions differ, for example across subjects? What are possible causes for and consequences of such differences, for example for intake to higher education?
- The selection into upper-secondary and higher education by Grade Point Average: Is this a fair model of students' merits? What are possible alternative models?
- The random allocation of students to exams ('trekkordningen'): Is 'trekkordningen' truly random? What are the implications of the draw for students' chances to be admitted to their first study choice?

Several of these issues may also be supplemented with subsidiary targeted (quantitative or qualitative) studies. For instance, the last issue of 'trekkordningen' would benefit from collecting data to capture the procedure by which schools allocate exam subject to students or groups of students. The final description of the research project for the PhD will in the end be fine-tuned and balanced to avoid overlap with the existing portfolio of research activities.

We welcome applications of candidates with a strong background in educational, sociological, economic or psychological research/measurement. More information on the Norwegian educational system, including brief introduction to assessment [can be found on this website](#). Although a bit dated, this paper by Tveit (2014) is also a nice introduction to assessment in general in the Norwegian context: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0969594X.2013.830079>. Furthermore, the two last papers in a special issue of the journal Acta Didactica (Hovdhaugen, Prøitz & Selland, 2018; Tveit & Olsen, 2018) include relevant discussions of teacher made grades, exams and their possible functions: <https://journals.uio.no/adno/issue/view/615>.

The research fellow will take part in the Faculty's approved PhD program and is expected to complete his/her project within the fellowship period. The main purpose of the fellowship is research training leading to the successful completion of a PhD degree. The successful candidate will develop skills in quantitative methodology, statistical programming, and scientific communication during their PhD period.

### Qualification requirements

- Applicants must hold a 2-year Master's degree (120 ECTS, including a thesis of at least 30 ECTS) or an equivalent qualification in education, psychology, social sciences, statistics or similar fields related to educational measurement. Candidates must have submitted their Master thesis when they apply.
- Fluent oral and written communication skills in English
- Familiarity with the Norwegian context and the language would be an advantage, but is not a requirement

By the time of appointment, the successful candidate must also satisfy the requirements of admission to the PhD program of the Faculty of Educational Sciences. These include minimum grade B (ECTS grading scale or equivalent) on the Master's thesis, and good grades on the overall degree. [Please visit this website for more information about the PhD program at the Faculty](#).

In the assessment of applications, emphasis will be put on:

- The applicants' academic aptitude for completing the research training program
- The writing sample, which must be submitted with the application (see information under "how to apply")
- Training and experience with quantitative research methods and data-analysis
- The applicant's personal suitability and motivation for the post, including his/her ability to collaborate
- Other qualifications that meet the objectives of the position

## We offer

- Salary from 482 200- 526 000 per annum depending on qualifications in a position as a PhD research fellow (position code 1017). Research fellows are normally allocated to pay grade 54, NOK 482 200 on appointment. The position is remunerated according to the Norwegian State salary scale
- PhD students receive full tuition, a partial fee waiver, and five weeks of paid vacations. PhD candidates are also entitled to apply for subsidized housing through the University of Oslo, subject to availability
- The University of Oslo offers attractive welfare benefits and a generous pension agreement with the Norwegian Public Service Pension Fund, in addition to Oslo's family-friendly environment with its rich opportunities for culture and outdoor activities

## How to apply

The application must be submitted electronically and must include:

- Cover letter including a statement of motivation
- CV (summarizing education, previous positions and other qualifying experience)
- Master thesis and other selected works suited to demonstrate the applicant's fit to the position announced, in particular documentation of training and experience with quantitative research methods and data-analysis (a strong record here will give a distinct advantage)
- An extended abstract in which the PhD candidate demonstrates his/her their understanding of the research topic, key concepts, potential research questions and methodological approaches (3-4 pages, 1.15 line spacing, 12pt font size, 1-inch margins)
- Documentation of English proficiency in the form of an academic degree from an English language university or an approved English proficiency test with a minimum required score. (For guidance, [see this website](#)).
- Documentation of earlier education (e.g., diplomas, grade transcripts, course descriptions)
- 1-2 references with contact information (e.g., Master thesis supervisor(s))

The application with attachments must be delivered in our electronic recruiting system, please follow the link "apply for this job".

Foreign applicants are advised to attach an explanation of their University's grading system. Please note that all documents should be in English (or a Scandinavian language). Incomplete applications will, under normal circumstances, not be assessed.

As a rule, interviews will be conducted as part of the application process. Successful candidates need to present original diplomas and grade transcripts from previous courses of study before they can sign the contract.

## Formal regulations

Please see the [guidelines and regulations](#) for appointments to Research Fellowships at the University of Oslo.

No one can be appointed for more than one PhD Research Fellowship period at the University of Oslo.

According to the Norwegian Freedom of Information Act (Offentleglova) information about the applicant may be included in the public applicant list, also in cases where the applicant has requested non-disclosure.

The appointment may be shortened/given a more limited scope within the framework of the applicable guidelines on account of any previous employment in academic positions.

The University of Oslo has an [agreement](#) for all employees, aiming to secure rights to research results etc.

Inclusion and diversity are a strength. The University of Oslo has a personnel policy objective of achieving a balanced gender composition. We also want to have employees with diverse expertise, combinations of subjects, life experience and perspectives. We will make adjustments for employees who require this.

If there are qualified applicants with special needs, gaps in their CVs or immigrant backgrounds, we will invite at least one applicant in each of these groups to an interview.

## Contact information

[Professor Rolf Vegar Olsen](#)

## About the University of Oslo

**The University of Oslo** is Norway's oldest and highest ranked educational and research institution, with 28 000 students and 7000 employees. With its broad range of academic disciplines and internationally recognised research communities, UiO is an important contributor to society.

**The Centre for Educational Measurement** at the University of Oslo (CEMO) provides a stimulating research environment by bringing internationally renowned substantive and methodological experts together. Research at CEMO combines basic research and applications of advanced measurement techniques to solve core educational problems. CEMO also contributes to the development of measurement

competence through teaching and outreach. The centre is part of a broad international network and manages several externally funded research grants.

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