1. Introduction

The percentage of women on the scientific staff of the Faculty of Science is quite low, especially at the level of permanent positions. The report *Gender Policy 2016-2020: Towards Gender Equality in the Faculty of Science*, proposes a number of actions to recruit and retain more women on the scientific staff. In particular, the report contains several recommendations on gender-neutral advertisement texts (reproduced on p2 of this note).

We made a quick scan of a dozen advertisements for positions in the Faculty that appeared during the last year. In our view, their advertisement texts are definitely not gender neutral, but we think it is quite straightforward to change this. Well-formulated advertisements help to attract female (and male) talent, and form good PR for our University.

In this note we elaborate on the first five recommendations from the gender policy report, and provide concrete text suggestions that may help researchers to write gender-neutral advertisement texts. The remaining four recommendations from the report, which concern the writing style of advertisement texts, in our view do not need further clarification.

This note is meant as a self-help guide for researchers writing advertisement text and for the personnel department. In case of doubt, however, researchers are encouraged to contact the gender & diversity committee of the Faculty of Science.
Recommendations on advertisement texts from the report *Gender Policy 2016-2020: Towards Gender Equality in the Faculty of Science*

1. **Explain the job requirements**
   - Formulate less compelling (not ‘you should have’)
   - Reconsider (formulation) qualifications (‘initiating’ instead of ‘assertiveness’)
   - Focus on the 4 most essential requirements and do not specify too much

2. **Describe the work environment**
   - Mention atmosphere and culture
   - Mention the societal relevance / impact of the job / research
   - Emphasize the collaboration and partnerships within and outside the Institute

3. **Highlight opportunities to combine work and private life**
   - Flexible working hours and the possibility to work from home
   - Child care possibilities

4. **Highlight the commitment to gender policy**
   - Use facts and figures
   - Mention names of leading women in the institute
   - Mention presence of a gender committee and coordinator
   - Mention specific programs for women

5. **Write gender-neutral**
   (plural often offers a solution)
   *Rather not: The candidate can register his complaints at (..)*
   *Alternative: Candidates can register complaints (..)*

6. **Be personal**
   - Use personal pronouns (you, us)
   *Rather not: The candidate is part of (..)*
   *Alternative: You are part of (..)*

7. **Build a relationship with the reader**
   - Use dialogue forms
   *Example: Curious about our benefits? See the terms of Radboud University.*

8. **Write active**
   *Example: We strive (..) We seek (..)*

9. **Translate Unique Selling Points in User Benefits**
   *The Institute encourages employees to develop constantly*
   *The Institute is known for its unique cordial atmosphere*
   *Radboud University has a number of regulations that makes it possible for employees to create a good work-life balance.*
2. Job Requirements

As a first suggestion, we recommend to explain job requirements in a less compelling manner. Emphasize the role of the applicant as an active individual who will be working with new opportunities, rather than giving a long list of how they have to conform to your expectations. For instance, refrain from using expressions such as ‘you should’, ‘you must’, ‘we expect that’. The following text is clearly too compelling:

“This should result in high-quality scientific output. Moreover, you are expected to attract research grants, and to cooperate in writing joint research proposals with other group members. This should result in national and international collaboration in research projects, and funding to attract a steady flow of PhD students and postdocs. In addition, you will extend and deepen the relationship between ...”

Instead it is better to write things like:

“You are excited to work in an international project team”. “You combine a drive for scientific quality and rigor with making a difference in global environmental issues.”

Second, when formulating job requirements, be aware that many qualifications are associated with (supposedly) feminine or masculine characteristics, and strive for an appropriate balance between them. Terms typically linked to femininity are “cooperation”, “supporting”, “inspiring”, “openness” and “combining” whereas terms linked to masculinity are “competition”, “leading”, “steering”, “assertiveness” and “focusing”. A typical pattern we have observed is that advertisements use masculine terms in their requirements for research, and feminine ones in the requirements for teaching. This reinforces gender stereotypes and makes it less likely female candidates will be considered (or consider themselves) to fit the norm. A job advertisement will be less gender stereotypical if research, teaching and management qualities are described with a more balanced terminology. Here are some examples:

“You will establish a highly competitive and collaborative programme, with an emphasis on developing and applying advanced spectroscopic techniques.”

(You will coordinate an innovative and collaborative research programme, with....)

“You will be responsible for, and will actively initiate, attractive and innovative science education in biophysical chemistry”

Third, we suggest to focus on the four most essential job requirements (and order them according to importance) and to not be overly specific in their description. It transpires that disproportionately many female job candidates will simply decide not to apply if they fail to meet just one of the stated job requirements. The list of requirements in the following example is clearly too long (also note the compelling use of “should”):

In summary, you should:

• have the qualities necessary to become a successful group leader;
• be an enthusiastic and entrepreneurial scientist with an excellent track record and the potential to conduct biophysical research at the interface of
chemistry and biology using advanced spectroscopic techniques to initiate novel research at the IMM;

- be capable of developing and strengthening professional relationships at our institute;
- be a researcher willing to participate in projects of a multidisciplinary nature;
- be an inspirational lecturer with excellent proven teaching skills who can participate in the educational programmes of our faculty;
- have excellent scientific qualities (primary requirement);
- be a scientist who has shown competence in acquiring external funding for research;
- be willing to represent our institute in national and international research organizations;
- be an academic who is willing to contribute to the administrative and organizational tasks of the Faculty of Science and the IMM research institute, and to their educational programmes.

An alternative formulation would for instance be:

In summary, you:

- have the qualities to become a successful group leader;
- have enthusiasm for initiating multidisciplinary biophysical research at the interface of chemistry and biology using advanced spectroscopic techniques;
- are an inspirational lecturer with excellent proven teaching skills who can participate in the educational programmes of our faculty;
- have excellent scientific qualities (primary requirement), illustrated by a track record of publications and shown competence in acquiring external funding for research.

Fourth, do not specify the area of expertise of the candidate in too much detail, but remain open for candidates with complementary expertise, in emerging fields or with multidisciplinary backgrounds. This will create a larger pool of potential applicants – female or male – and may catch excellent people who were off your radar initially, because e.g. they

- work in emergent areas that are not yet established,
- have had non-standard career paths (this affects female researchers disproportionately),
- do research at the interface between traditional subject areas, or
- are not part of your network.

This may be done by giving a global indication of the necessary expertise. You may include a paragraph like:

“We will consider applicants knowledgeable in the general area of X. There are several broad areas of interest, including [name several]. In general we will give higher priority to the overall originality and promise of a candidate’s work rather than to the subarea of specialization.”
3. Work environment

Advertisements usually contain a sentence like

“You will be appointed at the Department of X, which is embedded in the Institute for Y at Radboud University’s Faculty of Science”,

followed by a description of University, Institute and the research group. As part of this general description, we recommend to highlight attractive aspects of the local atmosphere and culture, as applicable. Several websites and job ads already contain good general texts about the Radboud University, which may be reused in whole or in part:

“Strategically located in Europe, Radboud University is one of the leading academic communities in the Netherlands. It is a place with a personal touch, where top-notch education and research take place on a beautiful green campus, in modern buildings with state-of-the-art facilities. At Radboud University, we teach and perform research covering the full breadth of the academic spectrum. The atmosphere on campus is open and personal, which stimulates colleagues to share their knowledge beyond the boundaries of their own discipline. It encourages all to look further, to see more. Thus, Radboud University contributes to the development of new perspectives within science and within society. This makes Radboud University successful and of international importance.”

In the descriptions of the institute and research group, we recommend to include phrases such as “our Institute” and “we aim”, which emphasize the value of the collective group effort, in addition to that of individual achievement:

“Our group offers a first class and international research environment with various interdisciplinary but related research topics and projects.”
“Our group is responsible for several courses at both the Bachelor’s and Master’s level of the Computer Science program, in particular in the Master specialization Software Science.”

Below are examples of good examples describing the iCIS and IWWR institutes.

“Research at iCIS focuses on digital security, data science and software science. Our research mission is to improve the security and reliability of computer-based systems and algorithms through mathematically founded theories, methods and tools. During a recent evaluation of Dutch Computer Science research, iCIS received the highest ranking of all computer science departments in the Netherlands (together with Twente). The evaluation committee praised our flat and open organizational structure, our growing ability to attract external funding, our strong ties to other disciplines, and our solid contacts with government and industrial partners.”

If possible, include unique research facilities (which makes working at RU special), as in the following (quite elaborate) example:

“The aim of the Institute for Water and Wetland Research (IWWR) at Radboud University (Nijmegen, Netherlands) is to conduct research in the field of the natural environment, in particular aquatic ecosystems and wetlands. Many of these systems
have been substantially altered by human impact and climate change, resulting in increased incidences of drought, flooding and pollution. These changes have resulted in stress responses of all living biota and impose major challenges on individuals, populations and the entire ecosystem. At our institute we study the mechanisms of adaptation to these changes in microorganisms, plants and animals at the level of the molecule, the cell, the organism and the ecosystem. Interdisciplinary collaborations among the different research groups, within the IWWR, including ***, are strongly stimulated. IWWR counts with state of the art research facilities including a high-tech greenhouse facility and a well-equipped and fully staffed General Instrumentation laboratory with devices for element analysis and separation techniques, and light and electron microscopes.

The tight coupling of fundamental scientific research to application, distinguishes the IWWR from other national and international institutes on water research. Novel applications for current water problems are developed from innovative fundamental insight in molecular, physiological and ecological processes in cooperation with a large number of companies, governmental and non-governmental organizations. On campus these include IWWR spin-off company B-ware (www.b-ware.eu) and Dutch nature conservation NGO’s organized in Natuurplaza (www.natuurplaza.org).”

4. Opportunities to Combine Work and Private Life

We suggest to include at least a sentence such as:

“Radboud University has a number of regulations that support employees in finding a good work-life balance.”

The following text, taken from https://www.ru.nl/english/working-at/working-at-radboud-university/personal/, may be used to elaborate this point:

“Employees have a high level of freedom to determine the way they structure the work they do at Radboud University. We work on the basis of trust and professional integrity. Focus on the individual means we take each employee’s phase in life and career into consideration. Radboud University offers customised facilities to better align work and private life. Parents are entitled to partly paid parental leave and Radboud University employees enjoy flexibility in the way they structure their work. This flexibility extends to the conditions of employment and some aspects of the conditions of employment can be fine-tuned to the employee’s wishes. Options include a tax-free reimbursement for a bicycle or fitness.”

Other Unique Selling Points that may be mentioned:

“On campus day care facilities for all children in the age 0-4 years are available, next to the faculty buildings.”

and

“Its good accessibility, extensive cultural offerings, scenic surroundings and historic centre make Nijmegen a pleasant city to live and work.”

See also https://www.ru.nl/english/working-at/working-at-radboud-university/getting-started-nijmegen/.
5. Commitment to Gender Policy

We recommend you use the following text, which already occurs in many advertisements:

“The Faculty of Science is an equal opportunity employer, committed to building a culturally diverse intellectual community, and as such encourages applications from women and minorities.”

There are various ways to add more substance to this rather formulaic-sounding statement, in order to illustrate that there is a serious effort under way to attract qualified women and to highlight aspects that may appeal to them. You may mention the names of leading women at your institute, the existence of a gender & diversity committee and of specific programs for women, and include relevant facts and figures on gender issues, to the extent they tell a positive story. For this, (parts of) the following text may be used:

“Radboud University strives for a diversified workforce in order to shape education and research from different perspectives. The University is taking targeted action to appoint talented men and women of different nationalities to senior positions and to keep them at our University. The aim is to have at least 25% of senior positions filled by women in 2020. Long term, this will be 50%. To achieve this, talented, young women can count on support during their career in the form of a mentor programme. Specific attention will be paid to appointing female full professors by means of initiatives such as the Mohrmann programme. There are also two active female networks: the Halkes Women Faculty Network and the Women Professors Network.”

You may also refer to the specific initiatives taken within our Faculty:

“The Faculty of Science and its Gender & Diversity Committee actively work on enhancing staff diversity through various actions such as gender awareness trainings, special tenure track positions for women, and additional financial support to help them continue their research during maternity leave.”