



Extract from the report to the
Public Accounts Committee on
the administration of the employ-
ment terms of external lecturers
and teaching assistants

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I. Introduction and conclusion

1. This report is about the administration of external lecturers' and teaching assistants' employment terms. Rigsrevisionen initiated the study in October 2011.

External lecturers and teaching assistants are part-time academic staff that are not required to undertake any research activities. They provide approximately one fourth of the total teaching at the universities with great variations between the primary fields of study. During the term 2010/2011, the Danish universities employed approximately 6,900 external lecturers and teaching assistants.

The employment terms of external lecturers and teaching assistants are defined in a set of rules determining, for instance, duration of appointment and working hours. Rigsrevisionen has, through previous studies, established that the universities have on several occasions failed to comply with the rules, and that the area is difficult to administer.

2. External lecturers and teaching assistants are employed by the universities on fixed-term contracts to perform teaching duties. External lecturers and teaching assistants are special job categories used by the universities to fill positions that do not require research-based teaching. The appointment of external lecturers and teaching assistants contributes practical experience from the various fields of study and adds flexibility to the universities' performance of their teaching duties and their ability to meet fluctuations in the numbers of students enrolled in specific study programmes.

3. The study involves the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Employment, the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education (the Ministry of Education) and the universities.

Rules in the area are mainly issued by the Ministry of Finance. The ministry determines salary levels and terms of employment for teaching assistants following negotiations with the Joint Consultation Committee of the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations. Salaries and terms of employment for external lecturers are agreed between the ministry and the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations.

The Danish parliament (Folketing) has passed a bill on fixed-term appointments introduced by the Minister for Employment.

The responsibility for the supervision of the universities lies with the Ministry of Education. The Ministry has delegated the supervision to the Agency for Universities and Internationalisation.

The universities have the power to appoint external lecturers and teaching assistants and perform the on-going administration of the employment terms.

Wages for external lecturers and teaching assistants at the universities amount to approx. DKK 300-350 million annually.

4. The objective of the study is to assess whether external lecturers' and teaching assistants' terms of employment are administered in a satisfactory manner. The report answers the following questions:

- Do the universities comply with the current rules governing the appointment and working hours of external lecturers and teaching assistants?
- Do the rules underpin effective administration of external lecturers' and teaching assistants' terms of employment?

MAIN CONCLUSION

Rigsrevisionen is of the opinion that the employment terms of external lecturers and teaching assistants are not administered in an entirely satisfactory manner.

The universities have on several occasions failed to comply with the rules governing appointment and working hours of external lecturers and teaching assistants.

Rigsrevisionen therefore recommends that the Agency for Universities and Internationalisation should follow up on the universities' administration in this area.

The opportunity to employ external lecturers and teaching assistants adds flexibility to the universities' planning of teaching.

The rules on minimum and maximum working hours in relation to the use of external lecturers and teaching assistants increase the administrative workload on the universities.

Rigsrevisionen therefore recommends that the Ministry of Finance, on entering collective agreements, strive to ensure that the rules underpin effective administration of external lecturers' and teaching assistants' terms of employment.

The main conclusion is based on the following sub-conclusions:

Do the universities comply with the current rules governing appointment and working hours of external lecturers and teaching assistants?

In several instances, the universities have renewed external lecturers' and teaching assistants' employment contracts more than twice. With the exception of one, all the universities have established a practice according to which external lecturers or teaching assistants are re-appointed if they have taken a break of one semester after their third fixed-term appointment. This practice is not in compliance with the Danish act on fixed-term appointment which requires specific assessment of all re-appointments after expiry of the third fixed-term contract.

Generally, the universities do not comply with the rules stipulating that external lecturers are entitled to get paid for minimum 100 hours annually and that the organisation authorised to negotiate on behalf of the external lecturer must be informed when an external lecturer works more than 500 hours annually.

The universities have on several occasions violated the rules stipulating that annual working hours of external lectures and teaching assistants must not exceed 780.

The distribution of tasks and responsibilities among the relevant units at the universities is generally well defined in relation to the administration of the employment terms of external lecturers and teaching assistants.

However, the universities have not in all areas established internal controls that underpin compliance with the rules applying to employment of external lecturers and teaching assistants.

Do the rules underpin effective administration of external lecturers' and teaching assistants' terms of employment?

The rules that govern the terms of employment of external lecturers and teaching assistants, including rules on working hours and pay, are generally clear and well defined.

The rules on minimum and maximum working hours entail considerable administrative costs, because the universities need to consider the rules both during the planning of the teaching and continuously during the educational term.

According to the Ministry of Education, the rules on maximum hours are contributing to ensuring that research-based teaching is provided by staff holding academic key positions at the universities. The rules are, however, not an effective means of achieving this objective.