

WONCA Europe Recommendation on Qualifications for General Practice/Family Medicine Academic Posts in the Universities and Academic Units

By World Organization of Family Doctors Region-Europe (WONCA Europe)

WONCA Europe aims to provide evidence and guidance to Decision Makers, Rectors, Deans, Department Heads, Academic Administrators and to those others responsible for recruiting academic staff for GP/FM academic departments of the medical faculties/universities in the region.

Background

The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) defines primary health care (PHC) as a cornerstone of sustainable health care systems. It is a defined sector of the healthcare system, typically comprising several clinical disciplines and General Practice/Family Medicine (GP/FM) is a key medical provider within the PHC [1].

GP/FM is also a specific clinical specialty, taught at all levels of medical education, from undergraduate, through specialist training, to continuing education and professional development. Advisory Committee on Medical Training (ACMT), UEMO consensus document, and European Commission directives (EU directive 93/16) are clearly supporting the GP/FM clinical discipline as **a distinct academic specialty**. Through **teaching, research, supervision** and **professional development**, it aims to promote good medical care in the context of PHC services. Academic programmes to obtain GP/FM specialist competence may be tailored to national contexts and needs.

Use of **clinical and academic titles** is important to uphold the discipline. **In particular** or used as an individual statement, the term “Professor/Lecturer of GP/FM” signifies that the holder of a position is with clinical background in General Practice/Family Medicine, “often” as a clinical specialist in GP/FM. A flourishing academic milieu associated with GP/FM may comprise academics from various disciplines, however, the key role is mainly played by physicians with full clinical and academic competences specific to the discipline and specialty. This should be reflected in the title of the position in question, i.e. “Professor in medical anthropology in general practice.”

Recruitment to academic posts in General Practice/Family Medicine

Announcements for academic university posts in General Practice/Family Medicine should in general reflect scientific, educational and communicative standards (for professorship/associate professor/assistant professors, lecturer etc.) set by the universities and/or national bodies.

Preparing **announcements** including description and requirements for academic GP/FM posts ideally be prepared in close cooperation with existing GP/FM academic units or, if not available, with an advice from the national college of GP/FM or scientific society of GP/FM or a renowned external GP/FM academic unit, until a local academic milieu is established.

Evaluation of admissions is an important part of the process. A recommendation on composition of an evaluation committee according to the posts is in Table 1.

Table 1. WONCA Europe Recommendation for an Academic Positions Evaluation Committee	
Professorship in GP/FM:	Ideally the majority of the evaluation committee for eligible candidates comprise professors in GP/FM, of whom “at least one” come from an external faculty, national or international.
Other academic degrees in GP/FM	The evaluation committee ideally includes at least one academic GP/FM, with a similar or higher academic degree as the applicants sought for.

Recommended Qualifications

1- Clinical qualifications

Candidates eligible for an academic post in GP/FM should have “experience from clinical practice in GP/FM”, and ideally fulfil the core competencies for specialist degree in GP/FM according to The [European definition of General Practice](#) / Family Medicine[2]. The level of competence required can however be tailored to what the country can stand for in their developmental process of the GP/FM discipline and the specialty. Clinical practice experience in various PC settings including city and/or rural is considered as an important specification [3].

Table 2. WONCA Europe Recommendation on Minimum Qualifications for an Academic Position in GP/FM on Teaching/Education and Research	
1	Experience from clinical practice in GP/FM, in various PHC settings [3]
2	Fulfil the core competencies for specialist degree in GP/FM according to The European definition of General Practice /Family Medicine [2]
3	For a post including “clinical” teaching, the candidate ideally have an experience described in the EURACT Educational Agenda of General Practice/Family Medicine [4]

4	For a post including an “undergraduate” teaching the applicant ideally meets the described professional competencies of undergrad teachers in European Education Requirements for the Undergraduate General Practice/Family Medicine Curriculum [5]
5	For a post including “postgraduate” training, qualifications according to WONCA Europe Training Requirements for GP/FM specialist training , should be given high priority [6]
6	GP/FM should ideally have a varied portfolio of research with direct relevance for GP/FM. International and National Requirements should be tailored to suit the needs and potentials of the academic milieu in question. However those researches with questions raised in the clinical setting of GP/FM (primary health care setting) shall be a high priority [8]
7	It is always desirable for an GP/FM academic position candidate to have a number of international and national publications in well-established, discipline journals for GP/FM, and primary health care. Journal’s impact factor (IF) may be valuable although it is not necessarily an optimal measure of quality and relevance in primary care research which could also be reflected by the Journal Citation Reports in the Primary Health Care category [9]

2. Teaching and educational experience

Please see table 2 for WONCA Europe recommendation. Supervision of doctoral/PhD students who conduct research in the area of general practice/family medicine is a competence, requiring both educational and research proficiencies. GP/FM teachers should constantly develop their educational competences in accordance with the principles described in the Framework for Continuing Educational Development of Trainers in General Practice/Family Medicine in Europe [7].

3. Research in the domain of General Practice/Family Medicine

Please see table 2 for recommendations. Conducting research in the field of GP/FM requires the ability to recognize and reflect the context of the discipline, understood as the complex and specific relationships of individual professionals and primary care teams, as well as the patients they care for. The domain of scientific research, conducted within the framework of primary health care, therefore allows the use of a wide range of different research methods. The challenges faced by researchers in this field are well described in the Research Agenda for General Practice / Family Medicine and Primary Health Care in Europe and recently also in the Research Strategy for General Practice in Europe 2021 [8,9].

Senior researchers (e.g. Professors) in GP/FM should be able to participate in research projects with national and international relevance. They shall publish the results in acclaimed international journals. Small-scale research arising within a local context and consequently with direct relevance for developing regional/national primary health care, and thereby

published in national medical journals, should be valued in its own right, and serve as an indication of genuine commitment to the discipline. Requirements may however be tailored to suit the needs and potentials of the academic milieu in question.

4. Overall professional profile

Professional identity and impact should be considered essential for highly ranked academics in GP/FM. The following elements may serve as indicators of such qualities, and should be noted by evaluation committees in any applicant's file as in Table 3.

Table 3. WONCA Europe Recommendation on Documentation of Professional Development for a GP/FM Academic Position	
1.	Role(s) within local, national and/or international GP/FM colleges or other professional networks or interest groups with focus on GP/FM.
2.	Contribution in arrangement of meetings, symposia, congresses with relevance for GP/FM and PHC.
3.	Evidence of activity in quality development projects and representing GP/FM in interdisciplinary professional development.
4.	Evidence of an active participation in national or international conferences/congresses in GP/FM, ideally documented as a list of abstracts and lectures.
5.	Evidence and list of the published research articles in GP/FM journals or similar journals familiar within the GP/FM community.

References:

1. From Alma-Ata towards universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals. Declaration of Astana. Global Conference on Primary Health Care. <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/primary-health/declaration/gcphc-declaration.pdf> [accessed on 5 December 2022]
2. The European definition of General Practice / Family Medicine. <https://www.woncaeurope.org/file/520e8ed3-30b4-4a74-bc35-87286d3de5c7/Definition%203rd%20ed%202021%20with%20revised%20wonca%20tree.pdf> [accessed on 5 December 2022]
3. Blueprint for Rural Practice in Europe. <https://euripa.woncaeurope.org/sites/euripa/files/documents/EURIPA%20Blueprint%20for%20Rural%20Practice%20.pdf> [accessed on 5 December 2022]

4. EURACT Educational Agenda of General Practice/Family Medicine. <https://euract.woncaeurope.org/sites/euractdev/files/documents/publications/official-documents/euract-educationalagenda.pdf> [accessed on 5 December 2022]
5. European Education Requirements for the Undergraduate General Practice/Family Medicine Curriculum. <https://euract.woncaeurope.org/sites/euractdev/files/documents/publications/others/bmeeducation-requirements-151220finalwith-we.pdf> [accessed on 5 December 2022]
6. European Training Requirements for GP/FM specialist training. <https://euract.woncaeurope.org/sites/euractdev/files/documents/publications/official-documents/european-training-requirements-gp-fm-specialist-training-euract-2018.pdf> [accessed on 5 December 2022]
7. Framework for Continuing Educational Development of Trainers in General Practice/Family Medicine in Europe. <https://euract.woncaeurope.org/sites/euractdev/files/documents/publications/official-documents/euractframeworkforcontinuingeducationaldevelopmentoftrainersingeneralpracticeineuropecedingp.pdf> [accessed on 5 December 2022]
8. Research Agenda for General Practice / Family Medicine and Primary Health Care in Europe. https://www.egprn.org/file/68d67845-7961-4803-8520-546b11859d6e/research_agenda_for_general_practice_family_medicine.pdf
9. Research Strategy for General Practice in Europe 2021. <file:///C:/Users/windaka/Downloads/EGPRN%20Research%20Strategy%20for%20General%20Practice%20in%20Europe%202021.pdf>