

The logo for 'varbi' is written in a lowercase, rounded, sans-serif font. The letters are a vibrant green color. The background of the entire page is white with large, abstract green shapes that create a modern, geometric look. One large green shape is a triangle pointing downwards, partially overlapping the text area. Another is a smaller triangle pointing upwards in the top right corner. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional.

# varbi

A photograph of two women in business attire shaking hands. The woman on the left is seated and looking up at the standing woman on the right. They are both smiling. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The background of the photo is a plain, light-colored wall.

## Top 5 Features

**to Look for When  
Acquiring A New ATS  
for Staff and Faculty  
Recruitment**

## *We know that faculty recruitment is unlike any other type of recruitment.*

The hiring processes within higher education and research can be time-consuming and require more decision-making, more documentation and there are more people involved than in standard recruiting. Excessive administration is often one of the issues that universities and colleges spend time battling. To spend more time on finding the right candidate and working more strategic and less time on administrative work, investing in a suitable **Applicant Tracking System (ATS)** is key.

An ATS helps you save time, it also benefits your university or college in other ways, such as an improved candidate experience which directly contributes to your candidates' perception of you as an employer. Your Employer Brand will benefit greatly from a positive candidate experience, which in turn can help you attract the best candidates. With the best faculty and staff, you are sure to deliver the best teaching and best research.

Finding the right ATS is not an easy task. With so many different ATS's on the market with different features and characteristics, it is hard to know exactly which system is the best for your needs. Many HRM solutions also have built-in recruitment functionality but will that be enough when there might be an ATS out there for you that is best-of-breed and understands how you work?

Recruitment at a university or college can be split up in two main categories: **technical and administrative staff** and **faculty staff**. There are differences in the hiring processes for administrative and technical staff, and the hiring processes for faculty staff such as professors, lecturers and PhD candidates. Because of these differences in the hiring processes, most applicant tracking systems are not suitable for faculty recruitment.

Due to these differences between the two recruitment categories, it is quite common that different parts of an organisation use multiple tools to solve one single thing: namely recruitment. This is not necessary. Many ATS's also require that you adjust your recruitment procedure to fit the way that the system is built. The ATS you use should be able to adjust the way it works to your recruitment procedure, and not the other way around, while still remaining user-friendly.

Based on more than ten years of experience working with faculty and staff recruitment software for higher education, we conducted a survey with help from a university in the USA, to find the most important key features necessary for a faculty recruitment ATS.

**The findings have resulted in five key features to look for when acquiring a new ATS for faculty recruitment.**

# FEATURE 1: COLLABORATION TOOLS

There are often several different people involved in a faculty recruitment process. A few examples of members in a hiring process are specialists within Human Resources, hiring managers such as the head of a faculty, experts or other search committee members. To ensure that you can work together effectively from A to Z, it is crucial that the ATS you choose for your organisation offers the right collaboration tools. The ATS you choose should support efficient collaboration tools, from the decision that you are looking for a new candidate, to reviewing the applications, and to pursue with the selection.

To ensure that the hiring process runs smoothly, there are a few different key collaboration functionalities to look out for:

- **Clear overview of the hiring process, applicants, evaluations, and decision-making:**
  - What has been done?
  - What is the current status?
  - What is the next step?
- **Built-in messaging system to communicate with both colleagues and candidates**
- **Customizable application form with different types of questions to receive all necessary materials from applicants**
- **User-friendly functionality for objective scoring/ evaluation of applications for experts and search committees:**
  - Comments
  - Scores
  - Marks
  - Uploading files
- **Automatic notifications when tasks are performed, and applications are sent in**

Without the right collaboration tools that support your hiring activities, your hiring process will be less efficient, and include more steps and manual activities. Therefore, it is important to consider which collaboration tools you need in your ATS.



## FEATURE 2: STREAM-LINED JOB POSTING

Finding the right candidates and knowing exactly where to find them can be challenging. After writing the description of the position you are looking to fill, you should consider how you can reach the candidates that you are looking for. Here are some questions for the recruitment team to discuss to get the thought process going:

- **Are there any professional networks, regular job boards and academic job boards suitable for this particular position?**
- **Which channels have you previously tried posting on and which ones worked?**
- **How much time does it take you to post your job ad in different channels?**
- **Is access to other channels also necessary?**

From our experience, many universities and colleges have not been able to post job ads on a variety of channels because their ATS simply does not offer it. On top of that, posting a job ad directly through a channel's own tool for job posting is very time consuming.

There are multiple professional networks, regular job boards and academic job boards that can and should be used to post jobs. An ATS should therefore offer stream-lined job posting with just a few clicks with a variety of channels to choose from that help you get in touch with the right candidate. The solution you choose should also offer metrics showing the performance of these different channels, so you know which ones to invest in and get a higher ROI.



## FEATURE 3: CUSTOMIZABLE WORKFLOWS

As mentioned previously, universities and colleges often have long hiring processes that include several steps and many stakeholders, i.e. tenure track. Many ATS's on the market right now do not offer the possibility to customize the workflow in the system and only serve merely as a CV database. Some systems are used to handle hiring requests via email, but do not serve as a complete tool offering support for all steps in the process.

**Examples of workflows** (hiring processes) that are important for faculty recruitment:

1. **Tenure track**
2. **Assistant/associate/full Professor**
3. **Administrative and technical staff**
4. **T/A**
5. **PhD**

An ATS should not be a bottleneck that cannot handle every step in the process. It should offer you the opportunity to include as many of the steps in your hiring process as possible in one single system. Of course, not all hiring procedures require many steps and therefore workflows should be able to be customized for different types of positions. An administrative staff hiring process is usually not handled by a large search committee, like a professor hiring process will require.

If you want to cut down on the number of systems and decrease the number of manual steps in the hiring process, customizable workflows is a key feature that you should look for in your ATS for faculty recruitment.

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*Ease of use is a key feature to consider when choosing your ATS for faculty recruitment.*

## FEATURE 4: EASE OF USE

Some organisations make the mistake of focusing on acquiring a new ATS with certain functions and forget to take the ease of use into consideration. Functions that you need for your hiring activities are of course very important but if the system is not user-friendly, few people will actually use the full capacity of the ATS. With many different people involved, you must think about each of these individuals: what role do they play, how does the system support their role, and how much training is required to use the ATS for them to do their job?

An ATS that lacks user-friendliness might create more unnecessary work for the core recruitment team when the goal of using an ATS is to decrease the amount of unnecessary work and make it possible to decentralize recruitment tasks. According to TechTerms.com, user-friendliness means that the software is not difficult to learn and understand. This not only goes for the employee side of the ATS, but also for the candidates that are using the tool to apply for a position.

The following four aspects are often found in interfaces that are user-friendly:

- 1. Simple:** A straightforward interface that provides quick access to key features and/or commands.
- 2. Clean:** A well-organized interface in which it is easy to find tools and options.
- 3. Intuitive:** An interface that makes sense to the average user that requires minimal explanation of how to use the interface.
- 4. Reliable:** An interface that is reliable, so it does not cause frustration on the user's end.

The trick for ATS's to master this, is offering complex and advanced functionality while remaining simple, clean, intuitive, and reliable. If the solution is user-friendly, less support is required to do your job. If you do find yourself in situations where support is required, do not forget to ask the supplier what kind of support they offer. High quality support on time is key when you are focusing on doing your job.



## FEATURE 5: DATA SECURITY AND PRIVACY

Recruitment involves large amounts of (personal) data that you should always have access to. To protect this data from unauthorized parties and to make sure that you properly handle and store personal information, you should look for an ATS supplier who has sufficient methods and techniques in place to ensure information security and follow regulations and legislation.

Information security can be split into two categories: data privacy and data security. Data privacy is about making sure that personal information is handled, processed, stored, and used properly. Privacy is a human right in many countries and in some parts of the world, such as Europe, there are regulations in place to ensure data privacy (GDPR). Data security are the methods to protect and safeguard data from unauthorized access, attacks, or exploitation to ensure, for instance, data privacy.

What should you look for in an ATS supplier?

- **Certifications according to information security standards such as i.e. ISO 27001\***
- **Clear privacy policies**
- **Preferably few third-party tools necessary to use the system**
- **Servers with a high level of security (with their own certifications)**
- **Continuous testing of new code and penetration testing**

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\* **ISO/IEC 27001** is an international standard for information security management systems. An ISO 27001 certification shows that the supplier has policies and procedures in place to continually assess risks and improve themselves. It usually also means that the supplier's employees are well-informed about information security.

# CONCLUSION

**Universities and colleges have unique hiring processes with many different stakeholders and decisions to make.** Due to the complexity, it is not easy to know what features to look for when searching for your next ATS. Analyzing your own hiring processes and its differences and similarities will help identify what you need. Also ask yourself the following questions: “How much of my hiring process is efficient today, and what do I require to make it more efficient?”.

Key features to look for when acquiring a new ATS that will support your hiring processes and make you more efficient are; i) ***various collaboration tools***, ii) ***stream-lined job posting***, and iii) ***customizable workflows for different types of positions***. Other key features are the iv) ***ease of use of the system***, and v) ***an adequate way of handling data security and privacy***.

Ease of use is an aspect that has a bigger effect on the usability of the system than expected. The users' experiences, need for support and training required to use the system are very much dependent on user-friendliness.





Varbi was founded in 2007, developing a modern and user-friendly software-as-a-service ATS solution focusing on the recruitment process including customizable workflows, academic job board integrations and social media functionality. Varbi has become one of the leading ATS providers in the Nordics with special focus on faculty recruitment. Varbi's ATS is a test-winning comprehensive and impressive applicant tracking system with functionality to handle government, enterprise, and faculty recruitment clients all over the world. Among Varbi university clients you will find Karolinska Institute, Lund University, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, and Uppsala University.

To learn more about how Varbi helps universities and colleges digitize their recruitment process, find customer stories and watch webinars here [www.varbi.com](http://www.varbi.com).

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