**Guidance on Pre-Interview Social Occasions for Academic and Professional Services Posts**

1. Recruitment and selection of the best possible candidates is critical to the delivery of excellence in education and research. Across academic departments and professional services sections, a wide range of practices are currently used to gather knowledge about candidates, including the use of social events such as drinks receptions and dinners which may also serve as an opportunity for applicants to get a better sense of the department/section. The University has received a number of complaints from applicants about the status of these events and this guidance aims to ensure that the risks associated with social events are reduced and that the University is transparent and fair in relation to the use of these types events.

**Pre-interview social occasions**

2. The use of pre-interview social occasions such as evening dinners and drinks receptions should not form part of the formal interview process. However, they can be used as a means for candidates to meet potential colleagues and gain information about the work of the department/section. If departments/sections want to hold pre-interview social events, candidates will be informed in their invitation to interview that their attendance at these events is entirely optional and that no information will be taken into consideration as part of the interview process, nor will it be referred to during the formal stages of selection. It is the responsibility of the chair of an interview panel to ensure this is the case.

3. To avoid the possibility of candidates inferring unfair treatment the following principles should be followed:

1. Where social occasions are used, candidates should not meet each other.
2. Care should be given to the timing of events, which may make attendance or the type of event inappropriate, for example applicants with caring responsibilities or certain religious beliefs.
3. Some candidates might prefer not to take up the opportunity to attend a social occasion for personal reasons. In addition to candidates being informed in their invitation to interview that their attendance at these events is entirely optional and that no information will be taken into consideration as part of the interview process, HoD/HoS should also make clear that this will not affect their application and a note to this effect should be made on the paperwork returned to HR.
4. Departments/sections should be careful to ensure that candidates known to one or more members of the department and/or interview panel are not given preferential treatment compared with other candidates. The interview decision paperwork completed after the formal interview should clearly state the rationale for appointing the successful candidate as well as for declining those who are unsuccessful. This will help to demonstrate that a fair process has been followed. Any perceived conflicts of interest should be declared to the chair of the interview panel.
5. Knowledge of an applicant and/or a close working relationship should not preclude membership of a member of staff on an interview panel but should be declared to the chair.
6. Attendees from departments/sections should be briefed before the social event that the aim of the occasion is to meet potential colleagues and gain information about the work of the department/section and that it does not form a part of the interview process.
7. If information comes to light which could affect a candidate’s continuation in the process, the attendee from the department/section should make arrangements to discuss this confidentially with the chair of the interview panel only who should seek advice from HR as appropriate.
8. Chairs of interview panels/HoDs/HoSs should be ready to demonstrate how they have ensured these principles have been taken into account.

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