

Recruitment and selection equality and diversity

Handbook and Guidance

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About this handbook

This Recruitment and Selection Handbook has been designed to support the Recruitment and Selection Training Courses provided by Human Resources.

Everyone involved in the recruitment and selection of staff has a responsibility to ensure that candidates are treated fairly and that decisions are made objectively. The guidance contained in this booklet has been developed to help you recruit the right person to the right job in a fair and transparent way. The Handbook will encourage you to:

- Promote good practice in all aspects of recruitment;
- Promote equality and diversity;
- Comply with legislation; and
- Act in accordance with the University's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Throughout the booklet you will notice sections entitled 'Good Practice'. At these points, good practice advice will be given regarding equality and diversity in that particular area.

The Human Resources Section will support you in the recruitment process and any queries regarding the process should be directed to your link Recruitment Officer.

You may also find information on the Human Resources website: www.essex.ac.uk/personnel/ and the Equality and Diversity website: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/eo/>

We hope that you will find the information useful.

Human Resources
Equality and Diversity
2010

Part 1

Policy and legislation

Equality and Diversity in Recruitment

Policy statement on equality and diversity

The University of Essex recognises the value of diversity and is committed to equality of opportunity within the University. It therefore aims to create the conditions whereby students and staff are treated with dignity and respect and solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, regardless of, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, political beliefs and affiliations, family circumstances or other irrelevant distinction.

Training is available for all staff involved in the recruitment process and no member of staff must undertake to chair a recruitment panel without having attended such training.

As far as is reasonably practical HR staff, heads of departments, heads of sections and other employees who come into contact with job applicants must be trained in the provisions relevant to their responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity, including the provisions that it is unlawful to instruct or put pressure on others to discriminate.

Staff responsible for shortlisting, interviewing and selecting candidates should also be clearly informed of the selection criteria and of the need for their consistent application

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of any of the following protected characteristics:

- age,
- disability,
- gender reassignment,
- marriage and civil partnership,
- pregnancy and maternity,
- race,
- religion or belief,
- sex,
- sexual orientation.

Under the Equality Act the University has the duty to:

- promote good relations;
- eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- monitor recruitment practices;
- promote equality of opportunity;
- eliminate harassment

What is discrimination?

Unjustifiable and unlawful discrimination takes place when an individual or a group of people is treated less favourably than others on the grounds of a protected characteristic. Discrimination may occur as a result of prejudice, misconception and stereotyping, which may prevent the proper consideration of an individual's talent, skills, ability, potential and experience. It can be direct, indirect, by perception, by association, intentional or unintentional. We must avoid such discrimination when recruiting staff whether intentional or unintentional.

Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when a person has been treated less favourably than others on the grounds of his/her protected characteristic.

Intentions and motives are irrelevant in cases of direct discrimination, because it is the effects of the action that count, not the intention behind it. Harassment and victimisation are also types of direct discrimination.

Example:

- not selecting applicants because of their protected characteristic rather than because they don't meet the criteria;
- recruiting a male applicant to a position rather than a more appropriately qualified woman;
- not appointing the candidate who best meets all the criteria because they have a disability.

Indirect discrimination

Indirect recruitment occurs when an employer treats all job applicants in the same way, whatever their protected characteristics but the result of the treatment is that applicants of a particular group may be disadvantaged. It is not the employer's intention to discriminate but the effect of the treatment is discriminatory.

Example:

Applying an unjustifiable requirement or condition, which although applied equally to all, members of a particular group may not be able to comply such as:

- dress codes requiring women to wear knee length skirts could indirectly discriminate against women from some cultural or religious groups who would not feel able to dress in this way or women with certain disabilities would not feel able to comply;
- unnecessary height requirements, which state that employees in some roles have to be six feet tall could discriminate against women, members of some ethnic groups, or people with certain disabilities who would not be able to meet the requirement.

Discrimination by association

Could occur if for example:

An internal candidate is not selected because they are known to associate with people who have a protected characteristic irrespective of whether the candidate has the protected characteristic or not.

Discrimination by perception

Could occur if:

An employer decides not to recruit a female applicant because they believe she is pregnant irrespective of whether she is pregnant or not.

Discrimination by victimisation

Could occur if:

An internal candidate is not selected or is treated detrimentally because they have made a complaint about discrimination or have given evidence relating to such a complaint even if it had no relevance to the recruitment process.

Genuine occupational requirements

There are a few situations in which it is lawful to recruit people on the grounds of a protected characteristic.

Examples:

- authenticity is required e.g. acting, modelling or where there is a “special ambience” e.g. Chinese/Indian Restaurants etc;
- work that will take place in a single sex institution or might involve intimate services;
- where the law requires the person to be of a particular sex;
- where a person is required to carry out certain duties that require them to be members of a particular religion.

Liability

Those involved in recruitment are legally responsible, together with the University, for ensuring adherence to the above mentioned legislation. However, if the University has taken all reasonable steps to prevent its staff discriminating, and this still occurs, then the individual who discriminates is personally liable, possibly for a substantial fine. Changes in the burden of proof mean that the University and individuals involved would have to prove that discrimination has not taken place.

If the University had to defend itself at an Employment Tribunal or in the Civil Courts, the onus would be on the University to prove that:

- the selected person/s most suitably conformed to the “genuine requirements” of the post;
- the candidate was not discriminated against, either directly or indirectly, on the basis of any protected characteristic listed in the Equality Act 2010.

The University would be required to produce:

- a set of objective criteria against which all candidates were measured at the shortlisting and interview stage;
- any relevant documents, including interview notes and shortlisting grids demonstrating the link between reasons for rejection and the person specification.

Ignorance of the law is no defence. Where an Employment Tribunal is satisfied that a complaint is well founded, it can:

- make an order declaring the complainants rights;
- award compensation;
- recommend action to be taken within a specific period by the discriminating organisation to put matters right.

Part 2

Recruitment and Selection in
employment

Recruitment into posts of 6 months or longer is managed centrally from Human Resources. Each Department, Section, Centre, Institute and School has a link Recruitment Team made up of a Recruitment Officer and Recruitment Assistant whose aim is to provide help, support and guidance throughout the recruitment process.

We recommend that any member of staff planning to undertake a recruitment campaign contact their link Recruitment Officer as early as possible to discuss the appropriate methodology and agree timescales etc.

The Job Description and Person Specification

The job description and the person specification are fundamental elements of the recruitment and selection process. Together they help to avoid unlawful discrimination and provide the basis for the advertisement, the criteria to be used when shortlisting, the structure of the interview, questioning and ultimately the selection of the successful candidate.

The Job Description:

The purpose of the job description is to give potential applicants an accurate account of the main duties and responsibilities of the post. It is a tool that individuals will use to assess their ability to perform the job and help them to decide if they wish to apply for the post

The job description should describe the job as concisely as possible by identifying the duties of the post. Care should be taken to ensure that the job is reflected accurately, and that any duties listed are up to date. If the role necessitates working in confined spaces, spend long periods standing, handling heavy objects, or climbing ladders or stairs for example, explain this and describe the environment. That way candidates can determine if they can meet these requirements (with reasonable adjustments if necessary). It is good practice to review the job description each time a post is to be advertised, as this will highlight whether the duties have changed

Before preparing the job description, it is worth taking the time to ask some basic questions about the post such as:

- Is this a new job?
- What do you want the postholder to do?
- Have things changed since you last appointed, e.g. technology, qualifications?
- Does the job have to be full or part time? Could job-sharing be a possibility?

Answers to these questions should help to clarify the actual requirements of the job and how it fits into the rest of the Department/Section. Significant changes, however, may require the post to be re-evaluated and could affect other postholders. New posts must be job-evaluated under HERA (Higher Education Role Analysis) before recruitment commences and the link HR Manager can assist with this.

The job description may include:

- Job title and grade of post;
- Whether the post is permanent or temporary, full-time or part-time;
- Which Section/Department/Campus the post is located in;
- The purpose of the job and the main duties of the role holder;
- Relationships, accountability and responsibilities;
- Who the postholder will be responsible to/report to on a day to day basis.

The Person Specification:

The person specification is a separate document that sets out the 'essential' and 'desirable' characteristics the postholder needs in order to perform the duties of the job and must be closely linked with the job description. Here the emphasis is on the 'attributes' that are required from the postholder and it is essential that you get it right. For example failure to properly consider the skillset necessary to successfully appoint to a Research Officer post could result in a poor applicant pool and the need to re-advertise.

Essential/Desirable experience, skills, knowledge and abilities:

When constructing a person specification you will need to decide whether the criteria are 'essential' or 'desirable':

- **Essential criteria** – this is the minimum you will accept when the person starts work. Do not include anything you would be prepared to do without on day one. Candidates must demonstrate in their application that they meet the essential criteria in order to be shortlisted.
- **Desirable criteria** – someone could do the job without these skills and attributes but they would be useful, or they are necessary for the job but not from day one. A person could acquire these after they have been appointed (e.g through training). The desirable criteria can be used to reduce the shortlist if a large number of candidates satisfy the essential criteria so you may wish to list these in priority order.

Once the criteria have been established and the post advertised, they cannot be changed. An appointment panel should not deviate from the person specification during the selection process, as adding further criteria at a later stage could lead to claims of discrimination.

Care should be taken in wording the criteria. If they are too narrow there is a danger that there could only be a few applicants. However, if they are too broad you could attract too many applicants, making the shortlisting process difficult and time consuming.

The person specification should be referred to at each of the following stages of the recruitment process:

- **Advertising** – to attract the right candidate
- **Shortlisting** - to assess whether candidates meet the 'essential' skills, experience and attributes to enable them to undertake the role.
- **Interviewing** - questions should relate to the contents of the person specification and help the interview panel assess whether candidates have the required experience, skills and attributes for the role.

A person specification is essential if the recruitment and selection is to be undertaken lawfully and in accordance with the University's Equality Policy. Failure to use the person specification makes it very difficult to justify selection criteria in the event of a complaint or challenge. As such, criteria included in the person specification must be genuinely necessary for the performance of the job.

Good Practice – Designing the job description and person specification:

It is important when developing the job description and person specification that equality and diversity issues are considered. Below is a list of issues you may wish to consider:

- ❖ It is often easy to replace a full-time post with another full-time post without considering flexible working (e.g. job share arrangements). Could flexible working arrangements and/or part time working be supported as this may help to attract a wider pool of skilled applicants for the post.
- ❖ Any job description should avoid words which imply that most of the people doing the job are predominantly of one gender.
- ❖ The inclusion of unnecessary or marginal requirements should be avoided in order to avoid discriminating people with disabilities, e.g. a driving licence. Stating instead that 'applicants must be willing to travel' would still indicate that this is a requirement of the job. However, this does not specify how this should be done and therefore will not exclude people who cannot drive because of a disability.
- ❖ Avoid using words such as 'active and energetic' when the job is a sedentary one. This requirement is both irrelevant and potentially discriminatory as it could exclude some disabled people who are less mobile.
- ❖ Ensure ageist language is not used. Phrases like 'applicants should be 25-35 years of age', 'young graduates', 'bright young thing', 'mature person' are discriminatory. Likewise, a requirement that someone must possess a certain qualification might deter an older applicant who either does not have any proper paper based qualifications or has out of date qualifications. Furthermore, specifying the number of years' experience needed for a particular post may deter younger applicants and could lead to claims of age discrimination. Rather than focusing on the number of years experience needed, look at the skills which are actually required for the job.
- ❖ Keep the required qualifications to a realistic minimum and say that equivalent qualifications (e.g from different educational systems) will be accepted.
- ❖ Don't fall into the prejudice trap: younger people may be perceived to be irresponsible, immature and ill-mannered, while their older colleagues could be seen as inflexible, slow learners and unable to adapt to change. Both sets of perceptions are stereotypes.
- ❖ Avoid attributes that could be seen as applicable to everyone (e.g. friendly and outgoing). Instead, try to express them in a way that is job related (e.g. able to establish a good rapport with students).
- ❖ The words used should be clear and not open to misinterpretation. They should also be specific (e.g. rather than stating 'good communication skills', it is better to specify exactly what is required in the post, such as 'be able to prepare and deliver presentations to small groups' or 'liaison with staff and students via phone, email and in person').
- ❖ When outlining particular knowledge the postholder must have, try to be as specific as you can. For example, do you require an 'awareness' of something, or do you need the person to have demonstrable practical experience.
- ❖ If the role is physical in nature, eg standing for long periods, climbing ladders/stairs; lifting heavy objects, working in confined spaces – explain this so that candidates can determine if they can meet these requirements (with reasonable adjustments if necessary).
- ❖ Do not use gender specific terms such as 'manageress' or 'forman'.

Advertising:

Any post which is for six months duration or more must be advertised. The only exception is for those research posts where funding has been allocated for a named individual. This requirement may be varied only with the express permission of the Director of Human Resources.

Methods of Advertising:

It is important to consider carefully where, and in what format, the vacancy will be advertised and your Recruitment Officer can advise on the most effective method for the particular vacancy. The main options available are listed below but it is useful to note that over 60% of applicants prefer to search for jobs online. It is important to draw applications from as wide a pool as possible and you should consider using specialist press or websites if minority groups are under-represented.

National and local newspapers:

- Local press for Colchester - Essex County Standard / Evening
- National press – The Guardian or THE
- Specialist journals (e.g. Nature/ the Economist)

The Web:

- University website – all posts are advertised on the University website by the Recruitment Team (<http://jobs.essex.ac.uk>)
- www.jobs.ac.uk – academic, professional and research posts are advertised on this external website free of charge.
- Other external websites - jobsgopublic.co.uk, charityjobs.co.uk, [jobsforphilosophers](http://jobsforphilosophers.com), [Guardianjobs](http://guardianjobs.com), etc

The Job Centre:

Local jobs can be advertised with the Job Centre which provides nationwide coverage. **Note:** For Academic or Research posts where candidates may require a work permit or Certificate or Sponsorship, jobs must be advertised with the Job Centre for a minimum of 4 weeks.

The Careers Service

The Careers Service helps our students find part-time, temporary or casual work at the University or in the local community through their JobsOnline service. This can help students with financial difficulties to complete their studies.

Internal recruitment:

All jobs are circulated internally by the Recruitment Team (via notice boards). This provides opportunities for development and promotion of existing employees and addresses concerns of allegations of favouritism.

Advertising Costs:

For University funded posts, we will normally cover the cost of one external advertisement – either in print or online. Where more than one publication or website has been requested, the additional advert (s) must be funded by the Department/Section (a cost code must be supplied to your Recruitment Officer before the advertising can go ahead). The central budget will not fund the cost of advertising for non-university funded posts (e.g. advertising for staff employed on research grants).

Designing the Advertisement:

As the advertisement is the first thing a potential employee will see, it needs to attract them and generate enough interest for them to make further enquiries and submit an application.

The job description and person specification form the basis of the advert.

The advert should contain the following information:

Job Title

The job title is the first thing that most people will notice in the advert. Think about the reader – is the job title appropriate for the job eg. Administrative Assistant rather than Secretary, if part-time, do you say so?

Job Description

Advertising in newspapers and journals is expensive and many job hunters now prefer to use online job-boards and websites to search for jobs.

Were you plan to advertise in print, you should keep the text to one paragraph and use it to generate interest rather than describe the whole job. Good adverts 'hook' interested individuals and encourage them to visit the University website where they can find out more about not only the job but about Essex and the benefits of working here.

The opening lines of the advert should encourage potential applicants to read on and could focus on the main duties of the job, information about the Department/Section or a particular project or any training or development opportunities. Essential skills may also be mentioned if particularly important.

When using websites the above also applies, although there is generally more flexibility about how much information you provide about the job. Your Recruitment Officer can help with this.

Salary/Duration/Hours of Work

- We will normally advertise the salary scale (excluding any discretionary points) but this can be varied in consultation with your Recruitment Officer. For example providing an hourly rate for manual or support roles, or a fixed spine point for a grant funded research appointment.
- If the position is for a fixed term or temporary contract, please say so.
- Please denote the hours of work if part-time. If you require specific days of the week, or are able to be flexible, say so.

Closing Date

Be realistic and allow candidates at least two weekends to put together their applications. A minimum of two weeks after the date of publication is recommended for posts being advertised in the local press, and three weeks is normal for posts in the national press. This allows enough time for the advert to reach a reasonably wide audience and to ensure that candidates have sufficient time to make an on-line application. Please note that Home Office regulations require a four week advertising period where academic and research posts might attract an international candidate requiring a work permit.

It is a good idea to consider the following before drafting the advert:

- The advertisement is the first impression potential applicants get of the University;
- For reasons of cost and readability the main principle is to keep the advertisement concise and to avoid repetition;

- The aim is to attract interest from individuals;
- It is unnecessary to include lengthy descriptions about the Department/ Section or extensive detail about what the post involves as this information is available on our website. The advert should be used to attract people to find out more about the job;
- The advertisement should be structured so that it is clear, eye-catching and written in plain English (e.g. avoiding acronyms).
- Are particular minority groups under-represented at the particular level of the appointment – for example women or ethnic minorities at Professorial level. If so, do you want to highlight this with a strapline indicating that the University would welcome applications from under-represented groups?

Good Practice – writing job adverts

Anti-discrimination law covers the conduct of writing advertisements and must be adhered to if costly legal actions are to be avoided. When drafting a job advert consider the following:

- ❖ Avoid using initials, acronyms or abbreviations without explaining their meaning;
- ❖ Make clear, if appropriate, that job-sharing or part-time working is an option;
- ❖ Take care not to use language that would exclude or discourage women, people with disabilities or other minority groups;
- ❖ Consider using positive action (e.g. advertise in the minority press);
- ❖ Make clear, where appropriate, that previous experience is unnecessary or training can be given;
- ❖ Watch out for words like ‘groundsman’, ‘storeman’ etc;
- ❖ Make sure that advertisements for jobs previously done by one gender (e.g. secretary/electrician) do not indicate a preference;
- ❖ Watch out for words like ‘he’ ‘she’ etc. Instead use ‘he/she’, ‘her/him’, ‘the appointee’ consistently throughout the advert;
- ❖ Make sure that any photographs, images or other graphics do not reinforce stereotypes.

Recruitment Pack

Once the applicant's attention has been attracted by the advertisement, the Recruitment Pack provides the candidate with information about the post.

The Recruitment Pack includes:

- A cover sheet providing information about making an application
- The Job Description
- The Person Specification
- University profile
- Department/Section/Research Project profile – this is an opportunity to provide additional information about the role, the section, details of a research project, specific hours of work or other supporting information.
- Other information – you may also wish to include links to relevant websites, any named contact for an informal discussion about the role and any special information about the recruitment process such as the requirement to make a presentation or provide a portfolio of work at interview.

An example of the current layout can be found on the HR website.

The Recruitment Pack is published on the university recruitment site but there is an opportunity to attach other documents, such as a Department Brochure, University strategy or additional information relating to a research project. These should be in PDF format and provided to your link Recruitment Officer along with your recruitment pack document.

Positive action and positive discrimination

Positive action provides a way of encouraging applicants from a particular group, (e.g. women or members of minority ethnic groups) to apply for specific job vacancies where that group is under-represented in that area of work.

For example:

- A statement could be included in an advertisement, making it clear that applications from under-represented groups are particularly welcome.
- Advertising in minority press.
- Holding events to give individuals from under-represented groups a feel for the post and an understanding of the University. These events may encourage applications from people who may otherwise not have considered doing so.

Although positive action to “level the playing-field” by encouraging applications is lawful, applicants must subsequently be selected on merit. Choosing applicants on the grounds of their gender or race is positive discrimination and is unlawful.

Positive action can be used at all stages of the recruitment and selection process. However, please consult with your Recruitment Officer before doing so.

The application process:

All applications are handled by the relevant Recruitment Team. Candidates are asked to make their applications on-line using the University web-based recruitment site, known as 'iGRasp'. However, should an individual be unable to do so for reasons of disability or other relevant factor, they will be provided with an identical paper application which, when completed and returned, will be scanned into the recruitment site.

In addition to the Job Pack, additional information or documents (eg strategy paper, or Department Newsletter) can be attached to the job page on our website, providing further background and information for applicants.

To ensure consistency of approach, applicants are asked to provide their personal information in a specified format. Depending on the type of post, they will then be asked to complete either an 'Application Form' or attach a CV and covering letter. They may also be asked to provide a list of published work or other documents. Applicants are specifically asked to relate their experience and skills to the duties and essential and desirable criteria for the post.

In addition, our iGRasp online application system provides the opportunity to ask candidates to answer job-related questions as part of the application process. These are tailored to each job and can be helpful in assessing candidate's knowledge and skills as an aid to shortlisting – particularly where large numbers of applicants are anticipated. If there are specific and essential technical requirements for the post, it is also possible to 'screen out' candidates who cannot meet that criteria. Your Recruitment Officer can provide advice.

Remember that all information provided by candidates falls within the Data Protection Act, and should be treated in strict confidence and not shared with anyone outside the selection committee/panel without the express agreement of the Recruitment Officer.

Application process:

- Candidates are asked to complete and submit their applications on-line by the closing date (the job is automatically removed from the site at 1 minute past midnight the following day).
- The Chair of the selection/shortlisting panel will be provided with on-line 'manager' access once the job is posted on the University website. The chair can nominate other members of the shortlisting panel to be given similar permission.
- At the closing date the Recruitment Team will notify the chair of the panel that the post is closed and that formal shortlisting may begin.

Shortlisting and Interviewing:

Shortlisting:

Shortlisting is the stage in the selection process during which all applicants are considered against the essential and desirable criteria for the post. The Chair of the interview panel is responsible for the fair and lawful conduct of the shortlisting and interview process and must have attended University Recruitment and Selection training.

If members of the shortlisting panel have had on-line access to applications prior to the closing date, the Chair must ensure that all applicants are considered again at the same time post closing. It is recommended that the Chair determine whether or not panel members have attended Recruitment & Selection training and, if not, arrangements are made for them to do so. Training courses and briefings are held termly and upcoming dates can be found on the Learning and Development website under their Events Calendar. A member of the Recruitment Team may be available to provide one-to-one or group training if necessary, but you are encouraged to use the generic courses where possible.

Shortlisting should be carried out by a minimum of two people. Try to ensure, as far as possible, that those people who are involved in the shortlisting are on the interview panel. The essential and desirable criteria should be used to select and reject candidates and a record of decisions should be made. A simple matrix may be helpful in the process. The chair must make a record of the reasons for shortlisting or rejecting candidates and a Grid will be provided for this purpose.

Two Ticks – positive about disabled people: Interview Guarantee Scheme

The University is a diverse community and is committed to equality of opportunity, and the "Two Ticks" scheme is a good way of publicising that fact. We received Two Ticks accreditation in 2008 and have made a commitment to five principals, one of which is interviewing all applicants with a disability who meet the essential criteria on a person specification and considering them on their abilities.

Candidates can request consideration under the Two Ticks scheme and the Recruitment Team will provide the names of any such candidates to the chair of the shortlisting panel following the closing date. The chair must ensure proper consideration is given to Two Ticks candidates, who must be shortlisted if they meet the essential criteria for the job. Further information about the scheme is available on the Equality & Diversity website:

http://www.essex.ac.uk/eo/disability/two_ticks_disability_symbol.htm

Interviewing:

The interview is the opportunity for the selection panel or committee to meet the candidates and to discuss their experience and skills. It is important to remember that the interview is a two way process and, whether successful or not, each candidate will take away with them an impression of the University.

Members of the interview panel/committee should ensure that questions are relevant to the experience, aptitude and skills required to do the job. As such, the questions should be designed to allow panel members to judge a candidate's ability to perform the duties as outlined in the job description and person specification.

All panel members should have made themselves familiar with the job and the applicants in advance of the interview.

General Interview guidance:

- Interviews are not interrogations and are not conducted solely for the benefit of the interviewer(s). They involve a two-way exchange and it is important that the interviewee is allowed ample opportunity to gather information or express opinions;
- Base decisions on facts rather than intuition;
- Avoid the stereotyping of “good candidates” by comparison with previous job-holders;
- Use the essential and desirable criteria in selection;
- Avoid selecting the candidate who will best “fit in” – this may lead to “cloning” and the perpetuation of current profiles.
- Conduct interviews in a systematic and structured way. The aim is to gather evidence about how each candidate meets the criteria outlined in the Person Specification.
- Candidates should be asked the same ‘core’ questions, which test their skills and abilities against the criteria. However the questions may differ where the panel deems it appropriate to probe candidates for further information/clarification.
- Under the Equality Act 2010 asking about the health of a job applicant is prohibited before an offer of employment is made, and therefore not permitted at interview.
- It is important that where internal candidates are being considered alongside external candidates nothing is done which gives either an advantage or a disadvantage, or which could give the appearance of doing so. Particular care must be exercised where a candidate is known to members of the interview panel

Before

- Plan the interviews for an appropriate time and place – ensure that the venue is private and without interruptions. If a candidate has indicated a disability and asked for adjustments to be made to the recruitment process, the Recruitment Officer will discuss this with you. Notify your Recruitment Team of any tests, presentations etc. well in advance;
- Allow enough time between interviews for breaks and, at the end of the interviews, time for a full review;
- Familiarise yourself with the job description;
- Read the application form /CV and any supporting documents;
- The interview panel/committee should meet in advance of the interviews to agree the list of questions.

During

- Start on time;
- Start with a welcome;
- Seek to establish rapport;
- Explain the purpose of the interview and the stage in the selection process;
- Provide brief information on the nature of the job and Department/Section;
- Ask relevant questions (see next section);
- Allow the applicant to do the majority of the talking;
- Listen actively;

- Do not seek to fill silences (you may discourage the candidate from providing more information);
- Check gaps, omissions, or contradictions;
- Check claims relating to level and type of experience;
- Use a logical sequence of questions and provide links between sections;
- Allow sufficient time for the applicant's questions;
- Take brief notes;
- Keep control of the content and timing;
- Summarise;
- Close on a positive note – thank the candidate and confirm the next stage of the process/when they are likely to know the outcome.

Afterwards

- Compare the information gained about the applicant with the essential and desirable criteria;
- Allow each member of the interview panel to have an input into the final decision;
- Make a record of the panel's decisions (this may be required should candidates request feedback or challenge your decision).
- Follow up the interview with the appropriate documentation, including a completed interview decision grid, to the Recruitment Officer.

Types of interview questions:

Open:

These type of questions are used to encourage full responses (e.g. 'Tell me about ...' 'how did you organise....')

Probing:

These type of questions are used to follow up points raised in answer to open questions and to drill down to uncover important details. (e.g. What did you do exactly; Give me an example of; Explain what you mean by ...). Probing questions include situational questions to elicit practical experience or judgement and 'contrary evidence' questions to check an assumption made about the candidate by seeking evidence to the contrary.

Closed:

These type of questions normally demand a 'yes' or 'no' response, and should only be used for clarification or control (e.g. bringing a line of questioning to its conclusion).

Behavioural:

Behavioural questions ask the candidate to describe how they handled a real situation in the past and encourage them to give concrete examples of how they applied their skills or knowledge. For example: 'Tell us about a time when you had to prioritise a number of important tasks.'

The following types of questions should generally be avoided or used sparingly:

Hypothetical:

Asking an interviewee how they would handle an imaginary situation given a certain set of circumstances may reveal how well they can think on their feet but will not tell you how they will actually perform. Therefore you may find it helpful to also seek evidence from the past as a more reliable predictor of future behaviour.

Leading:

e.g. 'You are fully trained in the use of an XYZ Personnel Information System, aren't you?' 'Obviously you found that a rewarding experience?' (The candidate knows exactly the answer you are looking for).

Multiple:

e.g. 'Tell us about your educational background, your career history to date and your strengths and weaknesses'. By the time the candidate has finished telling you about their educational qualifications, you will probably both have forgotten what else you asked. Further, a clever candidate will undoubtedly tell you about his or her strengths but ignore the issue of weaknesses.

If you do fall into either of the above traps, it is relatively easy to rectify your mistake by asking additional probing questions. Keeping brief notes, both of the candidate's responses and the further questions that you feel it necessary to ask, will help you here.

Good Practice: shortlisting and interviewing

- ❖ The shortlisting and interviewing process must be managed in a secure and confidential manner.
- ❖ It is essential that for all jobs a minimum of two people should be involved in shortlisting and interviewing to avoid the potential for intentional or unintentional unfair discrimination.
- ❖ Include a gender mix and members of under-represented groups where possible. You may wish to consider inviting other staff from outside the Department/Section to join selection panels/committees to fulfil this criterion.
- ❖ Consider applicants against the job description and the essential and desirable criteria for the post. Remember Two Ticks candidates should be considered against the essential criteria only.
- ❖ You must not change the criteria during the recruitment process. If you find something has been missed, best practice would be to start again from the beginning.
- ❖ Conduct the interview in accordance with the equality and diversity policy and code of practice (the responsibility lies with the person leading the interview);
- ❖ Ask comparable questions of each candidate:
 - Only ask questions which relate to the requirements of the job;
 - Keep questions clear and simple, avoiding ambiguities and multiple questions;
 - Measure all applicants objectively against the agreed criteria.
- ❖ You may not ask questions about:
 - Domestic or family situation (e.g. do not ask about childcare arrangements);
 - Marital status;
 - The occupation of a spouse or partner;
 - Health/sickness or absence record;
 - Do not ask questions which may be perceived to be related to the race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability of the candidate.
- ❖ In situations where a member of the shortlisting or interviewing panel has a potential conflict of interest (e.g. personal relationship with a candidate) this matter must be raised with the Chair immediately following the closing date.
- ❖ A brief record should be kept at each stage of the appointment process, giving the reasons for the rejection of each unsuccessful candidate and the reasons supporting the selected candidate. Grids will be provided for this purpose.

Disability Issues:

The University's recruitment procedures are designed to guard against the possibility of deliberate or accidental discrimination against candidates on the basis of disability.

Do not make assumptions about the capabilities of candidates. People select the jobs they apply for, using their own awareness of their qualifications, capabilities, experience, skills etc. Only those selection criteria which are necessary to the job should be specified, and care must be taken not to use criteria which may unjustifiably place a disabled applicant at a disadvantage in the selection process.

Candidates being considered under our Two Ticks policy should not be asked questions about their disability at interview, and the Equality Act prevents employers from undertaking pre-employment health or fitness checks. Occupational Health questionnaires or fitness tests must be left until after an offer of employment has been made, and unless raised by the candidate discussions relating to reasonable adjustments cannot occur until a formal offer is made.

Arrangements can be made to meet any special requirements indicated by candidates at each stage of the process e.g. wheelchair access, and the Recruitment Team will have identified other more specialist requirements at invitation stage.

- Information about the job, e.g. Job Description, can be made available in alternative formats i.e. audio tape, Braille or large print, if requested;
- The interview venue should be accessible;
- Furniture and equipment at the interview should be arranged for the convenience of the candidates;
- Arrangements should be made to assist candidates in arriving at the interview location, if required (e.g. guides may be required for those people with visual impairment and advice on the best route may be needed for those with mobility difficulties.);
- You should contact the Equality and Diversity Officer if you need to provide a sign-language interpreter, or your Recruitment Officer for other advice

If there are any job-related special requirements identified when appointing staff, contact your Recruitment Officer or the Equality and Diversity Unit or the Occupational Health service for advice on the support available or adjustments that can be made.

Practical Tests/Presentations

Departments/Sections are increasingly using presentations and tests as part of the selection process and, whilst these methods are helpful in providing information to selection panels, it is crucial that these parts of the process are carefully managed. This is the responsibility of the Chair of the selection panel/committee (even if delegated).

The choice of test/presentation to be undertaken should follow on from the preparation of the job description and the person specification so that you do not test for skills that are not required. For example, a candidate should only be tested on their knowledge of Excel if it is an actual requirement of the post. If challenged, the University would need to show that the test used corresponded to a real need.

- Candidates should be notified in advance that they will be tested or required to make a presentation as part of the selection process. This will be done by the Recruitment Team as part of the interview invitation process.
- Consideration should also be given to the context in which the skill is measured. For example a typing test should not involve the typing of material specific to the University that could put external candidates at a disadvantage.
- The level of difficulty of the test also needs to be considered. A test that is too easy will not differentiate between applicants.
- All applicants should be tested under the same conditions (e.g. same room/equipment, timing, assistance/instructions given).

Language: Special care should be taken with people whose first language is not English, to ensure that they have understood any instructions properly.

Disabled applicants: When using tests/presentations the Chair of the selection panel or committee should ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for people with disabilities (Equality and Diversity or the Recruitment Team can help with this). The most appropriate person to give advice regarding the implications of a disability is nearly always the candidate. In the majority of cases he/she will be able to tell you the extra facilities they need for the selection procedure. (E.g. the height of a desk may need to be adjusted for a wheelchair user.)

Examples of tests which can be used:

- typing/word processing tests for clerical/administrative staff;
- setting up a laboratory test for technicians;
- observed group discussion for professional staff;
- observed presentation for academic or other staff for whom presentation skills are an essential criteria.

Informal aspects of the selection process:

If it is decided that an informal dinner, an informal visit, or a tour of the Department/Section are to be used, the Chair of the selection panel or committee should ensure that all candidates have been offered the same opportunity and are treated in the same manner. Whilst it may be felt that an internal candidate will not need to attend an informal dinner to meet members of the Department, they should still be given the opportunity to participate. It is therefore their choice if they decide not to attend.

Ensure that everyone involved is aware of the purpose of the dinner/tour/visit. If it is not part of the selection process then comments should not be fed back to panel members and information gained should not be used in the final assessment. However, if the purpose of a tour (e.g. a laboratory tour) is to identify knowledge of particular equipment or processes, then candidates must be made aware of this fact and the individual giving the tour must be clear of the questions to be asked.

Whether an informal or formal part of the recruitment process, all University staff involved must be made aware of their role and responsibilities with regard to issues of equality and diversity in recruitment. An innocently asked question about a candidate's family could end up with a challenge of discrimination should the individual be unsuccessful.

Record keeping/Feedback:

Individuals can challenge decisions at any stage of the process. We also offer feedback to shortlisted candidates, those who have applied under the Two Ticks Scheme, and internal applicants. For this reason, all decisions, and reasons for these decisions, must be recorded by the Chair of the selection committee/panel on a standard Decision Grid which is held by HR. These notes will assist the University should any complaint of discrimination be made in regard to the recruitment and selection process.

We encourage managers to provide personal feedback to internal candidates and the Recruitment Team are happy to provide advice on this aspect of recruitment.

Personal copies of application forms/CVs, shortlisting documents and interview notes should be destroyed once the recruitment campaign is complete. Alternatively, the Recruitment Team retain a JobFile for a period of 12 months, and notes may be forwarded to your Recruitment Officer for safe-keeping.

References:

In all but exceptional circumstances, references will be taken up by email or in writing by the Recruitment Team

- For Academic posts, references are taken up for the shortlisted candidates and circulated to members of the selection committee before the interview. References that arrive late will be tabled on the interview date.

- For Research and Senior Administrative posts, references may only be taken up prior to interview on request and if there is sufficient time.
- For all other posts, references are only taken up for the successful candidate.

References will be sought from the most current or recent employer or Supervisor if appropriate. Personal references are rarely of significant value, but if a candidate has no previous employment a referee from a school teacher or a University Tutor may be suitable.

Please note that questions relating to health, attendance, or absence cannot be raised until after an offer of employment has been made.

All offers of employment will be subject to the receipt of references satisfactory to the University. Should an unsatisfactory reference be received an offer may be withdrawn. A contract of employment will not normally be issued until we have received two satisfactory written references.

Monitoring:

It is important to have a monitoring system so that the University and others can assess the extent to which equality and diversity is being achieved. Universities UK (UUK) regards monitoring and review as essential to enable Universities to:

- Assess the employment situation with regard to different groups;
- Identify areas for change to policy or procedures;
- Identify the need for training;
- Measure progress.

To comply with legal responsibilities, Universities UK recommends that universities keep a comprehensive statistical record of the gender, marital status, ethnicity and any disability of applicants for posts, candidates interviewed and new appointments.

Such records show, for example, whether individuals from particular groups:

- Do not apply for employment or apply in smaller numbers than might be expected;
- Are not recruited, or are appointed/selected in significantly lower proportion than their rate of application;
- Are concentrated in certain posts, sections or departments;
- Are under-represented in jobs carrying higher pay, status or authority.

At the University of Essex, each applicant is given the opportunity to complete an Equality and Diversity in Employment Monitoring Form on-line as part of the application process. Completion of this form and the information supplied remains confidential to HR and is not used for selection purposes.

The University has set up monitoring procedures and reports annually to the Equality and Diversity Committee.

Part 3

Chairs of panels and committees

Responsibilities

Staff who chair or who are likely to chair recruitment panels or committees must have attended one of the training courses or briefings in recruitment and selection offered by Human Resources.

Responsibilities of the Chair of an interview panel or committee:

The person chairing a selection panel or committee is responsible for ensuring that all stages of the recruitment process are carried out correctly and within the requirements of the law and University policy. Whether taking direct control, or delegating aspects of the recruitment and selection process, they should ensure that:

- the preparations for recruitment are correctly carried out including the drafting of the job description/person specification and advertisements;
- the make-up of the selection panel/committee confirms to any University requirements eg. Ordinances, senior appointment Guidance etc. and contains a gender mix and, where possible, members from under-represented groups.
- that the location chosen for the interview and facilities provided meet the needs of any candidates with disabilities;
- the formatting of documents, the provision of technology and interpreters or signers meets the needs of any candidates with disabilities;
- all members of the panel or committee are briefed and prepared at both shortlisting and interview stages;
- interviews are managed correctly so that members of the panel and applicants are given a proper opportunity to ask relevant questions and that agreed time limits are adhered to;
- questions asked of candidates relate to the criteria laid out in the job description/person specification and are comparable for all candidates;
- nothing of importance in enabling the panel to reach an objective assessment is missed or overlooked and that they follow up areas not adequately explored;
- that unlawful and unjustifiable discrimination does not take place during the shortlisting, interview or assessment of candidates;
- the panel's decision is summarised and recorded;

Staff involved in the recruitment process

All staff involved in the recruitment process should be encouraged to attend one of the training courses or briefings in recruitment and selection provided by Human Resources.

When recruiting staff, as Chair of a selection panel or committee the following points should be considered:

- does the make-up of your selection panel/committee meet with any university requirements?
- have all the members of the panel/committee, and those involved in setting tests or taking part in any 'informal' process, attended training or been briefed on acceptable practice for interviews?
- is non-discriminatory language used in all the recruitment literature and materials and have you avoided using stereotypes?
- are all the "essential" and "desirable" criteria in the person specification necessary for the performance of the role?
- are the criteria easily understood and do they avoid discrimination?
- have the available data been checked to identify which groups are under-represented in the staffing group for which you are recruiting?
- has positive action been considered to encourage people from under-represented groups to apply, including appropriate placement and wording of advertisements?
- have the needs of all shortlisted applicants, especially those with disabilities, been considered with regard to the interview and any testing, presentations etc?
- has the panel/committee agreed the method for measuring the candidates against the criteria?
- ensure members of the panel, and candidates, are given proper opportunity to ask questions.
- the questions asked relate to the criteria and are comparable for all candidates.
- nothing of importance in enabling the panel to reach an objective assessment is missed or overlooked eg follow up areas not adequately explored.
- actively manage the interview process and ensure the panel keeps to time.
- discuss the terms of the offer with your link Recruitment Officer before contacting the successful candidate.
- do all concerned in the shortlisting and selection process understand the need for good record keeping?
- the panel's decision following interview must be summarised and recorded by the Chair.
- does your record of the shortlisting and interview decisions contain sufficient detail to enable constructive feedback to be given to unsuccessful candidates?
- will you be a position to defend the decision to appoint a particular candidate if required to do so?

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Equality and Diversity

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