

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion considerations in Recruitment

Inclusive is a key strand of Aberdeen 2040. We are committed to tackling unfair and unlawful discrimination and to eradicating bias in the recruitment and selection process. We are also committed to actively promoting equality and celebrating diversity to create a positive and productive environment. We recognise that diversity adds value to the work of the University. We seek to create a culture where all staff are encouraged to and can reach their full potential.

You may find the following practical information useful in terms of how to embed these commitments into our recruitment practices. If you have a specific concern or query about an equality or diversity issue it is best to discuss it with your HR Adviser or Partner at an early stage.

Recruitment Materials:

- Always review your job and person specifications, selection criteria and advert wording to ensure they do not include any content that is potentially discriminatory or unreasonably excludes certain groups without justification.
- Focus on the essential skills required to do the job effectively, considering transferable skills and non-degree holders. Use a person specification that allows for a wide range of candidates with appropriate skills to apply rather than a rigid person specification criteria.
- Be clear about the skill or experience level required rather than years of experience. Do not include age-related criteria in job and person specifications, selection criteria and advert wording. Avoid words like "young", "recently qualified" and "mature", as these could potentially be seen to be discriminatory to older or younger workers and therefore in breach of the Equality Act 2010.
- Consider the essential and desirable criteria for positions. Women and BAME applicants are less likely to apply for positions if they do not meet 100% of the essential criteria.
- Write the adverts in plain English and use wording inclusive of all applicants.
- Consider using a gender de-coder to identify words that may be off putting to women (<https://www.totaljobs.com/insidejob/gender-bias-decoder/>).
- Include a positive action statement to encourage applications from a diverse range of candidates; consider that the University particularly focuses on increasing diversity among staff on higher grades
- Use quotes that convey a welcoming environment, consider what images would encourage diverse applicants
- Confirm on the advert if you are open to considering flexible working arrangements for the position (e.g. part time working, working from home / other locations). The University has committed in the Athena Swan action plan that consideration shall be given to part-time/job-share arrangements for all grade 1-6 roles and flexible working arrangements for grades 7 to 9.
- The concept of a default retirement age has been abolished by the Government and it is therefore unlawful to reject job applications from candidates who are over 65.
- The University does not have a 'minimum' employment age, other than that imposed by legal restrictions on the number of hours those in full time secondary education can work. The University's policy on employing young people outlines the relevant legal and health and safety requirements when employing under 18's.
- Chronological information on education and work experience should only be used to establish whether a candidate has any gaps in their work/education history and not to impact your decision making in terms of age.
- If a candidate has applied using alternative formats (e.g. audio-tape) treat them in the same way as other applications.

Advertising:

- Advertise through local and national diversity networks, such as the University's Women's and BAME networks, liaise with the HR team for more avenues that could be utilised
- Share vacancies amongst your existing diverse networks and feel free to encourage people to apply
- Consider advertising in national and local media outlets, especially in regions with high BAME representation, and/or on a website that is specifically aimed at diverse applicants e.g.: www.diversityjobsite.co.uk | www.diversitydashboard.co.uk | www.vercida.com | www.rarerecruitment.co.uk | www.proudemployers.org.uk
- Consider advertising in media which has a strong female user base, or (where appropriate) promotes positions which are suitable for flexible working (these may involve additional cost), e.g: <https://www.mumsnet.com/jobs> | <https://www.ten2two.org/> | <https://capabilityjane.com/> | <https://www.timewisejobs.co.uk/> | <https://www.ginibee.com/benefits.html>
- Avoid the "quick hire" - allow sufficient time for the advertising stage to attract a diverse applicant pool.
- Build a record of successful diverse recruitments, including the advert text and the media used, to identify methods which helped to attract diverse candidates.
- Ensure that vacancies are available in accessible formats, with contact information to request alternative forms of application and other forms of reasonable adjustment.

Shortlisting:

- Accept that we all have biases. Consider why you might feel drawn to some applicants more than others, and what biases might be involved. Consider how race, gender, age, socioeconomic background, and other characteristics might influence you.
- Ensure that those taking part in the selection process undertaken the Recruitment and Selection Training and is this mandatory for staff to participate in interviewing candidates.
- Shortlist against the agreed criteria as set out in the person specification.
- Avoid any assumptions on the applicant's cultural or social "fit" within the institution based on the perceived difference of the candidate from the existing employees.
- Conduct the shortlisting with more than one person on the panel, ideally forming the panel that is diverse both in gender and race if possible.
- Research shows that when the final applicant pool has only one minority candidate, they are unlikely to be offered the position: try to ensure that more than one candidate from underrepresented groups is invited to interview stage.
- If the longlist is not diverse, you do not have to appoint someone immediately, consider re-advertising the position to encourage a more diverse shortlist.
- If you are using recruitment agencies or head-hunters, outline the University's commitment to diversity and insist that they provide diverse longlists for your positions.

Interview arrangements:

- Ensure that any invitation to interview letters ask all candidates about any adjustments due to a disability that may have to be made to the interview process.
- Avoid making assumptions about people based on personal appearance, name, how long ago they were at school or university, family or caring responsibilities etc. Focus on assessing each candidate objectively on how well they meet your selection criteria based on the evidence they provide to you.
- If someone you invite for interview can't make the date set, make sure you at least consider whether you can re-arrange the interview to accommodate them. If its because of child-care responsibilities, a disability issue or even a religious holiday then you may be potentially discriminating.
- If a candidate that you have short-listed has specified in their application that they have specific requirements to enable them to attend an interview, complete a test or another part of the selection process because of their disability, ensure that the required adjustments are fully considered; the expectation will be that if the adjustment is 'reasonable' then it should be made. You should contact your HR Adviser or Partner for advice.

Interviewing:

- Conduct the interviews in line with the Panel requirements set out in the Recruitment and Selection Policy. Try to form a panel that is diverse in its construction (in both gender and race if possible).
- Before the start of the interview, the Chair should encourage the selection panel to reflect on the equality and diversity commitments of the committee, recognising that everyone has their own biases and needs to actively mitigate against these.
- Avoid asking questions which could be deemed discriminatory (either directly or indirectly) (e.g. 'Where are you from?' or 'That is an unusual name, where does it come from?')
- Ask all candidates broadly similar questions.
- Ensure that interviews are held in a welcoming and accessible environment, suitable for those who may have a disability or require reasonable adjustments.
- Just as in the shortlisting stage, avoid any assumptions on the applicant's cultural or social "fit" within the organisation.
- Showcase the organisation's commitment to equality and diversity, all candidates should be asked about how they can contribute towards this.
- Provide fair and constructive feedback to all applicants on how further applications could be improved.
- When selection committee have reached a decision on which candidate to appoint, the Chair could invite the panel to consider if implicit bias might have impacted the decision (e.g. making it more likely to appoint people with similar ethnic and cultural background to those sitting on the panel or those in the institution).
- Take time to reflect on the final selection decision.
- Justify selection decisions through evidence presented as part of the recruitment process and record the reasons for your decision linked back to person specification.
- The Equality Act 2010 limits the circumstances when health-related questions can be asked before a job offer is made. Health-related questions can be asked to:
 1. Determine whether reasonable adjustments need to be made to the selection process
 2. Determine whether an applicant can carry out a function that is intrinsic to the job (such as manual handling)
 3. Monitor the diversity of job applicants
 4. Take positive action to assist disabled people
 5. Confirm that a candidate has a disability where this is an occupational requirement
- Under the Act it is no longer permissible to ask questions that aim to establish how many days of sickness absence an applicant has accrued during previous employment prior to the candidate being made a conditional or unconditional offer of work. This question must not be included on any application forms, reference requests or addressed at interview.

Job Offer:

- Once a job offer has been made, appropriate health-related questions can be asked, provided that they are linked to the job requirements. However, this needs to be approached sensitively and as a 'fact-finding' rather than a judgmental process, ie to fill in the gaps rather than as any kind of medical assessment. It should be made clear during the discussion that they may be subject to an occupational health check; and that this is the point at which an informed and professional assessment of the potential impact of the condition or disability on the job will be made. In limited circumstances, this may include making conditional offers subject to a satisfactory occupational health check.
- When you assess an applicant's suitability for the job you must take account of how reasonable adjustments could enable them to do the job. If, after taking reasonable adjustments into account, they would not be the best person for the job, you do not have to offer it to them.
- Remember also to contact your HR Adviser or Partner when you are considering a candidate with a disability to ensure access to expert advice and potential financial support for the many practical options for making reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities.