

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION GUIDANCE NOTE FOR CHAIRS OF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PANELS (SEPT 18)

This guidance has been designed to assist Chairs of assessment panels to ensure that selection exercises are conducted in such a way as to minimise unconscious bias and ensure fair and equitable process. The guidance covers the following areas –

- Unconscious bias
- Selection panel composition
- Disability Confident Scheme
- Applicants who require sponsorship to work in the UK
- Making an offer of employment/ starting salaries

It is expected that Chairs will familiarise themselves with this guidance ahead of the selection exercise and that they will highlight the salient points to panel members, particularly in relation to unconscious bias and that they will circulate the document entitled 'Limiting unconscious bias – A good practice guide for recruiters' (available at <https://www.keele.ac.uk/hr/recruitmentandselectionsupportinformation/>) to all panel members prior to shortlisting.

Chairs are asked to alert panellists to the University's targets for proportions of women at professorial and senior lecturer level as set out in the document entitled 'Chairs' Briefing to Panel' (available at <https://www.keele.ac.uk/hr/recruitmentandselectionsupportinformation/>)

LIMITING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Limiting unconscious bias - A good practice guide for recruiters¹

Unconscious bias occurs when our brain makes quick judgements and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences. Types of unconscious bias that may operate in recruitment and/ or promotions panels include:

- **Unexamined first impressions**, especially in relation to 'trustworthiness', 'confidence' and 'competence'. Seek specific evidence for attributes you think you perceive, and be aware of:
- **Confirmatory bias** (the tendency to search for, interpret, or recall information in a way that confirms one's beliefs).
- **Stereotyping / Implicit association**. (For example, success in men being attributed to their own skills, success in women or BAME candidates to hard work.)
- **Affinity bias** (the automatic favouring of people like ourselves).

Limiting unconscious/implicit bias in shortlisting

- Shortlist anonymously if possible.
- Assess against the criteria only on information provided in the application. Ignore prior knowledge or hearsay.
- Ensure you allow sufficient time for a decision.
- Take regular breaks to limit the impact of fatigue: be aware that tiredness fosters the operation of unconscious biases.
- Consider prioritising/weighting essential criteria so outcomes can't be manipulated.
- A points-based system can help ensure shortlisting is consistent and evidence-based.

Limiting unconscious/implicit bias in interviews

- Allow plenty of time for the interview and for discussion afterwards.
- Allow regular breaks for panel members to reduce fatigue, especially for interviews held later in the day.
- Ensure the same set of questions is used for each applicant.
- Be conscious of body language (yours and other people's): is it more encouraging to some candidates than others?
- Ensure you do not use gendered terms when you assess candidates.
- Make sure you use the same 'stand-out' adjectives (e.g. 'excellent', 'outstanding', etc.) for all candidates consistently.
- Document interview decisions. Panel members should know their notes may be audited in the future.

Limiting unconscious bias generally

- Slow down the decision-making process –quick decisions are more susceptible to unconscious biases.
- Respectfully challenge instances where you think there may be unconscious bias by asking the person to evidence their claims.

¹Adapted by Helen Williams for the School of Psychology, November 2017, from materials created by Newcastle University Staff Development Unit, 2016 and the Equality Challenge Unit's 2013 'Unconscious Bias in Higher Education'; subsequently synthesised for more general use at Keele.

SELECTION PANEL COMPOSITION

The Chair of the selection panel is responsible for controlling and coordinating the shortlisting and interview processes. The Post Approval Form (PAF) should identify selection panel members. In instances where it is not possible to confirm the panel at the time that the PAF is completed the Chair must ensure that the relevant Panel Composition Form (available at [www.https://www.keele.ac.uk/hr/forms/#tabs-5](https://www.keele.ac.uk/hr/forms/#tabs-5)) is completed and submitted to HR *prior to* the advert closing date. The same panel should partake in both the shortlisting and interview processes. The Chair is responsible for confirming any changes to the panel to HR (prior to shortlisting) and for confirming the final panel when the Contract Request Form (CRF) is completed and submitted to HR.

It is University policy that interview panels should have equal numbers of men and women where possible, with a minimum of one third of men/women on small panels. The University acknowledges that in some circumstances it may be difficult to achieve this within the composition requirements set out below. In such situations it will be possible to achieve broadly equal proportions by measures such as having a panel member at a lower grade (not normally more than one grade's difference) than that stipulated and, for professorial selection committees, by appointing female externals where internal members are disproportionately male.

All professorial selection committees should include a senior member of staff versed in the importance of race and gender equality. This might include the Institutional Lead for gender equality, a Faculty or School EDI Champion or senior representative from HR.

In addition to the gender mix/ balance of the panel the Chair should give consideration to the overall composition of the panel in terms of age, ethnicity, disability, etc. Depending on the diversity mix of the panel the Chair may wish to consider whether it would be appropriate to invite a member of the Black Female Professors Forum (BFPF) to sit on the panel. Requests for panel members can be made via the forum's website <http://blackfemaleprofessorsforum.org/>

Upon receipt of the applications, panel members should declare any conflict of interest to the Chair before partaking in the selection exercise. The Chair will need to make a decision as to whether the conflict is too great for the panel member to continue in the process.

DISABILITY CONFIDENT SCHEME

By displaying the disability confident symbol the University is showing that we have a positive attitude towards job applications from disabled people. As part of our commitment as a Disability Confident Employer we guarantee to interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria (i.e. the essential criteria as set out in the person specification) for a job vacancy.

The Chair of the panel must ensure that where applicants have asked to be considered under the Disability Confident Scheme the panel consider whether they meet the essential criteria and ensure they are shortlisted if this is the case. Where the essential criteria are not met the Chair must ensure that there is a robust justification for the decision and that this is recorded to enable feedback to be provided to the applicant if requested.

APPLICANTS WHO REQUIRE SPONSORSHIP TO WORK IN THE UK

Where an applicant has indicated on their application that they do not have the right to work in the UK this information should be disregarded when shortlisting and the normal process should be followed.

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) rules regarding the ability to appoint migrant workers (from outside of the EEA) differ depending on the skills level of the post -

- Jobs at PhD level – the best person for the post, irrespective of immigration status, can be appointed. (Academic posts are likely to be at PhD level.)
- Jobs below PhD level – where there is an appointable settled worker they must be appointed over a migrant worker even where the migrant worker is the best person for the job.

Where the appointed candidate requires sponsorship to work in the UK the Chair of the panel must provide the following to HR alongside the Contract Request Form before a Certificate of Sponsorship can be applied for –

- interview notes from all panel members in their original form (e.g. handwritten notes)
- summary interview notes (please use the template on the HR website)
- two/three (dependent on role) references which are confirmed as satisfactory

Keele People must also be updated with the reasons for not shortlisting and for not appointing after interview.

MAKING AN OFFER

The Chair (or nominated panel member) is responsible for contacting the appointed candidate to make the offer of employment. It is important to be aware that a verbal offer of employment is legally binding.

Starting Salary

For reasons relating to equal pay the University is legally required to monitor and report (internally and externally) on starting salaries and it is therefore vital that starting salaries above the first point on the relevant scale can be objectively justified.

External appointments should normally be made on the first incremental point of the advertised salary scale, as appropriate to the grade of the job. A starting salary higher than the scale minimum should only be considered where appointing to the scale minimum would be inappropriate and this decision can be supported by a justifiable business reason. In any case the starting salary must be as close to the scale minimum as possible.

An offer of a higher starting salary should have regard to:-

- The knowledge, skills and experience of the appointee,
- The level at which the appointee operated in previous roles.
- The need to avoid creating anomalies in pay relativities between new starters and existing staff,
- The need to give new appointees the opportunity to demonstrate their capability to undertake the full range of the duties of the new post,
- The current salary of the appointee. When considering current salary, please take into account that salary is only one element of the remuneration (i.e., incremental pay scales, pension, merit award processes and development opportunities and excellent work place facilities).