

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

STAFF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION : A CODE OF PRACTICE

Introduction

The University acknowledges that its staff are the most important resource, therefore their recruitment and selection should be undertaken expertly, cost effectively and with care.

This paper looks at the arrangements and regulations governing the appointment of staff within the University, gives guidance on the practicality of certain procedures and discusses the behavioural aspects of the selection process. It will therefore be of value to those engaged in making staff appointments.

This Code of Practice applies to the recruitment and selection of all staff to the University. Staff should be appointed in accordance with the Code of Practice, thus ensuring that the process is fair, systematic, efficient, effective and provides equality of opportunity. Allocation of authority and responsibility for initiating, managing and participating in the recruitment and selection processes for all types of posts is detailed in this Code of Practice. All recruitment will be based on agreed job descriptions/particulars and selection should be based on relevant knowledge, skills, aptitudes, experience and physical ability to do the job.

Recruitment should be seen as a key public relations exercise, promoting the image of the University as a fair and caring employer and an efficient and professional organisation. It is essential that all staff involved in the recruitment and selection process ensure the confidentiality of information supplied by applicants and referees. All staff engaged in the recruitment and selection of staff should be aware of and adhere to the contents of this Code of Practice.

1. The Recruitment Process

Before deciding to recruit, the organisation and operation of the Faculty/Department/Section needs to be considered. There may be changes in the organisation of work which will enhance quality and efficiency. Once these matters have been settled a job description/particulars should be drawn up, together with a personnel specification outlining the qualities required of applicants. Having addressed these points the framing of an advertisement becomes easier.

The Recruitment process will vary depending on the appointment, however it is important that someone is given sole responsibility within the Faculty/Department/Section for setting up and following through the process in liaison with the Personnel Department.

The procedures for the different groups of appointments are outlined below.

Academic and Related Appointments

For Professorial appointments a Search Committee will be established by the Dean of Faculty which will comprise the Head of Department in which the vacancy arises, together with another senior academic from within the Department, two senior academics from other departments within the Faculty and a senior academic from outside the Faculty. The Search Committee will agree the job description and will be responsible, with the Director of Personnel for determining the recruitment and selection procedure. The Vice-Chancellor will normally chair the Interview Panel.

For other academic appointments, a Search Committee will not normally be required. The Dean and Head of Department would jointly agree the job description, determine the composition of the Interview Panel with the Director of Personnel and approve the shortlist. The Interview Panel will be chaired by a senior academic from outside the Department, it may often be appropriate for the Chair to be from outside the Faculty. All academic appointments will be reported to Senate and Council providing details of the recruitment and selection process and the successful candidate.

For Research Appointments the Panel will normally consist of the Head of Department, the grant holder(s) and a member of the Personnel Department. The Head of Department may wish to delegate chair responsibilities to a senior member of staff from time to time in view of the number of such appointments.

Other Faculty Appointments

The Panel will normally consist of the Head of Department (or an appropriate member of faculty) and a member of the Personnel staff along with, for example, the Departmental Administrator for clerical/secretarial appointments or the Chief Technician or Laboratory Superintendent for technical and manual appointments.

The Administration and Other Areas

Academic-related interviews within the Administration are chaired by the Head of Department, and an appropriate member of academic staff and a member of the Personnel Department will be present.

Clerical and technical appointments will be made by a panel consisting of the Head of Department (or an appropriate substitute) and a member of the Personnel Department.

Except in the case of appointment at Senior level, members of the Personnel Department will not routinely be present at interviews for manual staff; normally two members of the employing Department should be present at manual staff interviews.

General Comments

Wherever possible the immediate supervisor should be involved in the recruitment and selection process to provide a detailed knowledge regarding the job.

It is inappropriate for the outgoing postholder to be included in the recruitment and selection process unless he or she has become the immediate supervisor. This does not mean that candidates should not meet their predecessor or talk to people doing similar work; that can be very useful, but it should be done outside the formal procedures.

All staff appointments will be reported to Council.

2. The Short-listing and Inviting of Candidates for Interview

For academic appointments it will be the responsibility of the Search Committee to shortlist candidates for interview. In other appointments it is the responsibility of the Head of Department to short-list candidates for interview and in doing so he or she should normally consult the immediate supervisor of the post concerned. Very often with Clerical, Manual and Ancillary appointments the immediate supervisor will shortlist. It is the responsibility of the Director of Personnel to ensure that any shortlist conforms to staffing policies formulated and applied within the University. The shortlist must reflect the requirements of the job as advertised, and the choice of criteria must be justifiable in the event of a challenge on, for example, equal opportunities grounds. Any internal candidate who is short-listed should be interviewed at the same time as external candidates. No one should be invited for interview who has not completed an application form, curriculum vitae, or given the names of relevant referees who can be contacted when requested to do so (although one must respect the wish of some candidates that their referees should not be contacted until after the interview). Appointment decisions should not be made until references, normally including one from the existing employer, have been seen by the panel.

It follows, therefore, that appointments must not be offered 'subject to references'.

3. The Selection Interview

The selection interview is but one component within the recruitment process, for any decision concerning the appointment of a member of staff should not be solely based on an interview. Other methods of selection must also be employed such as, examination of the application form, consideration of references, presentation of a lecturette, and utilisation of attainment

and aptitude tests where appropriate. Having said this, the interview still remains the most popular method of selection in the University and it is the purpose of this paper to concentrate on this method of selection, but also to bear in mind that its success still depends on the application of other criteria of selection.

4. Objectives of the Interview

The three main objectives of the interview are:

to ensure that the candidate has an accurate picture and comprehensive understanding of the job;

to establish who is the most suitable candidate for employment, having regard to the agreed personnel specification; and

to conduct the interview in such a manner that the candidate feels that a fair hearing has been given whether he or she obtains the job or not.

5. Conduct of Interview

Each member of the appointments panel will be supplied with a copy of the job particulars/personnel specification, application forms, supporting papers, and relevant references (all of which should be collected by a member of the Personnel Department immediately following the interview).

The appointments panel should apply the same criteria to all candidates, these criteria varying according to the nature of the post.

In no circumstances should candidates be encouraged to believe that there are opportunities beyond those indicated in the written particulars of a post; if a candidate is over qualified for a post, the appointments panel should indicate this to the candidate although this should not deter the panel from appointing that candidate if he or she is the most suitable of those applying.

Each member of the panel should be assigned an area of questioning. The panel should meet at least 15 minutes before the first interview, in order to discuss its strategy.

Candidates should be given plenty of opportunity to ask questions.

At the end of the interview the candidate should be told the procedure for notifying the results of the interview and this procedure should not subsequently be varied.

6. Guidance for the Chair of the Interview Panel

In general when interviewing candidates for posts the appointments panel should seek to appoint the most suitable candidate for the post concerned bearing in mind its grade and the requirements of the post as set out in the information issued to prospective applicants. A general plan for the interview is useful:

Study the application form, look for omissions, inconsistencies, gaps in employment and presentation.

Study the job description and personnel specification.

Draw up 'main headings for discussion', with notes on specific topics.

Have a brief summary of each candidate as well as the individual application form.

Do not make the interview like an examination: the candidate should be put at ease; 'interview nerves' should not be induced by too formal an approach.

Do not keep the candidate waiting too long.

Avoid interruptions such as telephone calls, visitors, etc.

Ensure privacy.

At the commencement of the interview greet the candidate politely and introduce him/her to each interviewer and explain who each member of the panel is and where that person fits into the University.

Get the candidate to relax, establish rapport.

Keep to the time allotted.

The Chair, having greeted the candidate and introduced the members of the panel, should describe the University and then ask the candidate questions about a subject he/she knows and can talk about easily. Going through the application form is one way of doing this. Having got the candidate to relax the Chair can then pass the questioning to the other members of the panel; the Chair and members of the panel should encourage the candidates to do most of the talking and allow time for candidate's questions.

7. Guidance for the Panel Members

Listen carefully to what the candidate says.

The way the candidate answers may be as important as what is said.

Frame your questions carefully.

Avoid leading questions or ones which call for 'yes' or 'no' answers.

Spot the glib answer that has been prepared.

Analyse the candidate's previous appointment(s) in some detail.

Do not be afraid to take notes during the interview as this will aid comparisons between candidates.

8. Assessment: the Choice

Following the final interview the panel should immediately compare all the candidates.

When the successful candidate has been chosen the panel should decide the next most suitable candidate in case the offer is declined.

Candidates should be informed as soon as possible.

Internal candidates should be informed in person by a member of the Personnel Department whether successful or not.

9. Equal Opportunities

All staff engaged in recruitment and selection of staff should be aware of and adhere to the contents of the following University of Bath documents:

Equal Opportunities Employment Policy and Code of Practice

Policy Statement and Code of Practice on the Employment of People with Disabilities

Equal Opportunities 'Good Practice' Guidelines for all members of Interviewing and Selection Panels

*Peter J Hill, Director of Personnel
1 August 1997*

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES 'GOOD PRACTICE' GUIDE-LINES FOR ALL MEMBERS OF INTERVIEWING AND SELECTION PANELS

These guide-lines will be distributed to all those involved in recruitment and selection interviews and should be read in conjunction with 'Staff Recruitment and Selection : A Code of Practice'.

NOTE: The premise of all these guide-lines is that every applicant/interviewee should be treated equally, regardless of gender, sexual orientation (heterosexuality/homosexuality), marital or parental status, race or ethnic origin, colour or creed, physical disability, social or economic class, age, or relationship to any member of staff. Interviewers should be aware of the need to be neutral in their approach to all categories of interviewee.

No member of the interview panel may be related to any interviewee.

Consideration should be given to the balance of interviewing panels in terms of reflecting the diversity of potential interviewees.

1. The Chair of the panel should check to ensure that all members of the panel have received (and are familiar with) these guide-lines.
2. At the beginning of the interviewing procedures, the Chair should advise the interviewing panel that improper questions should be avoided. These include questions about marriage plans, family intentions or childcare arrangements or other personal and domestic matters including questions about a candidate's impairments or ethnic origins, whether such questions be of a direct or indirect nature. If, in spite of contrary advice, a member of an interview panel asks discriminatory questions, such questions should be immediately ruled out and repudiated and this line of questioning should not be allowed to continue.
3. Questions should relate to the requirements of the job, relevant qualifications and relevant experience.

The following points relate to the interviewing of women candidates and are based on the practical experience of women at interview, and the recommendations of the Equal Opportunities Commission:

4. Questions at interview should not be different for male and female interviewees.
5. Selection Panels must avoid patronising language when addressing women interviewees. Women should not be referred to as 'girls', nor should they be addressed as 'dear', 'my dear' or by any other terminology that has patronising or offensive overtones. These forms of address can act as a reinforcement of gender differential and may make it difficult for a woman interviewee to do justice to her professional qualities in interview.
6. Women can encounter either over-aggressive questioning or joking familiarity at interviews. The Chair of the panel should seek to ensure that the tone of the interview and the treatment of the interviewee remains identical whether that interviewee is male or female.

7. The Chair should give advice to the interviewing panel concerning the 'breadwinner' concept. This is not a legitimate consideration in making appointments at any level. It should never be assumed that it is more important for a man to have a job than for a woman to have a job. Candidates' family circumstances are not a relevant consideration.

The following points relate to the interviewing of candidates from minority racial groups. (A racial group is a group defined by reference to colour, race or ethnic origins.) They are based on the practical experience of candidates and the recommendation of the Commission for Racial Equality:

8. Black and Asian UK Citizens can often encounter the racist notion that their colour indicates 'foreign' nationality. The panel should *not* assume that because a candidate is from a minority racial groups he/she is not a UK citizen.
9. Idiomatic use of language is often unintentionally racist. The panel should be aware of this and use language sensitively.

The following points relate to the interviewing of candidates from overseas and are based on the experiences of candidates and the recommendations of the Commission for Racial Equality:

10. Questions should be phrased in a standard way and not make use of English cultural idiom or metaphor which might put particular candidates at a disadvantage.
11. Overseas degrees, diplomas and other qualifications which are comparable with UK qualifications should be accepted as equivalents and not simply be assumed to be of an inferior quality. Any necessary checking of less familiar institutions or qualifications should be undertaken with the assistance of the Registry prior to shortlisting.
12. Reference to, or questions containing, general knowledge matters which are more likely to be familiar to applicants living in the UK should be avoided.
13. Questions which assume that because an applicant is from one part of their home country (example, Delhi) they must know academics in another (example, Madras - distance 1300 miles) should be avoided unless subject specialisation is narrow enough to warrant it.
14. Some applicants could be very self-conscious about their use of English language. Correcting of applicants' English at interview should be avoided.

The following point relates to the interviewing of candidates who have a disability or special needs:

15. A candidate with a disability will have considered whether that disability is likely to interfere with the demands of the job. An application from such a candidate is evidence that he/she considers himself/herself adequate to the post.