



# LIBRA RECRUITMENT HANDBOOK

Inclusive, Transparent and  
Unbiased Recruitment Processes

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## PREFACE

Diversity is a key feature of a modern and successful workplace. It allows access to a larger talent pool, increases the number of viewpoints and experiences in a team, which results in improved productivity and the personal growth of all team members. To increase workplace diversity, it is important to assess and restructure recruitment processes to ensure objectivity and inclusiveness.

Employers play a central role in any discussion on inequalities, discrimination or gender gaps. “They and their agents have the power to influence, if not determine, the shape and degree of inequalities in their organisations (1).” It is the responsibility of an employer to inform themselves, to raise awareness amongst employees and individuals involved in recruitment processes, and to actively follow strategies to mitigate any imbalances, even if caused unconsciously. Such bias can mean one is failing to hire the best person for the job and potentially missing out on valuable talent.

This handbook was created to inform institutes participating in the LIBRA project and to support them in hiring the most suitable candidate, and increasing workplace diversity, which provides the basis for creativity and ultimately success. LIBRA is a project funded by the European Commission, which brings together 13 research institutes in life sciences in 13 European countries. They are all members of the alliance EU-LIFE, which aims to build and promote excellence in life sciences throughout Europe. Their commitment to excellence is also a commitment to gender equality.

The ten core LIBRA institutes developed a tailored Gender Equality Plan, which aims to bring about long lasting and profound structural changes to remove institutional barriers and empower women to be equally successful as men in their research careers. The Gender Equality Plans address four main areas of intervention, which aim to increase the number of women in senior academic positions. One of the four areas is to revise and improve recruitment policies and procedures.

One of the biggest challenges in recruitment is to overcome unconscious biases and to structure the individual processes. In order to do so, this handbook compiles a series of recommendations for a more fair, objective, and transparent recruitment process for senior leadership positions in science research institutes. These recommendations can also be applied more broadly to include the recruitment of PhD students, postdocs and technical staff.

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## RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

### Selection Committee

Diversity is the key to creating a successful Selection Committee as it allows both for diverse hires and for a more valuable and fair assessment of candidates (2, 3). Elected members should have a demonstrated record of commitment to diversity, recognising the value of drawing on different experiences to widen the perspective of the Committee. The Committee should include both women and men. External independent members should be invited either when no diverse representation exists or when a large workload makes it difficult for internal female staff to be part of the Committee (2). However, when hiring for a senior position, it is recommended that the Selection Committee should have at least two members that are external to the group/department.

***Target: At least one, ideally two, committee members should be women***

When there are more women in the Selection Committee, the chance of a female applicant being appointed significantly increases and generally more female professors are hired (4).

The Selection Committee should be established as soon as it has been decided that a vacant position needs to be filled, and before the position is advertised. Once a Committee has been appointed, sufficient planning time should be assigned to agree on the job requirements, competences, and qualifications necessary for the vacant position, as well as the evaluation methods and interview questions. It will be also helpful to create a checklist including the designated Selection Committee members, selected Chair, timelines, upcoming meetings, interview times, roles and responsibilities of each Committee member.

### *Committee member roles*

Ideally, each Selection Committee should include a Chair (essential), an Employment Equity Observer and a nominated person to record meeting minutes. Their roles are:

- Chair: the Chair should ensure that all members of the Selection Committee understand and execute their roles in the recruitment process.
- Employment Equity Observer: the Employment Equity Observer ensures that the recruitment process is carried out in an honest and unbiased way and that ethical standards are maintained throughout the entire recruitment process. This role does not have voting rights.
- Minute taker: one member of the Selection Committee should be nominated to record and file meeting minutes (3,5). This role does not have voting rights.

### *Confidentiality*

All aspects of the recruiting process should remain confidential. Materials and details of the candidates should not be shared or discussed with any other person who is not part of the Selection Committee, other than staff within the Human Resources Department. In addition, Committee members should not contact former or current employers or referees without the Chair's approval (2).

### *Conflict of interest*

If Committee member has a financial or close personal relationship with a candidate, the Chair together with the Human Resources Department should ask the Committee member to withdraw from the Selection Committee (5,6).

## *Responsibilities*

The responsibilities of the Selection Committee are to:

- Identify selection criteria and design the position description and sought qualifications before the job is advertised. (See Job Description section.)
- Establish plans for recruiting women and underrepresented minorities prior to beginning the search.
- Ensure that all Selection Committee members are available to interview all candidates. Hence each candidate will have an equal opportunity to prove his/her suitability for the position.
- Establish prompt, respectful and confidential communication processes.
- Determine how best to portray the advantages of joining the institute/department to the candidates.
- Be prepared to answer any questions raised by the candidates.
- Develop a meeting schedule and review deadlines to avoid delays.
- Decide which documents should be included as part of an application, and how these should be assessed, in order to create an evaluation form to be completed during the recruitment assessment process.
- Decide where application documents, candidate assessment forms, and meeting minutes will be stored.
- Discuss the treatment of any potential internal candidates.
- Determine the assessment criteria which will be used to evaluate shortlisted candidates (e.g. research presentations, interviews).
- Determine the details of the required outcome (e.g. prepare ranked list of three candidates or unranked list of x candidates for recommendation to the Director by (date)).
- Review practices that result in unfair evaluations for women and minority candidates so as to avoid them.
- Monitor gender balance at each stage of the recruitment process and record this data (see Form 1).

### ***Target: Monitor the percentage of females at the main stages of recruitment***

The Selection Committees as well as the Human Resources Department should be aware of the percentage of females throughout the recruitment process. The main stages to monitor are: Applied – Long/Shortlisted – Interviewed – Offered – Hired (Form 1).

## *Selection Committee training*

Prior to commencing the recruitment process, all members of the Selection Committee should ideally have participated in an unbiased selection workshop and/or watched this training video on Recruitment Bias in Research Institutes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g978T58gELo&t/watch?v=g978T58gELo&t>

## *Learning from previous recruitment processes*

The Selection Committee should be provided with gender balance data from previous senior hiring processes at the institute, including the percentage of women at every stage in the recruitment process. If available, they should also be informed about some of the reasons why female candidates may have turned down offers in the past (these may reveal patterns). In addition, it might be useful for the Selection Committee to know where female candidates who were previously turned down are currently working (which institute and in which position).

As an observation, if no women have been offered positions in recent recruitment processes, the Selection Committee needs to consider whether the positions have been defined too narrowly (3).

## Documenting the Recruitment Process

It is recommended to track each stage of the recruitment process (7). A tracking system is especially useful for tracking gender balance statistics at each stage of the recruitment process (see Form 1). In addition, a tracking system should be used to record (and store) the following information:

- When the position was publically advertised
- The date of each application submission
- The date when the Selection Committee started to screen the applications
- If a candidate was interviewed via a telephone call or over Skype, when did the interview take place, which questions were asked and what were the candidate's answers
- All correspondence with the candidate (via email, phone calls, and Skype) and the dates of this correspondence
- The minutes of all Selection Committee meetings
- All candidate evaluation forms completed by the Selection Committee members
- Gender balance statistics at each step of the recruitment process (see Form 1)
- The personal data and application documents of all applicants (forming a candidate database in case the institute would like to contact a candidate again in the future, or in case a candidate applies for another position at the institute)
- Whether a candidate accepted or rejected an offer, plus their reasons (if they rejected the offer)

Many recruitment web-based software solutions offer these features, such as Prescreen, Workable, Zoho Recruit, The Applicant Manager or ICIMS Recruit.



## JOB ADVERTISEMENT

### Job Description

Well-defined selection criteria provide the Selection Committee with a consistent method for assessing candidates. These criteria should be observable and measurable so that the candidates can be assessed on their behaviour rather than on their personality. If criteria are not objective there is potential for subjective decision-making and hence discrimination may occur. Gender stereotypes are more likely to arise if criteria are vague and various interpretations are possible.

***Target: Write the job description and define the selection criteria before the position is advertised***

The more defined the tasks are the easier it is to define the selection criteria, which will serve as a reference for the objective evaluation of candidates.

#### *Develop specific hiring goals*

When deciding what should be included in a job description, carry out a general feedback process to define the essential tasks. The peers and supervisors will provide feedback from a different perspective. In addition, direct reports or the views of students, staff and other members of the unit/group can also contribute some extra insight into what is required for the position.

#### *Identify selection criteria that are absolutely necessary not only desirable*

Consider whether each criterion is really necessary to perform the role or whether it is merely desirable. Discuss how to prioritize the weight and range of evidence considered for each criterion. It has been shown that men apply for a position when they only meet 60% of the requirements, while women only apply when meeting 100% of the requirements (8). Hence listing desirable criteria as if they are absolutely necessary in a job advertisement can deter women from applying.

#### *Use clear job titles*

Keep in mind that job titles (e.g. Consolidated Researcher) must be clearly explained or internationally understood and accepted.

#### *Review job description*

All members of the Selection Committee and the Human Resources Department should review the job description prior to the position being advertised.

## Advertisement Content

When writing a job advertisement aim to compose a detailed and clear description of the position and a welcoming description of the institute. In particular it is important to:

- Emphasize that you are interested both in female and male researchers, and have a statement of inclusivity and, if applicable, a link to a specific equality and diversity page on the institute website
- Present information about the people working at the institute – including references to the number of different nationalities, the percentage of females in senior positions, participation in social activities, etc.
- Portray the institute as being a diverse and inclusive workplace by including images of women both on your website and in recruiting materials
- Describe the work environment as collaborative and interactive (placing an emphasis on how researchers work together)
- Describe how the institute promotes a healthy work-life balance, including a link to the relevant page on the institute website
- Provide a detailed description of the employment package offered, including information on the salary, health insurance, pensions, and the potential for career development
- Add dual career opportunities

The length of a job advertisement is not of concern if the information it contains is important and relevant (9).

## Proactive and Unbiased Language

The language used in a job advertisement should always be inclusive and should appeal to candidates of diverse backgrounds. An even mix of terms that research has identified as being feminine or masculine should be used to create a balanced, unbiased job description. Evidence shows that the use of many stereotypically masculine words in job descriptions can result in women perceiving that they would not belong in that kind of a work environment (10) (See Annex 1).

## Platforms and Active Recruitment

The job advertisement should be widely distributed, using international publications, personal contacts, mailing lists, conferences and websites, thereby reaching different communities (11). It may also be advantageous to document advertisement strategies from each call in order to identify successful and good practices.

Directly approaching potential female candidates via personal communication, as well as using networks which aim to identify female researchers (e.g. femconsult, EMBO, AcademiaNet, EULIFE website), increases the possibility of hiring more women (12).

Other ways of potentially increasing the number of female applicants include:

- Generate a pool of promising candidates and invite them for seminars
- Check for women who were shortlisted in previous recruitment processes but not offered a position
- Identify suitable candidates and send the job advertisement to them directly
- Attend conferences for the purpose of recruiting
- Contact or collaborate with professional organisations that specialize in diversity to help identify potential candidates

For more detailed information and examples on how to write a job advertisement see Annex 1.



## APPLICATION MANAGEMENT

### Official Application Email Address

Creating an official application email address or using a recruitment tool is highly recommended. Candidates should not engage in direct correspondence with any member of the Selection Committee as all candidate applications should be reviewed at the same time. To ensure a fair process, the Selection Committee should be informed about this policy and instructed to forward any correspondence to an Human Resources representative who is not involved in the selection process. If a candidate requests further information about the position which requires input from a member of the Selection Committee, this information should be communicated in writing and the correspondence passed onto the candidate via a Human Resources representative.

### Regular Status Updates

All candidates should receive regular updates on the status of their application status. Research has shown that gender bias is more likely to occur during a recruitment process when evaluation is kept confidential (4). Transparency and accountability are very important in the promotion of gender equality.

Establish prompt, respectful, and confidential communication processes that include:

- A confirmation message upon the receipt of an application
- Information regarding the status of a candidate's application and whether they have been shortlisted
- Follow-up promptly with finalists after their campus visit with feedback and information on the status of their application (offer letters, waiting list and rejections)



## ASSESSMENT AND SHORTLISTING OF APPLICATIONS

### General Strategy

#### *Evaluate candidates independently*

The Committee members should not discuss candidate profiles with each other until they officially meet as a group to decide which candidates should be invited for interview.

#### *Use fair and objective evaluation criteria*

The Selection Committee should evaluate the candidates based on fair and objective criteria rather than informal judgments of “fit” (often meant as “feel comfortable with them”). These criteria need to be measurable. In order to minimise discrimination and unconscious bias when reviewing applications, the Selection Committee should be provided with standardised assessment forms that have a separate box for each competency (based on the written job advertisement) together with clear instructions on how to complete the form.

#### *Be aware of and avoid unconscious biases that can occur during the recruitment process*

A trained Selection Committee should be able to recognise and avoid unconscious biases that can occur during the recruitment process. In particular, the Chair of the Selection Committee should remind the other Committee members to objectively evaluate the applications and document all their evaluations and decisions in the provided candidate assessment forms.

#### ***Target: Ensure there are at least two women shortlisted for all independent research positions***

At least two women should be shortlisted for all independent research positions and ideally more if the final candidate pool is larger – women should not appear to be the minority group at the interviews. Statistically there is no chance of hiring a woman, if there is only one female candidate on the shortlist, meaning that one woman is the same as none (13). The reasoning behind this is that if there is only one woman in the final candidate pool, she will stand out as being different from the norm. Decision makers tend not to deviate from the norm as this is considered to be risky behaviour.

### CV Assessment

#### *Recognise career breaks and flexible work*

Remind the Selection Committee that when they are assessing a candidate’s CV they should explicitly take into account career breaks and flexible working. When assessing a CV, in general, the duration of parental leave, nursing leave, or similar, should be subtracted from the total duration of a candidate’s research career to make their profile comparable to those who have not had any career breaks.

### *Consider co-authorship equally for women and men*

When the Selection Committee are assessing a candidate's publication record they should judge male and female co-authorship equally. Evidence suggests that women who co-author papers do not receive as much credit for their work as men do (14). A study in the field of economics demonstrates that women who co-author papers are less likely to get promoted than men who co-author. Effectively, women are penalised for collaborating, while men are not. The effect only disappears when a woman solo-authors a paper (14).

### **Creating a Shortlist**

When creating a candidate shortlist:

- Analyse the pool of applicants by collecting data on gender and including it in the applicants pool form (see Form 1).
- Define checkpoints at which you make a considered decision about whether the pool of candidates and its diversity is satisfactory.
- In the case where there is no, or only one, female candidate shortlisted, interviews should be postponed and the candidate search should continue until at least two women are shortlisted.
- The Selection Committee should be provided with a shortlist form to record why applicants were or were not shortlisted (see Form 2 for an example).
- It can be useful to create separate shortlists ranking candidates by different criteria to mitigate the "halo" effect, which results from overall impressions, and consider the top ranking candidates from these different lists.
- Ensure that the Chair guides the discussion at the Selection Committee meeting on the basis of selection criteria and within the equal recruitment policy.
- Identify candidates who increase intellectual diversity, work well with students and colleagues, and have the ability and commitment to mentor students and juniors.

### **References**

Be aware that reference letters can differ between male and female candidates due to gender bias. Research has shown that female applicants are only half as likely to receive excellent letters versus good letters compared with male applicants (15). Reference letters written for men – independent of the sex of the author - are on average longer, are more likely to mention publications and accomplishments, and are less likely to include "doubt raisers" (such as negative language or potentially negative comments) than reference letters written for women (16, 17).



## INVITING AND INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

### Detailed and Welcoming Invitations

Shortlisted candidates who are invited for an interview should receive informative invitations with sufficient notice. The invitation should include:

- The date, time, location, format of the interviews, and contact information including details of any formal research presentations or chalk talks to allow the candidate to prepare
- A detailed visiting schedule, including the names and titles of all interviewers (in advance prepare a schedule which will show the candidate the full diversity of the institute's community and environment)
- The contact details of an Human Resources representative who is not involved in the selection process

When writing the invitation, consider communicating the opportunity as a "visit" or a "meeting" rather than an interview.

The invitation also provides an opportunity to send the candidate information on the institute, work environment, the city, family-friendly policies, dual career services, flexible work models, benefits, reimbursement policies, etc.

### Interviews

The purpose of the interviews are:

- To determine how well the applicant could perform the duties of the job
- To determine how well the applicant meets the selection criteria
- To identify the person who best demonstrates the ability to meet the advertised selection criteria
- To identify which candidates do not meet certain criteria
- To clarify any issues or ambiguities in the candidate's application (6)

An interview should be considered to be an information gathering exercise rather than a decision making process.

***Target: Make the candidate feel welcome, not examined, and leave a positive impression***

Establish an open and friendly relationship with the candidate from the start of the meeting to help them overcome any anxiety or nervousness they may be experiencing (Annex 2). The interview should be considered satisfactory when there is a conversation flow between the candidate and Selection Committee members. Remember that the job description should provide the foundation for interview questions (see Annex 3).

Prior to the interviews the Chair should remind all the interviewers to adhere to the following guidelines (6):

- Establish a consistent and equitable approach to the interview process
- Encourage the interviewee to fully answer the questions
- Stop a candidate who talks too much or strays from the topic
- Ensure all questions are covered
- Be aware of time and follow the interview schedule
- Bring the interview to a timely and polite conclusion

### *Avoid panel interviews*

Panel interviews are prone to bias (unconscious or not). Interviewers are more likely to influence each other's assessment of a candidate if they are present together in the same interview (18). Another advantage of holding several one-on-one interviews as opposed to one panel interview is increased data collection. For example, three data points from three individual interviews are better than one data point from one collective panel interview.

### *Structured independent interviews*

When hiring for a senior position, aim to include a minimum of three independent interviews per candidate. These interviews should follow a structured format. All candidates should be asked the same worded questions, which have been prepared in advance and should be based on the selection criteria described in the job advertisement (Annex 3).

Unstructured interviews are often an assessment of "best fit", which is subjective and open to unconscious bias. Looking for a candidate who will "fit" into the institute work environment generally means, finding someone who will blend in easily with the existing structures and not change the status quo (10). When the majority of the existing faculty are male, looking for a candidate who will fit will tend to recruit more of the same.

Every Selection Committee member involved in the interview process should be provided with a form to record how well each candidate fulfills the selection criteria, as assessed by their responses to the interview questions (see Form 3).

#### ***Target: Objective assessment of candidates***

All Selection Committee members should be provided with a short survey asking them to assess each candidate against objective criteria, which are necessary for the job and which were included in the job advertisement. A standard form should be created and modified as appropriate for each recruitment process.

### *Assess candidate responses horizontally not vertically*

Horizontal assessment considers the candidate's performance on a question-by-question basis, contrary to the vertical assessment, based on a candidate-by-candidate performance comparison across all questions (18). Ideally, members of the Selection Committee should hide their own assessment of previous answers from themselves when judging candidate responses to subsequent questions – to reduce the chance that a candidate's previous answers and scores will influence their assessment of subsequent answers. This is important because candidates can give excellent answers to some questions, but poor ones to others, and the interviewer should minimise the risk of either the "halo effect" (where everything is perceived as positive) or the "horn effect" (everything is perceived as being negative) occurring (Annex 4).

Horizontal assessments also decrease the chances of stereotypes and unconscious biases influencing an evaluator's decision. Selection Committees are less likely to rely on the candidate's appearance when simultaneously evaluating and systematically comparing several candidates (18).

When the Selection Committee meets at the end of all the interviews they should be provided with a form (see Form 4 for an example) which allows them to compare all candidates on a criteria by criteria basis.

### *Hold formal presentations after the structured interviews have taken place*

Research presentations (PowerPoint and chalk talks) are frequently used to complement structured interviews as part of the recruitment process when hiring a Principal Investigator. Structured interviews should be held prior to the formal presentations to avoid vertical assessment. If the presentations are held before the interviews, the Selection Committee members are more likely to directly compare the candidates (horizontal assessment) and they are also more likely to remember the first and the last presentations and candidates (primacy and recency – see Annex 4). In addition, during the presentations the Selection Committee members could form an opinion based on first impressions which could subsequently influence their interviews (Annex 4).

Presentations provide an opportunity for a candidate to demonstrate their communication skills. Feedback on the presentations can be structured by providing the Selection Committee and any other audience members with a form which should be handed out before the presentations start (Form 5)

### **Venue**

It is important to arrange the visit venue correctly and ensure it is welcoming by:

- Choosing a comfortable and private room with adequate lighting.
- Ensuring appropriate seating arrangements.
- Removing any visible or audible distractions (telephone or white boards with writing on them) (6).
- If the room is decorated, paying attention that photos are gender-balanced and items displayed are not stereotypical (19).



## CONTRACT OFFERS AND NEGOTIATIONS

### Equitable Offers

When a candidate is offered the position, negotiations over salary and other benefits (e.g. lab space, number of lab members, equipment budget, relocation reimbursement, etc.) should be avoided. Gender pay differences mainly occur because women are more hesitant than men to negotiate for pay rises (20). Thus it is important that the offer consists of an equitable package of salary (based on the market rate, years of experience, and education) and additional benefits. If negotiations are needed, a list of all negotiable criteria should be prepared by the the Selection Committee prior to the start of the recruitment process.

***Target: All salaries and benefits should be equal between employees of similar positions***

Salary criteria and additional benefits should be agreed upon before the start of the interview process and made transparent to the candidates.

### Provide Candidates with Access to an HR Expert

Candidates may not feel comfortable asking a member of the Selection Committee about work-life policies and practices at the institute, as they may feel that they will be judged negatively.

***Target: Separate conversations on work-life balance from the decision-making process***

A Human Resources expert who is independent of the search process can talk with a candidate in confidence and this discussion will not influence the Selection Committee's decision.

### Follow Up Promptly with Candidates after their Institute Visit

It is the Selection Committee's responsibility to compile constructive feedback for the candidates. By keeping good interview notes, and completing the candidate assessment forms, an interviewer should be able to support their decision with relevant examples from the interview.

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## ANNEXES

### Annex 1 - Building Blocks and Suggested Wording for your Recruitment Advertisement

#### 1. Description of the Offered Position

##### **Responsibilities and Requirements**

<i>Instead of writing:</i>	<i>Better write:</i>
"Candidate"	"You"
"We are looking for strong, extraordinary..."	"We look for exceptional, enthusiastic..."
"Who thrive in a competitive atmosphere"	"Who are motivated by high goals..."
"We have a high-performance culture"	"We have a creative culture"
"Strong communication skills"	"Proficient communications skills"
"Outside the box thinking is a must"	"Creative work is required"

From ZipRecruiter

- Also stress personal relationships: "We strive for...", "Your tasks would be...", "Your group contributes to..."
- Description as verbs, not as traits, to encourage females to apply (no negative effect for males)

##### **Qualifications**

- Experience
- Studies
- Technical skills
- Competencies

##### **Offers**

- "You will be offered an appropriate laboratory space, additional resources for research positions, consumables, investments, state-of-the-art core facilities, and a generous research budget to support cutting edge research in a highly interdisciplinary department"
- "You will have the opportunity to work in an innovative research environment and collaborate closely with other groups."

##### **Fringe Benefits and Work-Life Balance**

- "Career planning and guidance to achieve personal career goals and quickly conquer the next professional stage within 3-5 years"
- "Opportunities to contribute to more than one of our current team's projects in order to increase productivity and accelerate career development"
- "The institute also provides a research mentoring program, and internal peer review, to enhance success in research grant applications, as well as other support programs"
- "Childcare vouchers, workplace nursery and 25 days annual leave, increasing by one day per year up to a maximum of 30. We also have a gym, two cafes, dining facilities, and a free campus bus service. Our thriving Sports and Social Club provides many opportunities to meet with people working across the campus"
- "Other benefits include relocation, employment and education support for family members"
- "The institute was awarded the work and family certificate"
- "The institute provides a supportive and family friendly environment in which to develop ambitious and original research. The institute, within the work-family life balance programme, is offering an opportunity to benefit from annual leave allowance, flexible working hours and a teleworking programme. In addition, financial support for relocation and installation, including family, and the availability of an excellent child care facility on campus are also provided"
- "The institute is responsive to the needs of dual career couples"

#### 2. Employment Conditions

- Explain contract extent, possibility of extension, and part-time work
- Starting date
- Salary according to...(do not mention salary negotiations!)
- Working language

### 3. **Institute Description**

**Location** (it can be linked to family life)

- "The institute is situated in (city), which offers an outstanding scientific and cultural environment as well as entertainment and sports activities"
- "Ranked the (number) most livable city in the world with high quality of life and competitiveness studies. (City) is one of the best cities to raise a family"
- "The institute is located in a family-friendly district with various opportunities for child-care facilities and schools"

#### **Scientific Environment**

- "The institute excellence is based on an interdisciplinary, motivated and creative scientific team that is supported by high-end and innovative technologies and a flexible and efficient administration"
- "HR Excellence in Research" logo
- "The (university) promotes research and teaching of the highest international standard. The (university) gives students and staff the opportunity to cultivate their talent in an ambitious and informal environment. An effective organisation – with good working conditions and a collaborative work culture – creates the ideal framework for a successful academic career"
- "The University is ranked among the (number) best universities in the world"
- "We work in an international and multicultural environment with undergraduates, graduate students, exchange students in the ERASMUS program, postdoctoral researchers, educators and scientists at ..."
- "Research staff at the department makes a special effort to increase the awareness and understanding of the importance and impact of (subjects) in our society"

### 4. **Gender Equality/Diversity**

- "The institute offers and promotes a diverse and inclusive environment and welcomes applicants regardless of age, disability, gender, nationality, race, religion or sexual orientation. For additional information please see the Notice of Nondiscrimination/ Gender Equality plan / at..."
- "The institute is committed to employing more people with disabilities and especially encourages them to apply"
- "Appointment will be based on merit alone"

### 5. **Application Procedure**

- Required documents
- Address/email to send applications and inquiries
- Information contact
- Deadline:
  - "The eligibility period will be extended under special circumstances such as maternity"
  - "We reserve the right not to consider material received after the deadline"

### 6. **Further Process/General Selection Procedure**

- Please consider whether you would like to notify candidates who were not on the shortlist.
- "You can read about the recruitment process at..."
- "After a first selection round, candidates will be invited to an interview"
- Data protection: "applications are kept on file for two years after the appointment has gained legal force. The regulations do not apply to attachments that have been printed or otherwise published"

**7. General Information for Your Advertisement**

- Brighter colours and roundness are more associated with and favored by women
- Use pictures which show many different types of people - diversity is valued by all
- Gendered wording in recruitment advertisements endorses gender inequality. Masculine wording decreases women’s interest in a job as it signals to them that they may not belong (11).
- Here we present a list with masculine- and feminine-coded words (some words have been reduced to a 'stem' to cover a range of noun, verb and adjective variants). Keep in mind that the words are organised alphabetically and that masculine- and female-coded words are not paired!

Masculine-coded words	feminine-coded words
active	affectionate
adventurous	agree
aggress-	child
ambition-	cheer
analy-	collab-
assert	commit-
athlete-	communal
autonomy-	compassion
battle	connect
boast	considerate
challeng-	cooperat-
champion	depend
compet-	emotiona-
confident	empathy-
courag-	enthusias-
decisive	feel
defend	flatterable
determin-	gentle
dominant	honest
driven	inclusive
fearless	interdependen-
fight	inter-personal
force	kind
greedy	kinship
head-strong	loyal
hierarch-	modesty
hostil	nag-
implusive	nurture-
independen-	pleasant
individual	polite
intellect	quiet
lead	respon
logic	sensitive
objective	shar-
opinion	submissive
outspoken	support
persist-	sympathy-
principle	tender
reckless	together
self-confiden-	trust
self-relian-	understand
self-sufficien-	warm
stubborn	whin-
superior	yield
unreasonab-	

- Online tools are available, such as Textio or the gender-decoder by Kat Matfield (<http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/>), to check whether your recruitment advertisement is gender-biased.

## Annex 2 - Equity Considerations

(provided by the Human Resources Services from the University of Newcastle, Australia)

Be aware that cultural differences may influence certain behaviour. In some cultures it is polite to speak quietly, or considered disrespectful to make direct eye contact with persons perceived to be in authority.

Under-represented groups are people affected by disadvantage, either historically or currently. This can include discrimination in various aspects of employment. These groups include:

- Women
- Non-native English speakers
- People from a different ethnic background
- People with a disability

Where selection processes are planned and conducted appropriately, applicants are evaluated against objective and relevant selection criteria. This reduces the likelihood of equity-related issues.

## Annex 3 - Questioning Techniques

(Provided by the Human Resources Services from the University of Newcastle, Australia)

Factors such as the context, order and manner in which questions are asked are important. Be flexible in the use of question types to cover all criteria for all candidates.

Ensure that questions are short, clear and unambiguous to ensure that the candidates do most of the talking. Introduce each area of questioning and probe appropriately before moving on. Listen carefully to the answers and take detailed notes. This will:

- Allow assessment of comprehension, vocabulary and articulation of thoughts into speech
- Prompt further questions where required
- Prompt rephrasing of questions if a candidate cannot answer or shows little understanding

### 1. Types of Questions

#### Behavioural Questions

Behavioural interviewing is based on the theory that past behaviour predicts future behaviour. A Selection Committee needs to know what a candidate has done rather than what they would or might do.

For example, if one of the criteria for an administrative position was around "Planning & Organising", do not ask an interviewee, "Tell us how you would manage a busy day". Instead ask: *"Tell us about a time when you faced conflicting priorities and how you determined the top priority"*.

Example: *"Accomplishing team goals requires that all team members fulfill their responsibilities. Tell us about a situation where you helped to clarify a specific team member's roles and responsibilities."*

Example: *"Making a formal presentation can be very challenging. Tell us about a presentation that you wish you could do over and why?"*

Responses to behavioural questions must meet the STAR (Situation/Task, Action, Result) principle by including the following:

- **Situation/Task** (What was the background/context)
- **Action** (What the candidate said or did in response to a situation/task)
- **Result** (The effect of the candidate's actions)

As many candidates provide partial STARS (missing information) or false STARS (vague, theoretical/future-based or opinions) you may need to ask several follow-up questions to evaluate the candidate for that target. All follow-up questions should be phrased in the behavioural style to ensure you receive the information you need.

#### Scenario Questions

Scenarios frame hypothetical situations for candidates. Interviewers can then use the scenario as the basis of questions.

Example: *"There are days when this position can be very busy. The phone will be ringing, students will be waiting at the counter and you may be the only staff member working. Can you tell us about a time when you had to deal with a similar situation and what strategies you used?"*

Scenario questions are often less valuable than behavioural questions in providing a Selection Committee with an understanding of the candidates' demonstrated competencies. Scenario questions can be helpful at understanding how a candidate considers a situation and makes choices, which may be a selection criterion for some roles.

#### Motivation Questions

During the job interview process, the Selection Committee should not only check whether the person has the required skills and experience for the position, they should also try to observe whether the person has the self-motivation to succeed in a job and to ensure that the person delivers his/her best in the role.

To find this out, the interviewer should ask a motivational question.

Example: *"Why do you want to work at the University of Newcastle?"*

Example: *"Tell us about one of the most exciting aspects of your previous job?"*

### **Theoretical/ Knowledge/ Opinion Questions**

This type of questioning can be useful when interviewing senior leaders or academic staff. These questions test the candidates' knowledge of the work environment and their experience with the subject matter.

Example: *"The Australian University sector is entering a period of immense change. What do you think are the major challenges and opportunities ahead for the University?"*

## **2. Suitable Questioning Techniques**

### **Open Questions**

Open questions often start with "tell us", "what", "how", "when", or "why" and encourage candidates to think through their responses. Open questions encourage candidates to speak more freely.

Example: *"Tell us a little about the most important project you have worked on in your current position?"*

### **Follow-up Questions**

Follow-up questions seek more information relating to the previous question. These questions are spontaneous rather than planned.

Example: (Candidate) *"I had some responsibility for the Project".*

(Interviewer) *"What were the responsibilities you had?"*

### **Mirroring Questions**

Mirroring questions re-state the interviewee's previous answers and invite them to add further information.

Example: (Candidate) *"I had to motivate the project team each day."*

(Interviewer) *"The project team required motivation?"*

(Candidate) *"Yes. We would meet briefly in the morning to discuss ideas and opportunities for improvements that would keep the project on track. Everyone looked forward to the briefings."*

## **3. Questions to Avoid**

### **Leading/Loaded Questions**

These do not generate original thought and could make a candidate defensive.

Example: *"It seems that you don't really like dealing with customers, do you?"*

### **Double-Barrelled Questions**

These questions confuse candidates and reflect a lack of clarity and planning by the committee.

Example: *"Tell me what you like most about your current job, and where you have been able to demonstrate the best use of your initiative?"*

### **Closed Questions**

Closed questions elicit a yes/no response and provide little value other than to establish facts.

Example: *"Were you in charge of the project?"*

### **Trick Questions / Stress Tactics**

These questions are very stressful for applicants and can be counterproductive.

Example: *"You say you don't like conflict. Would you agree then that you wouldn't stand up to a manager that you disagreed with?"*

### **Questions Based on Stereotypes or Assumptions**

Questions relating to marital status, parenting, physicality, residential address, family composition or care arrangements should not be asked. Candidates may willingly offer personal information, but questions should not be asked in this area.

Example: *"Will you need to leave work early in order to pick up your kids from school?"*

### **Questions on Culture or Ethnicity**

These are only important where knowledge of a particular language or culture is a requirement for a position.

## **4. Equity Questions**

As a Selection Committee member, it is necessary to understand the implications of the different levels of equity knowledge and/or experience for different positions to ensure that appropriate equity questions are asked at the interview.

### **Non-Supervisory Positions**

- Capacity to deal effectively with students from diverse backgrounds
- Cross-cultural communication skills
- Understanding of equity principles

**Supervisory Positions**

- Knowledge of, and ability to, apply equity and diversity principles
- Knowledge and understanding of equity and diversity issues for staff and students in higher education

These involve knowing how to implement equity principles and understanding responsibilities as a supervisor and issues relating to the higher education sector.

Examples of employment equity that supervisors would experience on a day-to-day basis would include:

- Ensuring staff had access to information
- Backing opportunities
- Rotations and opportunities to act in higher 'duties'
- Encouraging staff to undertake training programs for both work and personal related development
- Ensuring the environment for students and staff is free from harassment and discrimination
- Handling grievances

**Senior Management/Management Positions**

At this level, applicants should understand direct and indirect discrimination and be aware of staff and student equity-related plans and strategies. Applicants should have a record of implementing equity policy in their area of operation.

- Proven capacity to develop and implement equity strategies.
- Demonstrated understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of equity, and a willingness and capacity to implement equity plans and policies.
- Applicants should give examples of their personal involvement in implementing, monitoring and reviewing policies and programs to achieve student and staff equity goals, and provide ideas for future initiatives.

## Annex 4 - Hazards in Selection

(Provided by the Human Resources Services from the University of Newcastle, Australia)

It is important that Committee members are aware of these common hazards in the selection process and do not impose an 'unconscious bias' on certain candidates.

### **First impressions**

Initial impressions of a candidate biases the interviewer either for or against them.

### **"Halo" Effect**

Where a Committee member is so impressed by one attribute of a candidate that they will attribute positive qualities for all other criteria regardless of the evidence.

### **Leniency or Strictness**

Where candidates are appraised either too leniently or too strictly.

### **Primacy and Recency**

A tendency to recall the first few or last few candidates only, (hence the importance of written interview notes).

### **"Outsiders"**

A tendency to give a lower estimate to a candidate because they are not from "within" the organisation or, because their current workplace or role is looked upon in less favourable terms.

### **Over-Emphasis on the Interview**

Some Selection Committees try to glean information on the full range of selection criteria during interviews. It has been shown, however, that not all capabilities are reliably and validly assessable at the interview. Some information, such as applicant's efficiency and standard of work, can be assessed by other means. Interpersonal abilities, for example, may best be evaluated verbally with nominated referees or assessed during a site visit. Other skills may be best assessed through tests, set tasks, presentations and work samples.

### **Rushed Final Decision**

Selection Committees sometimes fail to consider all the available information and instead make hasty decisions based on impressions. In other cases, the majority vote prevails, with some members changing their minds or having to accept a decision about which they still have serious doubts.

### **Future Capacity of the Applicant is Not Considered**

It is important to ensure that undue weight is not given to lack of skills, which may be overcome by a short period of on-the-job training. An applicant may lack some ability in written work, but in all other aspects is the best candidate. Where a deficiency is not serious enough to prevent the applicant from performing the main duties of the job, the committee should consider whether a period of training would be sufficient to develop the applicant's missing skills in an acceptable period of time.

Conversely, some skills are very difficult to develop if they haven't been exhibited during a career to date. If these are essential to the role and are not evident during the selection process, it is unlikely that these can be effectively developed in the role in a short period of time and it is probably best to continue to search for a candidate who has already demonstrated these capabilities.



**Form 2.** Shortlisting candidate form. The Selection Committee members are asked to provide a reason why a candidate was invited for interview or rejected.

Candidate's name	Invited	Rejected

**Form 3.** Interview review form for Selection Committee members. Each Selection Committee member is asked to score every candidate according to their answers to a standard set of questions (each committee member has their own set of questions). These questions are formulated to assess the candidate’s ability to perform the job and are based on the selection criteria defined in the job advertisement.

Position Title:  
 Committee Member name:

Please record your score for each candidate’s answer.

Score: 1 = fully meets criteria assessed by question    2 = partially meets criteria assessed by question    3 = fails to meet criteria assessed by question

	Candidate Number					
Question	1	2	3	4	5	6
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
Total Score for each Candidate						

**Form 4.** Interview outcome form for the Selection Committee. The full Selection Committee meets after all the interviews have taken place to review all the candidate scores and make a decision regarding who will be made an offer. Comments should be included to support the feedback process when later communicating with the candidates.

Position Title:

Date:

Chair of the Selection Committee:

	Candidate Number					
Candidate's total score from each interview	1	2	3	4	5	6
1						
2						
3						
Candidate's Total Score from all interviews						
Comments						
Final status (offer or reject)						

**Form 5. Presentation Feedback Form**

<b>Candidate Name</b>	
<b>Job Position</b>	
<b>Presentation Title</b>	

**Please score the candidate/presentation for each evaluation criterion below on a scale of 1 to 5 where:  
1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neither agree nor disagree, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree**

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1. The candidate speaks clearly and at a good pace		
2. The candidate engages the audience (candidate uses eye contact, gestures and voice inflection to gain and maintain the audience's interest)		
3. The candidate's language is appropriate for the audience (scientific but avoiding specific field jargon and too many acronyms)		
4. The presentation is logically structured, with smooth transitions between topics		
5. The content of the slides is relevant and supports the presentation		
6. The candidate has considered how they would collaborate with other research groups in the institute		
7. The candidate responds confidently to audience questions and comments		

8. Any further comments: