

Hiring Best Practice Guidance

This guidance is not intended as a replacement for the policies of relevant institutions but as an additional point of reference. The guidance offered here is not binding.

Advertising the Position

This section includes suggestions and guidance for what to include in the role description and person specification, along with other things you can include in the job advert to increase applications from diverse candidates.

Remote and Flexible Working

- Try to **offer remote and flexible working as default**. If you can't, ensure you have a good reason for this.
 - Offering remote and flexible working as default is likely to increase your pool of candidates in general, as well as likely increasing the diversity of the candidates.
 - [Studies show women \(particularly when in cohabiting couples/families\) are less likely to relocate for work](#), so roles that are fully or almost fully remote are likely to attract proportionally more women than if the role required them to live within a certain radius of an office.
 - [A study into applications to tech startups found that remote positions in STEM attract 15% more female and 33% more minority job applicants.](#)
 - Remote/hybrid working can also be beneficial in attracting candidates with disabilities or who are neurodivergent.
 - Remote/hybrid working options can also make a role more attractive to those with caring responsibilities.
- **Be as specific as possible** when describing the flexible working patterns available so candidates know whether it would suit them.
- Try to **offer flexible/part-time working** across all levels of seniority.
 - [Flexible working makes a role more attractive in general, but particularly to those with caring responsibilities.](#)

Job Salary

- **Include the salary or salary range clearly on the job advert.**
 - Publishing the salary on the job advert increases transparency and improves equality in pay.
- Ideally, the **salary should be non-negotiable** and this should be stated on the advert.
 - [Women are less likely to negotiate on pay, and women and ethnic minorities are more likely to be viewed unfavourably when they do, achieving poorer outcomes.](#)
 - Neurodivergent candidates are also less likely to negotiate on pay unless it is explicitly stated that they can.

- **If salary is negotiable, this should be stated clearly on the advert.** Clear criteria should be set prior to negotiations which are applied equally to all candidates and outcomes should be monitored to ensure one group is not penalised.
 - This helps women and minorities feel more able to negotiate on pay without being penalised.
 - It is also useful to make this clear for neurodivergent candidates who may assume that salary is non-negotiable if a range is stated.

Other Benefits

- **Include benefits clearly in job adverts** where they go beyond the statutory minimum, such as for paid parental leave, annual leave allowance, and sick leave.

Role and Person Specification

- **Remove biased language**, particularly stereotypically masculine-coded words and phrases (you can find language decoders online to help with this such as [this gender decoder](#)).
 - Biassed language can impact who will apply for a job, particularly language associated with male stereotypes.
 - [This is because when women see job adverts with lots of masculine-coded language, they are more likely to assume that the team is predominantly male and that they would not belong. Conversely, feminine-coded language does not seem to negatively affect men's perception of the role.](#)
 - Examples of stereotypically masculine language include: ambitious, world-beating, self-sufficient, confident, persistent, hierarchical.
 - Examples of stereotypically feminine language include: cooperative, dependable, understanding, considerate, committed.
- **Make essential vs desirable role requirements clear and specific.**
 - Women are more likely to self-reject if they feel they don't meet all of the criteria specified, so making it clear which criteria are desirable but not essential helps.
 - Neurodivergent candidates are also more likely to self-reject if they don't meet the full criteria.
 - Not being specific enough benefits candidates who already have a contact at the hiring institution that they can ask for more details, or candidates who feel confident reaching out to contacts listed on the job advert.
- **Make role requirements behaviour/experience/competency based rather than character based.**
 - Women are more likely to self-reject based on subjective criteria such as "natural leader" or "skilled communicator"
 - For example, rather than "highly skilled programmer", specify "experience using python for data analysis of large datasets" or "familiar with C++".
- **Avoid specifying that you require a 'cultural fit' or a 'person-organisation fit'.**

Other Diversity Considerations

- **Offer reasonable adjustments** both during recruitment and on the job, and state that you are doing so on the job advert.
- **Offer a range of dates and interview times** to fit around applicants' schedules and state these on the job advert.
- If a particular contact person is given on the advert, **including their pronouns** will both avoid misunderstandings and signal that the employer is likely to be a safe environment for trans people.
- **Provide candidates with a clear timeline for the recruitment process** along with details of what will be expected at each step.
- **Anonymised applications are often recommended, with names and dates removed.** These can avoid bias based on gender, age, ethnicity, gaps in employment history, etc. While this doesn't necessarily work in academia, where publication history is considered, it is important to keep in mind the unconscious biases that can creep in here. For example [discrimination against candidates without British sounding names](#). This is where monitoring outcomes at all stages of the selection process can be important, to identify where unconscious bias may be impacting things, and taking action to redress the balance accordingly.

Selection Process

This section includes suggestions and guidance for carrying out the shortlisting and interviewing of candidates as well as monitoring outcomes.

Selection Panel

- **The selection of candidates and the interview should be carried out by a panel** rather than a sole individual
- People sitting on the selection panel should ensure that they've taken **unconscious bias training** prior to doing so (this is a requirement for all CCP4 PIs on the most recent BBSRC grant)
- Trying to **have a diverse selection panel** could limit the effect of unconscious biases such as affinity bias if the diversity in your organisation allows for it ***but if there is not currently diversity in the organisation this can have a negative effect on marginalised staff already working there and on the hiring process. For example, if you decide you need at least one woman on the panel, but that woman is a junior staff member whose opinion is less likely to be listened to in the hiring process, or if there is only one senior woman in an organisation who then has to sit on every interview panel so has less time for her work.***

The Interview

- **Make scheduling the interview flexible** by offering a range of dates and times.
- **Proactively ask candidates** whether they need adjustments, including a list of suggestions, rather than waiting for them to ask.
- **Offer remote interviews** via video conferencing software, and ideally **interview all candidates via the same medium** to avoid unconscious bias. So if one candidate

requires a remote interview, all interviews should be conducted remotely, unless this directly contradicts another candidate's reasonable adjustments.

- **Use structured interviews**, where
 - candidates are all asked the **same questions in the same order**
 - there are clear **scoring criteria** for answers agreed upon in advance
 - members of the panel score answers **independently** from each other **before** discussing as a group
- **Make decisions about candidates in parallel**, by comparing them to each other, rather than deciding one at a time whether to progress them to the next stage

After the Interview

- If you want to keep improving the hiring process, **seek anonymous feedback from all candidates** after it is complete.
- Try to **give personalised feedback on applications and interviews** when giving the decision as this increases accountability .
- **Encourage candidates to reapply** if they narrowly missed out and a similar position becomes available ([women are less likely to reapply for roles, especially senior roles, when compared with men](#)).
- **Proactively offer reasonable adjustments to all new joiners.**
- **Monitor inclusion outcomes against targets at all stages of the selection process.** These targets should be **specific**, have a set **time frame**, be **accountable** to a particular individual or set of individuals, be made **public**, and be **monitored** publicly. Potential targets might include:
 - Aiming for a particular percentage of applications from various demographics
 - Increasing the hire rate for particular demographics to a particular percentage
- **Use inclusion data monitoring to adapt**, for example, to identify whether particular groups are less likely to apply, or are less likely to be short-listed.

Further Reading

<https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/guides/inclusive-employers/>

<https://www.realityhr.co.uk/why-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-edi-should-be-at-the-core-of-your-recruitment-strategy/>

<https://factorialhr.com/blog/diversity-and-inclusion-recruitment-best-practices/#9-diversity-and-inclusion-recruitment-best-practices>

<https://theewgroup.com/blog/seven-steps-inclusive-recruitment-workplace-diversity/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/best-practices-improving-edi-workplace-including-hiring-toronto>

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/guide-positive-action-and-inclusive-recruitment>

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3894404

<https://www.bollettinoadapt.it/old/files/document/3626ATESTFORRACIALDI.pdf>