

Recruitment and Selection Procedures

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Recruitment and Selection Procedures

These procedures cover the activities that form part of the Commissioner's recruitment process.

It is the responsibility of the Head of Corporate Services (HOCS) to ensure that any member of the Commissioner's staff who is involved in any aspect of the recruitment is aware of this document.

These procedures enable consistency across any recruitment we undertake but they may need to be amended in particular cases or where internal resource is limited.

For business continuity purposes, it may be necessary to provide temporary and interim procedures to add to or amend these procedures, for example, when dealing with the impact of a pandemic.

Preparation for Recruitment

Committee Report (CR)

A template Committee Report (CR) - Recruitment will set out the relevant matters to be considered and will need to be prepared by the Head of Department who wishes to recruit to a post within their Department and submitted to the SMT for consideration and decision. The HOCS should be consulted on any draft CR relating to recruitment.

The Senior Management Team (SMT) will need to approve the recommendations in the CR which and, also, the business case for the proposed recruitment and the members of the Selection Panel which will be set out in the CR.

Selection Panel (SP)

The SP will be made up of at least one member of the SMT and shall be agreed as part of the CR approval process for the proposed recruitment.

The SP will be supported by the HOCS and/or the FAM who will provide HR advice and guidance on the proposed recruitment.

The SP will agree

- the Recruitment Action Plan (RAP) – a template for this is filed in VC
- the Job Description and Person Specification (JD and PS)
- the selection process
- the advertisement
- the interview dates

Head of Corporate Services (HOCS) and the Finance and Administration Manager (FAM)

The HOCS will provide overall HR guidance and advice on recruitment, selection and appointment of employees.

HR advice and guidance must be obtained on the following:

- draft JD and PS
- proposed selection process
- draft advertisement and timescales
- proposed interview dates
- draft terms and conditions of employment

The FAM will review the draft terms and conditions of employment and submit these to HOCS for approval

Corporate Services Team (CST)

For any proposed recruitment, the CST will:

- prepare the RAP, including timescales, for approval by the SP
- SP should advise CST of the preferred media they wish to use for advertising e.g. local press, national press, on-line advertising, Job Centre, external websites
- establish costs of placing adverts in the press / online job sites / job centres as directed by SMT and a quote should include:
 - details of Cost for online only advertising
 - cost for printed media only advertising
 - cost for online and printed advertisement
 - lead times/deadlines for publication
 - size of advertisement including word count
 - can online advertising be directed to our website only for application pack
 - a summary of the costs for each advertising media and contact details for the companies should be saved to VC
- prepare the draft advertisement - a proposed proof of the advertisement should be supplied to CST by the chosen publications/websites prior to publication
- arrange for the publication of the advertisement as approved by the SP including the necessary layout, style and proofing
- ensure that all advertising for the post is removed following the closing date for applications
- prepare the Application Pack
- set up a Recruitment Monitoring Spreadsheet in VC, restricting access to Administrator and FAM
- set up an Outlook folder – Outlook Folder will hold applications received by email and access will be restricted to Administrator and FAM.

Timescales

Once the decision has been made to carry out recruitment, the timescales should be agreed by the SP and these will be set out in the RAP. An adequate and reasonable amount of time must be allowed for each stage of the recruitment process and take into account the other duties and responsibilities of the SP, the FAMs, the Administrator and the HOCS.

The recruitment timescales are subject to there being sufficient staff resource available to carry out the recruitment. On average:

- at least 8 weeks are required from the approval to recruit to the making of a conditional offer of employment. However, more than 8 weeks may be required where sufficient staff resource is not available
- if second interviews are required, the timescales will need to be extended by a further 3-4 weeks so that there is sufficient time to organise and hold those interviews
- once a conditional offer of employment is made at least 6 weeks are required to enable the pre-employment checks to be carried out

Recruitment Action Plan (RAP)

The RAP should detail the individual actions required in date order starting at week 1, who is responsible for carrying out the actions and the required completion date.

The draft RAP should be referred to the SP for review and approval.

Following approval of the RAP, each staff member involved in the recruitment process should ensure that they monitor the RAP, complete any actions they are required to undertake and update the RAP in VC.

Advertising

All jobs will be advertised on the basis of fair competition.

Generally, jobs will be advertised externally but there may be operational reasons why the SMT decides it appropriate to first or only advertise a job internally.

These reasons could include, for example:

- to support staff development and progression
- where the appointment is temporary (e.g. maternity cover)
- where new organisational structures and procedures are piloted with a view to informing potential permanent changes.

If no suitable internal candidate is appointed, the job may then be advertised externally.

Irrespective of how and where a job is advertised, absent staff (e.g. illness, maternity, career break etc.) will be informed of the advertisement and provided with a copy.

Adverts placed in external media should direct applicants to the recruitment pages on the Commissioner's website where an application pack will be available to download, or to contact the main office to be sent an application pack by email or by post.

The same text should be used for all media, including the Commissioner's website and should include the minimum necessary requirements.

Job Description and Person Specification (JD&PS)

The job description should cover the main purpose of the post, the tasks, duties and responsibilities involved.

The person specification should describe the skills, knowledge, abilities, qualifications, experience and qualities that are considered essential or desirable in an applicant, in order to perform the tasks, duties and responsibilities of the post.

The job description and person specification must not discriminate, directly or indirectly, against anyone with a protected characteristic.

The HOCS should be consulted on the draft JD and PS.

The SP will approve the JD and PS.

Application form

A template application form is filed in VC.

The application form should be updated for each recruitment by the Administrator as follows:

- Part A – add closing time, day and date
- Part B – Populate each of the box headings in the Essential and Desirable Personal Characteristics and Behaviours/Competences section using the approved Job description and person specification for reference.

The FAM should review the Application Form before the post is advertised.

Where applications are invited by completing and returning a form online, it is likely to be a reasonable adjustment for the form to be made accessible to disabled people. If on-line forms are not accessible to disabled people, the form should be provided in an alternative way. Where an application is submitted in an accessible format, an employer must not discriminate against disabled applicants in the way that it deals with these applications.

Equal opportunities monitoring form (EOMF)

A template EOMF is filed in VC.

To prepare the EOMF for inclusion with the application pack the Administrator should create a new form, add the post title to the form and save as a MS Word document in VC.

The EOMF should be reviewed by the FAM before it is included in the Application Pack.

Terms and conditions of employment (summary and main)

The template documents are filed in VC.

The SMT/SP will provide the necessary information to the FAM to allow creation of the documents. This information should include:

- Job title
- Salary grade/scale
- Hours of work
- Type of contract – permanent or fixed term

Using the above information, the FAM will calculate the starting salary and holiday entitlement, pro-rata if required.

The terms and conditions must be approved by the HOCS. The summary terms and conditions should be issued with the application pack.

The main terms and conditions document will be issued with the formal offer of appointment issued by the HOCS.

Application Pack (AP)

The AP should contain:

- Job description and person specification
- Application form
- Equal opportunities monitoring form
- Summary terms and conditions of employment
- Additional information as appropriate

Recruitment monitoring spreadsheet

The Administrator/FAM will set up a recruitment monitoring spreadsheet from the VC template to record and monitor the process of receiving applications. Access should be restricted to the Administrator and the FAM only. If the FAM is part of the SP, access should be restricted to the Administrator only.

Outlook folder

The Administrator will create a folder within Outlook to hold application forms received by email.

Access to the folder should be restricted to the Administrator and FAM only. If the FAM is part of the SP, access should be restricted to the Administrator only.

Application Process

The CST will:

- Issue and send the application pack
- Maintain the record of all information packs issued and sent
- Maintain the record of applications received
- Prepare the applications for the short-listing process

Sending application packs

The application pack should be made available on the Commissioner's website. Requests for an application pack may be received by email or telephone or in person (when office premises are open)

The application pack should be issued by the Administrator and sent to the requester by email. Where it is not possible or suitable to send the application pack by email, an application pack can be sent by post.

The recruitment monitoring spreadsheet should be updated with the details of application that have been issued.

Receiving applications

Applications must be processed in accordance with our data protection requirements - see below Data Protection.

Applications can be accepted by email (into the Enquiries inbox), post or delivery by hand.

If not already signed, applicants attending for interview in person will be asked to sign their application form.

CST handle all applications at this stage.

Throughout the recruitment process all application forms received should be held securely and electronically in the protected public folder in Outlook and, if a paper copy is received, in the locked cupboard in Bell.

The EOMFs should be separated from the application form and held securely in electronically until the closing date. Access to the folder should be restricted to the Administrator and FAM only. If the FAM is part of the SP, access should be restricted to the Administrator only.

After the closing date had passed, the FAM will access these for equality information gathering. If the FAM is part of the SP, access should be restricted to the Administrator only.

All applications should be filed on receipt in the Outlook folder created for this purpose. This folder will have access restrictions and will only be able to be accessed by the Administrator and the FAMs. If the FAM is part of the SP, access to this folder should be restricted to the Administrator only.

An acknowledgement must be sent for all applications received.

The application form states that evidence of emailing an application does not guarantee that it has been received by us and applicants are informed that there is no confirmation that we have received it until they receive an acknowledgement.

Responding to enquiries about the post

Enquiries should be directed as follows:

- information regarding the job content and requirements: the SMT member of the SP
- information regarding the recruitment process and terms & conditions: the HOCS

No informal or formal discussions should be entered into regarding the suitability of the enquirer for the post.

Closing date

The job advertisement will detail the closing date and time. The time is normally 1200 noon on the closing date.

On occasions we may receive an application after the closing time. For example, an applicant may email an application to us just before the closing time but it may take several minutes to be delivered. If this happens, it is at the discretion of the HOCS or the SMT member of the SP whether the application will be accepted.

Processing applications

The Administrator will:

- enter the applicant details on to the recruitment monitoring spreadsheet on the 'Applicants' tab, allocating each application a unique reference number.
- include the reference number on all pages of the electronic copy of each application form.
- remove the front 'personal information' page (Part A) and the 'declaration page' and file separately in VC

Consideration of applications

Criteria checklist

Selection criteria consist of all essential and desirable characteristics against which an applicant will be considered and shortlisted for interview.

The Administrator will create a new document from the VC template and file to VC with the appropriate security settings.

The Administrator will populate the VC template, completing the essential and desirable characteristics, lifting these directly from the JD&PS.

There should be nothing on the criteria checklist which is not included in the JD&PS.

Applicant assessment form

An assessment form will be created for each application form and each member of the SP will be provided assessment form for each application and the VC reference for that form.

Selection of candidates for interview

The Administrator will prepare the selection materials for each member of the SP

The selection materials consist of:

- the JD&PS
- the application forms
- the criteria checklist
- the applicant assessment form – each member of the SP must have their own assessment form filed in VC and needs to be informed of the VC number of their form

Each member of the SP will read through each application independently using the criteria checklist and completing the applicant assessment form for each applicant

The SP should meet, virtually or in person, as appropriate, and

- review each application and their individual assessments of the applications
- agree the short list of the applicants to be invited to an interview
- notify the FAM of the applicants to be invited to interview

- notify the FAM of the applicants who are unsuccessful at the application stage and will not be invited to interview

The FAM will:

- prepare, sign and send an email to each unsuccessful applicant
- prepare, sign and email inviting applicants who have been selected for interview
- update the Recruitment Monitoring Spreadsheet with details of applicants invited to interview and who were unsuccessful at the application stage

Interviews

Interview questions and, if required, presentation or exercise

The SP should agree:

- interview questions
- member of SP who will ask each question
- points available for each question
- If there is to be a presentation or exercise
 - format of presentation/exercise
 - time allowed
 - information given to candidate to allow preparation, if any

The relevant information should be passed to the Administrator who will prepare the interview scoring sheet for the electronic interview packs.

Ability tests and other similar methods should only be used if they are well designed, properly administered and are a reliable method of predicting an applicant's performance in a particular post. If such a test leads to direct or indirect discrimination or discrimination arising from a disability, even if such discrimination is not intended and the reason for the discrimination is not understood, the test should not be used unless it can be objectively justified.

We should make adjustments where a test or assessment would put an applicant at with a disability at a substantial disadvantage, if such adjustments would be reasonable.

The HOCS should be consulted on the proposed interview questions and on the format and requirements for any presentation or exercise.

Invitation to interview

The FAM will:

- prepare the invitation to interview emails using the VC template.
- the emails must set out the arrangements for the interview, including whether it will be held virtually or in person

- the emails must also ask an interviewee to confirm whether they have any additional support needs and ask them to inform us as soon as possible of any additional support needs e.g. sign language interpreter, hearing induction loop.
- keep a copy of the emails in the Outlook folder
- update the recruitment monitoring spreadsheet with details of the interview timetable.

The Administrator will update the SP diaries with the proposed interviews dates.

Preparation for interviews

Interview packs

The Administrator will prepare an electronic copy of interview pack for each member of the SP. Each pack should contain:

- Interview timetable
- Application forms
- Interview scoring sheet which incorporates the interview questions

Interview scoring sheet

The Administrators will create a new document using the VC template Interview Scoring Sheet and save this in VC with the appropriate security setting. A copy of the Interview Scoring Sheet must be set and filed in VC for each member of the SP.

The Interview Scoring Sheet should contain the following information:

- Post
- Date (of interview)
- Interviewers
- Details of written test or assessment exercise and points available, if used.
- Update each of the questions with the information provided by the SP:
 - Question
 - Who will ask the question
 - Points for – is there any specific attribute required
 - Points available

Interview day

Right to Work in the UK checks

A copy of the checklist should be set up in VC for each applicant attending for interview with the appropriate security setting.

In consultation with the HOCS, the FAM will decide whether the right to work checks will be carried out prior to or on the day of the interview. This will enable flexibility depending on whether the interviews are being held virtually or in person.

After the Right to Work in the UK checks have been undertaken, the FAM should complete the individual checklists referring to the appropriate guidance as required.

If the checks are being carried out in person, the checks must be carried out with the applicant present and copies of documents submitted as evidence taken at the time.

The HOCS will assess the Right to Work in the UK checks for each candidate and confirm whether they are satisfactory.

Copies taken of an unsuccessful applicant's documents will be securely destroyed following interview. The copy documents of the successful applicant who is appointed to the post being recruited to will be retained as part of their employee file.

The interview

All candidates should be asked the same questions that are set out on the interview sheet and their answers scored consistently.

The interview scoring sheet provided to each member of the SP for each applicant should be used to record notes of their answers. Any notes on paper should be kept securely in a locked cupboard or cabinet to which no other person has access.

If the interview is in person, interviewers may make notes on paper during the interviews and following the interviews these will be given to the FAM who will arrange for them to be held securely.

Interviewers should avoid:

- asking questions concerning an interviewee's personal life
- commenting on the interviewee's location (if a virtual interview)

If second interviews are required the SP will notify the HOCS and the FAM who will provide HR advice and guidance on the process to be followed will be provided.

Selection

The SP should meet to compare scoring and agree the preferred candidate

The SMT member of the SP advises the Commissioner of the preferred candidate and seeks authority to make a verbal conditional offer of employment.

The Commissioner authorises the making of a conditional offer of employment and confirms this to the SMT member of the SP and the HOCS.

The SMT member of SP telephones the preferred candidate to make the conditional offer of employment and obtain verbal acceptance.

A conditional offer of employment letter will be prepared by the FAM, signed by the HOCS and sent to the successful applicant by email requesting confirmation that their referees can be contacted

Unsuccessful applicants following interview

The SMT member of SP can provide verbal feedback to unsuccessful applicants who were interviewed. If written feedback is requested or required, this will be drafted by the SMT member of the SP and HOCS consulted on the draft before it is sent.

The FAM will prepare and send emails to unsuccessful applicants who were interviewed using the template in VC. The wording of the email should be approved by the HOCS.

The FAM will file the emails in the Outlook folder.

The FAM will update the recruitment monitoring spreadsheet with details of those applicants who were unsuccessful.

Conditional offer and pre-employment checks

An applicant who is successful at interview and who receives a conditional offer of employment must undertake pre-employment checks to progress to an unconditional offer of employment.

The pre-employment checks will include:

- Right to work and identity checks
- References
- Basic criminal records check
- Right to work and identity checks
- Security clearance - security clearance is required for all posts

The Commissioner can only make a formal unconditional offer of employment once the pre-employment checks process is complete and satisfactory assessments of the checks have been obtained.

The Recruitment and Selection Policy sets out more details on the Pre-employment Checks.

Pre-employment Checks

Right to work in the UK and identity checks

The right to work in the UK and identity checks will be carried out by the FAM and we may ask for the relevant evidence prior to an interview taking place. The HOCS will assess the right to work and identity checks and confirm whether they are satisfactory.

If an employee's right to work is time-limited, we will need to check their right to work and identity documents when they are due to expire.

If an applicant's right to work in the UK and identity checks are not satisfactory, the applicant cannot be appointed to the post being recruited to and, if these checks are carried out prior to interview, may not be able to take part in any interview.

References

The FAM will seek the references and before doing so must have written confirmation that the successful applicant has consented to the references being obtained.

The references will be assessed by the HOCS who will advise the Commissioner as to whether they are satisfactory. If satisfactory references are not provided the conditional offer of employment will be withdrawn.

Basic criminal records check

The basic criminal records check will be assessed by the HOCS, in consultation with the Commissioner.

Security Clearance

All staff employed by the Commissioner have to undergo security clearance and there is a Security Vetting Policy and Procedure set out in the Employee Handbook.

If an applicant is successful at interview and a conditional offer of employment is made, the HOCS will arrange for the successful applicant to complete a security vetting form which will be processed by the Scottish Parliament's Security Office on behalf of the Commissioner.

Once the security vetting has been completed, the outcome will be communicated to the applicant and the HOCS. If satisfactory security clearance is not obtained the conditional offer of employment will be withdrawn.

Appointment procedure

Following the issue of a conditional offer of employment to a successful applicant, the HOCS will:

- assess the references received in respect of an applicant
- assess the basic criminal records check provided by an applicant, in consultation with the Commissioner
- obtain confirmation from the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body as to whether security clearance has or has not been obtained

Once the above matters have been assessed and the confirmation received, the HOCS will make a recommendation to the Commissioner as to whether or not a formal offer of employment should be made to the applicant.

If the Commissioner decides that a formal offer of employment should be made, the HOCS and the FAM will prepare the relevant documentation to be sent with the formal offer letter.

The HOCS will sign the formal offer letter and this will be sent by email to the successful applicant.

The applicant will be asked to confirm their acceptance of the employment terms and conditions in writing.

If the Commissioner decides that a formal offer of employment should not be made, the HOCS and FAM will prepare the relevant documentation to be sent notifying the applicant that the conditional offer of employment has been withdrawn and that they have been unsuccessful.

Equal opportunities monitoring forms (EOMFs)

The FAM will collate information from the anonymous EOMFs for the purposes of recruitment equalities monitoring and reporting.

Once the monitoring and reporting has been completed, the EOMFs will be securely destroyed. The EOMFs should not be held for longer than 12 months following the recruitment exercise.

Induction

A Model Induction Manual is available in VC and the Induction Plan for the new employee will be set up by the FAM. The HOD for the department in which the new employee will be based is responsible for populating the Induction Plan.

The Induction Manual contains three sections:

- Part 1 – mandatory elements
- Part 2 – necessary for the new employee to be able to do their job
- Part 3 – role specific elements

Part 1 and Part 2 elements have already been populated in the Induction Manual and the HOD should add any additional training required for the post.

The HOD should consult any staff involved in training to check their availability and allocated training slots should be agreed with the member of staff who will be providing the training.

The Administrator can provide assistance with diary planning and will ensure that all relevant staff diaries are updated with the schedule. Sufficient and adequate breaks between induction training/meetings must be included for all participants in the schedule.

The final version of the Induction Manual should be sent by email to the new employee prior to their start date, if possible.

Records Management

All documents generated throughout our recruitment processes must be kept securely and held electronically at all times, where possible. Generally, no recruitment documents should be printed or held as paper records. If a paper record is required, this should be authorised by the FAM by email and the FAM will also provide instructions as regards the appropriate records management requirements for the paper record.

The FAM and the Administrator will ensure that all recruitment documentation is held and disposed of securely in accordance with the Commissioner's Data Protection Policy and Handbook.

Following acceptance of the unconditional offer, the related recruitment documentation should be dealt with as follows:

- Successful candidate - original application form, applicant assessment form and interview scoring sheet should be filed by the FAM in VC for retention as part of the employee's employment file.
- Unsuccessful applicants/interviewees – the original application form, applicant assessment forms, criteria checklists, interview scoring sheets, recruitment monitoring

spread sheet and copies of letters issued to the applicants should all be filed in VC by the FAM and securely destroyed after a period of six months. Any paper records should be collated by the FAM and held securely in the HR cabinet in Bell for a period of six months before being securely destroyed. A Calendar reminder should be created to highlight when the six-month period has elapsed.

Data Protection

The Commissioner recognises the importance of safeguarding personal privacy when dealing with information received from applicants during a recruitment process. Relevant data protection laws, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018, require us to inform an applicant about what data we hold on an applicant and the purposes for which this data might be used. This information can be found in in the Commissioner's Privacy Notice, available at: <http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/home/privacy.aspx>.

The Commissioner undertakes to process personal data obtained during a recruitment process in accordance with the following data protection principles. Personal data will be:

- used lawfully, fairly and in a transparent way
- collected only for valid purposes that are clearly explained and not used in any way that is incompatible with those purposes
- relevant to specific purposes and limited only to those purposes
- accurate and kept up to date
- kept only as long as necessary for the specified purposes and
- kept securely.

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