Recruitment Toolkit: Equality, diversity and inclusion in recruitment

This advice selects and combines information from the University of Edinburgh [diversifying recruitment guidance](https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/inclusion/diversifying-recruitment), and the [Future Leaders Fellows Development Network](https://www.flfdevnet.com/recruitment-toolkit/) EDI guidance.

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EDI in your recruitment strategy

* Have you considered the diversity of your department/ team and identified any under-representation, based on clear evidence? You may wish to consider the staff or student demographic data contained in the [EDI Dashboard](https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/GSP-BI/SitePages/EDI.aspx) for an overview of the current status.
* Have you included your staff/ colleagues in your recruitment strategy? Communicating to others throughout the process enables you to promote the transparency and integrity of your recruitment strategy, demonstrating that considerations for diversity have been adopted.
* Have you actively considered options for job sharing or flexible, hybrid and part-time working to diversify your pool of potential applicants even further?
* Are you familiar with the many [initiatives in all areas of equality](https://www.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity/inclusion) that the University supports to attract people from underrepresented groups?
* Have you undertaken the [mandatory diversity and inclusion training](https://www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/recruitment-guidance/planning-your-recruitment) to understand the challenges which may come with recruitment from under-represented groups?

# EDI and clarifying the role

* Try to avoid unintentional non-inclusive language or bias within your job description. Consider using a tool, such as [Bias Decoder | Totaljobs](https://www.totaljobs.com/insidejob/gender-bias-decoder/), to identify words that may impact negatively on the diversity of your applicant pool. You could ask colleagues or local HR administrators to review the language and content of the document.
* Review your essential criteria to ensure they are realistic/reasonable. If there are narrow parameters, can they be justified? Have you allowed for the possibility of equivalent experience or qualifications?
* Take care not to exclude people/groups within the criteria. For example, stating a certain number of years’ experience will exclude people on age basis even though they may be just as competent with less experience.
* The [University’s Equality Outcomes 2021–2025 report](https://www.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity/about/outcomes) includes an action to "advance the use of positive actions to promote diversity in our staff". Make sure you understand the difference between lawful positive action and unlawful positive discrimination.
  + Positive action in recruitment can include: actively seeking candidates from underrepresented groups and encouraging them to apply; setting diversity targets and challenging yourself to achieve these; taking forward candidates from disproportionately underrepresented groups over other candidates of equal merit.
  + Positive discrimination in recruitment would occur in: appointing an unqualified or less qualified candidate solely because they have a protected (equality) characteristic; and setting quotas (versus setting targets) for appointment of candidates with particular protected characteristics.
* If negotiation on salary is possible, make this explicit. Avoid language like 'competitive' as this can make candidates with marginalised identities less likely to apply.
* Clearly state if home working or flexible working is possible.
* If recruiting PGRs, think about how you are assessing potential and not just the experience that people are bringing.
  + Some students will have had the opportunity to gain unpaid work experience in research labs as an undergraduate, whilst others will have had to prioritise paid work with less relevance to research.
  + Researchers from less research-intensive universities are often put off by unfamiliar jargon or poorly defined words like ‘excellence’.

## Related resources

* '[A Guide to Inclusive Recruitment for Employers' - PDF online from the CIPD](https://www.cipd.org/globalassets/media/knowledge/knowledge-hub/guides/2023-pdfs/inclusive-recruitment-employers-guide_tcm18-112787.pdf) - An in-depth guide to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion at all stages in the recruitment process.
* ['Inclusive Recruitment' - Online toolkit from Imperial College](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/recruitment-and-promotions/recruitment/inclusive-recruitment/) - A guide with several academic recruitment case studies, highlighting good practice in language for job descriptions, as well as many other areas.
* ['Guide to Positive Action and Inclusive Recruitment' - Online guide from UCL](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/guide-positive-action-and-inclusive-recruitment) - A great start if you want to get to grips with what positive action actually means in practice.

# EDI and advertising the role

* Cast your net wide for applicants and consider targeted promotion to under-represented groups. If in doubt, try Googling '[under-represented characteristic] in [Discipline]' - on the model of groups like 'Black in STEM' – to see what’s out there, and whether that could provide a route to reaching those groups. Contact them and/or tag them on platforms like LinkedIn when promoting opportunities.
* Consider the use of appropriate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion statements within your advert. Does it demonstrate a commitment to equality, e.g. explicitly welcoming applications from under-represented groups?
* Ensure that language in adverts is unambiguous. This is particularly helpful for neurodiverse applicants.
* Check that the language you use within your advert is inclusive using software such as such as [Bias Decoder | Totaljobs](https://www.totaljobs.com/insidejob/gender-bias-decoder/).
* Your advertisement on the University systems/website or your social media should be accessible to potential candidates (e.g. those with visual impairments, colour blindness, dyslexia). Further guidance on creating accessible materials is available from [Information Services](https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/help-consultancy/accessibility/creating-materials).
* Know where the [Universities EDI websites](https://www.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity) are that represents its commitment to EDI (e.g. mission statements, work on equity campaigns, safe space policy/code of conduct, reasonable adjustments/accessibility) so you can signpost this to candidates.

## Related resources

* [Inclusive recruitment: Guide for employers (CIPD)](https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/guides/inclusive-employers/#attracting-diverse-candidates) - A step-by-step guide for employers to ensure fair processes are set up to attract a more diverse talent pool.
* [The University of Glasgow Athena SWAN Neurodiversity Resource Hub](https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/cancersciences/athena/neurodiversityresourcehub/jobrecruitment/) - See the section on 'Advertising roles and use of language' for a great resource for ensuring your adverts are inclusive and encourage a diverse talent pool.

# EDI when selecting your candidate

### **Shortlisting and planning the interview**

* Have more than one person shortlist - do this independently and then compare notes. Consider shortlisting applicants without knowledge of their identity, at least in the first instance, if admin is available to support this.
* Make sure your panel is diverse and that at least one person is not in your team or personally invested in the appointment.
* Be aware of unconscious bias and consider using an independent unconscious bias observer (if available). Bias is more likely to creep in when you are under pressure or tired so prepare well and plan the process so that all involved can take breaks.
* Consider providing candidates with interview questions (or a general overview of question style/themes) in advance as this can reduce stress, improve accessibility, and enable candidates to prepare more thoroughly. For example, British Sign Language (BSL) users able to prepare questions with their BSL/English interpreters are perceived as more competent by employers.
* Ask if any of your candidates require reasonable adjustments for the selection process.

### **During the interview**

* Be aware of how you might be interpreting mannerisms or behaviours such as hesitation or lack of eye contact, this could be due to neurodiversity, nerves and many other reasons. Be prepared to break questions down or ask them in a different manner.
* After each interview, panellists should have a period of quiet reflection to record their scores and comments. Avoid communicating cues or signals that may influence and shape the approach of fellow panellists.
* Sufficient time should be built into the recruitment schedule to allow panellists to discuss in full the scoring of each candidate. All panellists should have equal time to share their evidence-based assessment of each candidate’s strengths and weaknesses in relation to each of the criteria. Within this dynamic, it is important that there is not a ‘rush to consensus’ or attempts to influence/cajole others into following the consensus. Panellists should be prepared and encouraged to openly share their own views, and to constructively challenge colleagues when there is a lack of evidence to support assertions.
* All panellists should be made aware that, as at any stage of the selection process, it is permissible in law to prioritise candidates from disproportionately underrepresented groups over other candidates of equal merit.
* Be prepared to justify each decision to advance or eliminate a candidate. Keep secure records of your scoring and decision-making for 6 months before destroying.

### **Making the offer**

* Be prepared for questions about personal circumstances when you offer the role, e.g. flexible working.
* Consider how you can give feedback to unsuccessful applicants. Can you prioritise applicants from underrepresented groups for more detailed feedback that will help them to achieve recruitment success in the future?

## Related resources

* [A new approach to interviews, can we improve the experience? (University of Leeds)](https://sway.office.com/pifa6hjQnkBUoG5g?ref=Link) - A case study about sending interview questions in advance.
* [Understanding unconscious bias (The Royal Society)](https://royalsociety.org/news-resources/publications/2015/unconscious-bias/) - An animation and briefing that introduces the key concepts and current academic research around unconscious bias.
* [Rethinking Research Assessment: Unintended Cognitive and Systems Biases (DORA)](https://sfdora.org/resource/rethinking-research-assessment-unintended-cognitive-and-systems-biases/) - A summary of how unintended biases can affect recruitment and selection from the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA).
* [Unconscious Bias Observer Scheme (University of York)](https://www.york.ac.uk/chemistry/about/equality-diversity/resource-hub/unconscious-bias-scheme/) - Webpage introducing the Department of Chemistry's unconscious bias observer scheme.
* [Reasonable adjustments guidance (University of Edinburgh)](https://www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety/staff-disability-advice-service/reasonable-adjustments) - Online guidance including information on reasonable adjustments for staff once they are in post from the Health and Safety Department.

# EDI and inducting a new recruit

* Make [yourself aware of staff and/or student networks](https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/edi-groups) which exist in your organisation to support specific groups such as LGBTQ+, women, ethnic minorities, disabled and international staff/students.
* When you meet your new team member, ask them if there is anything else that they might need to support them in the role or to ensure that they are working to their fullest potential.
* This could be particularly important if you are doing fieldwork, which could be emotionally or physically demanding, or in geographical areas which are unsafe for particular groups (e.g. LGBTQ+ staff or students).
  + It may take a while to build trust and people won’t necessarily want to make a disclosure straight away but signalling that you are open to discussion from an early stage will help ensure researcher wellbeing and safety.
  + Be conscious of the format in which you provide induction materials. One long email can be a lot to digest (particularly for neurodivergent people) so consider providing a short summary with links to relevant information or an invitation to provide more details if they have questions.
* Spread out induction activities over the course of the first few days/week as required and, where possible (we know unexpected things can happen), provide a schedule in advance. This creates clear expectations about when social activities feature and where breaks are available, enabling time for the new recruit to absorb the information.