

STAFF RECRUITMENT

LOCAL WORKING PRACTICE – DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

Please note that this document describes a local working practice at the Department of Chemistry, and that University-wide policies will override anything stated in these local guidelines.

The guidelines below are set out for the recruitment of all new **post-doctoral, academic, technical support** and **administrative** staff in the Department of Chemistry, irrespective of whether the post is permanent, short-term, full-time or part-time.

You should be aware of **unconscious bias** when advertising, shortlisting, interviewing and appointing, and the impact it can have on fair decision-making making. Please read the Unconscious Bias Briefing Document, which details the origins of unconscious bias, the dangers associated with it and what can be done about it. Some key points concerning unconscious bias are summarised below:

- **Unconscious bias** is when we make judgments or decisions on the basis of our prior experience, our own personal deep-seated thought patterns, assumptions or interpretations, and we are not aware that we are doing it. The result of this is that we unconsciously **discriminate** in favour of things that feel ‘natural’ and ‘right’ as opposed to those that are less familiar, but might actually be correct.
- We **all** have **hidden biases** and you are unlikely to be more fair and less prejudiced than the average person.
- Therefore, always **question the validity of cultural stereotypes**, e.g. that women or people from different cultural backgrounds are less suitable for the job than a white male, or that somebody with family commitments would not be able to commit themselves fully to their job.
- Unconscious bias overtakes automatically when decisions are made in stressful situations with time pressures. Therefore, **slow down** the speed of your decision-making and avoid making **haste decisions**.
- You can detect unconscious bias far more easily in others than in yourself. Thus, **challenge** instances of unconscious bias in others, particularly in group decision-making. Always seek clarification and evidence when other assessors use unfounded statements or highly up-beat language to describe certain candidates.

Advertising.

- The job description for each role should be submitted to the Equality, Diversity & Disability Committee as soon as it is available for consideration **prior to advertising**. This is to ensure that the details of the job description or the tone of it do not inadvertently discourage applications from certain groups of people.
- All job advertisements for new staff to include the following statement: *“The Department of Chemistry provides an environment that strongly supports the individual needs of each employee, promoting a healthy work-life balance. We are committed to family-friendly and flexible working practices on an individual basis, as well as the Athena SWAN Charter, which recognises and celebrates good employment practice undertaken to address gender equality in higher education and research.”*

- All job advertisements for new staff to include the following statement: *“For candidates invited to interview who require childcare, the Department of Chemistry can provide a list of approved childminders in Lancaster and reimburse the associated costs.”*
- A positive statement may be included if appropriate.
- All advertisements to carry the Athena SWAN logo.
- In the case of post-doctoral or academic vacancies, staff will be requested to disseminate the advertisement *via* relevant research networks (e.g. OrgNet).
- In the case of academic vacancies, relevant staff due to speak at external research symposia or conferences will be requested to include one slide in their presentation on the availability of the vacant position at the Department.

N.B. To take part in the *shortlisting* and *interview* process, you should have successfully completed the ‘**Recruiting the Best**’ workshop, run by HR, within the last five years.

Shortlisting.

- The shortlisting panel will include at least **one woman** and **one man**. The chair of the panel is responsible for identifying the most suitable candidates for the panel, and for ensuring that all members of the panel have undertaken the **compulsory training**, as detailed above.
- When assessing applications, **explicit criteria** against the job description will be followed.
- All applications will be assessed and graded **on equal terms on their merits**, regardless of the sex, age and/or ethnicity of the applicant.
- Be aware that **unconscious bias** may be present in the **references** for candidates, bearing in mind that more enthusiastic language tends to be used to describe favoured groups.
- You are required to consider any **career breaks** or other **personal circumstances** of the candidate, irrespective of whether these are disclosed explicitly or are apparent in the CV of the candidate.

Interviews.

- The interview panel will include at least **one woman** and **one man**, and may be the same as the shortlisting panel. The chair of the panel is responsible for identifying the most suitable candidates for the panel, and for ensuring that all members of the panel have undertaken the **compulsory training**, as detailed above.
- When interviews are conducted, **explicit criteria** against the job description will be followed.
- In the case of academic appointments, the HoD should ensure that each shortlisted candidate gives a **presentation** as part of the interview process, which should be available for all staff to attend. Staff present at the presentation, but in the absence of any panel members, should openly discuss the suitability of each candidate based on the presentation alone. The majority views and impressions should then be fed to the interview panel for consideration as part of the final decision-making process.

VF 01/09/2017