

Recruitment and selection policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the recruitment and selection policy is to establish the principle of fair and open competition within the Competition Commission (CC) and to ensure consistency and transparency in all aspects of the recruitment and selection process. The policy aims to incorporate the best from our current recruitment and selection policy and also to take account of the recent amendments to the Civil Service Recruitment code.
- 1.2 All staff are required to follow the rules set out within this policy document when filling posts via internal appointment or external recruitment. This will allow the CC to achieve its strategic aim of attracting and retaining the right people for the job. If any aspect of the recruitment process is unclear then advice should be sought from HR before progressing.
- 1.3 There are times when owing to short-term operational needs, exceptions are made to the policy. This is due to the unpredictable nature of the CC's workload. All these cases should be approved by the Director of Corporate Services or the Chief Executive as appropriate, and reported in management information given to the staff council and operations board.

Overview of the policy

- 2.1 There are a number of important principles which underpin the recruitment and selection policy:
 - prospective candidates must be given a reasonable opportunity to become aware of the vacancies and the terms of appointment, and a reasonable time in which to apply;
 - all eligible candidates must be considered equally on merit at the start of the recruitment process and at each subsequent stage that they reach;
 - selection procedures will contain safeguards against individual bias;
 - the selection process will comply with the CC's equal opportunities policy and ensure that no bias, whether direct or indirect, will be allowed on the basis of gender, age, race, culture, marital status, Trade Union membership, disability or sexual orientation; and
 - all selection criteria and techniques must be reliable, valid and relevant to the job concerned and must as far as possible reduce the potential for individual bias or discrimination.
- 2.2 Before any unconditional offer of appointment is made, checks must be made as to the candidate's eligibility from the point of view of character references, education and professional attainment. A baseline standard security check must also be carried out on all appointees before they begin work at the CC. No one will be allowed access to the CC's key business systems without reaching this standard.

- 2.3 Accurate records will be kept for at least 12 months after each recruitment exercise showing the criteria in use, the advertisement, the role profile, the application forms and the performance of the candidates. If the recruitment exercise is carried out by a third party, such as an agency, then the CC will request any relevant documentation from them.
- 2.4 Any potential conflict of interest must be declared as soon as it comes to light. Examples of likely conflicts of interest would be if a person directly involved in any stage of the selection process has (or has had) a personal relationship with one of the applicants, or is related to one of the applicants, or has prior knowledge of one of the applicants outside of the work environment which could in any way affect the decision they make. Normally the assessor should stand down as they are unable to give a fair assessment of the applicant.

3. Fair and open competition and selection on merit

- 3.1 The CC needs staff who are best suited to the job and the selection process should be perceived to be sound and subject to high standards of integrity. The fundamental principle is that appointments should be made on merit and vacancies will therefore normally be subject to fair and open competition (see exceptions section).
- 3.2 The CC's selection process must meet the following criteria:
- (a) it must be driven by the need to find the best person for the job based on merit; and
 - (b) all appointments must be above the suspicion of patronage. If friends, relations or business contacts comprise most of the applicants for the job, clearly it will be impossible to defend our selection procedure—even if the person selected is perfectly competent.
- 3.3 In the interests of fairness and transparency the CC has decided that no-one in a relationship with another member of staff will be shortlisted for a post that would put them in a direct or one removed line management position with that other person. The CC expects anyone in a relationship with another member of staff to declare this on their application form. However, if you are considering applying for a post that would create the issue referred to above, or may appear to do so, please note that you must make a prior declaration. Failure to do so would be a disciplinary offence.
- 3.4 Individuals who do not believe that the principles set out in this recruitment and selection policy have been correctly applied during a recruitment process may appeal directly to the Head of HR who will investigate and respond in writing within 21 days. In cases where the Head of HR has been directly involved in the recruitment exercise, the appeal will be considered by the Director of Corporate Services.

4. Secondment

- 4.1 The CC will encourage the use of secondments at all levels of employment within the organization, to suitable external organizations and within the CC itself. The primary purpose being to promote the personal and professional development of an individual with the aim of meeting the future needs of the organization.
- 4.2 Secondment is a flexible work process where members of staff move out of, or transfer from, their established or primary posts to engage in different jobs or roles for a temporary period of time. The latter may be newly constituted jobs, vacant

positions or project activities for which an established permanent full or part-time post is not deemed necessary at the time. This may take place within a single organization moving from one department to another or across organizational boundaries and employment sectors.

- 4.3 In line with the performance management system used by the CC all staff on secondment will be required to work to a number of annual performance objectives. This will be the responsibility of the host organization to implement and manage effectively.
- 4.4 A review of individual performance will occur annually and at the end of the secondment period. This will be undertaken with the individual and their established and host line manager.
- 4.5 In the unlikely event that it should be necessary to terminate the secondment, whether through the volition of the individual secondee, the host organization or the established employer, the following action will be taken:
 - all parties will be informed in writing with a suitable period of not less than 2 working weeks to be given by each party to ensure that arrangements are set in place to accommodate any necessary or appropriate change;
 - where a post has been temporarily filled during the absence of the secondee, a suitable alternative post will, if possible, be identified for the duration of the secondment; and
 - managing this circumstance remains at all times the mutual responsibility of the secondee, the host organization and the established employer.
- 4.6 At the end of the secondment an evaluation will be undertaken by all parties. It is essential that individuals who return from secondment are given the opportunity to practice new knowledge and skills. This process will need to be planned by their respective line manager as part of the individual's performance management process.

5. Responsibility for applying the recruitment principles

- 5.1 HR has responsibility for ensuring that the principles of this recruitment and selection policy are applied throughout the CC.
- 5.2 All managers who are involved in recruitment exercises are required to familiarize themselves with this policy document and the procedural guidelines and must ensure that the principles are applied in every case.

6. Interview boards

- 6.1 Candidates should be interviewed by a board which consists of at least two people and in normal circumstances three. The board should:
 - (a) be diverse to reflect the CC's age, gender and ethnicity profile;
 - (b) consist of staff who have been trained in interviewing techniques, normally by the CC and be aware of issues of equality;

- (c) be chaired where possible by a member of staff at least one grade above the post being filled;
- (d) not contain anyone who has a link with a candidate which could cause a potential conflict of interest, without that conflict being declared in advance; and
- (e) never prejudge the outcome of an interview.

7. Information for candidates

- 7.1 Advertisements and supporting literature must together contain whatever the applicants need to know to give them a clear picture of the job: what it entails; where it is based; with whom they will be working; what is required to do it; and the terms and conditions which apply (eg a role profile). This should include brief details of qualifications, knowledge, skills, experience and competencies required to do the job. If possible details of the selection process should also be included.
- 7.2 The advertisement should make it clear whether or not the job is permanent, fixed-term, loan or secondment. It should also make clear whether or not the post would be open to job-share and whether it is full-time or part-time. Job-sharing will be encouraged where this is practicable and subject to business need. If the post may have an option of permanency at the end of the fixed-term period this should be made clear at the outset, if possible.
- 7.3 The closing date for applications should be made clear in the advertisement and should give candidates a reasonable time to apply, usually at least 10 working days.

8. Shortlisting

- 8.1 When candidates have all applied there is generally a requirement to reduce the overall number of applicants down to a manageable number who can then be interviewed, this is known as 'sifting' or 'shortlisting'. This may be performed by CC staff or sometimes by an agency conforming to criteria set by the CC.
- 8.2 The shortlisting process is an essential part of any effective recruitment and selection exercise and must be fair and equitable, assessing applicants on merit, usually using a scoring matrix.
- 8.3 Shortlisting should be carried out by a board (normally the same as the interview board) and should follow these principles:
 - (a) Shortlisting must be done using an objective method (measuring the application against the requirements set out in the role profile). Decisions not to see a candidate for interview should be clearly defensible and not based on subjective assessments such as a dislike of the applicant's name or handwriting (unless the handwriting is illegible).
 - (b) Equal opportunities records must be kept for all recruitment exercises, but not divulged to the board. If an agency is acting on behalf of the CC, then it should provide the CC with the relevant documentation.
 - (c) Managers sitting on a shortlisting board must be able to feed back to applicants not selected for interview why this was the case, and all applicants must be given the opportunity to receive feedback if they wish. Again an agency may fulfil this requirement if it is engaged by the CC.

9. Selection techniques

- 9.1 For Band C posts and above, additional selection techniques (eg psychometrics) should be considered where appropriate. Advice can be sought from HR on the most appropriate tests to be used.
- 9.2 Selection techniques must be reliable, valid and good indicators of future performance, as well as meeting the requirements set out in the CC policy on equal opportunities. Psychometric tests must only be administered and interpreted by individuals with the relevant qualifications from the British Psychological Society (BPS). Applicants completing such instruments must always be given the option of having feedback, separate from their interview. If an agency/headhunter is doing the recruitment on behalf of the CC they must ensure that these guidelines are adhered to.

10. Recruiting staff from overseas

- 10.1 The CC will not be responsible for securing work permits for staff who come from overseas. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that they are eligible to take up the post should it be offered and have any relevant work permits.
- 10.2 It is a requirement of the baseline standard security check, which all candidates wishing to join the CC must pass, that—where applicable—a valid work permit is held.

11. Relocation and travel costs

- 11.1 The CC may reimburse candidates for travel costs to and from interviews. The CC will only cover the cost of standard travel and candidates will need to present their tickets to HR and complete an expenses claim form.
- 11.2 For certain posts, the CC may cover the costs of relocation. This is usually where the preferred candidate lives overseas and is appointed on a permanent basis after a fair and open competition. This is usually only payable for recruits in core skill areas at Band B and above. Staff who believe they may qualify for this should confirm with HR that they are eligible. The CC may pay up to £2,000 to assist with relocation expenses, but staff will need to have sought three quotes from removal companies and selected the one that provides best value for money. The money is reimbursed by finance on the presentation of a receipt.

12. Candidates with a disability

- 12.1 All applicants who have a disability and meet the minimum criteria for the post will be offered an interview in line with the CC's commitment to providing opportunities for people with a disability.
- 12.2 Issues such as the need for special equipment will not be allowed to reduce a candidate's opportunities in the CC if this can be avoided and equipment and training be provided where necessary.

13. Baseline security

- 13.1 Although it is not a selection criterion, all staff must be able to pass the new baseline personnel security standard.

- 13.2 For each applicant we must be able to verify three years' worth of employment or academic history and, if there are any noticeable gaps, that needs to be verified too. The candidate's permission will be sought before referees are contacted.
- 13.3 HR must see originals and copy evidence of all qualifications and eligibility to work in the UK. A random selection of 20 per cent of criminal declaration forms will be sent to Disclosure Scotland which states whether they have a criminal conviction.

14. Temporary staff

- 14.1 The CC often recruits agency temps who turn out to be excellent. In these circumstances it is advised that they remain an hourly paid temp until such time as a vacancy arises and a full and open competition can be organized.
- 14.2 Occasionally the CC only advertises vacancies internally. This is especially true if a department has undergone restructuring and it allows those already employed by the CC to find suitable alternative employment. In such cases temporary staff (agency and contractors) are unable to apply for the internal vacancy.

15. Exceptions to selection via open and fair competition

- 15.1 Recruitment by fair and open competition and appointment on merit should always be pursued where possible to test the market for the best person for the job, and to demonstrate that the appointment is above patronage and political partiality. The primary objective of permitting certain exceptions from that rule is to provide flexibility where it is genuinely necessary to meet the needs of the CC or where significant costs savings can be made (eg by avoiding two sets of agency fees for one introduction)
- 15.2 The CC allows exceptions to the recruitment principles to be made in the following categories:
- (a) Short-term appointments.
 - (b) Where there is clearly only one suitable person for the post and that person was originally recruited by open and fair competition.
 - (c) When a recruitment exercise would be a genuine waste of time and resources.
 - (d) Secondments.
 - (e) Surplus acceptable candidates from a previous recruitment exercise.
 - (f) Disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the post.
- All exceptions have to be approved by either the Chief Executive or the Director of Corporate Services.
- 15.3 Any uncertainty about areas in which the exception to open and fair competition may apply, then advice should be sought from HR.

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