

Associate Professor Inclusive Recruitment Guidelines

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Associate Professor Inclusive Recruitment Guidelines

Introduction

These guidelines have been developed through collaboration with the Collegiate University, bringing together the existing good practice already taking place, and suggestions for new approaches that are being used at comparable Russell Group Universities.

They aim to provide an optional source of ideas and resources to assist those colleges, departments and faculties choosing to incorporate inclusive recruitment principles when recruiting for Joint Appointment Associate Professors. The guidelines provide suggestions to support Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter recruitment initiatives.

It is recognised that Joint Appointment Selection Committees involve a large number of people each year. These guidelines are not intended to impact the already heavy workloads of those involved. However, delivering an appropriately inclusive recruitment process is essential to the ongoing success of the University and will require input from all panel members. When inviting members of under-represented groups to sit on selection committees, it is important to recognise that this additional workload should not fall on them disproportionately.

Please note that all members of the selection committee must be in agreement before the guidelines are used.

The guidelines follow the four phases of recruitment; Plan, Attract, Recruit, Appoint.

To view the rules for how joint appointment should be conducted, including membership of selection committees, the operation of the Joint Appointments Panel in mediating between the two employers, and how any difference of opinion should be resolved, please use the [Joint Appointment Procedures](#).

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Recruitment Phase - Plan

Successful recruitment requires a clear plan that sets out when the required actions should take place, such as shortlisting and interviews. It is also an opportunity for the college and department or faculty to discuss their requirements and agree their approach.

These steps provide suggestions for making recruitment documentation inclusive, such as further particulars and job adverts.

Diversity Statements

The use of clear statements which promote diversity and inclusion within recruitment documentation has become common within the Higher Education sector. It can help applicants understand the employer's commitment and approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.

It can be used in either the further particulars or in job adverts.

It is important however, that a diversity statement is both authentic and genuine.

An example of a diversity statement is as follows:

The University of Oxford is committed to fostering an inclusive culture, which promotes equality, values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected. We recognise that the broad range of experiences that a diverse staff and student body brings strengthens our research and enhances our teaching, and that in order for Oxford to remain a world-leading institution we must continue to provide a diverse, inclusive, fair and open environment that allows everyone to grow and flourish.

Colleges, departments and faculty who choose to incorporate a diversity statement are encouraged to develop a statement that speaks to their approach to diversity and inclusion.

For example, highlighting their work on Athena Swan or their commitment to supporting students from underrepresented groups.

Consider Positive Action

Positive action aims to encourage people from protected groups to apply for jobs and help them make more competitive applications.

Using positive action statements in our recruitment documentation highlights to job applicants that a particular protected group are underrepresented, and that the recruiting college, department or faculty is taking positive action to improve representation.

Comprehensive guidance on positive action is provided by University Equality and Diversity Unit (EDU). here: [Legal framework | Equality and Diversity Unit \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

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DORA Considerations

In 2019 the University of Oxford became a signatory of the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#).

This means that the University is committed to the responsible use of research metrics in assessing the research achievements of applicants during a recruitment exercise. In particular, we will no longer promote journal impact factors, directly or indirectly, in job adverts, job descriptions or further particulars.

More information is available at [Principles to promote responsible use of research metrics | Research Support \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

Recruitment documentation should make no reference to high impact or internationally recognised journals as a research metric.

Colleges, departments and faculty may wish to include the following statement in their recruitment documentation to help promote and instil the DORA principles throughout the recruitment process:

DORA Statement

The University of Oxford is a proud signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), which means all hiring, tenure and promotion decisions will evaluate applicants on the quality of their work, not the impact factor of the journal where it is published.

More information is available at [Principles to promote responsible use of research metrics | Research Support \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

DORA Guidance for Applicants

Colleges, departments and faculty may choose to adopt one of the following approaches, or a combination of both, to ensure appropriate information is received to assess the quality and impact of the applicant's research.

- Applicants are required to **select their two highest quality research outputs**, and provide a summary of the significance and impact of each piece for the selection panel to assess.

AND/OR

- Applicants are required to **provide a research statement** summarizing the past, current and future direction of their research, highlighting how their research has evolved and their key achievements for the selection panel to assess.

Once an approach is decided upon, it is advisable to include clear guidance for applicants in the further particulars, to ensure the applicant submits the appropriate information about their research at the application stage.

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The strategy meeting

The strategy meeting is already commonly used across the Collegiate University, and is a standard part of the Statutory Professor Electoral Board process.

Colleges and the department or faculty may choose to adopt this approach to help ensure both parties have the opportunity to discuss their vision for the role and how they wish to approach the recruitment.

It has become increasingly common for the strategy meetings to be held virtually following the increased use of platforms such as MS Teams and Zoom. However, it is recognised the strategy meeting is an extra step in the process, and that therefore capacity may be an issue.

For those who choose to adopt this approach, the strategy meeting may include discussion on the following items as a guide agenda:

- The vision and strategy for the post.
- Review of further particulars and advertising arrangements.
- Search strategy, and who will lead it.
- Recruitment timetable.
- Selection panel membership.

Inclusive Further Particulars

Try to create a welcoming and inclusive environment throughout the further particulars, by the use of inclusive language. Removing gendered language, jargon, and idioms, may help prevent potential candidates from feeling excluded.

College, departments and faculty may also wish to consider enhancing the look and feel of the further particulars through the use of authentic inclusive images to bring the document, and the role to life.

Enhanced presentation of the further particulars can play a role in promoting an employer's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

The same images used in the further particulars can also be used as part of the broader advertising strategy, for example in social media posts that are used to promote the vacancy.

The branding design company, [ThirtyThree](#) currently provides this design service to a number of Higher Education recruitment firms, such as Perrett Laver. Examples of their work can be found in the appendix.

Costs for this service range from £60 to £150 depending on requirements.

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Recruitment Phase - Attract

Combining a strategic search with a targeted advertising campaign is a highly effective approach to reaching a broad diverse candidate pool.

This section outlines the steps to conducting the strategic search, creating an effective advertising campaign, and provides suggestions for managing the expectations of candidates for those who chose to adopt this approach.

Guidance for strategic search

The strategic search is a key tool for delivering inclusive academic recruitment with the aim of identifying academic, research and pedagogical excellence from the broadest possible pool of suitable candidates. It is an *active* process that identifies and engages candidates with the requisite experience and skills to meet the specific requirements of the role.

This section outlines practical steps for conducting a strategic search.

Planning/Scoping

- *Identify a designated Search Lead*

The department or faculty in partnership with the college should identify a member of the Selection Panel as the **Search Lead**. This will often be the Chair, but this responsibility can be delegated where appropriate, as the Search Lead should ideally be a subject specialist.

For the purpose of consistency across appointments within the same subject, it could also be helpful for the administration of the active search to be supported by the department or faculty, as there is the potential for the same people to be approached multiple times for different recruitment processes in the same subject area.

- *Agree a broad scope for the strategic search*

For academic posts, the search should always be international and aim to include as many continents as feasible. The broadest search provides the greatest opportunity to identify world class diverse candidates. The Search Lead may also wish to consider exploring candidates at a wide range of institutions, or those with non-traditional career histories, including time outside academia.

- *Consult with the selection panel and others with knowledge of the field*

The Search Lead will usually consult with all panel members to seek suggestions and recommendations of potential candidates to approach. When requesting recommendations, emphasise the importance of considering diverse candidates, taking particular care to ensure under-represented groups (e.g. women and/or black and minority ethnic) have been considered and included in the search where appropriate.

Additional parties outside of the Selection Panel should also be consulted. These may include the following:

- Department or faculty colleagues.
- External experts in the field.

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- Academic and professional networks (including specific networks for under-represented groups).
- Interest groups/think tanks.
- Contacts in industry.

- *Compile the search list*

At the end of the scoping stage, with administrative support, the Search Lead should provide a list of names, usually with accompanying biographical notes or links to online profiles.

- *Ongoing searches*

Departments or faculty may wish to maintain a rolling list of potential candidates for academic posts, which should be reviewed periodically to identify any new names, taking into account the guidance above. This list can then be reviewed when a post is released, to see whether there are any candidates who meet the specific requirements of the post.

Search meeting

The Chair may wish to facilitate a meeting of as many panel members as possible, to review the list of names gathered at the scoping stage and to agree which candidates will be approached. For consistency, it is beneficial for the Search Lead to approach the candidates who have been identified. However, there may be occasions where it is more appropriate that they are contacted by the Head of Department/Faculty Board Chair or another member of the panel who knows the potential candidate.

Panel members who cannot attend or otherwise take part in the search meeting should ideally be invited to submit their views by other means.

The Chair should take responsibility for challenging any bias in this initial review of the proposed search list. The search may be extended if necessary.

Approaching candidates (active search)

Messaging about the role and the college, department or faculty's commitment to diversity will benefit from being consistent, whether through the advert and further particulars or via personalised approaches.

- *Approach the candidates*

Framing the tone of the approach is important to balance engagement and expectations. You may wish to offer support and encouragement to candidates to apply, but it would be sensible to reinforce that the recruitment is a competitive process and there is no guarantee of progression to the interview or offer stage.

- *Consideration of additional candidates*

It is common for names of additional potential candidates to emerge during the active search phase, e.g. when a candidate who is approached indicates that they do not wish to apply, but recommends someone else for the panel to consider. The Chair may wish to share any additional names

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confidentially with the selection panel for them to decide whether they should be added to the search list.

Reporting and analysis

- *Search report*

There is a template search report <https://hr.web.ox.ac.uk/file/976526/> that can be used to record those candidates who have been approached. The Chair may wish to use this at the shortlisting meeting to monitor the success of the search, i.e. how many candidates who were approached went on to apply.

The search report also provides a mechanism to capture the reasons why candidates decided not to apply. Over time, this may help to identify if any particular groups are being deterred from applying, and help when defining and advertising future roles.

It can also be a useful starting point the next time a search is conducted in the same subject area.

The template has been kindly provided by The School of Geography and the Environment.

Follow-up

- *Contact with unsuccessful candidates*

Where an individual has applied following an approach during the searches but is unsuccessful at the shortlisting stage, it is good practice for the Search Lead (or designated contact) to include a brief personalised note with the rejection letter. These candidates may well have future contact with the department or faculty, so it is vital to ensure that they have a positive experience of the recruitment process, whatever the outcome. For unsuccessful candidates at the interview stage, it is recommended to provide feedback against the selection criteria, again accompanied by a personalised note where appropriate.

- *'Keeping warm'*

Departments or faculty may wish to pay particular attention to second-choice or lower candidates who were deemed appointable at the interview stage. It may be appropriate to ask these candidates if they might be interested in applying for other positions in the future [see *ongoing searches*], and/or explore ways to maintain contact with them through departmental or faculty events.

Confidentiality

It is important that confidentiality is maintained throughout the search process. All information about candidates must remain strictly within the selection committee. A means of maintaining confidentiality in the search process is for committee members to return all information they have received about candidates, together with any notes made during the search process to the Chair.

It is advisable from a legal perspective that this confidential information kept for six months.

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NB: It is noted that a strategic search can be labour intensive and it is recognized that most colleges and some departments or faculty do not have designated HR support or the resources to conduct, record and monitor all aspects of the search. The strategic search is therefore used at the Chair's discretion.

Advertising strategy

The placement of a job advert is an important part of the overall attraction strategy, and should aim to complement the strategic search, if one has been conducted. Whilst it is important that the job advert clearly reflects the criteria in the further particulars, it can also be a good opportunity provide some positive messaging on the importance of diversity to the college, department or faculty.

Where inclusive imagery has been used on the further particulars, the same images can be used in external job adverts to help create a consistent look and feel.

Additionally, there may be inclusive images and pictures that are already being using on the college, department or faculties own website, which can be used bring the job advert to life.

To help ensure the job advert reaches the broadest possible audience, consider sharing the role in a mixture of social media and other communication channels that are used by the college and department or faculty.

Where possible, use the same images in the social media posts to create a consistent aesthetic for the recruitment exercise.

Search engine optimisation is also an important consideration to ensuring the advert can be found easily via search engines. By using common key words that are specific to the academic discipline or subject area, in the title and the body of the advert, will help make the role discoverable to applicants.

Finally, include proposed interview dates the advert, so that applicants know when they are expected to take place. It can be helpful to invite candidates to confirm their availability on the proposed dates in their submitted application.

Candidate Support and Familiarisation

Offering candidates the names of people to contact to discuss the role and find out more about working at Oxford can provide valuable support. It can be helpful for candidates to include this in the further particulars or as part of communications during a strategic search.

The contact provided should be familiar with the post and the University's recruitment process. They will normally be a member of the selection committee from the college and department or faculty.

In addition it can be helpful to offer the name of someone candidates can speak to in confidence about working and living at Oxford, or any personal matters they may wish to discuss confidentially.

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For international applicants this approach can provide reassurance and support with important decisions, such as moving their family to the UK.

Recruitment Phase - Recruit

Shortlisting, interviewing, and assessing the job applicants is the core of the recruitment phase. This section outlines good practice being used across the Collegiate University and at comparable Russell Group institutions. These suggestions can help deliver an inclusive approach to recruitment whilst ensuring identification of the best person for the role.

Shortlisting

Colleges, departments and faculty should seek to shortlist the most academically brilliant, and pedagogically gifted candidates. It is advisable that all shortlisting decisions be taken explicitly against the agreed selection criteria on the basis of the written application.

During the shortlisting meeting, consider discussing the following points:

- Which applications best demonstrate academic, research and pedagogical excellence, meet the selection criteria and should therefore be interviewed.
- Confirmation of the selection and assessment methods to be used to determine the quality of the academic and research outputs.
- What information reserve candidates should receive, or whether all other candidates should be stood down.
- Is the committee content the shortlist is diverse? For example, whether there is male and female representation.

A record should always be made of which candidates were shortlisted and which candidates were not, with evidence of the reasons. This is to ensure the committee shortlisting decisions are not exposed to a discrimination claim.

When considering a candidate's research and publication profile relative to the selection criteria, any career breaks should be taken into consideration in assessing the size of that candidate's body of work. Circumstances such as caring responsibilities for children or other family members, ill health or disability may result in the quantity of a candidate's outputs being less than might otherwise be expected. However the quality of the outputs should be judged in the usual way.

If the shortlist is not of the required quality, the Chair may wish to consider re-opening the application process by extending the advertising period.

For colleges, departments and faculty following Athena Swan or Race Equality Charter initiatives, it may also be appropriate for the Chair to consider whether the shortlist is diverse and representative of the specific academic discipline.

Potential reasons for a lack of diversity could be a result of the search phase not being sufficiently comprehensive, or perhaps the research field may be too narrow. It is well known that some fields of

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research experience challenges with the diversity of their pipeline. However, this should not prevent the Chair or the committee from attempting to reach the broadest possible candidate pool.

If the result is a re-opening of the search or extending the advertising period, it is good practice to inform the applicants that a delay should be expected.

Gender Split Shortlisting

Colleges, departments and faculty may wish to consider splitting the longlist by gender prior to shortlisting. This approach has been employed as part of Athena Swan Silver action plans at comparable Russell Group Institutions, and has also been successfully used here at Oxford.

The aim is to support the selection panel in creating a gender diverse shortlist.

The shortlisting is conducted in two separate pools where the job applicants are split by gender. The whole panel assess all applications from women. The whole panel will then assess all applications from men.

The two separate shortlists are then assessed against each other systematically to determine the final shortlist for interview.

This is achieved by assessing the top shortlisted application from a woman against the top shortlisted application from a man. The strongest application of the two is added to the final shortlist, with the runner up then being assessed against the second placed applicants in both lists.

This continues until all applications from women and men have been assessed against each other, with the best applicants added to the final short list for interview.

Whilst it is noted that not all applicants will identify as women or men, this tool is specifically designed to support Athena Swan initiatives and ensure that women are represented on shortlists.

Inclusive Interview and Assessment

The following steps can help to create an interview process that provides a positive experience for all shortlisted candidates.

When interview invitations are issued to the shortlisted candidates, including full details of the interview and assessment process will ensure all candidates know exactly what to expect. This can help provide a level playing field where the candidates can focus on demonstrating their academic, research and pedagogical excellence.

The Oxford tutorial system is unique and potentially unfamiliar to external shortlisted candidates, so it is particularly helpful that suitable information about how the tutorial system operates is provided in advance of the interview, along with how the tutorial assessment will take place.

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It can often be the case that external shortlisted candidates may have other questions to ask prior to being interviewed. It is good practice to respond to these requests quickly and consistently, to give candidates much needed time to prepare.

It is important to bear in mind the shortlisted candidates will have many work related commitments to manage outside of the recruitment exercise, just like members of the selection committee. They may also have personal commitments to manage such as caring responsibilities or religious observations. Therefore being respectful of everyone's time and demonstrating flexibility sends a positive message. For example, if a shortlisted candidate has signalled they are not available on the proposed interview date, it is advisable that all effort be made to accommodate an alternative interview date and time.

Where a shortlisted candidate requests reasonable adjustments, such as an interview location that has suitable rooms for those who have declared any mobility issues relating to disability, injury or pregnancy, it is important these requests are accommodated.

Assessment of the candidate's research excellence should consider the DORA principles and focus on the quality of the research outputs, not solely the journal where the research is published. This can help mitigate the potential lack of visibility within professional networks for candidates from the Global South, from less traditional academic institutions, or those not currently in an academic role (e.g. in professional practice or in industry).

It is advisable to craft a list of interview questions that are aligned directly with what will define success in this role, and to remove any questions that are superfluous or could exacerbate bias. When candidates are asked the same interview questions, it helps to reduce bias by focusing on the factors that have a direct impact on their performance, and can provide all candidates the same opportunity to effectively tell their story and showcase their suitability. This assists the committee in comparing the answers of candidates consistently.

Tutorial and teaching assessment

Where tutorial assessment is included as part of the recruitment process, it is important to ensure the approach is consistent and that shortlisted candidates receive the same experience during the assessment process.

The importance of providing candidates with information about the tutorial system has already been highlighted. It is recommended that *how* the candidate will be assessed during the tutorial exercise be also included.

It can be common for tutorial or teaching assessment to include existing students or staff members, who are not part of the selection panel. In these circumstances and for the purpose of consistency, the same students or staff members should be present for each of the tutorial or teaching sessions.

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Where existing student or staff are used, it is beneficial to set the expectations of those who are volunteering their support.

- Make all participants aware of their obligations to maintaining confidentiality.
- Be clear with the participants on their role in the exercise, and also make that the final selection decision sits with the panel.
- Where participants are asked to take notes or record scores, ensure that all are collected at the end of the session.

Familiarisation Visits

Familiarisation with the college, department or faculty can be an important part of the recruitment process. The physical and intellectual environment at Oxford constitutes a strong 'selling point' and can be a significant factor in a candidate's decision about whether to accept a post. This can include the opportunity to meet potential colleagues, visit the college, department or faculty, and become familiar with the environment of the post - all outside the formal selection process.

If familiarisation visits are offered, for consistency it is important that all shortlisted candidates are offered the same opportunity, with reasonable adjustments offered if needed. It is however important that any knowledge of the candidate from a familiarisation activity, is not considered as evidence within the selection process.

For example, where a short listed candidate has been offered a lunch or dinner by the college, department or faculty, this invitation should also be extended to all the shortlisted candidates. Additionally, informal conversations that takes place during the lunch or dinner should not be considered part of the final selection decision.

Recruitment Phase - Appoint

Once the preferred candidate has been identified it is advisable to offer the role as soon as possible. Once the offer is made and accepted, it is also advisable to maintain communication with the candidate even after the contract has been signed. For candidates who are relocating to the Oxford area, there are resources available that can support with orientation.

Employment Offer

Making the employment offer as soon as possible, ideally by telephone or MS Teams/Zoom, is essential as any delay could be crucial if, for instance, the candidate has other job offers to consider.

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Confirm the salary being offered, and also outline the benefits that come with the role. Be aware that any conditions or offers of benefits will have contractual force.

When making the offer, be positive and enthusiastic, and ideally provide some positive feedback on how well they performed.

Be realistic about the potential start date, and remember they will have pressures of their own such as finishing projects/work with their current employer, possible relocation, and an existing notice period to serve.

Once you have discussed the offer, check whether the candidate has anything further they want to ask or anything else that needs to be clarified.

Once all their questions have been answered, and without pressurising the candidate, try to establish whether they are likely to accept the offer. Sometimes people may need some time to consider the employment offer, which is perfectly reasonable. If this is the case agree a timescale for them to confirm their decision.

Finally, consider agreeing a follow up call or visit, as this provides an opportunity to continue discussions on the appointment. In absence of a familiarisation visit, this will enable the candidate to visit the work environment and meet future colleagues in a more relaxed environment.

Welcome Service

The Welcome Service website (<https://welcome.ox.ac.uk>) provides information for new arrivals to the University. It should contain most of the information that new members of staff will need, particularly those arriving in the UK for the first time, and is also a useful reference source for colleagues who are involved in welcoming new starters to the University.

The website is designed to respond to the most immediate needs new staff may have prior to or just after their arrival. It includes links to resources from the UK government and local councils on topics such as housing, education, healthcare, transport and finance. It also provides information about local community facilities and social activities to help new arrivals to settle into life in Oxford.

Details of the Welcome Service website should be provided to newly appointed Associate Professors as part of their job offer documentation.

The Welcome Service Coordinators can be contacted on welcomeservice@admin.ox.ac.uk to help signpost further support in individual cases, or if you have any comments/suggestions on the content of the Welcome Service website.

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Newcomers' Club

The University recognises that a successful transition to Oxford for new members of staff, including the partners and families who come with them, may require support to integrate into the local community.

The Oxford University Newcomers' Club have put together some ideas for anyone new to Oxford who wants to make friends and feel part of the community.

The Newcomers' Club is run by volunteers to help the newly-arrived partners of visiting scholars, of graduate students and of newly appointed academic and administrative members of the University to settle in and to meet people in Oxford. They are a globally diverse and inclusive group, welcoming people from all backgrounds.

Further information can be found at: [Home | Newcomers' Club \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

It is recommended that all newly-appointed Associate Professors are provided with a link to the Newcomers' Club as part of their pre-arrival information and during their induction.

Equality and Diversity Data

The equality data collected during the recruitment exercise can help provide insight into how inclusive our recruitment has been at each phase of the exercise.

Reviewing the diversity of the applicant pool, the short list and the final appointed candidate also enables us to determine where the focus of our efforts should be during the next recruitment exercise.

For example:

- Did we reach a broad audience? If not, can we extend the strategic search to include institutions in the Global South?
- Is the shortlist representative of the overall applicant pool? If not could we consider gender split shortlisting?

For University led recruitment, the equality data is collected anomalously at application stage by the University HR system.

For college led recruitment the vacancy can be added to the University HR system by the Senior Appointments Team. There may also be circumstances where the department or faculty can perform this transactional task on behalf of the college.

It is noted that some colleges benefit from their own HR recruitment system and can therefore run their own EDI data set.

Please note: Access to the equality data for specific recruitment exercises should be requested directly from the EDU.