**1 Introduction**

The University is committed to the recruitment of high-calibre staff from across the world with the aim of maintaining and enhancing its international position. It is equally committed to working towards an increasingly diverse staffing profile, reflecting true equality of opportunity.

The appointment of an Associate Professor is a joint exercise of two employers: the college and the faculty/department. The [Joint Appointment Procedures](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/joint-appointment-procedures) which should be referred to alongside the guidance, lay down the rules for how joint appointments should be conducted including the 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.

Each division has a slightly different process for the release of post, recruitment and appointment of Associate Professors, and divisional offices should be involved by the department/faculty from the outset of all recruitments.

Opportunities to share experience and good practice between Chairs of selection committees should be provided by divisional offices to discuss ideas and issues that have arisen during recruitments. This could be done by scheduling discussions each year at divisional board or GPC meetings. Chairs appointed by colleges may also be invited to attend.

**2 Equality and Diversity**

The University has set high level equality objectives to increase the proportion of women in senior academic roles, and to increase the proportion of BME staff in senior roles, supported by the University’s [Equality Policy](https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/equality-policy).

We always aim for a representation of at least 1/3 women on selection committees

Reviews of recent recruitment data are available in the [Annual Equality Reports](https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/equality-report).

Each recruitment is an opportunity to identify and attract as diverse a pool of applicants as possible to meet the aims of recruiting the best people and increasing academic diversity. To achieve this, good practice needs to run all the way through the recruitment process, taking into account the points below:

* **Analysis of Equality and Diversity data** will support departments and faculties to consider how a recruitment can make a positive contribution to the advancement of equality. Faculties/departments may wish to set aspirational diversity targets within the context of the discipline. Any such targets should be discussed fully with the college at the outset of each recruitment with the aim of building shared diversity objectives. See the guidance on [Equality Analysis](https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/equality-analysis).
* **Training**: University chairs of selection committees should have completed [recruitment training](https://pod.admin.ox.ac.uk/course-listing) within the last four years. It is strongly recommended that all University and college members of selection committees complete the University’s recruitment training, and in addition complete training on [implicit bias](https://pod.admin.ox.ac.uk/course-listing). At least one member of the committee should also have completed training on [race bias](https://pod.admin.ox.ac.uk/course-listing). These training courses can be accessed through People and Organisational Development.
* **The leadership role** of the Chair of the selection committee is to ensure that diversity and fairness are considered at every stage. Chairs are encouraged to manage recruitments to ensure that:
  1. all stakeholders are clear on the recruitment objectives and strategy – department/faculty, college and division agree the responsibilities of the post and the contribution to research and education strategies of all stakeholders (→ section 5);
  2. the job description and selection criteria reflect the requirements for the post and are drafted to attract a diverse range of candidates (→ section 5);
  3. all committee members are encouraged to complete recruitment and selection training and training on implicit bias and race bias;
  4. all those involved in the recruitment process are aware of the University’s [Equality Policy](https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/equality-policy) and associated guidance;
  5. attraction and search strategies are thorough, objective, unbiased and will reach a diverse external audience (→ section 6);
  6. where gender diversity has not been achieved, either by the search or at shortlisting, the selection committee considers this fully and takes action accordingly (→ sections 6 and 7);
  7. differences of opinion or conflict in committee discussions are acknowledged and resolved;
  8. all candidates are judged only on the evidence from the selection process against the selection criteria;
  9. any bias is challenged (including in references), and extra time is taken where decisions are difficult;
  10. consideration of career breaks is consistent and fair (→ section 7).

* **Consideration of personal circumstances:** It is not unusual for candidates to declare personal circumstances either during a recruitment or after a job offer is made that could affect how and when they can perform the role. These circumstances could include maternity or family leave requirements, disability, illness, or outstanding sabbatical leave accrued at another University.

It is recommended that the University and college stakeholders pause to discuss all the possible options that will offer flexibility and reasonable adjustments. It is recommended that advice is sought from University HR Business Partners and, if relevant, the University disability advisor, to ensure that discrimination or disadvantage do not occur. For example if a woman is on or about to go on maternity leave you may have to wait for her to start work and make interim arrangements to cover the role. It would be discriminatory if you rejected her, or withdrew a job offer, or insisted that she end her maternity leave earlier than intended to start work, unless she agreed.

Note that it is not possible to provide University maternity pay unless the individual meets the qualifying conditions (see <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/maternity-leave>).

* **Flexible working:** Offering flexible working, such as part time or a job share, signals a positive approach to equality and the participation of under-represented groups.
* **Time:** Research shows that bias can creep in where recruitments are hurried. Take time to shortlist and make decisions. If necessary, leave decision-making until the next day. The outcome of each recruitment will have an impact on the college and department for years to come; extra time invested in recruitment is never wasted.
* **Communications:** Candidates from under-represented groups may not initially think Oxford is for them. Reach out through the advert and job description to position Oxford as a welcoming and inclusive place to work. Root out inward-facing Oxford jargon and acronyms as this can put off external candidates. Highlight the tangible and intangible benefits of working at Oxford and of the particular post under recruitment. Wide-ranging candidate searches can identify and attract candidates who might otherwise not apply (→ section 6).
* **Familiarisation:** In the job description offer candidates the names of people to contact to discuss the role and find out more about working at Oxford. The contacts should be familiar with the post and the University’s recruitment process, normally members of the selection committee from the college and department/faculty. In addition it is helpful to offer the name of someone candidates can speak to in confidence about working and living at Oxford and any personal matters.
* **Selection committees:** The [Joint Appointment Procedures](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/joint-appointment-procedures) set out the rules for membership of selection committees. Consider the diversity and balance of selection committees to secure a range of perspectives, noting that this goes beyond race and gender. Council has agreed, in considering its Public Sector Equality Duty the aim to have at least one third women on selection committees. In disciplines where the proportion of female academic staff is below a third, departments should seek to achieve female representation by other means, including the use of external panel members.

Appointing external committee members, including those from related disciplines at Oxford, is recommended to enhance the overall fairness of the application process. Externals can provide specialist knowledge and different perspectives; reinforce or widen research expertise; increase the diversity of committees; reduce the risk of polarisation in discussion; and identify Oxford terminology and assumptions that may disadvantage external applicants. Externals can also assist with the search phase of recruitments. Externals are substitutes for, not in addition to, the 7 members of a selection committee.

The Global Talent visa, academic and research appointments (fast track) provides an accelerated and advantageous visa route compared to Skilled Worker sponsorship, but does have particular requirements for the [selection committee](https://staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/gtv-endorsement#collapse1917226).

A [template invitation letter to prospective selection committee panel members](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/guide-to-the-appointment-associate-professors), designed to clarify their role and responsibilities, is provided.

1. **Confidentiality, data protection and conflicts of interest**

## It is the role of the Chair of the selection committee to manage confidentiality and data protection. Chairs are advised to brief committee members at the first meeting to adhere to the guidance below.

## Confidentiality and data protection

All aspects of recruitment are strictly confidential, including all written material and discussions. Revealing the names of candidates or any information about the recruitment beyond that strictly necessary to the recruitment process constitutes a serious breach of professional standards that should be dealt with strictly by the Chair of the committee. For reference, a breach of confidentiality by internal members of an electoral board during the recruitment of Statutory Professors is considered by the Registrar to be a serious disciplinary matter.

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and associated legislation, candidates have a right to see their personal data including meeting notes on request (subject to third party rights in certain circumstances). In the event of a challenge, an employment tribunal can ask to see all notes and records taken during the recruitment process. Notes should therefore be limited to a factual record of what the candidate says and/or an evaluation of their performance against the selection criteria. Notes should be kept in accordance with the principles of [data protection](https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/data-protection-policy) for at least six months(if the appointee is sponsored on a Skilled Worker visa, papers should be retained according to [Home Office requirements](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/retention-periods-for-university-personnel-records)).

Requests to the University under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and associated legislation should be referred immediately to the University’s [Information Compliance Team](https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/about).

## Conflicts of interest

Members of selection committees must declare any conflicts of interest immediately, including any potential conflict of interest or any issue which could be perceived as a conflict of interest. Knowing or working with a candidate does not always mean that the committee member needs to step down or be recused, but the Chair and committee must be made aware of the nature of any actual, potential or perceived conflict.

1. **Planning the recruitment**

It is important to have an early, strategically-focussed discussion between department/faculty and college, including the following:

1. clear identification of department/faculty, division and college expectations for the post, to be reflected in the job description;
2. discussion of all aspects of diversity, to contribute to an Equality Impact Assessment guidance is available from the [Equality and Diversity Unit](https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/about-us) and template documents can be found at <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/equality-analysis>.
3. the recruitment and attraction strategy (→ section 5);
4. the proposed timetable for the recruitment.

If more than one Associate Professorship in the same department/faculty is to be advertised at the same time, consideration may be given to recruiting via a single combined selection committee – see the [Guidance note on combined selection committees](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/guide-to-the-appointment-associate-professors).

1. **Job Descriptions**

[Template job descriptions](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/academic-staffing-further-particulars-templates) for Associate Professorships are provided, and further guidance on preparing job descriptions is provided below.

The following points should be agreed by the faculty/department, college and division before the job description is drafted.

1. The scope of the research field, to ensure that it is defined in a way to attract a diverse applicant pool, support academic strategies and avoid simply replicating past appointment patterns. It may be assumed that encouraging a broad research and teaching field will increase the chances of attracting a diverse applicant pool. However, in some disciplines a narrower field might achieve this most effectively. Consideration should be given to whether the definition of a research field might give advantage to applicants from specific backgrounds, could risk deterring potentially qualified candidates, or could reduce the quality of the applicant pool and embed bias throughout the selection and recruitment. Colleges may need to appoint an Associate Professor who can teach across the core undergraduate syllabus, whereas departments/faculties may wish to make a strategic appointment in a developing or interdisciplinary field which does not yet feature on the undergraduate syllabus. In such cases the list of duties and the selection criteria should make it clear that candidates should be active in research in the specific field and be able to teach across a broader range. It is important to consult where research and teaching involves more than one department/faculty/college.
2. The balance expected between disciplinary and departmental leadership, research, teaching, postgraduate supervision, pastoral duties and administration.
3. Selection criteria that reflect the agreed role. These should include all the attributes needed to fulfil the requirements of the post on both University and college sides, including behaviours such as team working, collaboration and management where required. They should cover research and teaching, as well as administrative and pastoral duties if these are required. Criteria can be broken down into “essential” and “desirable” but this is not necessary and it is often better to focus on what is essential. Examples of [possible selection criteria](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/guide-to-the-appointment-associate-professors) are provided; it is stressed that these are examples only. The provisions of the [Equality Act](https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/legal-framework#collapse1082001) must be borne in mind (see pdf document under ‘Further Information’, as should the University’s guidance on [ensuring fair practice at shortlisting and interview stages](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/selecting-candidates#collapse1605231) (see point 6).

## Preparing Job Descriptions

* Always ensure the latest version of the [Further Particulars template](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/academic-staffing-further-particulars-templates) is used as they are frequently updated.
* The advertisement and job description are vital communications to attract the best people to apply for the role – make the job, the department/faculty, the college and working at Oxford as attractive and welcoming as possible. Examples include generous opportunities for sabbatical leave, world-class libraries, the devolved and democratic nature of the University and colleges, the multi-disciplinary academic community in colleges and provision of generous maternity and family leave.
* Keep the job description as brief as possible. Short sections about the faculty/ department, college and division provide information which is relevant, interesting, and likely to be attractive to potential applicants, with more detail provided via web links.
* Avoid Oxford-specific terminology, for example the requirement to have experience of ‘tutorial’ rather than ‘small group’ teaching. Terms such as ‘FHS’ or ‘Senior Tutor’ should be avoided or explained. Even terms in common use in the UK, e.g. ‘pastoral care’, might not have the same meaning for potential candidates from overseas.
* Ask candidates for any information specifically required for shortlisting. For example candidates can be asked to list what they see as their best research outputs in terms of quality and/or impact and their most significant achievements. This will enable the selection committee to focus on key attainments in CVs and facilitate consideration of candidates who have taken career breaks. Explaining this as a method to ensure career breaks and caring responsibilities are properly taken into consideration can of itself attract more women to apply. (→ section 7 for treatment of career breaks)
* Give all applicants the opportunity to discuss the advertised post with the department/faculty and college by giving contact names in the faculty/department and college. In practice, the contacts are likely to be the college Senior Tutor, and the Head of Department / Faculty Board Chair or nominee. It can also be helpful, in addition, to offer a confidential discussion with someone not on the committee about any aspect of working and living in Oxford, or about personal matters.
* Consideration of whether flexible working can be offered, such as part time or job-share.

1. **Attracting candidates**

## Attraction Strategy

There are several strands to attracting candidates:

* **Drafting the Further Particulars and Advertisement** to highlight the attractions of the post, the benefits of working at Oxford and communicating a welcoming and inclusive working environment.
* **Search Engine Optimisation**: ensure the advert will be found via search engines by putting key words in the title and first sentence. Obscure role titles and headings should be avoided as these will prevent candidates finding your role.
* **Placing the advertisement to attract candidates**: this can include both broad spectrum media and niche advertisements to attract applicants from particular subject areas or particular demographic groups.
* **Using social media to promote the role**: this may include postings on broad spectrum media such as the LinkedIn profiles of faculty/departmental/college members, sites specific to the discipline or research field and niche sites with relevant demographic targets. Guidance on [posting jobs on LinkedIn](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/attracting-candidates#collapse2756486) is available.
* **Searching**: carrying out a thorough search and inviting people to apply will encourage a high quality and diverse pool of candidates and is recommended in all cases.
* **General guidance**: <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/attracting-candidates>.

## Guidance on Searching

Candidate searching is an established recruitment practice for all types of roles. Searches can ensure that the best candidates in the world are researched and considered, including many talented people who are not actively considering a job move and those who may never have considered Oxford as a place to work. Thorough searches can provide a list of candidates including those with existing high profiles as well as emerging talent. A personal invitation from Oxford to discuss and apply for a post carries immense power.

It is vital that searches are objective, based on thorough research, and that all possible avenues to obtain names of potential candidates are explored. It is important not to rule out candidates during the search phase - for example because they are thought to be too senior, too junior, or unlikely to want to move job.

The search phase can be time-consuming, but the practice has delivered very high quality candidates who may not have responded to an advertisement. Searches are recommended for all recruitments where the University is the majority employer.

There are different possible approaches to searches as outlined below:

## Search immediately before a role is advertised

The Chair of the selection committee would normally lead the search, but may delegate to a ‘search lead’ whose specialism closely matches that under recruitment. Departments/faculties that have recruited Statutory Professors since 2015 will have experience of searching, and divisional offices can provide contacts for advice on recent searches.

The search lead should draw on the ideas and contacts of department/faculty members, the selection committee, and external leaders in the discipline both in the UK and globally. It is important that those consulted about the search are asked to understand the need for, and agree to, strict confidentiality about the names they put forward.

The objective of the search is to seek out all possible candidates. It will not be possible at this stage to know the demographics of the potential candidates, but a thorough and objective search should result in the most diverse list possible. It is good practice to record how the search was carried out, including the methods used, to ensure the list is as inclusive as possible. This information should be included in the report on the recruitment.

To review the search, the Chair of the selection committee should ideally convene a meeting (or virtual meeting) to consider the list of potential candidates from the search. It is important not to rule candidates out from being approached unless they clearly do not meet the selection criteria. It is particularly important not to rule out candidates because the committee think they may not be interested in applying, as only the candidate can make this decision.

If the list of potential candidates lacks gender diversity the selection committee should consider continuing the search to produce a more diverse list. Reconsideration of the role and research field may also necessary.

Potential candidates identified through the search may be approached by the Chair, the search lead, or other designated members of the selection committee. The message should draw candidates’ attention to the vacancy, attach the job description and offer the opportunity to discuss the post. Care should be taken that communications do not raise expectations of an interview invitation or appointment; the communication is simply an invitation to discuss the post and to apply. Potential candidates need to be approached with sufficient time to apply for the advertised post, so the search needs to start as soon as possible.

## Continuous Strategic Searching

Continuous searching can be led by the Head of Department / Faculty Board Chair or a dedicated faculty/departmental group. The idea is to constantly search for potential candidates who might, at some point, be interested in an academic post within the department/faculty. Potential future candidates can be invited to visit to familiarise themselves and discuss the potential for future job opportunities, meet faculty/department members, visit colleges and generally better understand life and work at Oxford. The advantages of consciously using this method are that talent-spotting activity is not rushed; emerging and established talent can be assessed, and potential candidates from across the world have the chance to visit Oxford at a time that suits them.

Once a vacancy arises, many of the potential candidates may already be in contact with the department/faculty and can be invited to apply. It is important to ensure that once the definition of a new role is clear, the search group also ensure that all other potential candidates in that particular field are sought out and considered.

## Use of external search consultants

The University has contracts in place with some leading search consultants and the Senior Appointments Team can advise on these. The Divisional office should also be consulted. Search consultants need to be briefed clearly, in particular in relation to consideration of diversity in communications materials and in the search. The (often substantial) costs should be considered, as these will be borne by the department/faculty/college.

1. **References, shortlisting and familiarisation**

## References

References may be taken up for all candidates, or for a longlist of candidates in order to inform shortlisting. Candidates may be asked to arrange for their referees to write directly to the faculty/department/college, or the faculty/department/college can write direct to the referee. A [template reference request letter](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/templatereferencerequestlettermay2018docx) is provided. In some cases, candidates may also be asked to provide copies of publications or unpublished work prior to final shortlisting.

Requests from candidates not to approach referees without their express permission or until a specified stage in the recruitment process should be respected, although candidates will sometimes release blocked references if informed that the selection committee has specifically asked to see them.

A member of a selection committee is allowed to act as a referee, and should submit a written reference in the usual way. If a candidate is shortlisted for whom only references internal to Oxford are available, the candidate should be asked to supply the name of at least one additional external referee.

## Implicit bias in references

When reading references it is helpful to be aware of research findings *[Trix & Psenka (2003) Discourse & Society, Vol 14(2): 191-220](https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Exploring-the-Color-of-Glass:-Letters-of-for-Female-Trix-Psenka/a6dc46165eda9ce8034915fa4bf34ab78a697b13)* and [Madera et al. (2009) Gender and letters of recommendation for academia: agentic and communal differences. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 94, No. 6, 1591-1599)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19916666/) that show differences in letters of recommendation for male and female candidates. Letters recommending men (whether written by men or women) were found to be longer, mention status terms more, focus on proactive behaviours (“Professor X successfully led his research group”) and quantify and endorse achievements more – research, collaborations, colleagues etc. Letters recommending women, on the contrary, were shorter, focused on ‘communal’ behaviours (“this lady makes a valuable contribution to departmental teaching”), had more references to personal life and irrelevant material and more ‘doubt raisers’.

The research also found that the most common semantically grouped possessive phrases referring to female and male candidates (her teaching, his research) reinforced gender schema that tend to portray women as teachers and students, and men as researchers and professionals.

## Shortlisting

All decisions must be taken strictly and explicitly against the agreed selection criteria on the basis of the written application. No other evidence (including from a familiarisation visit or discussion) should be taken into account as the same evidence would not be available for all candidates and would make the process automatically unfair. Please also refer to the [Joint Appointment Procedures](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/joint-appointment-procedures). The Chair should ensure that the consideration of career breaks is consistent and fair (see below).

At the shortlisting meeting, the following will be decided:

* which candidates best meet the selection criteria and should be interviewed;
* confirmation of the selection methods to be used (→ section 8);
* what information reserve candidates should receive;
* whether all other candidates should be stood down;
* if the committee is content with the gender split of the shortlist.

A record should be made of which candidates were shortlisted and which candidates were not, with evidence of the reasons.

Where a shortlist lacks gender diversity, the committee (led by the Chair) should investigate why this is the case. Referring to the diversity analysis done at the start of the recruitment, the committee might consider whether the search phase has been sufficiently comprehensive, whether the research field is too narrow and whether the communications and attraction strategy were optimal.

If the shortlist lacks gender diversity, or is not sufficiently strong, the committee should consider re-opening the search or re-framing the role. If a significant delay is expected, the selection committee should inform applicants.

## Flexible working and job share

If an applicant states a wish to work part-time or as part of a job-share, consideration should be given to the request. Refusals should be objectively justifiable and based on operational requirements. Advice should be sought by the Division from HR Business Partners in such circumstances.

## Treatment of Career Breaks and Atypical Careers in Shortlisting

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 applicants’ outputs being less than might otherwise be expected, but the quality of the outputs should be judged in the usual way. This method is used to judge research excellence for REF and for consideration of candidates for full title of professor through the Recognition of Distinction exercise. However, candidates are still expected to have produced a sufficient body of work for their merit to be fairly assessed.

It is recommended that all candidates are asked at the application stage to identify what they see as their best research outputs in terms of quality and/or impact and their most significant achievements. This will enable the selection committee to focus on key attainments in CVs and also enable those candidates who have taken career breaks or who have atypical careers for any reason, and who may have fewer publications, to highlight their highest quality work.

## Familiarisation visits

Familiarisation with faculty/department and college can be an important part of attraction and recruitment. 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 department/ faculty and college, and become familiar with the environment of the post - all outside the formal selection process. All shortlisted candidates should be offered the same opportunities for familiarisation and offered reasonable adjustments if needed. It is important that knowledge of a candidate from any familiarisation activity is not used as evidence in the selection process.

Some candidates will want to keep their candidature confidential. If it is envisaged that candidates will meet each other during familiarisation visits or at interview, this should be made clear when the invitations are issued so that candidates can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate, and alternative arrangements can be offered.

1. **Selection**

## Planning the selection process

The best selection methods test, as nearly as possible, the real work of the post. The range of selection methods chosen, when taken together, need to gather evidence about all the selection criteria including behaviours such as team working and leadership.

Either employer may decide to undertake additional exercises designed to assess candidates against one or more of the selection criteria of particular relevance to that employer. Please refer to the [Joint Appointment Procedures](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/joint-appointment-procedures) for specific guidance on how additional selection exercises are conducted. A sample [student feedback sheet](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/examplestudentfeedbackformdocx) is available.

Example [selection exercises](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/guidanceonselectionexercisesdocx) for academic posts are available, as is further general guidance on [selection tests](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/selection-tests).

## Interview invitations

The written invitation to candidates should set out the format of the day, the length of time they will be expected to stay, and the membership of the selection committee. Candidates need to be briefed fully in advance on the selection process and given adequate time to prepare for any exercises or presentations. It must be made clear which activities will form part of the assessment and which are for familiarisation only. Review communications to candidates to remove or explain Oxford specific terminology when describing the selection process.

All candidates should be asked if they require reasonable adjustments for the interview and other selection exercises or other arrangements for the day. If any have particular requirements, the guidance on [interviewing disabled candidates](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/interviewingapplicantswithdisabilitiespdf) should be followed.

Consideration should be given to any additional information provided to shortlisted candidates to ensure it is in a clear, consistent and attractive form and does not use Oxford jargon.

International candidates visiting Oxford to attend an interview may require a [Business Visitor](https://staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/visitor-invitation-process#collapse1537441) visa to enter the UK.

## Structuring the interview

An interview planning session should take place before the first interview to agree which member of the selection committee will cover which of the selection criteria. To test behaviour it is best to ask for real examples of a candidate’s experience rather than asking about how someone might act in a hypothetical situation. The former will provide more reliable evidence of future behaviour. The initial question about a criterion might be the same or nearly the same for all candidates, but the follow-up probing questions are likely to be unique to each candidate.

Time should be allowed at the end of the interview for candidates to ask any questions they may have about the post, and to ensure explicitly that candidates (and all members of the selection committee) are satisfied that all relevant aspects of their applications have been covered against the background of the selection criteria and the requirements of the post.

Further guidance is available on the [format of interviews and question strategy](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/interviewformatandpracticalarrangementspdf).

## Recommendation to appoint

Consideration of candidates should take place using all appropriate sources of evidence (CV, covering letter, references, selection exercises and the interview), and against the selection criteria.

If a decision cannot be made easily after a long day of interviews and discussions when the committee may be tired and hungry, it may be better to delay a decision and reconvene the committee after a break or, even better, the next day. Alternatively, if the committee decide further evidence is required, two or more candidates can be asked to return for a second stage of interviews or selection exercises, or to provide further references. While this will cause a delay, making the best decision will have a very long term positive impact on faculty/department and college. Where a committee cannot decide on a good candidate, consideration should be given to not making an appointment, but to re-run the recruitment exercise at a later date in order to attract a new field of applicants. The committee may also decide to reconsider the scope of the role and the search process.

It is rare for there to be only one candidate who is shortlisted, and rarer still to have only one applicant. Should this situation arise, it is still important for the candidate to be interviewed and tested against the selection criteria. This will assist the selection committee in deciding whether the candidate is appointable and provide evidence for a recommendation to appoint.

The [Joint Appointment Procedures](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/joint-appointment-procedures) provides a process if a committee cannot agree on an appointment or if a dispute arises during a recruitment.

## Decision to appoint and informing candidates

The divisional board and the college governing body make the final decision about the appointment based on recommendations from the selection committee, including the salary level and whether full title is recommended for consideration by the Senior Appointments Panel. These approvals can cause a delay in making a formal offer of employment. Departments/faculties and colleges will often need to communicate with the chosen candidate to ensure that the individual knows that they are the preferred candidate and are aware of the process and timetable for approving the appointment. A discussion about start date and salary level may also be needed so this information can be included in the recommendation to division and college.

Interim communication with candidates should make it absolutely clear that although the selection committee has made a recommendation, a final decision and job offer has not yet been made. Any misunderstanding at this stage could give rise to complaints of breach of contract, even if the implied job offer is made orally.

If full title or additional pay is being recommended, it is important to let the preferred candidate know that the formal job offer will be delayed while the Senior Appointments Panel makes a decision.

When an applicant requires a work visa, the [Staff Immigration Team](https://staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/) can provide guidance. In these circumstances, the appointment should be offered subject to the work visa being granted.

In most cases, references will have been sought at an earlier stage. Where this is not the case, references should now be taken up. Other pre-employment checks will be carried out once the appointment has been approved.

**Consideration of personal circumstances when a job offer is made**

See section 2 above for advice.

**9 Selection committee recommendations and reports**

Selection committee reports should clearly justify the committee’s decision against the selection criteria, making reference to evidence gathered during all aspects of the selection including any teaching and presentation exercises. The report should also demonstrate how the whole of the recruitment exercise addressed equality and diversity. This may include, for example: what training was made available to the selection committee; equality and diversity analysis; whether the post was advertised as part-time or as a job share; how the search process was conducted; how candidates’ career breaks or atypical careers were taken into account and commentary on application rates and shortlisting by gender.

Reports should also recommend any particular requirements that the committee decide need to be included for decision by the division and college such as the length of the IPO (if not a standard length in the division), request for full professorial title on appointment, or any particular conditions that need to be included in an offer letter.

Full guidance on the requirements in relation to reports to divisional boards and governing bodies (sometimes called ‘Selection Committee Reports’) is given in paragraph 21 of the [Joint Appointment Procedure](https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/joint-appointment-procedures)s. Requirements differ between divisions and specific advice can be given by the relevant divisional office.

**10 Requests for feedback and potential tribunal claims**

The Chair of the selection committee (whether from the University or College) should seek advice from the relevant divisional office or HR Business Partner before responding to requests for feedback from unsuccessful candidates. Written feedback to all candidates who request it should be given by the same member of the selection committee, usually the Chair, and should be objective, factual and relate only to the selection criteria. Providing the information in writing ensures that there is a record of the feedback given. Whilst most candidates who ask for feedback do so to inform their own future development, selection committees should be aware that candidates who are considering bringing a tribunal case almost always ask for feedback as a first step. The second step is usually a subject access request under data protection legislation.

Defending complaints before an employment tribunal is expensive, stressful and time-consuming. There is no upper limit on the amount of compensation that an employment tribunal can award in cases of discrimination.

Should the University be required to defend a claim made to an employment tribunal, it will be the Chair and the members of the selection committee who, with the support of Personnel Services, will be most involved in providing evidence of the selection process and the resulting decisions. All those involved in recruitment and selection should be aware of the relevant guidance on assessment against selection criteria and making and retaining notes. A tribunal can require an employer to produce any documents in its possession by means of a ‘disclosure’ order; this can include e-mails, hand-written notes and documents. It is therefore particularly important that any such documents do not contain material that could potentially be used to bear out a claim of unfair discrimination.

Following the guidance in this document should ensure that evidence of a fair recruitment process can clearly be demonstrated.