

Hiring process policies and guidelines

*Document developed by CAS Equity & Diversity committee – further suggestions very welcome.
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The aim of this document is to ensure best hiring practice. It is divided into *policies*, which need to be followed at each stage of a job search process, and *guidelines*, which provide further discussion and recommendations. We note that these policies and guidelines are consistent with, and do not override, Swinburne hiring procedure¹.

We emphasize the importance of a transparent and open competition for every position including implementation of objective selection criteria, avoidance of unconscious bias² and encouragement of a diverse applicant pool.

Policies

The following policies should be followed in all cases *except* for an initial appointment for a period less than 12 months, or for the extended fixed-term appointment of the occupant of a position where the initial appointment involved an open and competitive selection process. Please also refer to the Swinburne recruitment material³.

- *Assemble a selection committee.* Swinburne mandates⁴ that this consists of the manager as Chair, one other person from the management unit (e.g. CAS), one person external to the unit, and (optionally) one further person (internal or external) “with broad knowledge of the subject field”. Furthermore, *the committee should include both male and female gender representation.* It is strongly recommended that the selection committee be involved in the design of the selection criteria described in the next step.
- *Create a Position Description⁵.* This includes the multiple, specific selection criteria that will be used in the recruitment process.
- *Complete the A1 – Request to Advertise form⁶.* This requires 2 levels of authorization (typically, the management unit (e.g. CAS) Director and Executive Dean). The A1 form requires that the Position Description has been provided to `staffrecruitment@swin.edu.au`.
- *Advertise the position as broadly as practicable and appropriate, including standard text (see below) which describes part-time options and Swinburne’s commitment to diversity. If possible, seek approval for advert text from the chair of the local Equity & Diversity committee.*
- *Use the Swinburne eRecruit online system for receiving applications.* It is strongly recommended that the Panel Chair monitor applications⁷ and pro-actively encourage good

¹<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/media/intranet/documents/hr/docs/pdf/HRmanual2015---current-version.pdf>

²<https://cswa.aas.org/unconsciousbias.html>

³<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/intranet/your-employment/recruitment--appointments/recruitment-appointment-processes/recruiting/>

⁴Section 1.2, Human Resources Procedures Manual

⁵<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/intranet/your-employment/recruitment--appointments/position-designer/>

⁶<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/media/intranet/documents/hr/forms/A1.pdf>

⁷For example, if a pool of applicants is highly male-dominated it is likely that the pool is not as strong as it could be.

applicants, including those from under-represented groups and diverse backgrounds. After the application closing date, the selection committee should form a ranked shortlist.

- During interviews, *compare applicants objectively with the selection criteria*. Swinburne recommends to “rate each applicant independently on key selection criteria after each interview, using an interview rating scale as a guide”⁸. A useful list of common interviewer pitfalls is also provided⁹.
- Once the selection committee has agreed on their decision, the Chair can make an informal offer to the top-ranked candidate. If accepted, *complete the A2 – Request to Appoint form*¹⁰ and forward to hr-assist@swin.edu.au with the position description and CV. Inform all unsuccessful applicants.

Required text for job adverts

The following text should be included in all job adverts.

“Swinburne values its diverse work environment and is committed to the principles of equal opportunity and cultural diversity. The University has been recognised as a Workplace Employer of Choice for gender equality for the seventh year. Swinburne recognises the importance of providing career development, and offers promotion opportunities for both continuing and fixed-term staff. The University also offers a range of employee benefits including maternity and partner leave, a 17% employer superannuation contribution, 4 weeks’ annual leave and discounted health insurance. Swinburne supports a flexible working environment; subject to visa restrictions, this position is available either full- or part-time.”

“Swinburne University of Technology is a Child Safe Organisation and as part of this commitment, all appointments are subject to a valid Working with Children Check.”

Guidelines

The following recommendations expand on some of the above points and describe an effective hiring process in more detail.

Before the interview process

- **Assemble a selection committee as the first step of the process.**
 - Use a diverse committee including members with different perspectives and expertise and under-represented groups. An external panel member should also be nominated. See above policy for Swinburne’s requirements.
- **Agree on multiple, specific selection criteria before advertizing or assessing applicants.** Sending CVs/applications to the selection committee with no prior discussion of selection criteria will encourage subjectivity and unconscious bias.
 - Establishing these criteria is needed for the position description, and the selection committee should be involved in this step.

⁸<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/intranet/your-employment/recruitment--appointments/recruitment-appointment-processes/recruiting/>

⁹<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/intranet/your-employment/recruitment--appointments/recruitment-appointment-processes/selection/>

¹⁰<https://www.swinburne.edu.au/intranet/your-employment/hr-forms/>

- Ensure that the criteria are broader than a simplistic numerical evaluation of the candidate’s research record.
 - Discuss with the selection committee examples of how such criteria will be evaluated in practice. Wherever possible, minimize the ambiguity in selection criteria.
- **Draft a job advert with broad, not narrow, job definitions.** Narrow job descriptions will limit the pool of applicants. If their “fit” to a position seems poor, candidates from under-represented groups are even less likely to apply.
 - Include text in job adverts encouraging applications from diverse groups.
 - All positions should be advertized with the option of part-time working conditions, if possible.
 - Describe the position in a neutral way, noting that the use of certain language can narrow the pool of potential applicants¹¹.
 - Invite applicants to address the selection criteria and mention any relevant career breaks in their application materials.
 - **Advertize the job as broadly as possible.**
 - One possible approach is to ask international colleagues to circulate the advertisement within their networks.
 - **Pro-actively encourage good applicants, including those from under-represented groups and diverse backgrounds, before the application deadline.** This will produce a higher-quality and more diverse field than just waiting for applications to arrive.
 - If the pool of applicants is highly male-dominated, it is likely that it is not as strong as it could be. Pro-actively encourage good female candidates to apply.
 - **Use Swinburne’s Human Resources system to receive applications.** This enables application diversity statistics to be collected.

During the interview process

- **In selection committee deliberations, recognize the reality of unconscious bias¹² in forming assessments.**
 - Give extra weight to opinions formed by objective examination of the application materials with respect to the selection criteria.
 - Selection committee members should declare conflicts of interest.
- **Make an assessment relative to opportunity, taking into account non-traditional career paths.**
 - Excellent candidates may have taken career breaks or had periods of part-time work. They may be situated in less well-ranked institutions.

¹¹<http://www.eremedia.com/ere/you-dont-know-it-but-women-see-gender-bias-in-your-job-postings/>

¹²<https://cswa.aas.org/unconsciousbias.html>

- Flag situations where candidates may have excellent potential but have not yet had the chance to build up a strong track record (e.g. finishing PhD students).
- **Recognize that reference letters may not always be reliable guides.**
 - People write references in different styles. A good strategy can be to proactively ask referees to address specific, objective points in their recommendation¹³.
 - Discount any “ad hoc personal comments” in letters.
 - One option is to only request references for shortlisted candidates, rather than all candidates.
 - Be wary of informal references for candidates such as impromptu, off-the-cuff comments from colleagues, which may be biased by schemas¹⁴.
- **Take care when soliciting panel feedback.**
 - Apparent interview performance is strongly influenced by candidate personality as well as scientific merit, and can be given undue weight in deliberations. Keep the focus on objective selection criteria as far as possible.
 - One strategy for collecting panel feedback is to ask panel members to complete a very short written assessment of each interviewed candidate against the selection criteria.

Many online resources are available which discuss these issues and advise on good practice. Starting points include:

<http://advance.umich.edu/good-practices.php>

<https://cswa.aas.org/diversity.html#howtoincrease>

¹³To implement this one could request references for only shortlisted candidates, and request that those references address specific points. It does mean extra work for referees, though.

¹⁴The following article contains a good description of schemas in the astronomy context starting on page 14: https://cswa.aas.org/status/STATUS_June_July2011.pdf