
Recruitment and Selection Procedure

Introduction

1. This procedure sets out how we, the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC), recruit and choose staff.
2. We have designed this procedure to make sure that we follow our policy on equal opportunities, standards of good practice and meet our obligations to promote equality between people of different characteristics. This takes account of the duties arising from Equality Act 2010 regarding:
 - age;
 - disability;
 - gender reassignment;
 - marriage and civil partnership;
 - pregnancy and maternity;
 - race;
 - religion and belief;
 - sex;
 - sexual orientation; and
 - reducing inequality of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage.
3. As part of the process of consultation, Human Resources (HR) will consult with the trade union through the Unite Committee when vacancies arise or when we propose changes while existing temporary posts are still valid. This consultation will normally include details on:
 - whether the vacancies are permanent or temporary;
 - how we propose to fill them; and
 - what changes we plan for existing temporary posts.
 - Identifying the vacancy
4. Staff vacancies arise in several different ways, including when:
 - an existing member of staff leaves;
 - we need to introduce a new post; and
 - personal or organisational changes alter an existing post.

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5. When a vacancy is identified, line managers and HR will consider how the work should be organised and the options for filling the post. These may include:
 - redistributing work, either within the branch, the directorate or the SFC;
 - reviewing the level of responsibilities and the grade;
 - reducing or increasing the contractual hours associated with the post; and
 - using part-time, job-share or other flexible terms.
 6. If the work or responsibilities of the post change the Job grading and evaluation procedure will be referred to.
 7. In certain circumstances, we may consider transferring existing employees to fill a vacancy. These circumstances include:
 - health, personal and domestic reasons;
 - relationships;
 - severe disagreements that have damaged working relationships;
 - performance issues; and
 - disciplinary action.
 8. If we propose this type of action, paragraph 77 will apply.
 9. Before the process of recruitment can begin, the appropriate line manager must get advice from HR and approval to fill the post from the Resources Request Group (RRG).

Temporary vacancies

Definition

10. A temporary vacancy can be an established post or a non-established post which needs to be filled temporarily. The circumstances in which this can arise include:
 - sick leave;
 - maternity leave;
 - a member of staff transferring to another post;
 - us reviewing the post or operational area before we decide if there is a need to fill it on an established basis;
 - creating a post of a set length for a specific project; and
 - cover for another temporary change in staffing structure or responsibilities.

The length of temporary vacancies

11. We will identify the likely length of any temporary vacancy early in the recruitment process. Temporary vacancies may be short-term or long-term.

Using agency staff

12. From time to time we will use agency staff to cover temporary vacancies or short-term operational needs. These will normally be for less than three months. We will consider using existing staff for these vacancies to allow staff development, although this will depend on the circumstances. There may be cases where long term use of agency staff has to be made on business grounds.

Short-term temporary vacancies

13. These will usually be for up to 3 months. We may use an internal appointment process to fill this type of vacancy. When deciding how to fill the post, line managers, and HR, should consider the likely numbers of suitably qualified candidates and the type of appointment process, which may not include a competitive process.
14. If the appointment results in a temporary promotion or an increase in responsibilities for the member of staff, HR will adjust their pay and conditions to ensure they match the grade of work the member of staff is doing. This will apply for the period that the member of staff fills the short-term temporary vacancy.
15. If at any time during the short-term temporary vacancy it becomes clear that it is likely to last for more than three months, line managers and HR will review the situation and may change it to a longer-term temporary vacancy. We will avoid continually extending temporary appointments as far as is practical.

Longer-term temporary vacancies

16. This is where the temporary vacancy is expected to last for more than three months but not normally longer 12 months. However, we recognise that there may be specific project related posts that may last for more than 12 months.
17. We will use the normal recruitment process to fill longer-term temporary vacancies. We will advertise these vacancies internally and may advertise externally.
18. When we appoint external candidates to longer-term vacancies this will be on a fixed-term basis.
19. If at any time during the period of the longer-term temporary vacancy it becomes clear that it will last for longer than the expected length, or that there are other significant changes, line managers and HR will review the situation. We will avoid continually extending temporary appointments as far as is practical.

Converting a temporary post to established status

20. We may occasionally decide to convert a longer-term temporary vacancy into an established post. We may consider appointing the existing postholder to the established post if:
- we appointed the postholder as a result of a competitive interview process;
 - the postholder has held the post for at least 12 months; and
 - the postholder has demonstrated a satisfactory level of performance in the post.

Ending temporary positions (short and longer term) for existing staff

21. If we appoint an existing member of staff to a temporary position, we will expect them to return to their original post, grade and salary (unless we explicitly agree otherwise, in advance, with the member of staff). If an individual's original post changes while they are in their temporary position, we will consult that staff member and their line manager about the proposed changes as soon as possible. If as a result of any change the individual cannot return to their original post, we will give priority to finding a suitable post at their original grade and salary.

Preparing for recruitment

22. Line managers and HR will prepare:
- a current job profile for the post in the standard format;
 - a summary of the activities of the directorate and branch; and
 - any other information which may be useful to candidates.
23. The job profile will be shared with Unite for comments prior to advertising the post.
24. HR will prepare an outline of the terms and conditions of employment. This information will usually include details of the length of contract, entitlement to annual leave, and pension arrangements.
25. Line managers will name a member of staff whom candidates can speak to about the job or who can answer questions on the role of the Council or that of the directorate. Where possible, the named person should not take part in the interview panel.
26. This is an opportunity for the candidate to collect information. They must not use it as a first stage of interviewing, or as an opportunity to gain support for their application.

Advertising

Internal and external advertising

27. We will advertise all vacancies internally (by e-mail or through Links). HR and the line

manager will make a recommendation to RRG whether to advertise each post internally only or both internally and externally.

External advertising

28. External advertising may include advertising vacancies through professional or industrial organisations, employment agencies and websites, as well as advertising in the media. This will include consideration to ensuring, where necessary, positive action in relation to attracting a diverse range of applicants

Internal advertising

29. Staff will have the opportunity to apply for these vacancies in the normal way, although they can complete a shortened application form to avoid having to fill in the biographical information that is already held on file
30. When making a recommendation to RRG to advertise a vacancy internally only, the line manager and HR need to be confident there will be enough competition within the SFC to fill the post successfully.

Reviewing previous applications

31. Recent recruitment campaigns may have attracted suitable, appropriately qualified and experienced applicants. The appropriate line manager should check previous applications to identify candidates for the current vacancy. In these circumstances, it may not be necessary to advertise the vacancy externally, although it would still be advertised internally.

Drafting adverts

32. HR will draft the advert for the vacancy using the job profile agreed with the line manager, identifying the skills and qualifications and the main requirements for the post, plus the main aspects of the role.
33. How external adverts are advertised is very important and HR will advise on this.
34. The advert will give a closing date for candidates to return their completed applications and say, where appropriate, whether the post is fixed-term. Applications
35. We will not accept CVs from candidates unless they are accompanied by a completed application as they provide a specific set of information in a standard format.

Equal opportunities

36. We are against any type of discrimination, either direct or indirect, and welcome applications from all members of the community.
37. HR will advise line managers as necessary on matters concerning equal opportunities.

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38. To avoid discrimination and to help us monitor equal opportunities, we will issue an equal opportunities monitoring form to possible candidates. We will not use this information as part of the selection process, but it will help us to monitor and analyse the diversity of candidates applying for posts and those we choose for an interview. This will help us better monitor how we are performing in terms of equalities under the Equality Duty for public bodies and help identify any positive actions we need to take. HR will keep the information confidential. We will include statistical information in reports for managers, and the Unite Committee.

Disability Confident

39. We are participants in the Jobcentre Plus “Disability Confident” scheme. Under the terms of this scheme we shall interview any applicants with a disability who satisfy the minimum essential criteria. Applicants will indicate via the application form whether they wish to be considered for a guaranteed interview under the scheme.
40. Appointment to the post will then be on the basis of merit and in accordance with our recruitment and [selection procedure](#).

The interview panel

41. There must be at least two interviewers on an interview panel to reduce as much as possible the risk of biased decisions and discrimination. The emphasis in the whole process of recruitment and selection is on being unbiased and fair, and this is impossible to prove when a manager interviews alone. A member of HR will be involved in every panel and we will seek diversity in its composition as much as possible, mindful of the size of the panel and operational requirements.
42. No more than four people should sit on the panel otherwise the interview can become an intimidating experience for the candidate and time-consuming and difficult to manage for the interviewers.
43. To make sure the process is fair, one panel member should be external to the branch that has the vacancy when interviewing for posts graded at E2 level and above. This can help to show that there has not been any bias towards an internal candidate. At E2, E3, and M1 level the panel should include someone who is senior to the post from another group, if an internal panel member is unavailable we can invite a panel member from outwith SFC.
44. The line manager who has the vacancy and HR will agree the selection panel. The line manager will normally act as chair of the selection panel.

Co-ordinating applications

45. HR take responsibility for:
- receiving enquiries after the advert has been placed;
 - recording the details of interested individuals; and

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- sending out the application forms and information packs (made up of job profile, background to the council, equal opportunities monitoring form, data protection notification and a summary of conditions of service)
46. HR are responsible for co-ordinating applications and passing them to the managers involved in the short-listing process.

Preparing conditions for short-listing and interviewing

47. At least two people will short-list applications. This short-listing will involve assessing each application based on set conditions taken from the job profile. The conditions will be made of a list of essential and desirable requirements. The line manager should decide who should help in the short-listing process, and it is important they understand what conditions they are looking for. They should also agree on how to rank candidates so they can compare their results and create a final shortlist. HR will normally help with this process.
48. For candidates who are applying for an interview under the Disability Confident scheme they must meet the minimum requirement of achieving a minimum score of 2 across the essential skills criteria. If a Disability Confident candidate does achieve this score then they will be invited to interview. There are no further obligations under the Disability Confident scheme after this stage, the successful candidate is chosen solely upon the established criteria used during the interview process.
49. The number of candidates on a short-list will vary depending on the number and the level of vacancies and the time available for interviewing. As the interview is not always the best single way of judging a person's suitability or ability for a post, the line manager should consider other ways they can assess an individual's skills and experience. This may include, for example:
- the candidate putting forward a written document;
 - a practical task such as presenting work prepared beforehand; or
 - a group exercise with other candidates.
50. These exercises can help us choose the right candidate but it is important to make sure that they assess a necessary part of the post's requirements. The interview panel must be very clear on what skills they want to see displayed in the exercise and how important this part of the selection process should be.
51. Once a shortlist has been agreed, the line manager will return the forms to HR and tell them:
- the interview date;
 - the members of the panel; and
 - the details of any exercise the candidates should be asked to carry out before their interview.

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52. If the short-listing process results in only one suitable candidate, we will consider whether to advertise the post again or to continue with an interview.

Inviting candidates to interview

53. HR will write to invite short-listed candidates to an interview. Normally candidates will be given two weeks' notice.
54. Interviews can often go over their time so it is important to allow enough time (plus a little extra if possible).
55. In line with good practice and the Equality Act 2010, HR must give each candidate the opportunity to inform the interview panel of any specific requirements they may have for the interview or the interview task or exercise. This will normally be done when candidates are invited to interview. HR will ensure that they put in place any reasonable adjustments required.
56. External candidates will be asked to bring proof of their eligibility to work in the UK (passport/birth certificates and proof of their National Insurance number, as well as any relevant immigration documents) to the interview and a copy will be taken.
57. HR will try to change interview times if candidates find their travel or work commitments are causing genuine difficulty. However, HR will not change interview times if this would disrupt the interview panel.

References

58. HR will ask for references from the two referees whose details are on the application form. If the choice of referee appears to be inappropriate (for example, the candidate has not included their current or most recent employer), HR will contact the candidate for another referee.
59. HR will only:
- make an unconditional offer of employment once they receive two satisfactory references; and
 - contact referees if the candidate gives them permission to do so.
60. For internal candidates, HR will only ask for one reference, usually from their line manager. As far as is practical the referee should not normally be a member of the interview panel.
61. References will only be shared with the panel members if the panel are finding it difficult to decide between equally suitable candidates. If there is concern over the written comments, HR can contact the referee and discuss the reference in more detail. Panel members must keep references confidential and should not reveal their content to candidates. Members of the panel must reach their own decision on the value of any references, taking account of the suitability of the candidate assessed in the interview process.

Preparing for interviews

62. When HR have invited candidates to the interviews, they will prepare and distribute a set of application forms, together with an interview schedule, for each member of the interview panel.
63. To make sure that members of the panel understand their roles, the requirements of the vacant post and the questions that are to be asked (and in what order), it is important that they meet before the interviews take place.
64. Interviewers must declare any relevant interests to other panel members. This can include situations where an interviewer knows one of the candidates. Although he or she can still take part in the interviews, they must be careful to avoid claims of personal bias or prejudice. HR can advise whether it is appropriate for panel members to take part in the selection process.

The interview

65. Before the interviews start, the panel member from HR will remind the interviewers of the need to avoid all questions which break equal opportunities legislation. If a question is asked which the candidate may take as discriminatory, the chair or the member of HR will tell the candidate to ignore that question. If they fail to do so, it may result in a claim of either direct or indirect discrimination which the individual panel members will have to refute.
66. Panel members' interview notes can provide part of the evidence that discrimination has not taken place. The main safeguard in this process is the set of conditions that each interviewer should be assessing the candidates against. The chair of the panel must put forward a report (the chair's report) to HR summarising the decisions of the panel. HR will use this report to make an offer and will keep it on file for one year.

The selection process

67. The main discussion on which candidates are suitable takes place once all the interviews have been carried out. Each interviewer is given the opportunity to discuss their appraisal of the candidates, referring to the set conditions they were assessed against. Although interviewers are mainly concerned with the responses given to their own questions, they must also take a broader view of the overall suitability of the candidates.
68. The chair is responsible for making the final choice of candidate, but this should not be at conflict with the rest of the panel. The aim of the panel should be to agree in all instances. Selection should be done on the basis of merit. This means the appointment of the best available person judged against the essential criteria for the role. No one should be appointed to a job unless they are competent to do it and the job must be offered to the person who would do it best. If the panel has a choice of successful candidates they should be ranked in order of merit so that if the first choice refuses the offer it is possible to identify who is the next appointable candidate.

The offer

69. When the interview panel has decided on the successful candidate (together with any reserve choices), HR will set the appropriate salary. The salary will be set in accordance with the Salary Determination procedure, which will take account of the individual's relevant experience, necessary qualifications, current salary and also the range of salaries of existing staff across the Council. The Chief Operating Officer (or other relevant senior manager) must give approval before HR can make the offer.
70. HR is responsible for making the offer to the successful candidate. This is likely to be a verbal offer first, followed by a written contract and an employment information pack. Once the offer has been accepted HR will liaise with the new employee to determine start dates and any other arrangements. This will include consideration of any reasonable adjustments which are necessary to facilitate employment. HR staff will work in conjunction with the new employee, their line manager and Facilities staff seeking assistance where required from Access to Work.

Follow-up action

71. When the successful candidate has accepted the post, HR will write to the unsuccessful candidates.
72. HR will email unsuccessful internal candidates and offer them the opportunity to receive feedback from the chair of the interview panel. If they have any concerns or grievances arising from the selection process, they should contact the Head of HR (or the Assistant Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development if they have been involved in the interviews).
73. HR will deal with any enquiries from external applicants about the recruitment and selection process, including requests for feedback. This is a sensitive area where a careless comment may be taken the wrong way and may have legal implications. In the event an applicant makes a complaint about the recruitment process or the result it will be dealt with as follows:
 - Internal applicants – via the SFC grievance procedure
 - External candidates – via the SFC complaints procedure (available by writing to The Information Management and Security Officer, Scottish Funding Council, Apex 2, 97 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5HD, or e-mail info@sfc.ac.uk)
74. Panel members should return any application forms, interview notes and all other information on candidates to HR within a week of the interviews. All this information will be kept confidential.
75. HR will keep on file (in line with HR practices and, where applicable, relevant retention schedule guidance, for at least 2 years):
 - a full set of the application forms;
 - a copy of the advert;

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- information on the post;
 - the interview report; and
 - any relevant correspondence.

76. HR will then prepare a confidential personnel file for the successful candidate. This will contain the application form, references, proof of eligibility to work in UK and the signed contract. The recruitment and selection process is now finished.

Variation to procedure

77. If we believe an exception to this procedure is likely to arise, we will consult the Unite Committee as soon as possible to try and reach an agreement on how to deal with the situation. If we and the Unite Committee cannot reach an agreement, we will consider the comments from the Unite Committee and decide how to continue. No one will act unreasonably.

HR supplementary guidance is available on:

- [Approach to advertising posts](#)
- [Use of agency staff](#)

Document History

This Policy and Procedure does not form part of SFC's terms and conditions of employment.

Owner: Human Resources

Version number	Changes	Date approved
1.0		17/12/2015 Ratified by JNCF

Review cycle: where there is a change in elements of the policy or periodically every two years.