

RECRUITING NEW EMPLOYEES

Introduction

The first step in building an effective team is placing people in roles that ensure they are successful. The 'right' individuals will have both the character and skill to deliver for the team and the organisation. Clarifying for applicants what these mean in practice will allow you to build trust from the start. Remember people who join the organisation will be ambassadors for the company when interacting with customers, suppliers and potential employees. They will be the ones who will support you to deliver your plans. Recruiting new employees can be time consuming and costly. It merits sufficient planning and consideration to ensure it delivers the required outcomes.

Before investing in new plant and equipment, companies usually take time to carefully specify their needs to ensure that any purchases meet those needs and provide a good return on investment. Employing people represents a potentially much greater level of investment and therefore a similarly rigorous approach should be taken.

The aim is to ensure that the people employed are capable of ensuring that the business meets its objectives. It is important that managers are able to delegate with confidence rather than micro-managing or dealing with performance or disciplinary issues.

Depending on the nature of the business, people may be employed on a temporary or permanent basis and on either a full or part-time basis. Non-standard working patterns may be of mutual benefit.

Employers are legally obliged to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination in the recruitment process, when making the decision as to whether or not to make an offer of employment to a particular applicant, and in relation to the terms of employment offered to the successful applicant. This can include a wide range of matters from setting the selection criteria, to how the interviewers behave towards candidates. It is illegal to discriminate against an individual on grounds of sex, pregnancy or maternity leave, married or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, religious or similar philosophical belief, political opinion, race, disability, sexual orientation or age. It is also unlawful to treat staff less favourably on the grounds of fixed-term or part-time status. It is recommended that all staff involved in the recruitment process receive equal opportunities training and that they continue to receive it at regular intervals throughout their employment. The best strategy that employers can adopt is to try to ensure that their recruitment procedures are fair and founded on the principle of selecting the best person for the job. The Equality Commission NI have developed Codes of Practice and various guides to assist employers. (www.equalityni.org)

Taking these factors into consideration, it is well worth taking the time to make effective recruitment decisions. These decisions will be much more robust and a good result more likely if a structured process is followed. This means defining what the person will be required to do, what knowledge, skills and experience are needed to do the job effectively, determining how to attract applicants with those attributes and assessing applicants against those attributes.

To help you achieve the goal of appointing the 'best' person for the job, begin by committing to making it your policy and practice to recruit fairly. The Equality Commission have developed a model 'Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure' to assist you (see www.equalityni.org).

A full summary of the recruitment and selection process is attached at Appendix 2S. The key steps in the process are detailed below.

1. Define the job – prepare a Job Description

The first step in an effective recruitment process is to define the job that needs to be done. The job description should show clearly the purpose of the job and objectives, the place of the job holder in the organisational structure, the main tasks and responsibilities of the job holder and any associated tasks so that people can judge whether it is really what they want to do. If someone is already doing the job, information on what the job involves can be gathered by observing them or asking them to complete a work diary. It is important to consider carefully the 'Job Title' and also ensure that it is gender-neutral as it conveys the role to potential applicants.

See template for a job description at Appendix 2A.

2. Determine what attributes are needed to do the job – prepare a Person Specification

Following on from the job description, the person specification determines the knowledge, skills, experience, competencies and qualifications needed or required in order to perform all the duties in the job description satisfactorily. When defining the qualities needed for the job, remember that potential to develop is important and that certain skills can be taught. Skill requirements are also likely to change and employees will need to continually update their skills. Innate capabilities such as the ability and willingness to learn new skills and knowledge, and qualities such as a positive approach, enthusiasm for work, self-discipline, integrity and initiative are more difficult for an employer to develop therefore it is important to take such qualities into account during the selection process. Avoid using clichés or meaningless or ambiguous terms in the person specification. Think how you will assess every requirement included.

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In some workplaces, it may sometimes be lawful to designate some jobs as being open to women only, or men only, or only to people with certain religious beliefs or other equality characteristics. This is a complex topic and advice should be sought from the Equality Commission.

The person specification will produce criteria which will form the basis for selection. Equal Opportunities guidelines recommend that **objective and strictly job related criteria** are established at the beginning of the recruitment process and adhered to throughout. Each element of the person specification should **relate to an element of the job description**. This avoids a person specification turning into a “wish list” and also helps avoid discrimination claims.

Care should be taken to ensure that the person specification contains criteria which are genuinely required in order to do the job and that these criteria are justifiable and do not, even inadvertently, exclude particular groups of candidates. Try to keep an open mind and avoid making stereotypical assumptions about different groups of people and their ability to do the job.

There may be some requirements which are essential to do the job and others which would be an advantage but which are not essential. The requirements should therefore be classed as either **Essential or Desirable**. Think carefully about those requirements classed as essential. If you state that a particular criterion is essential, and this can be assessed at short-listing stage (i.e. on paper) you will not be able to interview a person who does not meet this criterion. Ensure that you are not ruling people out for unnecessary reasons. Making a criterion desirable means that you have more flexibility at the short-listing and interview stages.

The person specification helps those making the selection decision to know what they are looking for. It also shows applicants what is required - they know what aspects of their experience to highlight. The criteria developed at this stage will form the basis of the advert, the short-listing process and the interview so it is important to get them right and make sure that they do not change during the process.

See template for a person specification at Appendix 2B.

3. Attracting candidates - prepare a Job Advertisement

The Equality Commission strongly recommends that employers advertise their job vacancies widely so as to invite applicants from as many eligible candidates as possible. One of the easiest ways to meet this recommendation is to advertise in a medium proven to be accessed by all sections of the community. Options will include the press, including specialist and professional publications, recruitment websites, job centres and the Government’s online service (www.employersonlineni.com) which is free of charge.

Some media will have a local focus while others may have a national or international reach. The right one will depend on the nature of the job and the availability of the relevant skills. In addition to other media, the company website may also be used. Check with the providers on the number and profile of people accessing their services.

It is important to ensure that a sufficiently wide range of potential candidates are reached, for example recruiting only via the internet may not reach older, disabled or mobile workers and particular publications may have a wider gender or ethnic coverage. Consider how all potential applicants who meet the requirements can be made aware of the role.

Depending on the nature of the role, you may also wish to encourage applications from internal candidates. It is also worth considering the timing of the advert since coming up to a major holiday is generally not a good time to place an advert.

Include all of the criteria in the advert if possible and if this doesn’t make the advert too long and expensive. If not, include those which will be used in short-listing (i.e. those such as experience and qualifications which can be judged on paper).

Some criteria may be ‘Desirable’ i.e. they are not critical in order to do the job effectively, others will be ‘Essential’. It should be stated at this stage which is which.

Care should be taken over the wording of job advertisements as inappropriate wording could give rise to the risk of unlawful discrimination claims or be used as evidence of a discriminatory culture. For example, terms such as “mature” or “energetic” should be avoided as they may imply that the employer is seeking candidates only from a particular age profile. The adverts should refer to the real (as opposed to the perceived) requirements of the role. Employers should avoid presenting men, women, disabled people or those from particular ethnic backgrounds in stereotypical ways. The **Equality Commission** website (www.equalityni.org) and helpline can provide further advice and guidance on advertising and avoiding the legal pitfalls.

Finally, the advert should reflect the culture of the company. Advertising is an opportunity to market the position and the company so that you attract applicants. Remember to “sell” the company and the opportunity in the advert emphasising the benefits of the position and the positive aspects of working for the company, while still presenting a realistic picture. Consider your target audience. Be honest, imaginative and avoid clichés and standard formulaic phrases. Ensure the advert is clearly set out, with good use of space and bold highlighting to catch attention. A strong and compelling company vision can also help attract applicants.

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When advertising online, use the kind of language job seekers will relate to. Think what words to use that will show up in internet searches. Conduct a search of similar jobs online to identify patterns of which jobs get listed first in the search results. Consider how the advert will be viewed on mobiles, tablets etc. Consider using visual as well as written information.

Adverts which include the salary tend to get a higher level of response than those which don't.

It is helpful to include a contact name, number or email address for interested candidates to get in touch for more information. This can save time later in the process.

If the company is using application forms and wants to ensure consistency of information received, the advert may state that CVs will not be accepted in place of application forms. All adverts should specify a closing date for receipt of completed applications.

See template for a Job Advertisement at Appendix 2C.

Some positions may be difficult to fill or may attract a low rate of response to adverts. In this case (and together with the wider recruitment decisions referred to above) it may be helpful to specifically target people through the use of personal contacts, employee referral schemes, social media sites or professional search organisations. It is perfectly acceptable to use existing personal or online contacts to inform people that an opportunity exists. It can be useful to search online professional networking sites or job sites for the skills you are looking for.

Collect feedback on any advertising media. Online sites should give information on the numbers of people viewing the job which can then be compared with the number of applicants. If the results are not effective, review the strategy. It be helpful to invest in training to ensure that you are maximising your use of differing channels to attract the right quality of candidate.

4. Prepare a structured application form

Application forms make the process of short-listing and interviewing easier for the company. They should include only questions which are necessary to process the application or to determine whether the person meets the selection criteria. It is helpful to produce a **job specific application form** or appendix to the application form. This form will contain a section asking the candidates to demonstrate how they meet the criteria for this job and so **will need to be amended for each specific job role**. Because a structured application form contains questions related to the specific criteria some self-assessment is required from the candidates at this stage before an application is submitted.

The questions should relate only to those criteria which can be objectively assessed on paper. These tend to relate to qualifications (including driving licence if required for the job) and specific experience.

Using tailored application forms ensures the information is in a structured format so that you do not have to search through a CV or make assumptions about whether or not applicants really have the attributes you are seeking. It also means that you are not presented with irrelevant information and therefore makes short-listing easier.

It is not recommended that you accept CVs or speculative or casual applications for employment.

Employers may wish to ask applicants to declare if they have a criminal conviction in order to ensure that any declared convictions are not incompatible with the job. The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 sets out a period of time from a date of conviction which will allow certain convictions to become spent.

Once a conviction is deemed spent the individual does not have to declare this on an application form. Convictions which lead to a prison sentence of more than 30 months can never become spent. Some occupations are also "excepted" e.g. those which involve working with children or vulnerable adults. In these circumstances convictions never become spent and will always be disclosable. The Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders can provide further advice (www.niacro.co.uk).

You should provide the option of completing application forms either electronically or manually and be prepared to provide application forms in different formats (e.g. Braille) to meet the needs of disabled candidates.

If you have 11 or more employees (counting only those who work for more than 16 hours per week) you are obliged to register with the Equality Commission. Failure to do so is a criminal offence. Advice is available on their website (www.equalityni.org).

When registered you will have to **monitor** the community background (i.e. Protestant or Roman Catholic) and sex of your job applicants and your workforce. To do this you should send all job applicants a monitoring questionnaire along with the application form. Applicants should be advised to return the questionnaire to a person (your monitoring officer) who is not involved in the selection process. You should also provide a separate envelope to assist applicants to return the questionnaire to your monitoring officer. Members of the selection panel should not have access to the information contained in the applicants' monitoring questionnaires.

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See template for a structured application form including a monitoring form at Appendix 2D.

Employers are not legally obliged to monitor any other equality characteristics but the Equality Commission recommends doing so as it helps to promote equality of opportunity. Further advice and template monitoring forms are available from the Equality Commission. (www.equalityni.org).

Application forms should be provided in response to requests from candidates or made available through the company's or other recruitment website. Applicants should also be provided with a copy of the job description and person specification. The date each application form is received should be recorded either by using a date stamp or recording the date on a separate form. Applications received after the specified closing date should not be considered.

5. Carry out short-listing

Where the short-listing criteria require some measure of judgement, rather than a simple yes or no, it is useful to have a short-listing panel of at least two people, preferably of mixed gender and community background, to help mitigate the risk of discrimination claims/bias arising in the process. If possible, the same people should sit on the short-listing and interview panels to ensure consistency of approach. It also permits debate amongst the panel on borderline candidates. Before short-listing begins the short-listing panel should review the criteria to be sure that they are clear on exactly what is required in order for a candidate to be short-listed. The **Qualifications Comparison Service**, available through the Jobs and Benefits Offices, can assist you when checking overseas qualifications to ensure that they are equivalent to what you are seeking. Also see www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean. To avoid claims for discrimination or bias in the short-listing process it is good practice to ensure that the panel does not have any personal information about the applicants.

See template for short-listing form at Appendix 2E.

The short-listing form should be tailored to the criteria from the person specification which is assessable on paper (normally experience and qualifications).

See the short-listing guidance at Appendix 2F.

Each member of the short-listing panel should be provided with a copy of each of these documents.

Following short-listing, prepare a timetable for interviews, ensuring enough time is allotted to each candidate. Send letters to all short-listed candidates informing them of date, time and venue. The letter should provide contact details for candidates requiring special assistance or reasonable adjustments related to a disability (see paragraph below).

See sample letter at Appendix 2G.

It is important for the company's reputation to respond to all applicants so communicate with candidates who have not been short-listed at this time also.

See sample letter at Appendix 2H.

6. Arrange and hold interviews - prepare in advance:

- Ensure that there are two or more panel members (preferably mixed gender and community background) since this helps reduce bias. It may be useful to ask someone from outside the organisation to assist with interviews if they have a particular area of expertise which is relevant to the role. In an attempt to reduce the possibility of unlawful discrimination taking place ensure the staff involved in the interview and selection process, and the outside person where appropriate, have had equality training and training about interviews.
- The panel should determine in advance whether to create a reserve list of candidates who are suitable for appointment and how long the reserve list will last for. It is not recommended that a reserve list should last for any longer than 12 months.
- Prepare questions based on the criteria and agree your approach with the other panel members including who is going to ask which questions. When determining questions, remember that the best predictor of future performance is past performance even if this past performance is in a different context. Behavioural interview questions ask for details of how candidates have dealt with relevant situations in the past rather than asking what they would do in a hypothetical situation since no-one really knows what they would do in a hypothetical situation. For example, if an interviewer wants to recruit someone who will "go the extra mile", a useful question might be: "Tell me about a time when you stretched the rules or went above and beyond the call of duty to meet a customer's need?" If the post requires a lot of customer facing work then a suitable question would be: "Give me an example of a difficult customer you had to deal with. How did you handle the situation?" Adaptability can be assessed by asking for examples when candidates have changed their approach in response to feedback or change. It can also be useful to ask candidates for examples of setbacks and obstacles and what they have learned from their mistakes. Focusing on specific examples from the past like these helps get past the practised answers from a well-rehearsed interviewee.
- In order to avoid staff turnover among new starts, questions should also establish whether the job will meet the applicant's requirements. It can be useful to ask applicants to describe their ideal job.
- It is likely that some criteria are more important than others. It will help you to select the best person for the job if you determine in advance which criteria are the most important and weight them accordingly.

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- Prepare an interview record form and an interview summary form. See samples at Appendix 2I and 2J. These should be tailored to the criteria on the person specification which are assessable at interview (usually experience, which can be explored further, and personal skills) and should include an appropriate weighting for each of the criteria, since some will be more important than others. Criteria can be weighted by marking some out of a higher number (e.g. some criteria may be allocated 10 marks, others 15, others 20 etc) or by multiplying the score by two or three. However, the method of multiplying scores can produce quite wide variations in the importance of different criteria.
- Prepare answers to questions candidates are likely to ask. In particular, think about the terms and conditions of the role such as pay and benefits, working hours, holidays, frequency of travel if this is part of the role, etc.

See document on planning and preparing for interview at Appendix 2K.

Each member of the interview panel should receive a copy of each of these documents (Appendices 2I to 2M) along with copies of the application forms for each of the candidates. These guidance documents help ensure consistency in the recruitment process and help those involved in selection decisions to avoid the temptation to rely on gut instinct.

Making adjustments for disabled candidates

In advance of the interview date, where practicable, the employer should consult with any disabled applicants who have indicated that they may need adjustments to facilitate their participation in the interview process. The purpose of the consultation is to obtain information to inform and assist the employer to make appropriate reasonable adjustments. If the employer cannot consult with the disabled applicants, he or she should nevertheless take into account any information that the applicants have provided in or with their application forms that may assist in determining what reasonable adjustments would be appropriate.

The kinds of adjustments that need to be made will depend on the particular facts of each case, including the nature of the disabled person's disability, the resources of the employer and the particular disadvantages that need to be overcome, but examples might include:

- Allowing a disabled applicant additional time to deliver a presentation or to answer questions; or
- Conducting the interview in a different location, such as in a room on a different floor which may be more accessible; or
- Conducting the interview in a different way, such as over a telephone or video link; or
- Conducting the interview through a sign language interpreter.

On the day:

- Arrange appropriate venue and practicalities.
- Avoid interruptions and make sure the panel members can give the interviewee their full attention.

See checklist on interview practicalities at Appendix 2L.

- Ensure the interview follows a planned structure which will be defined by the core criteria. To get the information you need, each area should receive adequate attention. It is too late to do anything about gaps once the interview is over. The structure should also cover introductions and closing which will include an explanation of the process during the interview and afterwards.
- Some of the criteria will be more important than others. Ensure that the relative weighting for each of the criteria has been agreed in advance.
- Make every attempt to conduct the interview in as non-stressful a manner as possible (introduce panel members, comfortable setting, explain process). The emphasis should be on giving candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their skills, rather than trying to catch them out.
- Ask similar questions covering the same areas to all candidates. Comparing candidates who have not had the same opportunity to demonstrate the competencies is like comparing an apple and an orange.
- Allow the conversation to flow. While answering one question, candidates may provide answers to another and allowing this can make the process seem more natural. However, ensure that the candidate is providing the information needed and that all criteria are covered.
- Use the interview to gather information. Do not try to reach a decision while the candidate is talking or you will not be able to listen properly.
- Take notes of what the candidate says, the examples they give etc, rather than evaluations of what they say. Avoid making any written comments which could be perceived as discriminatory.
- Evaluate the findings afterwards using a scoring system with a defined marking scheme helps consistency.
- Arrange for copying of any relevant documentation, if appropriate.

Purpose of questions

Remember that the purpose of the questions is to gather evidence to enable the interviewer to assess the candidate against the requirements of the post. For each question, ask yourself "Which of the criteria am I trying to assess with this question?"

The Chairperson of the interview panel should ensure that the panel do not ask any potentially discriminatory questions, for example, questions asked of a female candidate that would not be asked of a man, such as plans to have children.

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The only other questions should be to check out gaps in the candidate's history or to test whether the candidate fully appreciates any special requirements such as travel, long hours etc. and is prepared to meet them.

Do not be too rigid. The questions are a guide and not a verbal test with one set of right answers.

See checklist on Interview Do's and Don'ts at Appendix 2M.

7. Carry out Assessment tests

It may be useful to ask candidates to carry out a practical task as part of the interview in order to demonstrate typing, computer skills or other technical skills relevant to the role. For example, you could ask a sales person to make a presentation, an accounts clerk to set up a spreadsheet, or a joiner, welder or electrician to carry out a practical task relevant to their role. These tests should only be used if they are essential to the post being considered, as an unnecessary test may lead to discrimination. If you do include such a task, make sure that the task and the conditions are the same for each applicant. Tests should correspond with the job in question and measure as closely as possible the appropriate skills and abilities used in the person specification. Language skills may need to be tested where proficiency in a language is an objectively justified requirement for a role. Care should be taken over assumptions made that applicants from outside the UK or of particular nationalities will or will not be proficient in English.

Employers are increasingly using psychometric testing which tests aspects of personality and intelligence. Thought needs to be given as to whether tests such as these; are necessary and proportionate; will involve any invasion of privacy; how feedback may be given; and how the data generated is to be stored. Only reliable and properly validated tests should be used.

Employers should only use tests which have been assessed as having no discriminatory impact on any of the statutory equality grounds.

These tests should not be the sole method of assessment and all candidates will need to be informed in advance if these are to be used as testing methods. Reasonable adjustments may be needed for disabled candidates.

8. Ensure a positive experience for applicants

Remember that candidates are assessing the company during the interview process in order to decide if this is the sort of place they would like to work. They may also be potential customers and so creating a good impression throughout the selection process is important.

9. Selecting candidates

Selection decisions should be based strictly on the criteria for the job as assessed through the various selection methods e.g. short-listing, interviews, tests etc. Information gathered during interview should be evaluated objectively following the interview. Once again, stereotypical assumptions should be avoided and decisions should be based on evidence rather than prejudices of individual panel members. The method used to decide on the successful candidate should be agreed in advance of the interview process and documented, and must be fairly and equally applied to all candidates.

If in doubt about any candidate's ability to do the job, do not appoint them. Keep looking. Do not compromise on the essential criteria to do the job effectively. Remember the negative effect the wrong person can have on the rest of the team and the amount of time that can be taken up managing a poor performer. There is also a responsibility to the individual. Appointing a person who does not have the capability of carrying out the role will do them, or the team, no favours in the long run.

However, when considering a candidate's ability to do the job, it will be especially important in the case of disabled persons never to forget that you may be under a duty to make reasonable adjustments. So you need to consider this if you have doubts as to whether a disabled candidate has the ability to do the job for a reason related to their disability, i.e. start by asking yourself 'if I make reasonable adjustments for this person, would they then have the ability to do the job?' not 'would this person have the ability to do the job?'

Once decisions have been made, all candidates should be informed promptly. Requests for feedback should also be answered tactfully and without delay either verbally or in writing. The feedback should relate specifically to the extent to which the candidate met or did not meet the requirements of the person specification. The employer should write to the successful candidate, if any, to make an offer of employment or, where they have initially spoken to them, to confirm the offer. Also inform the successful candidate whether the offer is subject to completion of a satisfactory medical and/or references.

Records must be kept of all stages of the recruitment process. Bear in mind that these documents will be disclosable in any tribunal proceedings. Documents to be retained include Job Description, Person Specification, selection criteria, any written test, notes of short-listing process, interview questions, notes of interview and minutes of any interview panel discussions or decisions following interviews. All handwritten notes must be retained even if there is a typed version. It is recommended that these records are kept for 12 months. Equal opportunities monitoring information should be kept for 3 years.

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10. Conduct Pre-employment Checks

Firstly confirm the identity of the candidate is genuine by requesting original copies of documents such as a driving licence or birth certificate etc.

You must ensure that any checks are not discriminatory. You should make any job offer conditional on the outcome of pre-employment checks. Some checks will be optional e.g. references, and others are a legal requirement e.g. their right to work in the UK.

Reference checks

References can be taken up during the selection process and can inform that process. However, references from a current employer should only be taken up with the employee's consent, usually once a conditional job offer has been made.

References can provide useful additional information about applicants, including confirmation of employment history, job title, experience, overall performance and reason for leaving. Telephone references can be useful as a reply can be obtained more quickly. Make sure that you are speaking to the right person and accept that the amount of information they are prepared to give may be limited. Questions should be based on the criteria for the job and referees asked to comment on how closely the applicant meets those criteria.

It is recommended that comments of a personal nature should not be asked about candidates. References for internal candidates should be obtained from their immediate supervisor or manager.

Except for certain employers in the financial sectors, employers are not obliged to give references. Also you should not assume that references given in confidence will remain confidential.

It should be borne in mind that not every employer or person giving a reference will always give a totally accurate picture, especially if the reference is given to the applicant directly.

Also, give fair consideration in respect of any referee of the long-term unemployed e.g. an employee who has been made redundant may not have a recent employer reference, neither will a parent who has taken a few years out for family reasons, yet they may become excellent employees.

Only factual or verifiable information should be relied upon when deciding whether or not to make an offer and this information should be considered along with all other relevant information.

Offers of employment should always be made conditional on receipt of references, which are satisfactory to the employer, so that no employment contract exists until the satisfactory reference is received.

See reference check sample at Appendix 2N.

Checking online profiles on social media sites

Some employers now state that they check applicants' profiles before making final selection decisions. However, employers should consider how this practice fits with a systematic, fair and objective recruitment process. Firstly, information from such a source may be available for some applicants but not others.

Secondly, there is no way of verifying the accuracy of this information. Furthermore, information about a candidate's religious belief or political opinion, family status, or sexual orientation may be available on such a site. If the employer has had access to this information, it may be more difficult to defend a claim of discrimination from an unsuccessful candidate. Finally, data protection legislation requires that individuals should be informed of the means by which information is collected about them and the information obtained must be relevant, adequate and not excessive for the purpose.

Qualifications checks

As well as checking out references, an employer may also wish to verify other factual data provided by the employee such as academic qualifications if this has not already been done. The employer may wish to ask to see original certificates, for example, either before an offer is made or as a condition of the offer.

The UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (www.naric.org.uk) can help you compare international qualifications and skills.

Restrictive Covenants checks

The employer may also wish to seek confirmation that there are no restrictive covenants that could prevent the employee taking up the job.

Restrictive Covenants are designed to prevent employees from disclosing or using confidential information, trade secrets, etc, and/or soliciting or dealing with customers during a specified period after leaving the business.

Health checks

It is reasonable to request completion of a health questionnaire where good health is relevant to the job or where there are any specific medical requirements of the job. Any particular medical requirements should be made clear at the application stage. For certain jobs where there are genuine physical requirements, a pre-employment medical check may be appropriate. Questions about a job applicant's health or medical history should not be included in the application form. Medical checks should only be carried out after a conditional offer of employment. All candidates should be treated equally so medical checks should not be required solely for one gender, age group, or ethnic minority. Care should also be taken when considering any previous absence related to pregnancy or disability.

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Employers also have a duty to consider making reasonable adjustments to the role or to the workplace to ensure that anyone with a disability is not placed at a disadvantage when compared to non-disabled people. It is suggested that you give applicants the opportunity, on an application form or a monitoring form, to indicate any relevant effects of a disability and to suggest any reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments may include:

- doing things another way;
- making physical changes such as installing a ramp for a wheelchair user or an audio-visual fire alarm for a deaf person;
- letting a disabled person work somewhere else for example, allowing a wheelchair user to work on the ground floor; or
- changing equipment for example, providing a special keyboard for someone with arthritis.

Employers should also ensure that storage and use of medical information conforms to Data Protection regulations.

Criminal Convictions For certain jobs you may need to check previous criminal convictions. In Northern Ireland the agency which deals with criminal record checks is Access NI (<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/accessni-criminal-record-checks>). Confidentiality when handling details of any criminal convictions is extremely important. Full details in relation to the rehabilitation of offenders and obtaining criminal records checks are available on the NI Business Info website nibusinessinfo.co.uk.

If a candidate has declared a criminal conviction, it is important to remember that a conviction does not automatically make an individual unsuitable for employment. The Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) can provide guidance for employers in working with applicants with convictions (www.niacro.co.uk). NIACRO recommend that disclosure of convictions is sought after the short-listing process and for the preferred applicant only. An objective risk assessment can then be carried out at this stage considering the following factors:

- when the offence occurred;
- seriousness of offence;
- frequency of offending;
- the individual's circumstances at the time of the offence;
- duties of the job;
- level of supervision of the job; and
- access of applicant to customers and clients, etc.

Objective assessments will focus on a person's skills, abilities, experience and qualifications while considering the nature of the offence and its relevance to the job in question.

Right to work in the UK You must check the eligibility of applicants to work in the UK since employers who fail to do so may be liable for a fine currently up to £60,000.

The online tool (<https://www.gov.uk/legal-right-work-uk>) provides guidance. It is recommended that you do these checks at the end of the selection process and only on those applicants who have been offered conditional offers of employment.

The UK Government has published guidance on right to work checks at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/right-to-work-checks-employer-guidance>. This document outlines the acceptable documentation to demonstrate a prospective employee's right to work in the UK

Whether a person can work in the UK, the type of work they are able to do and for how long will depend on their immigration status.

Employers should be careful when applying these document checks not to discriminate against any applicants on racial grounds and should therefore ask the same questions of all applicants regarding permission to work in the UK at the relevant stage of the recruitment process and not just of those who appear to be of non-British descent. It must not be assumed that someone from an ethnic minority is an immigrant, or that someone born abroad is not entitled to work in the UK. The best way to make sure that you do not discriminate in your recruitment practices is to **treat all job applicants in the same way**.

Full details are available on the NI Business Info website nibusinessinfo.co.uk and from the UK Visa and Immigrants Office (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration>).

11. Make the offer and agree the contract Send out a conditional offer letter, subject to satisfactory references and any other relevant checks. See sample letter at Appendix 20.

After any relevant checks have been made, advise the successful candidate of the date and time of starting and the person to whom he or she should report. It is good practice to inform any unsuccessful interviewees promptly in writing after an offer of employment has been accepted. See sample letter at Appendix 2P.

Consider the use of a reserve list. If, for example, the first choice leaves soon after taking up the post, you would be in a position to efficiently make an immediate cover offer. If you do choose to use a reserve list, it would be appropriate to inform those on it of such and their ranking position. You should time limit any reserve list stating the duration of the list e.g. 6 months.

SECTION 2

Upon acceptance by the successful candidate, you can send out a contract of employment which should contain details of the job title and the job that is being offered and the main terms of employment, such as pay, hours, holidays and notice requirements. Certain information must be provided in writing to the employee and more can be found on this in section 3. You may also wish to include terms relating to temporary lay-off, short-time working, confidentiality and non-compete clauses.

12. Register as an employer, if necessary, and set up a payroll record for the employee

All employers need to be registered for tax purposes and deduct income tax (PAYE) and national insurance contributions (NICs help pay for sickness benefits and the state retirement pension) from employees whose earnings meet certain thresholds. Employers must use approved payroll software to report to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on or before an employee's payday and every time an employee is paid. See www.gov.uk for details.

Employers must also pay Employer's Class 1 NICs for employees who earn above a certain threshold. These amounts are payable to HMRC monthly or quarterly.

The amount of National Insurance to be paid is fixed by the government and changes every April. In order to pay National Insurance Contributions all employees need a National Insurance number, although they can start work without one. Further information on obtaining National Insurance numbers and making contributions is available on the HMRC website (www.hmrc.gov.uk).

Employers must keep records showing; employee's pay and deductions; reports and payments to HMRC; employee leave and sickness; tax code notices; taxable expenses or benefits; and payroll giving schemes for 3 years from the end of the tax year they relate to.

The employee's tax code and National Insurance category letter can be used to work out how much Income Tax and National Insurance contributions (NICs) to deduct from their pay and how much Employer's Class 1 NICs is owed on their earnings.

Each employee must receive a pay statement, or payslip, at or before the time they are paid. This can be in either paper or electronic format but it must show certain items, including each employee's gross pay (before any deductions are made), all deductions and the purposes for which they are made, and the net amount payable after the deductions have been made (also known as take home pay).

Employee forms

Form P45. New employees who have had a previous job, or have had a period on state benefits, will give a P45 to their new employer when they start. When they leave they should receive a completed P45 for their new employer.

Starter Checklist. The employer and employee will usually need to complete a 'Starter Checklist' (formally a P46) if they don't have a P45. This covers the employee's personal details, including their National Insurance number, current or recent work history and any student loan details. It also records details about the employer's PAYE scheme and the tax code being used for them.

Form P60. Each employee who was working for the company at 5 April whose earnings reached the National Insurance Lower Earnings Limit (LEL) during the tax year must receive a P60. The P60 shows the employee's pay and tax for the whole year. The P60 must be given to the employee by 31st May following the end of the tax year.

Further information on income tax and national insurance payments and obligations is available on the HMRC website. www.hmrc.gov.uk or www.gov.uk/running-payroll

13. Register with the Equality Commission – when you have 11 or more employees

All companies with 11 or more full-time employees (working more than 16 hours a week) in Northern Ireland are required to register with the Equality Commission. All registered employers are required by law to monitor their workforce in terms of community background and to submit a return each year to the Equality Commission. All registered employers must also conduct a three yearly review (an **Article 55 Review**) of the composition of their workforce.

You can register with the Commission by sending them the following details:

- Name, address and contact details of business;
- Nature of business;
- Number of full time employees;
- Name and position of the person in the company who will be dealing with monitoring.

Employers must take into consideration the **Fair Employment Code of Practice** and consider taking affirmative action as required.

Further details on monitoring and support for employers can be obtained from the Equality Commission website: www.equalityni.org

14. Plan induction

Once you have recruited people with the right skills and attitude, people who are self-motivated, you want to ensure that their experiences with the organisation do not de-motivate them. A properly structured induction plan will help to:

SECTION 2

- give the right impression from the outset;
- make the new employee feel welcome;
- help the new employee to understand exactly what they have to do;
- ensure that they are aware of the employer's rules, standards expected, etc; and
- assist them to integrate as fully and quickly as possible.

It is well known that new employees account for a high proportion of labour turnover and hence it is important that new recruits receive adequate induction and, if needed, training to help minimise the likelihood of their leaving within a short period of time. The cost of a proper and effective induction procedure is small when weighed against recruitment and training costs. The main purpose of an induction is to help the new employee settle in and become effective as quickly as possible, while helping to minimise any stress or frustration that comes from starting a new job and not knowing the people or the systems.

Failure to implement a successful induction process will leave the new employee unclear about the 'way things are done' and disillusioned with the professionalism of the company.

It is useful then to use an induction check-list and to assign a "buddy" to help the new employee to settle in and to answer any minor queries they may have.

A sample induction plan is available at Appendix 2Q with a plan for the new employee at Appendix 2R.

15. Managing performance of new employees

During induction it is vital that clear expectations are set and communicated to the new employee. It is also vital that performance against objectives is monitored closely so that any failure to meet objectives can be addressed promptly.

Therefore while it is advisable to have a structured set of formal meetings to discuss progress etc, managers should not put off dealing with any issues as they arise.

It is recommended that contracts of employment allow for a probationary period (e.g. 6 months) so the employer can assess the suitability, capabilities and the reliability of the new employee. The length of the probationary period should be clearly communicated to the employee from the outset.

If performance has fallen short of expectations, in the first few weeks, discuss the necessary action to improve and any support that may be provided. Set a timescale for improvement and follow up. The employer should document any meetings.

If at 2 months there has been no improvement or if performance has recently dropped below the required standard, consideration should be given to issuing a warning.

Set timescales for improvement, and monitor closely with the objective of resolving the matter within a total of two months. If performance remains unsatisfactory, dismissal should be considered at this time. However, this should only be considered as a last resort.

Ensure that the employee is informed of the reason for each meeting and, if appropriate, advising that termination is being considered in advance and in writing. If it is possible that a warning will be issued or their employment terminated as a result, ensure that the employee is aware of their right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative (who may be either a full-time official employed by a union or a lay union official who has been reasonably certified in writing by his/her union as having experience of, or as having received training in, acting as a worker's companion).

At the meeting give the employee the opportunity to respond. After the meeting make a decision and notify the employee of the outcome in writing. If the decision is to terminate the contract, ensure you offer the employee the right to appeal within 5 working days.

So while the contract of employment may allow for dismissal during a probationary period without having to follow the company's full disciplinary procedure, it is advisable to follow the above process to avoid a claim for wrongful dismissal which has no length of service requirement.

It is important that you communicate, monitor, act early, and be consistent in your approach. The initial months of employment form an important basis for the future working relationship and ensuring that an appointee meets your expectations and their full potential.

16. Student Work Experience Placements

As competition for staff increases, more companies are actively seeking to provide this opportunity as a means of engaging with the next generation of employees and promoting the company as a 'good' employer for future recruitment needs.

Student work placements can bring many positive benefits for the student, employees, the team and the company as a whole. In many cases it gives employees the opportunity to review, clarify and articulate how they contribute to the success of the company. As well as a renewed focus on the individual or team achievements, there can be a sense of 'giving' which has many positive effects.

SECTION 2

Similar to the previous advice on determining new employees' roles, work placements will be successful when they are planned and structured, with the specific expectations and outcomes for both parties highlighted. The benefits must be clear to all and it should not be seen as an additional 'burden' on staff. Clear communication and management is required.

In a competitive employment market, the government support various initiatives to help connect applicants with employers so it is recommended to contact the local job support agencies and also research what's currently available at <https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/employer-support-programmes>

APPENDIX 2A

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: _____

(Employer guidance - consider carefully; what words will attract potential applicants; what the title will infer to applicants about the post, level of responsibility etc; and what words applicants may use to search online for the position. Job Titles should be gender neutral.)

Reporting to: _____

(Employer Guidance - list the position that this position reports to e.g. MD)

Responsibility for: _____

(Employer Guidance - what other positions will the role be responsible for?)

Location: _____

Overall purpose of the job: _____

(Employers Guidance - Why does the job exist? What will the role achieve? What issue will it solve? What is the key output? What will it contribute to achieving the company's objectives?)

Key activities:

(Employer Guidance - Start each sentence with a verb. These are the key tasks of the role. This is an action list focused on what will be delivered weekly, monthly and yearly. It should form the basis of objective setting for the appointee. You might also wish to prioritise and/or group the tasks so that an emphasis is placed on activities critical to success.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

(Employer Guidance: The Equality Commission recommend that employers include the following specific duty: To perform the job in accordance with the company's policies and procedures, especially the Equal Opportunities and Harassment Policy. It is also recommended that you include the following: To perform any other duties as may be reasonably be required from time-to-time)

Any special requirements: *(Employer Guidance - e.g. unusual hours of work, travel requirements, driving licence etc)*

APPENDIX 2B

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Job Title: _____

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications/Attainments		
Relevant Experience		
Skills and competencies <i>e.g.</i> <i>Communication Skills</i> <i>Problem solving Skills</i> <i>IT experience</i> <i>Ability to work on own initiative etc.</i>		
Circumstances* <i>Indicate if any special circumstances are attached to this post. (e.g. shifts, unusual hours, travel).</i>		

Employer Guidance

**Should only be included if a justifiable requirement for the job.*

NB: *Drawn up by employer based on essential versus desirable requirements of the position as a result of a Job Description.*

APPENDIX 2C

EXAMPLE FORMAT FOR RECRUITMENT ADVERTISEMENT

(Employer Guidance - Consider any advertisement as an opportunity to 'market' the position and the company to potential applicants. Therefore use language and phrases that reflect your company culture, work environment and the desired individual/team behaviours. The advert is an opportunity to highlight what the company offers in return for the applicants.)

Job Title: _____

Salary: _____

(Employer Guidance - including a salary is optional but advisable as it will either encourage or dissuade potential applicants and therefore increase the likelihood of the successful applicant being willing to join the company for the salary on offer.)

Length of contract: _____

Location of job: _____

Company background: _____

Summary of role

As a result of... we are now seeking a...

Essential and desirable criteria

Applicants must ... *(essential criteria)*. Preference may be given to applicants who ... *(desirable criteria)*.

A full job description, person specification and application form are available from: *(insert contact details name, address, telephone number, email address etc)*

The closing date for completed application forms is ... *(typically 2 weeks but suggest allowing until the following Tuesday which will give an additional weekend to allow applicants time to complete and send form)*

An equal opportunities statement is recommended, potentially together with a specific welcome statement, for example, highlighting your desire for applications from individuals who are under-represented in the business.

Consider this an opportunity to 'market' the position and the company to potential applicants. Use language and phrases that reflect your company's culture and work environment. Check how and where your competitors advertise. Try to be creative and to 'stand out' for the right reasons. Use every opportunity and format possible to promote the post. Consider what will attract applicants to the post from their perspective.

Employer Guidance on some good practice tips for avoiding discrimination:

- *Job Titles should be gender neutral.*
- *Do not use words like 'young', 'youthful', 'mature', 'dynamic', 'energetic', 'enthusiastic' to describe the workplace or person you are seeking.*
- *If the job requires the job-holder to have a particular characteristic eg woman or man, or having a particular religion or race etc, this should be stated in the advert. You should contact the Equality Commission for further advice.*
- *Be careful when using photographs and if possible show both men and women and people of different races.*

APPENDIX 2D

(Employer Guidance - Amend this sample Application Form to suit the vacant position's specific criteria and remove any comments in red before issuing)

APPLICATION FORM

Ref No:

Please complete this form legibly and return it on or before the closing date specified in the advertisement. Late applications will not be considered. ONLY INFORMATION PROVIDED ON THIS APPLICATION FORM WILL BE CONSIDERED BY THE PANEL. Curriculum vitae will not be accepted. Candidates must outline clearly how their qualifications and experience meet both the essential and desirable requirements. All information given will be treated with the strictest confidence. Continuation sheets may be added if necessary.

For Office Use: POSITION APPLIED FOR:

Closing date:

Date Received:

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Surname:	Telephone number (Home):
Forenames:	Telephone number (Mobile):
Postal Address:	Email Address:
Postcode:	

2. FURTHER/ HIGHER EDUCATION

Level (e.g. Degree/GCSE)	Subject/ name of course	Grade attained

3. MEMBERSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL BODIES

Name of professional body	Grade Of Membership (Where appropriate)

4. EMPLOYMENT HISTORY (Please list chronologically, starting with current or last employer)

Name and Address of Employer and Nature of Business:	Dates of employment: From: To:	Job Title: Job Function/ Responsibilities:	Final Salary and Reason for Leaving

5. TRAINING

Details of training courses attended and awards achieved, if appropriate:

6. SUITABILITY FOR THIS POSITION

Please detail your suitability for this position under the relevant headings below stating when and where skills and experience were gained.

Criteria 1 - <i>Insert criteria from Person Specification</i>
Criteria 2 - <i>Insert criteria from Person Specification</i>
Criteria 3 - <i>Insert criteria from Person Specification</i>
Criteria 4 - <i>Insert criteria from Person Specification</i>
Criteria 5 - <i>Insert criteria from Person Specification</i>
Criteria 6 - <i>Insert criteria from Person Specification</i>

7. REFEREES

Please list the details of two persons who are willing to provide references for you. They should be persons who know you (but who are not members of your family) and who are qualified to give an opinion about how you are suitable for the post. Please note that we will not contact your current employer for a reference unless and until we are prepared to offer the post to you.

Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
E-mail:	E-mail:
Telephone No.:	Telephone No.:
Relationship to you:	Relationship to you:

8. SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Please list below any special requirements or reasonable adjustments if you are disabled that you may have if you are called to interview.

9. VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION

I declare that all information which I have provided is correct. I understand that any false information given may result in a job offer being withdrawn or my employment terminated.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please complete the separate monitoring form enclosed.

Employee / Applicant Monitoring Questionnaire

Please complete and return in separate envelope marked Monitoring Questionnaire.

MONITORING QUESTIONNAIRE

Private & Confidential

Ref No:

We are an Equal Opportunities Employer. We do not discriminate against our job applicants or employees and we aim to select the best person for the job. We monitor the community background and sex of our job applicants and employees in order to demonstrate our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity in employment and to comply with our duties under the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998.

You are not obliged to answer the questions on this form and you will not suffer any penalty if you choose not to do so. Nevertheless, we encourage you to answer these questions. Your answers will be used by us to prepare and submit a monitoring return to the Equality Commission, but your identity will be kept anonymous. In all other regards your answers will be treated with the strictest confidence. We assure you that your answers will not be used by us to make any decisions affecting you, whether in a recruitment exercise or during the course of any employment with us.

1. Community Background

Regardless of whether they actually practice religion, most people in Northern Ireland are perceived to be members of either the Protestant or Roman Catholic communities.

Please indicate the community to which you belong by ticking the appropriate box below:

I am a member of the Protestant community

I am a member of the Roman Catholic community

I am a member of neither the Protestant nor Roman Catholic community

If you do not answer the above question, or if you tick the “not a member of either” box, we are encouraged to use the residuary method of making a determination, which means that we can make a determination as to your community background on the basis of the personal information supplied by you in your application form/personnel file.

2. Sex

Please indicate whether you are: Female Male

Note: If you answer this questionnaire you are obliged to do so truthfully as it is a criminal offence under the Fair Employment (Monitoring) Regulations (NI) 1999 to knowingly give false answers to these questions.

SHORT - LISTING RECORD

NOTE: THE ESSENTIAL CRITERIA WHICH ARE ASSESSABLE ON PAPER SHOULD BE TRANSFERRED TO THIS FORM FROM THE PERSON SPECIFICATION. PERSONAL SKILLS SHOULD BE ASSESSED AT INTERVIEW.

Position Title: _____

Closing Date: _____

Number of Application Forms Sent Out: _____

Returned Application Forms	Application Form Number	Meets Essential Criteria (✓ or x)			Meets Desirable Criteria (✓ or x)			Notes	Interview (Yes/No)
		Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3		
Candidate 1									
Candidate 2									
Candidate 3									
Candidate 4									
Candidate 5									
Candidate 6									
Candidate 7									
Candidate 8									
Candidate 9									
Candidate 10									

SHORT-LISTING GUIDANCE

During short-listing:

- Focus only on the criteria section on the application form.
- Use those criteria from the person specification which can be assessed from applications in short-listing. Do not introduce new criteria.
- Do not reject an applicant's qualifications merely because they were gained overseas, or the certificates are presented in a foreign language. Advice on equivalent qualifications can be obtained from the Qualifications Comparison Service that is available through the Jobs and Benefits Office network.
- Assess the candidates against the stated criteria. Those who meet the criteria can progress to interview, those who do not meet the criteria cannot.
- Remember that if a candidate does not meet all the stated essential criteria, they cannot be selected to move on to the next stage of the process.
- Be consistent when making decisions. In cases which are not clear cut, what is acceptable for one candidate must be acceptable for all.
- Decide whether or not any stated desirable criteria are to be used. This may be useful if a large number of applications have been received. Desirable criteria should be used in order of their priority. Again, candidates must be treated consistently and if some candidates are rejected on the basis that they do not meet a particular criterion, all candidates who do not meet that criterion must be rejected.

APPENDIX 2G

SAMPLE LETTER – INVITATION TO FIRST INTERVIEW

Name

Address

Post code

Date

Dear

Interview for the position of **(Job title)**.

Following consideration of your application, I am pleased to inform you that you have been short-listed for interview. The interview will be held on **(date)** at **(time)**.

(Optional) Please also bring proof of your XXXX (qualification) by bringing original certificate(s).

In accordance with our equal opportunities policy, we would like to ensure that all candidates, regardless of disability, can participate fully in the selection process. Therefore, I would be grateful if you would advise us of any additional assistance that we may be able to provide.

Please confirm your attendance no later than 12.00 pm on **(date)** by emailing **(email address)** or telephoning **(name and telephone number)**.

Yours sincerely

Name

Position

APPENDIX 2H

SAMPLE LETTER – NOT SHORT-LISTED FOR INTERVIEW

Name

Address

Post code

Date

Dear

Application for the position of **(job title)**.

I refer to your recent application for the above post. I regret to advise you that on this occasion you have not been short-listed for interview.

I would like to thank you for your interest in the company and wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Name

Position

APPENDIX 2I

RECORD OF INTERVIEW (POSITION TITLE) _____

DATE _____

Time In _____ Time Out _____

Rating scale (*Employer Guidance - where marks are out of 10*)
1-2 Not acceptable 3-4 Poor 5-6 Fair 7-8 Good 9-10 Excellent

CRITERION 1 – *Insert Criterion*

Score

CRITERION 2 – *Insert Criterion*

Score

CRITERION 3 – *Insert Criterion*

Score

CRITERION 4 – *Insert Criterion*

Score

CRITERION 5 – *Insert Criterion*

Score

CRITERION 6 – *Insert Criterion*

Score

Panel member's name _____ Date _____

Panel member's signature _____

APPENDIX 2J

FIRST INTERVIEW REPORT FORM SUMMARY FOR THE POSITION OF _____

CANDIDATE: _____ DATE OF INTERVIEW: _____

INTERVIEWERS: _____

CHAIRPERSON TO COMPLETE _____

TIME INTERVIEW STARTED: _____ TIME INTERVIEW FINISHED: _____

Criteria / Area of competence	Evidence	Marks available	Marks awarded	Agreed mark
<i>Employer Guidance Note: criteria assessable at interview should be transferred from the person specification for this particular role</i>				
Total marks				
Recommendation				
Availability:				
Summary of interview:				

Signed: _____ Print name: _____

Rating scale (*Employer Guidance - where marks are out of 10*)

1-2 Not acceptable
3-4 Poor
5-6 Fair

7-8 Good
9-10 Excellent

PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR INTERVIEW

Objective: To make the most effective use of time spent in the interview itself by:

- Developing a team interview plan and strategy in advance;
- Assigning responsibility for specific skill area(s) to be explored by each interviewer during the interview;
- Preparing structured, behavioural interview questions in advance.

Maximising the Interview Team's Contributions

The Problem: "I thought you covered that question."

- Does this sound familiar? If so, you and your interview team are suffering from an information gap syndrome. After investing hours of time and energy interviewing candidates, the interview team meets to make a recruitment decision and discovers that they are missing critical pieces of information. Typically each interview team member has focused on asking questions pertaining to key technical skill areas that they have individually decided to be the most critical. Lack of team planning results in having incomplete data on all of the critical areas necessary to make an informed recruitment decision.
- It is common that in an unplanned interview process, interviewers will unknowingly collect redundant data and miss collecting essential data. This is not only inefficient but also frustrating for everyone involved. It can also result in poor and costly recruitment decisions.

The Solution: If your goal is to hire the people who can be most successful in meeting the job requirements, a planned approach to interviewing is the best investment you and your interview team can make.

The interview team member's role in planning and preparing for the interview

Step 1: Review the job description and person specification.

Step 2: Agree who will cover which areas and then develop behavioural interview questions in advance, focusing on the skill area(s) you are responsible for evaluating.

Step 3: Review the CV or application form.

Step 4: Consider how the position will appear through the candidate's eyes.

Step 5: Highlight the benefits and the challenges of working for the company, ensuring that you are being realistic.

Step 6: Prepare FAQs and answers relevant to the company and the specific job in question e.g. starting salary and salary progression, leave and other benefits, hours, company culture, need for travel, reporting structure etc.

In summary:

Ultimately, the success of the overall interview process is only as good as the planning process itself. The experience the candidate has during the interview process will leave a lasting impression and will be a strong factor influencing the decision as to whether or not to join the company. Therefore, the entire interview process should be used as a sales tool. Remember, actions speak louder than words.

INTERVIEW PRACTICALITIES AND STRUCTURE

Preparation on the day

- Ensure that you are on time and that you have agreed the format of the interview in advance with the other panel member(s).
- Check that the room is tidy and that it is not too hot or too cold.
- Have a glass of water for the candidate (and the panel).
- Have a pen and paper for the candidate.
- Prevent interruptions e.g. have a notice on the door saying "Interview in progress", divert phone, turn off mobiles, etc.

The interview itself

- Welcome the candidate with courtesy and genuine interest. Body language and eye contact are indicators of interest. This is the panels opportunity to understand what the applicant might bring to the organisation and how they believe they would be successful in the role.
- Introduce yourself, your position and its relationship to the position you are interviewing for. Introduce the rest of the panel.
- Outline the structure of the interview e.g. X will start by going through the application form and career history, covering more technical areas, followed by Y who will focus on more general skills. Explain that there will be time at the end of the interview for any questions the candidate may have.
- Explain that the interviewers may take notes.
- Ask questions related to competencies as agreed. Do not interrupt the other panel members and try not to contradict each other.
- Ask 'open' questions which allow the candidate to expand upon their response rather than a simple 'yes' or 'no'. Questions that begin with 'what'.
- Stick to questions related to the criteria. You have a limited amount of time so do not get distracted by topics of personal interest.
- Ask if the candidate has any questions. Refer to av FAQs (relating to benefits, culture, products etc) with consistent answers.
- Check availability and notice required.
- Explain next steps. Refer to FAQs.
- Thank the candidate and show the candidate to reception.

Note: Remember that you are selling the company. Ensure that the interview is your priority at the time.

INTERVIEWING DO'S AND DON'TS

People often ask for lists of acceptable or unacceptable questions. As a rule of thumb, ask only questions which are strictly related to the job and treat candidates consistently, asking similar questions which cover the criteria areas.

Applicants should be given a fair opportunity to answer the set questions e.g. applicants should not be unfairly interrupted. Nor should applicants be made to feel out of place by comments such as “We don’t get many women working here” or “We don’t get many older people working here”.

The interviewers should be very careful about asking unplanned questions i.e. not the pre-set questions, but extra ones that arise in the course of discussion and which might be asked to clarify points raised by the applicant. Such questions should always be job-related.

It is important to note that marks awarded should be fair and consistent and based on evidence that is presented by the applicant in his or her interview answers or application form e.g. a candidate with a degree in a relevant subject would not normally be expected to receive a lower mark than a candidate without one or a candidate who gives monosyllabic answers would normally receive a lower mark than a candidate who answers fluently and without prompting. Inconsistent marking like this will need to be explained with good reasons if the decision is ever challenged as being discriminatory. More guidance on interviewing is provided below.

Acceptable

- Do evaluate applicants on job-related criteria necessary for successful performance on the job.
- Do ask job-related questions necessary for determining an applicant’s suitability for the position.
- Do question applicants for a position in a consistent and uniform manner.
- Do keep objective notes of why an applicant is or is not hired. Unsupported subjective characterisations such as “bad attitude” could lead to trouble.
- Do make reasonable accommodations to the needs of disabled individuals during interviews, e.g. by providing interpreters for the hearing impaired or scheduling interviews in rooms accessible to individuals in wheelchairs.
- Do return all applicable documentation for each interview conducted (including rough notes and information on the candidates not hired).

Unacceptable

- Do not ask questions regarding the general physical or mental condition of an applicant. An employer may ask if an applicant is able to perform the functions of the job. If an applicant voluntarily discloses a disability, the employer may then ask whether he or she can perform the functions of the job notwithstanding the disability or with reasonable accommodation, and what type of accommodation would be required.
- Do not ask questions of a female applicant that would not be asked of male applicants, including such matters as marital status, birth control methods, child care arrangements, or hindrances to work hours or to travel.
- Do not ask questions concerning colour of eyes or hair, height or weight, age, marital status or maiden name, or number of children, since such questions are not viewed as job-related. Be careful when making conversation at the beginning or end of the interview not to stray into any of these areas.
- Do not assume that because a candidate introduces a topic, that it is ok to probe further.
- Do not inform an applicant that the position must be filled by a female or minority group applicant due to equal opportunities or affirmative action obligations or regulations.
- Do not ask questions of one religious or racial or ethnic group or age group that would not be asked of another, such as whether an applicant could work in a facility with members of another religious, or racial or ethnic group or age group.

When in doubt, don't ask!

APPENDIX 2N

REFERENCE CHECK FORM

Reference for _____ *(Name of candidate)* _____

Position applied for: _____

REFEREE DETAILS:

Name _____

Organisation _____

Position _____

Date _____

Confirm dates of employment from _____ to _____ Yes/No

Confirm previous salary (if known) _____

Were attendance and timekeeping satisfactory? _____

If "no", please specify whether the problem was with attendance or with timekeeping or with both

If "no", why were you not satisfied and what was the extent of the problem? _____

Did you establish the cause of the problem? Give details _____

Did you try to help the employee to improve and what was the outcome? _____

What was the reason for leaving? _____

Please comment on the applicants suitability/ ability to meet the following criteria:

Criteria (from person specification)	Referee Comments

Signed: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX 20

SAMPLE LETTER – OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT

(Employer Guidance - Text highlighted in blue needs to be amended for position)

Name

Address

Post code

Date

Dear xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Following your recent interview for the position of xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx I am pleased to inform you that the company would like to make you an offer of employment. Your job title will be xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. A copy of the job description is enclosed for ease of reference.

This appointment is **(permanent/fixed term/temporary/from month to month)**.

The salary for this position is xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. You will be entitled to X days annual leave and X days public holidays. Standard working hours are X per week exclusive of lunch breaks. The standard hours of work are from X to X daily.

Your employment with the company would be on the terms set out in the enclosed Contract of Employment and Company Handbook.

This offer is conditional on satisfactory references (and a medical check if applicable).

This offer is also subject to:

Receipt of original certificates as proof of relevant qualifications *(if applicable and if not already received, checked and copied)*.

Receipt of original documents as proof of your right to work in the UK, as specified by the UK Borders Agency *(if not already received and copied)*.

Please contact me at the number below as soon as possible to confirm your acceptance of this offer.

Yours sincerely

_____ (Name)

_____ (Position)

_____ (Contact Number)

APPENDIX 2P

SAMPLE LETTER – UNSUCCESSFUL AT INTERVIEW

Name

Address

Post code

Date

Dear **xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx**

Application for the position of **xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx (job title)**

I refer to your recent application and interview for the above post. I regret to advise you that on this occasion your application has not been successful.

I would like to thank you for your interest in the company and wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

_____ (Name)

_____ (Position)

APPENDIX 2Q

SAMPLE – NOTE THE FOLLOWING PLAN IS INTENDED AS A GUIDE ONLY AND SHOULD BE TAILORED TO INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Mistakes to avoid

During the induction period try to avoid the following:

- providing too much, too soon; the new employee should not be overwhelmed by a mass of information on the first day - keep it simple and relevant;
- pitching presentations at an inappropriate level - they should be suitable for everyone in the audience and for their roles within the organisation;
- the office manager or HR providing all the information - it should be a shared process involving the team; and
- creating an induction programme which generates unreasonable expectations by overselling the job.

INDUCTION PLAN

1 week in advance of start date

Action	Responsible
Allocate work area	Line manager
Confirm desk is ready	Line manager
Confirm that equipment is available	Line manager
Contact new employee and agree time to attend on first day – who to ask for etc	Line manager
Inform all staff of imminent arrival of new employee/new role	Line manager
Set induction meeting dates in advance, including regular review	Line manager
Agree dates for input with other employees and give induction record sheet to relevant parties	Line manager

Day 1

Action	Responsible
Meet new employee and welcome to the company	Line manager
Introduce new employee to other staff	Line manager
Show new employee where desk/work area is	Line manager
Set up of relevant equipment - e.g. phone etc	Line manager
Explain main contacts – Manager, Office Manager, etc	Line manager
Introduce new employee to Team	Line manager
Outline induction timetable for first few days	Line manager
Walk through induction plans with new employee	Line manager
Give tour of facilities	Buddy
Cover section A of individual induction plan	Buddy

Day 2

Action	Responsible
Completion of relevant forms – employee details / pension, life assurance. Collect P45, signed offer/contract if not already returned etc. Provide Contacts sheet – who does what	Office Manager
Provide stationery, uniform, protective equipment etc	Office manager
Explanation and signature for company policies	Office manager
Present individual induction plans to new employee	Office manager
Cover section B of individual induction plan	Office manager
Agree initial tasks and objectives for week 1 and begin some straightforward tasks	Line Manager

Days 3 – 5

Action	Responsible
Discuss the areas covered in team induction plan	Line manager / buddy / other team members as required
Cover sections C and D of individual induction plan	Line manager

After 1 week

Action	Responsible
Review induction plan	Line Manager
Review of tasks and objectives for month 1 and feedback on progress to new employee	Line Manager
Explain and agree communication and reporting arrangements	Line Manager

After 1 month

Action	Responsible
Review induction plan	Line Manager
Review of tasks and objectives for month 2 and feedback on progress to new employee	Line Manager
Set objectives for the next month	Line Manager

After 2 months

Action	Responsible
Review induction plan	Line Manager
Review of tasks and objectives for month 3 and feedback on progress to new employee	Line Manager
Set objectives for the next month	Line Manager

After 3 months

Action	Responsible
Review induction plan	Line Manager
Review of tasks and objectives for month 3 and feedback on progress to new employee	Line Manager
Set objectives for the next 3 months	Line Manager

After 6 months

Action	Responsible
Conduct performance review to ensure employee has met objectives	Line Manager
Set new objectives for the next 6 months	Line Manager
Confirm in writing that probationary period has now ended if appropriate	Office Manager

APPENDIX 2R

SAMPLE INDIVIDUAL INDUCTION PLAN

(Employer Guidance - The following plan is intended as a guide only and should be tailored to individual circumstances)

Name

Welcome to _____ (*The company*).

This is your induction plan. You are responsible for ensuring that all the items here are covered. Please keep a record of each of the activities as they happen and if you are having problems with any of the items please ask _____ or me for help.

Regards

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Item	Completed (date)
Section A	
Familiarisation with location - nearest banks, sandwich shops and transport etc	
Tour of company premises	
Toilet facilities	
Entrances and exits	
Kitchen and catering	
Car parking facilities	
Notice boards	
Post	
Fax/photocopier	
Computer systems	

Item	Completed (date)
Section B	
Emergency exits	
Fire drill	
Use of fire extinguisher	
List of qualified first aiders	
First Aid boxes	
Health and safety policy	
Accident report book	
Security	
Petty cash	
Contract of employment	
Hours of work	
Holidays and process for applying for holiday leave	
Benefits	
Sick absence procedures	
Conduct	
Smoking/drugs/alcohol policies	
Equal Opportunities	
Performance management – feedback and reviews	
Use of computers, internet, mobile phones	
Other policies	
Communication mechanisms within the company – meetings, notice boards etc	
Salary	
Expenses	
Contacts	

Item	Completed (date)
Section C	
The company:	
Product overview	
Organisational overview	
History	
Mission statement of the company	
Company culture	
Organisation structure/who's who	
How business direction and key results are reviewed and measured	
Budgets	
Quality policy	
Quality systems	
Top 10 customers and key contacts	
Customer files and information	
Protocols for telephone, email, letters etc	
Section D	
Your team:	
The role of your team – how it relates to the rest of the company	
Your own role	
Your objectives for the next 3 months	
Your manager's expectations	
Individual learning plan – training and development required and how best to provide this	

