

Shortlisting

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Recruitment and Selection Policy – see section on ‘Shortlisting’.

DMU’s policy on shortlisting is that shortlisted candidates will be those who demonstrate in their application how they meet the criteria as specified in the person specification.

Shortlisting will normally take place within two weeks of the closing date.

This guidance covers the following areas:

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Definitions

In this guidance the following terminology is used:

Shortlisters	An individual who is responsible for shortlisting decisions in the recruitment process. They should be trained on the Recruitment and Selection Policy and fully understand their responsibilities as a DMU recruiter.
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1 **Avoiding unconscious bias**

- 1.1 The Recruitment and Selection Policy states that 'shortlisting, interviewing and selection will always be carried out without regard to age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin or religion or belief.'
- 1.2 Shortlisters should recognise how their unconscious bias ie the views, opinions and attitudes they hold, can influence the way applicants are assessed and scored at each stage of the selection process. Shortlisting should be carried out objectively and consistently, comparing the facts presented in each application with the person specification to establish whether, on paper, the applicant has the skills required to carry out the job. Generalised assumptions and stereotyping should be avoided.
- 1.3 Where previous experience is a requirement, shortlisters should avoid focussing on the length of experience, as this is not a reliable predictor of future job performance. Focussing on length of experience can also indirectly discriminate against younger applicants. For example recent graduates may face a significant barrier to obtaining employment if previous work experience is a requirement, but they may have a particular skill set that, with guidance and development, would make them a significant asset to the university and a productive member of the team. Similarly, where an applicant has significant previous experience at a senior level and has applied for a job that, on paper, they appear 'over qualified' for shortlisters should not allow unconscious bias to interfere with the shortlisting process by speculating on the applicant's reasons for applying. The only relevant factors are whether the person has the required skills as indicated on the person specification.
- 1.4 Other examples of how unconscious bias can influence decisions and lead to unequal and unlawful treatment ie under the Equality Act 2010 are shown below:
- a blanket assumption that women would not have sufficient physical strength to perform a heavy job would not be true of all women
 - an assumption that a pregnant applicant will want to work flexible hours or will have a poor attendance record if appointed
 - an assumption that a female applicant who has young children would be unable or unwilling to work long hours or attend international or overnight conferences
 - an assumption that an applicant from a particular country or cultural background would not "fit in" to the team
 - a stereotypical view that older people are less productive than younger people or that their mental faculties automatically decline with age
 - an assumption that making reasonable adjustments for a disabled applicant would be too costly or overly disruptive.
- 1.5 If an applicant has a disability like dyslexia or a learning disability, judging the applicant on the basis of a poorly presented application form could be discriminatory and unlawful. While excellent written communication skills may be an essential requirement for certain jobs and professions, evidence of spelling errors or a poor communication style should not be used to draw negative conclusions where such skills are not relevant to the job. The university

also has a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants at every stage of the recruitment and selection process. See also [Shortlisting in relation to disabled applicants](#).

- 1.6 For certain people, the requirement to apply in writing might be a significant barrier to employment in itself and shortlisters should take into account that other methods of assessment eg technical or practical based tests at a later stage of the selection process may be a much more reliable indicator of the applicant's suitability. Therefore, shortlisters should take an open-minded and inclusive approach to shortlisting wherever possible.

2 Shortlisting in relation to disabled applicants

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 prohibits direct discrimination against a job applicant because they have a disability, and there are no exceptions to this prohibition. The Act also prohibits discrimination against a disabled person 'because of something arising in consequence of that person's disability unless the particular treatment is justifiable as 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'. For example, it will always be discriminatory and unlawful automatically to reject a job applicant just because he or she is blind, whereas rejection on the grounds that the person would be incapable of performing the job even after reasonable adjustments had been made may be capable of justification.
- 2.2 The Recruitment and Selection Policy states that disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria should be shortlisted unless it is clear that even after reasonable adjustments have been made they are unable to fulfil a duty which is intrinsic to the role. If in doubt, discretion should be exercised in favour of a disabled job applicant.
- 2.3 If there are legitimate areas for concern over what adjustments might be required for a particular applicant if they were successful, these can be explored at interview.

3 Agreeing the shortlist

- 3.1 The Chair of the panel is responsible for the final shortlist agreed and should ensure that all shortlisters are briefed and take a consistent approach to shortlisting. The following principles apply:
- As required by the policy, shortlisting will be undertaken by a minimum of two members of the selection panel.
 - To help avoid bias in the process, unconscious or otherwise, each shortlister should carry out their assessment of the applications independently before meeting to agree the final shortlist.
 - Each shortlister should complete their own shortlisting form in respect of each applicant before a final shortlist is discussed and agreed.
 - Only criteria that is to be assessed at 'Application (A)' stage as indicated on the person specification should be referred to at shortlisting stage.
 - Subject to the need to achieve a manageable shortlist, applicants who meet all the essential criteria will be shortlisted.
 - Desirable criteria will only be used if there is a need to achieve a manageable shortlist.
 - If 'weighted criteria' are used, the weighted criteria must be agreed with a member of

POD before shortlisting commences.

- All shortlisters should agree the final shortlist. If this is not possible, a democratic decision should be reached and recorded by the Chair of the panel.

3.2 If a decision is taken to re-advertise the post to try and generate a wider selection of suitable applicants, any applications already received should be acknowledged and the applicants notified of the reason for the delay in the process and new indicative timescales for the selection process (eg interview date). They should be advised that they will not need to re-apply but, if they are shortlisted, they will automatically be included on the shortlist following the closing date of the re-advertisement. See the Recruitment and Selection Policy – ‘Shortlisting’ and ‘Re-advertising Posts’.

4 Pre-interview tests

Where it is not possible to reduce the shortlist to a manageable number by other means, the Chair of the panel may consider inviting ‘long-listed’ candidates to a pre-interview selection process which might be a test of technical or practical ability, written skills, presentation skills, etc. (see guidance on Selection Tests) measurable via ‘Test (T)’ on the person specification. The highest scoring candidates will then be shortlisted for interview. The Chair of the panel should contact their HR adviser for advice if they wish to consider this approach.

5 Rejecting applicants at shortlisting stage

5.1 The reasons for rejecting an applicant at shortlisting stage should be clearly recorded on the shortlisting form indicating which of the criteria the applicant has not met. It should be possible for a member of the HRST to provide feedback to an applicant based on the information provided on the shortlisting form and so shortlisters should ensure the rationale is clearly documented.

5.2 Having a clearly documented rationale for rejection of an applicant will also help the university defend any future complaints from applicants that they have been unfairly treated or discriminated against in the selection process. For example, if an applicant complains that they were not shortlisted because of their age, the university will be able to show that the applicant was fairly treated and the reason for their rejection was because they did not have the skills required, and not because of any personal characteristic like age, race, disability, etc.

5.3 It is also important to clearly record the reasons for not shortlisting applicants in cases where the university needs to satisfy the resident labour market test (RLMT) in order to employ a non-EEA migrant worker in the post. For further information refer to the guidance on [Immigration and Preventing Illegal Working](#).

5.4 If there are concerns about an applicant, irrespective of the information provided in the application form, the Chair of the panel should contact their HR adviser to discuss eg where the applicant has previously been dismissed by DMU for misconduct and they are seeking re-employment.