Guidelines

Title: HIRING MANAGER GUIDANCE ON RECRUITMENT ADVERTISEMENT

Ref: HR/KNW Last updated: 05/09/2013

1. **Introduction**

This document has been created to support hiring managers with recruitment advertising. It provides an overview of what good practice recommends, the legal issues associated with advertising jobs and practical guidance on how to write and place adverts.

Read the University’s recruitment policy.

2. **The purpose of advertising**

Advertising a role effectively can give you access to a wide pool of talent and ensure you’re not inundated with unsuitable applications. Getting it wrong may not just result in wasted time and money. If the wording or placement of the advertising prevents certain categories of people from applying, there is potential for claims of discrimination.

At the University, we advertise to:

- Find the best person to fill the post
- Encourage a diversity of applicants
- Ensure and demonstrate fair and open competition
- Produce a pool of applicants
- Promote Southampton as an employer of choice
- Support cost effectiveness by minimising wastage of money and time

3. **Roles and responsibilities**

Hiring managers should be involved in all decision-making processes regarding the advertising of vacant posts, irrespective of who is responsible for placing adverts. You have detailed knowledge of the roles within your team, so are in a good position to determine where to advertise and what to include in the advert.

HR coordinates the production of adverts as part of the University’s standard recruitment process. On receipt of your draft advert text from the recruiting manager, HR works with the University’s nominated advertising agency to place the advert. HR can also provide advice and guidance about advert style and content.

[Generic advert templates and standard text](#) about the University are available to support you in creating an effective recruitment advert.

4. **When advertising is not required**

In exceptional circumstances it may be inappropriate or unnecessary for you to advertise a post. These circumstances include:

- Temporary vacancies of less than 6 months*.
- Research posts where external funding has been allocated to a named individual.
- Sessional appointments where an individual is offered work on an “as and when” basis with no mutual obligation on the University to offer work, or on the employee to accept it.
- Specialist positions where it can be demonstrated that a comprehensive search has been conducted and the nominated candidate is the most suitable person for the post.
*Contact the University’s Temp Bank, to source cover for temporary administrative and related posts.

In addition, Deans/Directors may seek approval to waive the need to advertise by presenting a case for support that provides evidence such as:

- The identified candidate has unique, strategically relevant, internationally renowned expertise which would bring exceptional benefits
- Advertising the post would deter the candidate from applying, or put the successful recruitment of the candidate at risk.
- The equality and diversity implications of the proposed appointment have been considered in detail.

It is important to remember that candidates applying for a non-advertised post are still required to be considered by a selection committee.

5. **Internal advertising**

It may be appropriate to only advertise internally in some circumstances, ie:

- A secondment
- An acting up opportunity
- Where an existing employee is subject to redeployment

A mixture of internal and external recruitment options is normally recommended, to widen the pool for selection and reach a diverse audience.

Before deciding whether or not to advertise internally, you should consider the kind of role you’re recruiting and the possibility of finding a suitable candidate in-house. Suitable individuals you are not yet aware of may be within your own team or in other departments. There may be employees who are looking for a change – to advance their career, move into a new career or work to a different schedule – who may prove suitable during the selection process. And there may be redeployees to consider (see the University’s redeployment procedure).

Whether or not you advertise posts internally, you should always pursue a rigorous selection process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages of recruiting from within</th>
<th>Disadvantages of recruiting from within</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Candidates will be familiar with the organisation and its policies, procedures and practices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Potential saving in costs, time and resources.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Likely to need less training than external candidates, so may be productive more quickly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Candidates know from experience if they enjoy working here, therefore less likely to leave for this reason.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gives existing staff opportunities for development, which can improve motivation and retention.</td>
<td>- Affords less scope for diversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Normally still leaves a vacancy – the post from which the individual is transferred will need to be filled.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A fresh perspective from outside helps to increase organisational competitiveness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The post may not be filled by the most suitable candidate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although not a legal requirement, the University recognises this is good practice and therefore our policy requires all vacant posts to be advertised internally on [www.jobs.soton.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.soton.ac.uk)

When informing your team of vacancies, consider those without access to the internet and those on family-related leave (e.g. maternity, paternity or adoption leave). Also consider part-time and temporary employees. Even if the post is full time and office based, don’t assume that someone currently working part time would not be able and willing to transfer.
6. **External advertising**

The University uses an advertising agency to manage all recruitment advertising. Speculative enquiries and cold calls from newspapers or other media providers should be directed to HR.

All advertised vacancies are automatically placed on the following websites at no charge to you:

- [www.jobs.southampton.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.southampton.ac.uk)
- [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk)
- Jobcentre Plus

In addition, you may wish to advertise in print or in other media. The University's nominated advertising agency has access to a range of publications and websites summarised in a rate card with approximate costs.

If there are a number of University jobs to be advertised in the same publication on the same day, these vacancies may be brought together into a composite advert.

Other external advertising options to consider may include:

- Placing an advert in trade press and other specialist publications
- Placing an advert in local or national newspapers and magazines
- Setting up a stand at graduate recruitment fairs or open days
- Notifying contacts on social networking sites.
- Word of mouth, ie: asking colleagues to recommend suitable people.
- Instructing a recruitment agency
- Instructing a headhunting organisation
- Placing an advert through an online recruitment specialist

HR can advise about the types of advertising which have proved most useful in the past.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspapers, journals and magazines</th>
<th>Consider carefully which newspapers or journals are likely to reach the kind of people who would be suitable for the role. Ask your colleagues where they would go to find out about jobs of a similar nature.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- For a general or more junior role, where potential candidates might be less willing to travel a long distance, the local press may be most appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- For more senior roles, the national press may be more suitable because it reaches a wider audience. Some newspapers advertise particular types of role only, or certain types of role on particular days of the week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- For specialist roles, trade press, business journals and specialist publications could be considered.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| The internet | Many jobseekers now use the internet as their main source of job searching. Advertising online can be highly cost effective, reaching a wide audience (local, national and overseas) at low cost. Jobs can be advertised very quickly and changes made to an advert easily. Online recruitment websites such as totaljobs.com cover a wide range of fields, and can advertise vacancies very quickly for a fixed fee for a particular period. Social networking websites like LinkedIn and Facebook are also valuable tools for connecting with professional people keen to network. |

| Word of mouth | Recommendations made by existing employees can provide a useful and inexpensive source of new recruits. Existing employees are likely to know whether or not their contact is suitable for a vacant post and would be a "good fit". However, avoid recruiting new staff solely on this basis. It limits the range of prospective candidates, is not always a reliable method, and is likely to limit the diversity of applicants. |

| Recruitment agencies | Agencies can act on behalf of an employer to advertise a vacancy, screen incoming job applications, interview potentially suitable candidates, check their qualifications and |
that they have the right to work in the UK, and present a shortlist of suitable candidates to the employer to make the final selection. They generally have good knowledge of where to place job adverts to attract the right response.

We recommend you discuss the merits of this approach with HR first.

**Executive search consultants**

Executive search consultants (or headhunters) tend to recruit for very specialised or senior roles. Having identified target organisations in which suitable candidates for the post are likely to be found, they approach both applicants who have registered interest with them as well people who are not actively looking for new employment.

We recommend you discuss the merits of this approach with HR first.

**Jobcentre plus**

Jobcentre Plus advertises jobs for free on its searchable internet service, through its telephone system and on electronic touch-screen terminals in offices across the UK. Depending on the role, they may conduct the initial screening of applicants and arrange interviews.

All external vacancies advertised on the University website [www.jobs.soton.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.soton.ac.uk) are also placed with Jobcentre Plus.

---

7. **Attracting the right candidates**

Guidance on [how to write a recruitment advert](http://example.com) is available online.

Your advert should aim to attract only those candidates who possess the qualifications, skills, experience and other attributes that are necessary to perform the job competently.

What potential applicants want to know is what the job is all about and what opportunities and benefits will be available. Avoid simply copying the advert from the previous recruitment process.

Once you have your **job description and person specification** agreed, consider three questions before you start compiling your advert:

1. **What are you advertising?**
   - What role are you recruiting for?
   - Sense-check the job title
   - Will it be understood externally?
   - What are the most important elements of the role to communicate?

2. **Why is it being advertised?**
   - What makes this opportunity special?
   - What makes it different?
   - Is it a newly-created role/department?
   - Is it to replace someone who’s been promoted?
   - Change any negatives into positives – they’ll be attractive to someone!
   - Tell the truth and be able to prove what you say

3. **Who are you targeting?**
   - Skills and competencies
   - Attitudes and behaviours
   - Picture the person you want to recruit and write copy that will be attractive to them
   - Remember that person is not necessarily you!

To design an effective recruitment advert:

- Provide a brief, clear description of the organisation’s activities.
- Create a positive impression – avoid bland clichés and generalised claims.
- State the job title, key job duties and level of seniority of the job based on an up-to-date job description.
- Describe clearly, accurately and succinctly the type of candidate being sought – avoid vague, woolly statements.
- Ensure you’ve not included requirements or duties in the advert that do not match the job description or person specification.
- Be clear where the job will be based.
- Pitch the advert at the right level to appeal to suitable candidates.
- Be honest.
- Don’t over- or under-state the level of the job.
- Avoid language that could be interpreted as discriminatory.
- Include features that are likely to be attractive to potential applicants.
- If appropriate, say that the job will be considered on a flexible basis, eg: job-share.
- Include any unique or unusual features of the role, eg: if a lot of overseas travel is required.
- Provide an indication of the salary rather than meaningless expressions such as “excellent pay and benefits”.
- Make it clear how applicants should apply.
- Where practical, consider including a contact for an information discussion about the role.
- Include the interview date where possible – help avoid delays with interview arrangements due to shortlisted candidate availability.
- Include the University’s equal opportunities employer statement.

| Wording | • Use language that is understandable and chosen with the reader in mind.
|         | • Keep text clear and concise with an average sentence length of 15–20 words.
|         | • Give enough concrete information to potential applicants about the organisation and the job to enable them to decide about applying. But be succinct to keep the reader interested.
|         | • Avoid wording too broad or vague – you may receive large numbers of unsuitable applications, wasting valuable time, money and resources.
|         | • Avoid wording with too many detailed or specific requirements – no one may apply.
|         | • Requirements such as “intelligent”, “articulate” or “hard working” will achieve little – most people imagine that they have these qualities.
|         | • Vague phrases such as “good communicator” will not help potential applicants to understand what’s needed. A phrase such as “skilled at communicating effectively with customers on the telephone” or “competent at writing technical reports” would be much more useful.
|         | • Be realistic about what the role involves. Including any unusual features that might attract without focusing only on the virtues of the organisation.
| Flexible working | Read what to avoid when writing adverts.
| Departmental contact | Many talented and capable people need or prefer to work part time. Consider if it would be practical for the role to be performed on a job-share basis, ie: with two part-time employees sharing the responsibilities and duties of the job on an agreed rota. If this is an option, mention it in the advert.
| Date of advert | Read the University’s flexible working policy.
| Departmental contact | Potential applicants greatly value the opportunity to discuss a role with the department before deciding on their application. Including a contact name and number for informal enquiries is recommended, however may result in a high volume of calls. It may be preferable to include these details in the further particulars for the post instead of the advert.
| Date of advert | Give careful consideration to when advertising may be least effective for the post being advertised. For example, December and the summer school holidays may attract fewer responses than other times of the year.
| Closing date | You may wish consider the following timeframes from date of advert publication to
8. **Avoiding discrimination**

It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of any **protected characteristics**. Discrimination is unlawful whether or not it is intentional. Steps should therefore be taken to ensure job adverts are not discriminatory.

Read [what to avoid when writing adverts](#).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do...</th>
<th>Don’t...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Use plain English to ensure that potential candidates whose first language is not English are not disadvantaged or put off applying.</td>
<td>• Use sexist words eg: use “waiting staff” instead of “waitress”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure that there is no ambiguity or possibility for misinterpretation in the advert.</td>
<td>• Use pictures that create a stereotypical image eg: a picture that includes only men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mention age or age limits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use words that indicate or imply that only young or old people are likely to be appointed. Avoid words such as “mature” or “enthusiastic” and phrases such as “recent graduate” or “ideal first job”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• State that candidates should have a minimum (or maximum) number of years’ experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Make unjustified claims that a job requires eg: fitness or energy which could discriminate against people with certain disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Require candidates to hold a driving licence unless this is necessary for the effective performance of the job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. **Positive action**

In certain circumstances, employers are entitled to use **positive action** to encourage a more diverse range of applicants to apply.

Where you consider that people with a particular **protected characteristic** are under-represented in the organisation or suffer a disadvantage because of their characteristic, steps can be taken to encourage participation or help overcome that disadvantage. For example, if a vacancy occurs in a team of 10 with only one woman, the advert could state that the employer encourages applications from women for this reason. However, the most suitable person must still be appointed for the job.

Equality law allows employers to treat disabled people more favourably. The University has permission to use the **Two Ticks** symbol logo in all job adverts to show we encourage people with a disability to apply.
RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING – TEST YOURSELF

1. Which of the following is not true of recruiting from within the organisation for a vacant post?
   a) The line manager will not need to check that the employee is suitable for the role.
   b) An internal candidate should be familiar with the organisation’s policies and procedures.
   c) An internal candidate might require less on-the-job training.
   d) Giving employees opportunities to move jobs within the organisation is likely to motivate them.

2. Tony runs a marketing team of three people for a small retail organisation. One of his team members is leaving. Which of the following is correct about where he should advertise the role?
   a) Tony does not need to let other employees in the organisation know about the vacancy because there are no other marketing specialists in the organisation.
   b) Tony should advertise the post internally for a period of two months, and if he has no success, reconsider his options.
   c) Tony should advertise in the local newspaper because it has a popular jobs section on a Saturday and ask the HR department to send an organisation-wide email about the vacancy.
   d) Tony should post the vacancy on the organisation’s Facebook page only, because he knows that many people who are interested in working for the organisation look at the organisation’s page on a regular basis.

3. What is the best way for a line manager to put together a recruitment advertisement?
   a) Copy a previous advertisement for the same role.
   b) Copy a competitor’s advertisement.
   c) Write the advertisement around an up-to-date job description and person specification.
   d) Put as much positive information into the advertisement about the organisation and the role as possible.

4. Carla is putting together an advertisement for a role in her finance team. The role holder will be required to line manage four people, all of whom are over the age of 40. What is the most appropriate wording for the advertisement?
   a) "Mature person required."
   b) "Person aged over 40 required."
   c) "Experience of managing a team of older workers is an advantage."
   d) "The role holder will be required to line manage four people."

Test yourself answers: 1. (a) 2. (c) 3. (c) 4. (d)