



University of
Nottingham

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

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A large, multi-story stone clock tower with two visible clock faces, topped with a weather vane. The tower is part of a larger building with many windows. The entire image has a blue color overlay.

Diversity in Recruitment

Executive Summary and University Response

Introduction

The University of Nottingham (UoN) aspires to create an environment for its staff, which is not only free from discrimination, but celebrates and values diversity. To support this, Vice Chancellor Professor Shearer West initiated a review of staff recruitment processes to evaluate and improve practices in support of our institutional Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) objectives and aspirations: specifically investigating institutional recruitment data and exploring practices and behaviours around the recruitment of staff from an EDI perspective.

A Task and Finish Review Group, chaired by Professor Marion Walker (Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) was established to review UoN's recruitment data and to engage with recruiting managers, newly-appointed staff and staff networks in order to understand the barriers and enablers for staff with 'protected characteristics' (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) in attracting applications and securing employment at UoN. The overall aim was to produce a set of recommendations focused on further improving UoN recruitment practices, procedures and behaviours to support institutional EDI objectives and aspirations.

In summary, the purpose of the review was to:

- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of current recruitment processes and practices obtained from both data and personal experiences.
- Provide a confidential and solution-focused opportunity for staff to share views, concerns and suggestions via focus group and questionnaire activity.
- Identify recommendations that provide solutions to the issues and key challenges identified.
- Consider implementation of EDI recruitment best practices within the HE sector and beyond.

Specifically, the review group set out to explore:

- Any issues identifiable from institutional recruitment data in respect to EDI at each stage of the recruitment process (attraction, shortlisting, interview and offer).
- Feedback from staff new to UoN and from the staff networks with a focus on establishing their experiences of the recruitment process, including what is currently working well and any issues/priorities requiring attention.

Why any identified issues may be occurring, and what solutions/recommendations can be identified.

The scope of the review framework covered:

- Recruitment processes from Authority to Fill through to first day of work (excluding induction).
- All job families and levels across UoN.
- Recruitment into leadership positions (analysis of both external and internal appointments).
- Use of recruitment agencies/headhunters.
- Secondments for staff at UoN, and UoN staff seconded to the China and Malaysia campuses.

The review was undertaken in the period January-March 2018, with a final report presented to University Executive Board in July 2018. The review concluded that the University of Nottingham has robust recruitment processes in place, a view endorsed by comments received from newly appointed staff reflecting their recent experience of the recruitment process.

However, opportunities for further improvement were identified. With this in mind a set of recommendations and an action plan were produced.

The recommendations were reached following consultation and agreement with the review group members and EDI board.

This report outlines the work that took place and the recommendations, which were approved for adoption at the Institutional EDI board in July 2018.

Data analysis and findings

The quantitative data provided to the Diversity in Recruitment Task and Finish Review Group investigated data trends over the previous four years. The group examined this data in depth and found a number of visible positive trends, alongside trends that could indicate areas for attention. The below summarises key areas of interest identified from the data. Some of these areas were explored further to establish actions to help bring about improvement:

Age

Almost 40% of all applications to UoN, rising to 45% of offers, come from the 25-34 age group. In 2017 0.32% of all applications were received from the 65-74 age group; although this group is small, it was found to have the highest application-to-offer success rate of all age groups.

Disability

Positive progress has been made in terms of applications received and appointments made from persons with disabilities. In 2017, data showed that 4.41% of all offers were made to applicants who declared a disability. This was found to be a significant increase on previous years. There remain, however, challenging recruitment issues for applicants with a disability who apply for academic roles as declaration numbers are low.

Gender

UoN receives a higher number of applications from females across all levels, with the exception of academic roles. In the last four years, female applicant numbers have seen improved conversion to offer than for males. Although female academic attraction remains low, in 2017, at 34.48% of all applications received, the conversion to offer was found to be 43.25%. The female applicant pool is more homogenous than the male pool. Female applicants are much less likely to be Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Questioning (LGBQ) than the male cohort. There are noticeably low numbers of male applicants for lower level Administrative, Professional and Managerial roles.

Race (BME)

While overall attraction is good, there appear to be issues for BME applicants at the conversion stages (with the exception of Clinical Academics and Operations and Facilities positions). BME male applicant conversion numbers are of particular concern at both shortlisting and interview stages. BME success rates were particularly low for apprenticeships and technical roles.

Analysis at the time was unable to determine what effect, if any, Right to Work issues play in affecting the size of the BME application pool (which is large) and the poor conversion rate compared to white groups (which may

or may not be related to strict eligibility requirements). Of all academic sub-families, BME applicants have the lowest likelihood of obtaining an offer in the Research and Teaching sub-family. The analysis found that while white candidates generally convert to offer better at all levels, the difference increases at level 6 and 7.

Religion and Belief

Applications from candidates who have declared 'no religion' are converting better than applications from candidates who have declared a religion. This is despite applicants declaring a religion being the largest group at application stage (48% of applications come from candidates declaring a religion whereas only 39% of offers come from this group).

Sexual Orientation

Applications received from both LGBQ males and females showed improved 'attraction' year on year. However, the success rate for these applications was highlighted as a possible area of concern, specifically LGBQ males, as they were found to be less successful than other similar-sized groups in securing a position. For non-academic roles, LGBQ females were more successful than all other groups.

Trans

In 2017, the proportion of applications received from applicants identifying as trans was 0.97%: in line with estimates of the national trans population (under 1% of the total UK population). Although the number of applicants identifying as trans was small, data suggests that the conversion rate (from application to job offer) has been poorer for trans applicants than for those identifying as cisgender (not trans).

Secondments

Data on international secondments showed a continuing trend of positions being held by white, male staff mainly within Research and Teaching job family roles, at levels 6 and 7. UK secondments are predominantly held by women (71%). White staff hold 96% of secondments, with the majority of roles in the Administrative, Professional and Managerial job family, at levels 3-5.

Focus group findings

Focus groups were held with staff who had been recruited by the University in the previous 12-18 months, and from both external and internal recruitment processes. There were 12 new starters in each of the two focus groups covering the breadth of job families and levels enabling us to capture a wide range of perspectives.

The overall purpose of the focus groups were to explore how the University could improve the staff recruitment process to support its institutional EDI objectives and aspirations by understanding the candidate experience and identifying the impact of good and bad recruitment practices in order to:

- Inform policy development and review.
- Support recruitment practices.

- Gain information to use as part of recruitment training.

A significant number of positive experiences encountered by our new starters during the recruitment process were shared during the focus group sessions. Examples included comments such as; good to see part-time academic roles advertised; the application process was easy to follow; communication was excellent throughout; the interview panel were friendly and put me at ease and, I felt listened to throughout the process and was offered the job in a timely manner with clear new starter instructions.

However, there was also some feedback about how we can make the recruitment experience consistently even better. The review group carefully considered this feedback when developing their recommendations.

Best practice research

The Diversity in Recruitment Task and Finish Review Group sought out examples of other academic institutions and businesses that, in their professional opinion, demonstrated best practices in EDI recruitment. A key over-arching finding was that the examples presented tended to be from those organisations whereby diversity and inclusion was embedded within all people processes (rather than managed as a standalone agenda).

Businesses such as Google, Kellogg's and MasterCard were found to openly show a clear commitment to

improving the diversity and inclusion of their staff on their websites, highlighting both the activities that had taken place (and were continuing where success had been found) and a focus on their future plans.

The group welcomed the honesty shown by these businesses in that they openly admitted that the 'end goal' to achieve a diverse workplace that reflected their community/customer base had to date, not been met, but that they had a plan in place to achieve this.

Best practice key themes (learning and reflections) were as follows:

1 Definition

- Avoid narrow job definitions where possible.
- Focus on broader capabilities over professional qualifications (but recognising there may be times when professional qualifications are essential for a role).
- Prioritise demonstrated competency in other roles over pre-occupation with experience.
- Provide clear links to role requirements.
- Remove exclusive criteria such as 'competitiveness' which may reflect gender or other bias.

2 Marketing

- Refrain from using exclusive language that reinforces stereotypical attributes.
- Ensure that the job/institution is presented to appeal to all, not just certain candidates from specific demographics.
- Take a targeted approach to media to reduce the over-reliance on using standard media sources – and review alternatives that will enable greater outreach into diverse groups.

3 Shortlisting

- Provide mandatory unconscious bias training for all those involved in recruitment.
- Develop recruitment tools to support managers throughout the recruitment process.

4 Interviewing

- Give recruiting managers training in competency-based questioning techniques.
- Promote awareness of the impact of unconscious bias during interviews.
- Form diverse panels, where possible, and appoint a Chair that will challenge the thinking of recruiting managers throughout the process.

5 Decision-making

- Make decisions against clearly defined criteria and as a panel, not one individual, as this will increase the likelihood of unconscious bias.

6 Agencies

- Continually challenge recruitment agencies.
- Rather than having a diversity policy/statement, ask agencies to demonstrate that they have diversity among their own consultants, an awareness of EDI best practices, a track record of building diverse candidate pools and ultimately an eagerness to work with organisations to address diversity needs.

7 Monitoring diversity

- Establish relevant metrics to monitor if/where there are 'leaks' in the recruitment process.

Recommendations and actions

The Diversity in Recruitment Task and Finish Review Group analysed the quantitative and qualitative data and highlighted five main areas that, through development and action planning, would further enhance the recruitment experience of all those with protected characteristics:

1. External messaging: improve visibility and awareness of UoN's commitment to EDI through stronger messaging and targeted promotional activities.
2. Recruitment training: provide bespoke EDI training for all staff involved in recruitment, including updated training for recruitment panel Chairs and panel members.
3. Staff Career Development Opportunities: promote more clearly the available staff career development programmes, including career-enhancing secondment opportunities.
4. Anonymised applications: build on the success of the anonymised recruitment application form pilot in the Faculty of Engineering by using it in other areas to mitigate potential recruitment bias.
5. External recruitment agencies: ensure that there is diversity in long and short lists of potential applicants provided by partner agencies.

The following recommendations and actions were suggested by the Task and Finish group to further improve UoN recruitment practices, procedures and behaviours in support of institutional EDI objectives and aspirations. These recommendations will now be adopted

A timescale has been allocated to each action. Short-term refers to those actions with a planned delivery by the end of 2018, medium-term by the end of 2019 and long-term by the end of 2020.

Strategic objective 1

The University of Nottingham must clearly articulate in our external messaging our commitment to attracting, recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce.

Objective	Timeframe
<i>Deliver visible institutional commitment to EDI through our recruitment attraction tools and practices.</i>	medium-term
Action <p>Improve attraction practices to appeal to and attract an inclusive pool of applicants for UoN positions. Where appropriate, advertising should be tailored to attract applicants from under-represented protected characteristic groups. Actions to support this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve language used in adverts to promote inclusion by giving hiring managers access to the 'Gender Decoder' to help them avoid gender bias in their adverts. ■ Develop a new recruitment microsite to better promote our approach and resources supporting inclusive recruitment and highlighting our institutional EDI commitment. ■ Develop a diversity-focused recruitment video to complement the UoN corporate recruitment video, highlighting and accentuating the inclusivity of our workforce and breadth of opportunities available. ■ Develop case studies (video and written) from staff of all protected characteristic groups, including those that work part-time/flexibly. Ensure they cover the breadth of UoN roles and job families. ■ Develop brand/logo/images to use in recruitment and attraction activities to support our inclusive recruitment approach ■ Put in place practices to encourage part-time/job-share commitment wording to appear on the front page of job advertisements (where applicable for the role). ■ Broaden use of social media (Twitter, Facebook, talking heads) to reach a wider pool of potential applicants and share learnings across UoN. ■ Develop connections and attend local school/college and community recruitment events to promote the University as an employer. ■ Deliver recruitment campaigns to attract candidates from specific under-represented groups. 	

Objective	Timeframe
<i>Enhance understanding of the impact of Right to Work on conversion rates.</i>	short-term*
Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake further analysis of metrics to understand the 'real' outcome of international application conversion rate when Right to Work has been factored in. <p><small>*Completed July 2018. No substantial impact identified. Will continue to be monitored</small></p>	

Objective	Timeframe
<i>Raise visibility of support for disabled staff.</i>	short-term*
Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apply for Disability Confident Employer Level 1 and promote awareness via UoN job page. ■ Implement within the relevant recruitment system <p>the option of a 'guaranteed interview' for disabled applicants meeting the minimum essential criteria (key commitment required by UoN for registration onto the Disability Confident scheme).</p> <p><small>*Completed September 2018.</small></p>	

Strategic objective 2

Recruitment training for all Chair and panel members should be mandatory.

Objective	Timeframe
<i>Improve recruitment and selection training.</i>	short to long-term
<p>Action</p> <p>Recruitment and selection training package for Chair/panel member/hiring manager/recruitment administrator to be reviewed to address EDI considerations and improve recruitment and selection processes and decisions. Key aspects will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Defining the mandatory training requirements for those involved in recruitment and selection and recording/checking process (to include refresher courses every three years). ■ Developing suitable recruitment training/guidance materials to cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ EDI and unconscious bias training to become mandatory for all staff involved in recruitment decisions. ■ EDI considerations in recruitment planning. ■ Opportunities for diverse panel composition, where possible. ■ Panel behaviour – training to reinforce good recruitment practices for all panel members and specific responsibilities of the Chair. ■ Effective advert writing to include the use of language and its impact in adverts. ■ Reviewing the guidance on HR recruitment workspace pages to include, for example; new supporting guidance for those involved in selection decisions and how to prepare for interview and assessments. ■ Developing behavioural/competence-based interview skills training to improve recruitment interview techniques and objectivity. Chair training course to be further developed for all those chairing selection panels. ■ Developing a customer feedback survey mechanism to collect applicant feedback in real-time, establish a baseline (prior to new training introduction) and repeat exercise 12 months after training introduced to compare experiences and measure impact. 	
<p>Timeframes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Review training requirements; review HR workspace guidance – short-term (complete) ■ Implement new training; UoN competency framework embedded into recruitment activity – medium-term ■ All identified panel Chairs to be trained – long-term 	

Objective	Timeframe
<i>Redevelop recruitment assessments framework.</i>	medium-term
<p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An assessment framework/toolkit identifying appropriate assessment tools for each job family/level to be developed including different assessments available, guidance on how to access them, and costs. ■ Guidance for Hiring Managers will be enhanced to ensure assessments developed locally (for example, by schools) are appropriate for their intended use. ■ The new University competency framework 'Building a Culture for Success' will be further embedded into recruitment assessment practices. 	

Strategic objective 3

Improve visibility of staff career development opportunities.

Objective	Timeframe
<i>Promote staff career development opportunities.</i>	short to medium-term
Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve the visibility of staff career development opportunities available on our jobs web pages ■ Review redeployment policy and processes. 	
Timeframes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve visibility of career pathways for APM & Support staff – short-term (complete) ■ Review redeployment policy and processes – short-term ■ Improve the visibility of staff development opportunities available – medium-term. 	

Objective	Timeframe
<i>Increase diversity of candidates recruited for secondment opportunities.</i>	long-term
Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop a standardised approach to the identification and recruitment of UK and international secondment opportunities. 	

Strategic objective 4

Build on existing success of anonymised recruitment application forms.

Objective	Timeframe
<i>Anonymisation of application data</i>	
Action	medium to long-term
<p>Introduce anonymised applicant data for shortlisting panel members for all roles and job families to reduce the opportunities for bias in the selection process. This will include:</p> <div> <div> <p>Academic recruitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Further pilot work to develop the Diversity by Design approach in the Faculty of Engineering. ■ Pending pilot outcomes – review and update the application process to embed best practice approach derived from the pilot. ■ Review and consider ways to more effectively collect publication data to allow greater chance of meaningful anonymisation. ■ Standardised approach to shortlisting using only the advertised criteria. </div> <div> <p>Non-academic recruitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pilot the use of anonymised applicant data ■ Pending pilot outcomes, introduce the approach for all non-academic recruitment </div> </div>	

Strategic objective 5

Clear expectations articulated to external recruitment agencies.

Objective	Timeframe
<i>Diversity and inclusivity targets for executive search.</i>	
Action	short-term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clear instructions to be given to executive recruitment agencies on our expectations regarding the diversity of candidate pools, with particular focus on the under-represented groups for a particular role. ■ Using the Voluntary Code of Conduct for Executive Search Firms, target diversity percentages should be specified for long lists and short lists. ■ Long lists and short lists should be rejected where percentages are not achieved and justification is not accepted. 	