

The Royal Veterinary College Recruitment Toolkit

How the recruitment toolkit will help you

This toolkit will help you get the right person for the right job.

It takes you through some simple procedures and basic skills that are designed to help you achieve good practice at every stage of the recruitment process.

The toolkit has been structured around the e-Recruitment system workflow and adapted to give all College recruiters, whether experienced or otherwise, the information they require to work effectively and efficiently to bring on board the right people.

The advice is practical, easy to follow and realistic in terms of what a busy manager can be expected to do. If time is short you may prefer to concentrate on the Key Points sections, but for best results read the whole toolkit.

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1. Key Principles

1. KEY PRINCIPLES

To protect the College from litigation and to ensure we get the right people for the job, professional recruitment has never been more important than it is right now. Whether recruiting leading academics or office staff, grooms or veterinarians, we must follow due process and best practice.

Statistics from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) show that the average cost of replacing an employee is currently £8,000. The College needs recruiting managers to 'get it right first time'.

Good practice is at the heart of everything we do. Our aim is to help you develop skills, techniques and processes that will simplify recruitment as much as possible and minimise risk; to you individually and the College as a whole.

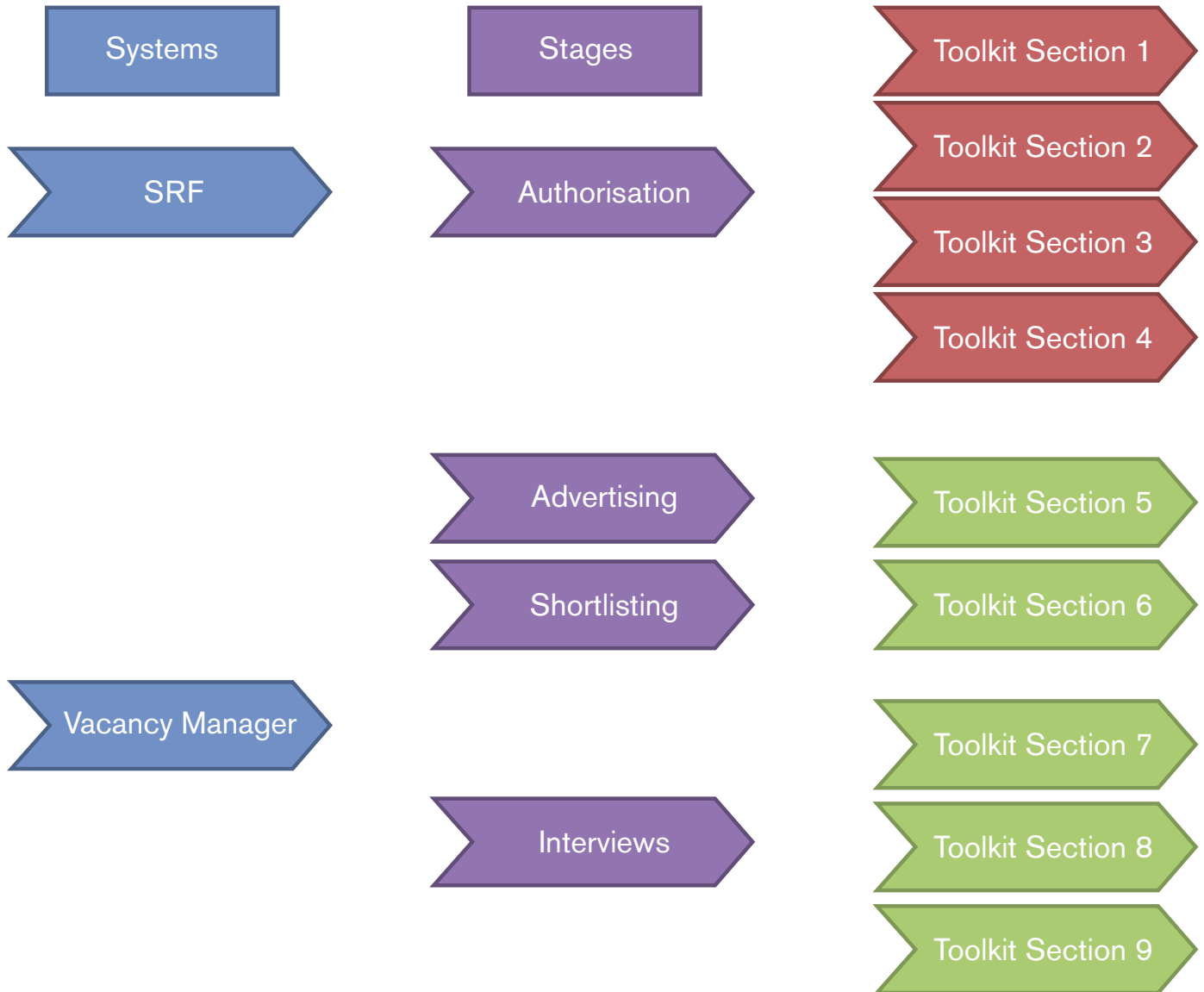
Experienced interviewers can share the opportunities to discover new ways of doing things as well as sharing their successes and failures. We all learn from each other.

Chairs of selection panels are expected to have completed RVC recruitment and equality and diversity training.

KEY POINTS

1. Get the right people for the job and avoid litigation.
2. GOOD PRACTICE = SAFE PRACTICE.

The e-Recruitment system supports the administration of the recruitment process



2. Stage 1: Pre-recruitment Planning

PRE RECRUITMENT PLANNING

Ask yourself some questions:

- is this a new job or a replacement?
- is there an opportunity for improvements?
- can you address turnover issues with job design?
- should you consider job share / full time / part time working?
- is this the best time to advertise, (e.g. the time of year, planned or likely changes or imminent vacancies?)
- is there anything else that might be relevant?

Use the opportunity to think about any possible changes or improvements that might be pertinent now rather than just advertising the same old job.

KEY POINTS

1. Planning is crucial for an effective recruitment process; do not underestimate the benefits of thorough planning in the early stages.
2. Circumstances change – embrace them and take this opportunity to make any changes that could be beneficial to your department or to the College as a whole.

3. STAGE 2: HERA Competencies

WHAT IS HERA?

It stands for Higher Educational Role Analysis

There are many ways HERA competencies can help you so check them out in Appendix 1.

In recruitment they are the key to developing effective Job Descriptions and Person Specifications.

There are 14 HERA competencies; most jobs will contain elements of most of these, however, for recruitment purposes you should focus on the five or six most relevant ones. The competencies help define the key areas of skill, knowledge and behaviour that are required to do the job as the College wishes it to be done and also what level the prospective job holder is expected to work at.

Many recruiters at the College have been using HERA for several years and have found them easy to use both in successfully recruiting the right people and subsequently linking them to objectives set during probation, personal development plans and appraisal.

Like to know more? – check out the staff recruitment section on the intranet for several examples of HERA'd Job Descriptions and Person Specifications.

https://intranet.rvc.ac.uk/HR_internal/StaffRecruitment/jobevalmgr.cfm

KEY POINTS

For more info about HERA see **Appendix 1**

The 14 HERA Competencies:

1. Communication
2. Teamwork and motivation
3. Liaison and networking
4. Service delivery
5. Decision making process and outcomes
6. Planning and organizing resources
7. Initiative and problem solving
8. Analysis and research
9. Sensory and physical demands
10. Work environment
11. Pastoral care and welfare
12. Team development
13. Teaching and learning support
14. Knowledge and experience

4. STAGE 3: Writing the Job Description and Person Specification

WRITING THE JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

The Job Description must:

- be an accurate summary of the role.
- identify the level and autonomy etc. within the role.
- be clear to potential candidates.

The Person Specification must be:

- clearly linked to the Job Description.
- measurable.
- appropriate.
- non-discriminatory.
- divided into Essential and Desirable criteria and must cover the knowledge, skills and experience needed for the role.

THE JOB DESCRIPTION

A Job Description describes the overall purpose of the job and lists the main tasks that have to be carried out.

It is not a definitive list of all the tasks to be undertaken.

It is implicit within the Contract of Employment that any job holder will undertake all 'reasonable duties' commensurate with the level and grade of their role, and that their job description will develop and change over time.

A commonly used phrase inserted into Job Descriptions to make this clear is: 'to deliver services effectively, a degree of flexibility is needed and the post holder may be required to perform work not specifically referred to above' (or something similar).

Job Descriptions should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are meaningful; a good time to do this is at appraisal time.

THE PERSON SPECIFICATION

The PS is the 'standard' by which you will judge candidates. To create one you must be clear about the level of knowledge, skills and experience required to do the job competently.

If the standard is too broad, eg. 'experience with spreadsheets', it is not a clear enough requirement. It would be much better to clearly state more **exact** requirements, for example:

- 'basic use of spreadsheets following a standard process of data entry'
- or 'experience in using XYZ software to develop new formats'
- or 'experienced enough about them to supervise the work of others'

Decide on the sort of evidence that will prove a candidate is competent in each one of the required competencies; look for **practical examples** that show s/he has undertaken tasks in the past or developed the knowledge or skills you require.

KEY POINTS

The Job Description

The Job Description should be a clear summary plus the key points of the job, written in a simple and straightforward way that is easily understood by the line manager and the job holder.

The Person Specification outlines the knowledge, skills and experience that are required of the job holder in order that they will do the job to the standard and in the way that the College wishes them to do so.

Having clearly measurable criteria makes it much easier to attract and find the right person for the job.

Essential or Desirable?

Some components of a job are more important than others. Decide what skills are:

- **ESSENTIAL** – without which the job could not be done
- **DESIRABLE** – those which enable the candidate to perform the job well but are not necessarily essential, at least at the start.

An effective PS will have a mix of both.

Evidence based on previous experience is the best predictor of success in a new job.

JD AND PS EVALUATION CHECKLIST:

Once you have completed them it is a good idea to review them (and maybe ask a colleague to look at them too) to see if you can answer 'yes' to the following questions:

- is the current job accurately reflected?
- have you avoided acronyms and abbreviations?
- have you avoided ambiguity?
- is every essential element of the PS really essential; is there no other way the person can get the knowledge or skill?
- have you the right balance between qualifications and evidence of equal or better experience?

KEY POINTS

Review, amend, and review again.
They are rarely right first time.

These templates can be downloaded from the staff recruitment section of the HR intranet.



JOB DESCRIPTION

This form summarises the purpose of the job and lists its key tasks.
It may be varied from time to time at the discretion of the College in consultation with the postholder.

Job Title:	Job ref no:
Grade:	Department:
Accountable to:	Responsible for:

Job summary:

Competency: Key tasks:

Competency: Key tasks:

Competency: Key tasks:

Competency: Key tasks:

Competency: Key tasks:

Competency: Key tasks:

Flexibility: To deliver services effectively, a degree of flexibility is needed, and the post holder may be required to perform work not specifically referred to above.

These templates can be downloaded from the staff recruitment section of the HR intranet.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

This form lists the essential and desirable requirements needed in order to do the job.
Applicants will be shortlisted solely on the extent to which they meet these requirements.

Job Title:	Job ref no:
Grade:	Department:
Accountable to:	Responsible for:

Competency	Evidence			
	Essential	Assessment *A and/or I	Desirable	Assessment *A and/or I
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				

*A = Application Form I = Interview

5. STAGE 4: Gaining approval for your post – completing the Staff Request Form (SRF)

GAINING APPROVAL FOR YOUR POST – COMPLETING THE STAFF REQUEST FORM (SRF)

Completing the Staff Request Form is the process through which you **gain** authorisation to recruit to a new post, or to fill an existing one that has become vacant. You **must** complete the SRF before going ahead, HR cannot advertise a vacancy for you until recruitment has been authorised.

HR can advise and assist with all the following tasks but because you know the job best, it is your responsibility to:

- prepare the Job Description, Person Specification and draft advertisement and submit them with the SRF.
- regularly monitor the SRF process online.
- gain approval for the SRF within your desired timeframe.

NB – the Recruitment Manager (RM), not Human Resources, is responsible for tracking the progress of their SRF. The tracking status is easily accessible online.

KEY POINTS

To see an example of an SRF and the type of information required to complete one, look online.

The RM is the person driving the whole recruitment process, with help and advice from HR when appropriate.

DEADLINES

Deadlines are often vitally important so check with HR at the outset if you are concerned about timing.

HR will tell you who your contact for this post will be and liaise with you regarding any issues, queries etc. including media options.

HR encourage you to meet them face to face to discuss requirements, so make contact; it can be very useful and helps speed the process along especially if there are timescale issues.

The SRF must be approved by the relevant HOD, Finance and the Principal (unless the role is fully grant funded); this all takes time, so build this into your planning.

After approval by the Principal you should review advertising, shortlisting and interview dates and amend if necessary in order that the final stated dates are realistic and achievable; seek HR's advice on what is realistic.

Avoid setting dates 'in stone' in case the approval process takes longer than expected; discuss dates with HR in order to determine and agree workable timelines.

KEY POINTS

Recruitment is often 'urgent' but some deadlines can't be moved.

If you have a chance, meet your HR advisor face to face, it tends to make the process easier.

SRF APPROVAL TAKES TIME!

Certain media can take over a month to arrange.

The form must be 100% accurate to avoid delays.

6. STAGE 5: Advertising the Vacancy

ADVERTISING THE VACANCY

External v Internal

The law does not require you to advertise all posts either externally or internally.

However, it is normally good practice to advertise externally and it gives you access to a wider pool of talent.

Sometimes advertising internally only can help avoid making someone redundant or allow you to promote from within, but discuss this first with HR.

- HR place all external advertisements via the College's advertising agency, who in turn can advise on the best media to suit your requirements.
- costs and results can vary enormously according to which media are used and there are many specialist ones which can be used for particular jobs.
- you may also want to advertise in particular publications to use your advertising to attract applications from under- represented groups.
- when you need to fill a post quickly with the minimum of fuss, recruitment agencies may be appropriate.
- for very senior posts executive search agencies may be used.

KEY POINTS

Advertising externally

- gives you the widest choice of applicants and meets any ethical concerns you or your colleagues might have

Advertising internally

- enables you to promote from within and maintain motivation
- can sometimes help with the redeployment of someone at risk of redundancy
- saves time and money

You may want to advertise externally, but you don't have to.

HR can advise on:

- media
- specialist skills
- under-represented groups
- agencies
- executive search

ADVERTISING

Some advice from advertising professionals

To get the best response your advertisement must **CONNECT** with your **TARGET AUDIENCE**.

Target audiences **VARY** according the **TYPE OF JOB** you are recruiting for.

To connect effectively your ad needs to create:

- **AWARENESS** by appearing in the right publication at the right time.
- **PREFERENCE** for your job over the competition's by using appropriate language and tone.
- **KNOWLEDGE** by getting to the point about what the job involves.
- Get this right and you will elicit the **RESPONSE** you need.

KEY POINTS

the best ads create the most **IMPACT**
impact is **VISUAL**
but it will be much greater if your text is
SHORTER
and more **READABLE**

get this right and your ads will also be more **COST EFFECTIVE**

your ads will be more successful if they
QUICKLY
INFORM
your **TARGET AUDIENCE** about the job in ways that **APPEAL** to them and tell them how to get more **DETAILS**

PRECISION IS EFFECTIVE

Every line of your ad costs money

Every unnecessary word you use increases the risk that your audience will move on to the next ad before finishing yours.

Here's a real example:

What's better, this:

'Applications are invited for the post of Deputy Subject Librarian (Engineering and Physical Science team). This post contributes to the provision of library and information services to the University's Engineering and Physical Science's departments' (34 words)

or this?:

'We need a Deputy Subject librarian to help provide library and information series to our Engineering and Physical Sciences departments' (20 words)

(Yes, we think the latter one).

KEY POINTS

Basic rules about precision and tone in advertisements:

- keep sentences to a maximum of 10 words
- keep paragraphs to less than 5 lines
- use headlines to tempt the reader in
- never use a long word when a short one will do
- if it's possible to cut a word out – cut it out
- never use jargon if you can think of an everyday equivalent
- be careful with similes and metaphors

WORDS COST MONEY

RESPONSIBILITIES

Your responsibility:

- to finalise job documents (JD, PS and advertisement) with HR.

HR's responsibility:

- to set up access details to e-Shortlist system for the Shortlist Panel.

All posts are advertised on the College website – external or intranet depending on vacancy – normally for 2 weeks.

If for redeployment or other reasons it is appropriate to only advertise internally, the vacancy may only be advertised on the intranet for one week; discuss with HR first.

If you are recruiting from overseas, please remember that by law, EU citizens must be given priority.

KEY POINTS

HR is there to support you whenever they can in fulfilling your responsibilities and getting the process right.

All advertisements will have a closing date – usually of your choice, but HR will advise.

RECRUITMENT FROM OVERSEAS

If you might recruit from overseas there are frequently changing legal requirements which mean that:

- the recruitment process may take longer.
- there is no guarantee you will be able to appoint someone from outside the EU.

Always check on the latest position regarding rules and processes. There is no flexibility around Government restrictions currently in place on workers from outside the EU.

As a matter of course, all RMs will be asked to state if it is possible they may wish to fill a vacancy from inside or outside the EU.

If it is from outside the EU please bear in mind:

- we have to apply for a Certificate of Sponsorship and there is no guarantee it will be granted.
- we must advertise the vacancy externally.

KEY POINTS

Check with HR for the latest position regarding restrictions etc.; they monitor the situation weekly.

7. STAGE 6: Shortlisting

SHORTLISTING

Why do we need to shortlist the way we do?

Because it enables us to methodically assess all candidates against the Person Specification using the online shortlisting system.

Shortlisting is the first stage of the recruitment process where you begin to involve other members of the Selection Panel. Over and above ensuring that they are representative of the key areas the job holder will come into contact with, there are no hard and fast rules about the composition of panels, however please bear in mind the following:

A note on the composition of Selection Panels

Appointments to all posts at the College must be made in accordance with the College's commitment to equality of opportunity and the requirements of its Single Equality Scheme. Due consideration must be given to ensure that Selection Committees reflect appropriately the diversity of the College community. In this regard, they must always include one male and one female member.

KEY POINTS

The work you did compiling the essential and desirable criteria will come into its own now.

The Selection Panel can work online at a convenient time, reducing the need for as many meetings.

Reflecting diversity is important; try to do this when choosing your Selection Panel.

Do not form a single sex panel.

As part of our Single Equality Scheme Action Plan, the College has stipulated that any disabled candidate who meets all the essential criteria must be shortlisted for interview.

Shortlisting can be done at any time from day one after the closing date. Panel members may find it easier to do it 'one day at a time' rather than leave it all until the last minute.

Your HR contact can see all progress, scores etc. but each panel member cannot see each others' scores.

The Chair has to score before being able to see the scores of the other panel members.

The Chair makes the final decision about whom to shortlist and communicates via the Vacancy Manager system, the candidates who are to be shortlisted, reserved and rejected.

KEY POINT

If a disabled candidate meets all the essential criteria they must be offered an interview.

ESSENTIAL AND DESIRABLE CRITERIA

Assessment against these criteria means that we will get the best person for the job and in support of that:

- we are fair and equitable to all applicants.
- we can demonstrate a consistent process.
- you can justify your decisions if you are challenged.
- potentially discriminatory assumptions and judgments are not part of the decision making process.

For example:

- one easy assumption to make would be to think that a mother of small children might not be able to show the required level of commitment because of this.
- another could be that if the applicant has worked for a renowned institution they are 'automatically' worthy of renown themselves.

Start off by shortlisting against essential criteria, then assess against desirable criteria to narrow the field. Sometimes you may have to be a bit ruthless but you can do this as long as you have clear criteria.

KEY POINTS

Shortlisting numbers:

Shortlisting no more than six candidates is generally advisable.

This is professional advice based on best practice, eg. it generally allows sufficient time between interviews.

However the online system allows for a maximum of eight applicants to be shortlisted.

INTERNAL V EXTERNAL APPLICANTS

If an internal candidate does not meet the criteria, do not interview them.

Better to disappoint them at this stage rather than raise false expectations by inviting them to interview. Instead, give them feedback on their application; this could be very helpful to them in the future.

You must only rate what is on their application; this is fair to all applicants and the only way to achieve consistency.

If you have any concerns or work very closely with an applicant then ask HR for a second opinion if it might help.

All applicants must be treated consistently, therefore assessed on what is contained in their application only, using the objective rating system.

KEY POINTS

Don't be kind.

Don't take the easy way out.

Give honest, constructive feedback if you are not shortlisting them.

8. STAGE 7: Ensuring an effective interview

ENSURING AN EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW

How well the interview is run and the questions that are asked can make a big difference to the usable information available to make the best decision.

The ability of the Selection Panel members is crucial; that's why all recruiters should be trained in the College's requirements and best practice.

Whatever the skill levels of individual panel members, their ability to work **together** is ultimately the test of whether or not they have participated well as a cohesive panel. This is not an easy thing to do and is covered during the training workshop.

Note taking by all panel members is essential.

KEY POINTS

For more information on effective interview techniques see the Skills Section, page 49.

Contemporaneous notes can be submitted to an Employment Tribunal if required; notes made subsequent to the interview are not always admissible.

PLANNING

Thorough planning is essential to a successful interview process. There are two key stages:

- planning the practical aspects.
- planning the questions.

One of the most common mistakes recruiters make is to assume that if they have planned for what they want, then all will be well.

In reality, it's the planning of what the **interviewees** might want, require or need that can make all the difference.

The practical aspects:

- interview date and timings.
- interview room.
- access requirements.
- contingencies.
- working effectively as a panel under the leadership of the Chair.

KEY POINTS

Put yourself in their shoes!

Each panel needs a Chair, but it does not have to be the RM (although it often is).

Although the date and timings of interviews are usually made to suit the interviewers you must also take into consideration important requirements of the interviewees which could include:

- Religious considerations, e.g. fasting during Ramadan therefore an early interview time would be preferable.
- Health issues e.g. use of medication might mean that a certain time of day would be best.
- Distance to travel e.g. see the more local ones early in the day.

If candidates are to prepare a presentation then let them know as soon as possible rather than spring it on them at the last minute.

Interviews are usually between 30 to 45 minutes, plus time for presentations or tests if required.

Time should be allowed at the end of each interview for the panel members to read their notes, rate the candidate and discuss final ratings for each candidate before going forward to the next interview.

KEY POINTS

As a rule, allow at least two weeks between notifying candidates they have been shortlisted and holding the interviews.

Longer time may be needed for overseas candidates who are travelling to the College for an interview, although a video link interview may be available.

Notes

All panel members must take notes of some kind to provide evidence for their rating, which is especially important if the recruitment decision is challenged.

INTERVIEW ROOM:

Rooms must be fit for purpose so consider the following:

- Do any of the interviewers or interviewees have any special access requirements?.
- Does the room give a positive impression to candidates?.
- Is it the right size to accommodate everybody involved?.
- Is there a waiting area?.
- Can the room be laid out so that the candidate can see all the interviewers and vice versa?.
- Does the room provide an appropriate environment? (e.g. not too noisy or too hot and the sun not in candidates' eyes etc.).

Options if people are unable to attend

If you receive notice that someone is unable to attend the interview at the time allocated, you may need to reconvene the panel.

Whether you are obliged to do this will depend on the reason that they cannot attend:

- If it is on grounds covered by the six main areas of discrimination (sex, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation and religion) you will normally need to reconvene at a convenient time.
- If it is for other reasons (eg. holiday), then you are not required to rearrange although you can if you wish and it is operationally possible to do so.

KEY POINTS

Access requirements

If you or HR receive details of access requirements you can get help with this, such as arranging sign language interpreters or identifying suitable rooms.

THE CHAIR OF THE SELECTION PANEL

The RM often assumes the role of the Chair but this is not obligatory. It can be delegated to another panel member if appropriate. Ask HR for guidance if you are unsure.

The Chair is responsible for:

- Introducing the panel and welcoming the candidate.
- Facilitating the development of the questions by the whole of the panel so that they are each aware of the purpose of all the questions and know who is to ask what question, and in what order.
- Ensuring continuity of the panel and their questions.
- All equality and diversity principles being upheld.
- Managing and facilitating discussions leading to the final decisions.
- Doing everything the rest of the panel are expected to do as well.

KEY POINTS

Most of the candidates who attend an interview will **not** be successful, but we want them to take back a positive view of the College and its practices.

All panel members are expected to:

- act professionally at all times
- work together to ensure good continuity
- make it a positive experience for the candidate
- take appropriate notes on evidence of competence, to support their ratings and also ensure that all candidates can benefit from constructive feedback

PLANNING THE QUESTIONS

Questions must:

- be prepared in advance.
- be the same for each candidate.
- ask candidates to give examples (evidence) of when they have demonstrated the skills required.

Therefore all candidates have the same opportunity to give evidence of suitability.

The planning and asking of the **right** questions is vitally important; although questions must be prepared in advance and be the same for all candidates, the College would not wish panel members to ask questions which actually have already been answered in response to an earlier question.

Using the Interviewer's Question Sheet (see next page) to plan your questions aids professionalism by helping to ensure that the interview flows well.

Before the interviews begin, the recruitment panel should agree two or three questions under each of the competency headings on the Person Specification and note them down on the form. It will then serve as a structure for the interviews.

By asking the same set of questions of each candidate you are giving each of them the same opportunity to give you information. However, the skill of the interviewer is in their ability to phrase the questions in such a way that a 'conversation' (as far as possible) develops between the candidate and the panel members, resulting in both parties feeling as relaxed as possible in what is inevitably a fairly formal situation, and able to obtain the information they each require.

KEY POINTS

For more information on effective questioning see the Skills Section, page 49.

All panel members are encouraged to develop their skills in questioning and listening; there is training available, please contact HR (Training).

All candidates should be asked all of the questions on the form.

If handled incorrectly the questioning process can become formulaic and repetitive. Panel members are encouraged to ask questions in a personable and reasonably informal manner whenever possible.

If a candidate's answers are insufficient in your opinion then you can (and should) ask further probing questions, based on the answers they give you.

Their answers should give you enough information on which to base your ratings and subsequent decision.

Every panel member must take notes; it is vital that you have a record of the evidence each candidate gives in order that you can substantiate the ratings that you subsequently give.

To summarise:

- ask questions.
- make notes.
- read and reflect on your notes after each interview.
- evaluate your evidence (or lack of it).
- give a rating.

KEY POINTS

Assessment Sheet ratings:

- 0 = no evidence of required standard
- 1 = some evidence of required standard
- 2 = meets required standard
- 3 = exceeds required standard

Decision Sheet ratings:

- 0 = unappointable
- 1 = appointable with development needs
- 2 = appointable
- 3 = appointable with skills beyond those required in the post

INTERVIEW QUESTION SHEET

This form is available from HR. Before interviews begin, the recruitment selection panel should agree two or three questions under each of the competency headings on the person specification and note them down on the form. It will then serve as a structure for the interviews. All candidates should be asked ALL the questions on the sheet.

INTERVIEW QUESTION SHEET

Selection committee members:

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 1 | ▪ Introductions – names/roles/location |
| 2 | ▪ Purpose of the interview – opportunity for both sides to find out about the other |
| 3 | ▪ How long it will last |
| 4 | ▪ Questions based on Person Specification |
| | ▪ Taking notes as we go through |
| | ▪ Opportunity for candidate's questions at end |

Opening questions

Communication

Teamwork and motivation

Liaison and networking

Service delivery

Decision making

Planning and organising resources

Initiative and problem solving

Experience

NB: These are examples, you can enter your own headings.

ASSESSING EACH CANDIDATE

At the end of each interview the panel members, individually, review their evidence of each competency in question and rate it on the **Candidate Assessment Sheet**.

The Chair then leads a discussion and may ask each panel member to substantiate their rating if there is disagreement.

Assessment Sheet ratings:

0 = no evidence of required standard

1 = some evidence of required standard

2 = meets required standard

3 = exceeds required standard

Making the decision

At the end of all the interviews, each panel member should rate each candidate individually and the Chair enters these ratings onto the form.

A common rating should then be agreed for each candidate by the selection panel as a whole.

All panel members then participate in the decision making process about whether or not each candidate is appointable, using the **Chair's Decision Sheet**.

Decision Sheet ratings:

0 = unappointable

1 = appointable with development needs

2 = appointable

3 = appointable with skills beyond those required in the post

The Chair should note the candidate selected and a reserve. If they have scored a '1', any development needs identified should be listed in the space provided.

KEY POINTS

To see a copy of the recruitment forms go to intranet, HR, A-Z forms.

For more information on effective interview techniques see the Skills Section.

If you want to develop your skills in this area we strongly recommend that you attend a Recruitment training course.

9. STAGE 8: Using References

REFERENCES

All job offers are made on the basis that satisfactory references are received.

The offer can be withdrawn even after the candidate has started, if references prove to be unsatisfactory.

References are generally of limited use apart from Academic references; their main benefit is to check and confirm information from the applicant.

References should be written rather than verbal; if a verbal reference is obtained a written record of the information should be made and a copy sent to the referee for confirmation of the conversation. Only comments that can be substantiated should be used in the recruitment process.

Referees can have various motivations for giving the references they do. For example, they might want to keep the candidate so give a less than glowing reference or they might want them to leave and embellish the truth to make them sound more attractive to you!

They might only give a very straightforward, factual reference because that is organisational policy. You will probably never know, so do not make any assumptions.

KEY POINT

Satisfactory means satisfactory to the College.

Never make assumptions about references; if your 'gut feeling' is telling you something might be wrong, check it out.

TAKING UP REFERENCES

References should not be taken up without the candidate's permission. Failure to do this could compromise an individual in their current role, and also prevents them from doing their referees the courtesy of forewarning them that a reference request may be on its way.

It's possible that reading references before an interview could lead to interviewers prejudging the candidate so a better approach is to take them up - or certainly only to look at them - at the end of the selection process.

References and making an offer

You don't have to make a job offer until references have arrived, but you may want to if you're in a hurry.

References should then be taken up as quickly as possible, and you may want to fix a date on which the job offer will be withdrawn if they have not arrived.

Occasionally candidates are unwilling to provide references from their current employer because they are involved in some kind of dispute with them and problems can arise.

ALWAYS DISCUSS CASES LIKE THIS WITH HR.

KEY POINTS

There is no legal obligation on the writer of a reference to disclose it to an employee but there is an obligation on the recipient to do so if asked.

ALWAYS DISCUSS CASES LIKE THIS WITH HR.

10. STAGE 9: Making the offer and giving feedback

MAKING THE OFFER AND GIVING FEEDBACK

The Chair:

- offers verbally, usually by phone.
- submits the Job Offer information to HR via the vacancy manager system.
- contacts unsuccessful candidates by phone and offers feedback if they wish to receive it.

HR:

- generate the offer letter to the successful candidate.
- sends 'regret' emails to unsuccessful candidates.

Not all offers are accepted so notification to a 'reserve' candidate is often delayed until acceptance is assured. Interviewing is a two way process and all members of a recruitment panel should remember this; not all offers of employment are accepted.

Giving feedback is an integral part of the recruitment process at the College and all panel members should be able to give it if required, although it is often given by the recruiting manager or the Chair.

Honest feedback demonstrates respect for the candidate; avoid trying to soften the blow by concealing problems or making excuses, which is not helpful to anyone.

KEY POINTS

For more information on giving feedback see the Skills Section, page 49.

Honest feedback is vital; it requires notes not memory.

Many panel members are reluctant to give feedback but it can be very beneficial for candidates so the College encourages panel members to de-personalise the process by focusing on the 'evidence' they obtained during the interview.

Keep a reserve candidate in case your first choice declines your offer.

11. STAGE 10: Induction

INDUCTION

Induction starts on Day one, lasts for about three months and is the responsibility of the line manager together with their new employee. All new employees receive a personalised Induction Pack whilst the Manager's Induction Guide provides all the necessary information their line manager may need.

We must support the new starter during their induction so that they:

- make a positive transition into their role.
- get up to speed as quickly as possible.
- understand the College's mission and values.
- build successful key relationships.
- feel they have made the right choice to join the RVC.

In addition to help from their line manager, support for new employees can come from many areas including:

- Senior Management Members.
- Finance.
- Human Resources.
- Academic Registry.
- Academic Development.
- Estates.
- Research Office.
- Departmental Support.

KEY POINTS

Check out the Employee's Induction Pack and the Manager's Induction Guide.

Support is available from many sources; make sure you make the most of it to get your new employee off to a flying start.

12. SKILLS SECTION

1. Working together as a panel

2. Asking questions

3. Active listening

4. Giving feedback

1. WORKING TOGETHER AS A PANEL

Continuity

Good continuity means that everything 'just flows'. The interview appears almost effortless. Poor continuity is confusing for candidates and interviewers alike. It increases stress levels and lessens your chances of getting the information you need.

It also looks unprofessional and leaves the candidate with a negative impression of the selection process.

Follow an Agenda

Like other stages of the recruitment process, interviewing effectively as a panel requires certain techniques that go almost unnoticed if done well, but which can be detrimental if mishandled.

You will probably be conducting a number of interviews in one day, and it is important not to miss anything out. A logical sequence of events, planned and agreed beforehand, helps avoid this, guides the candidate through the discussion and ensures everyone is treated fairly and consistently.

There should be three clear stages to the interview:

The three stages

- 1 **Opening** - where the candidate is settled, introductions are made and the structure of the interview explained
- 2 **Middle** - the most important stage for you where information is obtained using questions the panel have agreed in advance
- 3 **Close** - an important stage for the candidate, where their questions are answered and the next stage in the process explained

Using the existing interview question sheet will help you achieve this. Remember that you should all be taking notes individually through the course of the interview and it's good practice to tell the candidate at the outset that this is what you'll be doing.

Continuity is crucial. Done well, you look professional and ensure you get the information you want.

Done badly, you can cause confusion and stress and leave the candidate with a negative view.

A logical sequence helps you, guides the candidate and ensures fair treatment.

Notes and Ratings

All panel members must take notes individually through the course of the interview. You may choose to rate the candidate against the agreed competencies during the interview or at the end.

Agree beforehand whether you will be discussing each candidate and agreeing common ratings after each interview or at the end of them all.

By the end of the whole process you will be in a better position to assess each candidate once you have observed the performance of them all.

ASKING QUESTIONS

Good interviewers ask questions in such a way that the candidate talks for at least two thirds of the time.

Genuine interest in the candidate usually produces an effective response. Questions should be probing, powerful, incisive, calculated and searching - as well as being asked in an open and friendly manner!

The most useful questions to ask when interviewing a candidate are those based on their previous experience. This is relevant information - how they behaved in a previous situation is the most likely indicator of how they might behave if they worked for you.

Questioning techniques

There are a variety of effective styles of questioning, and a good interviewer will use a good mix of them.

Open Questions

Start with who, what, when, why or how:

- * How did you achieve.....?
- * What is the key to...?
- * Why did you...?

Also, 'tell me about...', 'please describe....' etc.

Use them at the start of the interview to establish rapport and explore attitudes and feelings.

Probing Questions

Help you to get much more detailed information after their initial answer:

- * Did you really need to do it that way?
- * Tell me about the main obstacles you encountered.
- * What was the result of you doing that?

Use them to draw out the examples you need to get to the evidence you require.

KEY POINTS

Ask questions based on previous experience:

- Open - to get them to 'open up'
- Probing - to get to the detail
- Hypothetical - to explore creativity (USE WITH CARE, you won't get facts, only opinions)

Hypothetical Questions

Are used to test out theoretical knowledge, but don't reveal much about the candidate's actual experience:

- * What would you do if...?
- * How would you cope with...?
- * What would happen if...?

Use them, if you must, when the limitations of the candidate's experience makes it difficult for them to answer questions with real examples.

Do not use:

Multiple Questions

They have several parts; a string of questions are asked before the candidate is allowed to reply, e.g.:

- * How does your current job compare with your last, which aspects present the greatest challenges, and how have they been overcome?

They can confuse the candidate, or they may choose to answer only one part of the question, and might have missed the crucial part for you.

Leading Questions

Well it might seem like stating the obvious, but interviewers often ask them!

- * We believe in team work here, do you think team work is important?

Leading questions usually give you answers the candidate **thinks** you want.

3. ACTIVE LISTENING

Asking effective, well thought out questions is one thing, but you can ask the best questions in the world and it will all be for nothing if you are not really hearing the answers. It's all about listening. Really listening and observing. All too often interviewers will judge candidates in the light of their own preconceptions, or make their decisions hastily.

Remember your objective is to give the candidate the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability, so LISTEN to their answers.

There are usually two components in a message:

- its content.
- the feeling or attitude underlying the content.

Try to 'get inside' the candidate and understand their answers from their point of view - use probing questions.

Good Interviewers work hard to ensure that they:

- make reflective statements - to encourage the candidate to continue
- summarise regularly - for the benefit of both parties.
- pause where necessary - an interval of silence will encourage the candidate to talk.
- use neutral phrases - for the same reason, e.g. *"I see, do go on, uh huh"* etc.

ALWAYS ASK CANDIDATES FOR EXAMPLES OF WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

Listen to **what** is being said for factual details - hear **how** it is being said to understand their feelings.

Active listening performs three key roles - it ensures information is correctly heard and interpreted, it makes the candidate feel valued and encourages them to talk more, and also it identifies areas for further probing.

"TALK MORE, LEARN LESS!!"

Good and Bad Behaviour

Your behaviour as an interviewer can have a significant effect on the information your questions yield - it can enhance it or may diminish it.

Most of the candidates you see will have come to the interview in good faith. Even if they are obviously not up to the job, remember that it was your choice to invite them for the interview and that the way they are treated will influence not only their future opinions of the College, but those of their colleagues, friends and family.

Listening pitfalls:

Scoring Points - relating everything to your own experience.

Labelling - putting the candidate into a "category".

Mind Reading - predicting what they'll say next.

Duelling - challenging the views of others with your own judgement.

Cherry Picking - choosing to hear some information and not the rest.

Rehearsing - practising your next question before they've answered the one before.

Counselling - being unable to resist interrupting and giving advice.

4. GIVING FEEDBACK

Feedback is very important. Honest feedback on their application and interview performance is important for all candidates, successful or unsuccessful. This applies particularly to internal candidates, whose future progression in the College could be crucially influenced by their experience of your recruitment process.

Unfortunately many recruiters find giving feedback uncomfortable, particularly to unsuccessful candidates who might find the feedback disappointing.

One way to deal with this is to focus on evidence as the basis for your decision. This de-personalises things, and reassures the candidate that your decision was made on the facts available from the information presented to you - rather than any subjective judgements about them personally.

If you do this, you are not saying "you've failed" just that "you did not give us enough of what we were looking for".

Candidates can then be steered in one of two ways, either:

- Try again next time - i.e. you are a suitable candidate, but give some thought to what evidence you can provide next time round.
- You need to develop your skills in the following areas before applying again.

Resist the temptation to soften the blow by concealing problems or making excuses. This does not help the candidate and may lead to them challenging the recruitment decision.

- **Fact** - candidates - particularly internal candidates - benefit from feedback.
- **Problem** - most recruiters find giving feedback uncomfortable.
- **Solution** - use evidence to explain your decision- e.g. "*you did not give us as much evidence of suitability as other candidates.*"

Suggest that they either try again or develop their skills before they do so.

Honest feedback demonstrates respect for the candidates and is safer for you.

13. Appendix 1

HERA

APPENDIX 1

HERA COMPETENCIES

How HERA can help you:

- it can help identify the real requirements of new or changing jobs, or just the current content of a post that has been held by the same person for a very long time.
- it can help you write a Person Specification that clearly defines the skills people must have (Essential) and ideally ought to have (Desirable) to meet these requirements.
- it can help applicants decide whether to apply for a job in the first place and helps you to shortlist them if they do.
- it can help in the framing of questions and the structure to be followed at interviews.
- it can help ensure that recruitment decisions are made fairly, consistently and justifiably.
- it can help identify the training and development needs of the person you appoint, so that these can be met during induction and probation.

COMPETENCIES

Examples of tasks and evidence, from simple to more complex

COMPETENCY	TASK	EVIDENCE
1a Communication (general)	<p>‘Convey basic information factually, clearly and accurately’</p> <p>‘Convey information in the most appropriate format’</p> <p>‘Explain complex information to non-specialists’</p>	<p>Examples of giving directions, handling routine phone enquiries or passing on messages.</p> <p>Examples of having explained course entry requirements, shown colleagues how to operate equipment, or persuaded others to adopt a particular viewpoint.</p> <p>Examples of having conveyed new legal requirements to colleagues or explained a report on budget or cost implications.</p>
1b Communication (written)	<p>‘Convey straightforward information in a clear and accurate manner’</p> <p>‘Convey information which needs careful explanation or interpretation’</p> <p>‘Receive, understand and convey complex conceptual ideas’</p>	<p>Examples of having written standard letters, confirmed attendance dates or completed single forms.</p> <p>Examples of having written a tender report, guides to course modules or advertising material, written minutes or prepared a grant application.</p> <p>Examples of having drafted manuals for equipment or software, prepared technical specifications for new buildings or equipment.</p>
2 Teamwork and Motivation	<p>‘Convey actively to the team’</p> <p>‘Motivate others in a team’</p> <p>‘Provide leadership and direction’</p>	<p>Examples of having participated in and made a contribution to a team – inside or out of work.</p> <p>Examples of having agreed clear objectives and delegated effectively, encouraged others and fostered a common purpose.</p> <p>Examples of appreciating the inter-relationships between teams and their impact on the aims of their organisation. Having broken down barriers between teams and formed and communicated a clear vision of what is to be achieved..</p>
3 Liaison and Networking	<p>‘Pass information promptly’</p> <p>‘Mutual exchange of information’</p> <p>‘Influence developments through contracts’</p> <p>‘Build an external reputation’</p>	<p>Examples of carrying out standard day to day liaison, using existing procedures.</p> <p>Examples of having participated in networks within the institution and externally.</p> <p>Examples of having initiated, built or led internal networks, maintained relationships over time and established new communication channels.</p> <p>Examples of having initiated, developed or led networks which are external to the College.</p>

COMPETENCY	TASK	EVIDENCE
4 Service Delivery	<p>‘React appropriately to requests for advice or information’</p> <p>‘Actively promote the services of the College to others’</p> <p>‘Set overall standards of service offered’</p>	<p>Examples of responding to colleagues, students, members of the public, drawing on prepared materials.</p> <p>Evidence of having discussed customer needs to establish the best solution available, e.g. agreeing of a conference programme, designing a brochure or contacting potential customers to sell them services the College can provide.</p> <p>Evidence of having forecasted the influence of new legislation and developed new procedures in response, or set and maintained standards for the College’s cleaning or security services.</p>
5 Decision Making	<p>‘Autonomy to make decisions regarding own work’</p> <p>‘Autonomy to make decisions regarding immediate team’</p> <p>‘Autonomy to make decisions affecting the organisational unit as a whole’</p> <p>‘Autonomy to make decisions affecting the future development of the College’</p>	<p>Examples of having spent cash within a local budget, decided when to hold a meeting, chosen materials etc.</p> <p>Examples of having bought stock or equipment, authorised expenditure from a divisional budget, purchased software or recruited staff.</p> <p>Examples of allocating responsibilities to groups of staff on an on-going basis, decided on overall allocation of resources, decided on the structure of an organisational unit.</p> <p>Examples of having secured external funding allocations, decided on the types of course to be offered, worked on mergers with other institutions.</p>
6 Planning and Organising Resources	<p>‘Plan and organise own work’</p> <p>‘Organise the work of others’</p> <p>‘Operational planning – including development of human, physical or financial resources’</p>	<p>Examples of having worked to a set pattern each day, preparing food or processing data; or completed tasks where there is a discretion as to what to do when, e.g. produced a departmental prospectus or designed a piece of software.</p> <p>Examples of having managed and been accountable for the resources (people, time, money) of a sub section of an organisational unit or managed a project such as a health and safety audit.</p> <p>Examples of having managed the staff of a department or a unit, including setting objectives and monitoring progress; managed a large research grant or collaborative project with responsibility for setting the budget.</p>

COMPETENCY	TASK	EVIDENCE
7 Initiative and Problem Solving	<p>‘Select a course of action from available options’</p> <p>‘Resolve problems when an immediate solution is not apparent’</p> <p>‘Deal with complex problems that could have significant repercussions’</p>	<p>Examples of having managed equipment or machinery, organised temporary cover for absent staff, contacted relevant people over an emergency or made travel and accommodation arrangements.</p> <p>Examples of having evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of different tenders for business, handled grievance or disciplinary cases, resolved IT system failures.</p> <p>Examples of having had to balance the budgeting and resourcing of a unit, developed new financial procedures, evaluated changes to funding of education or the redeployment of resources across the College.</p>
8 Investigation, Analysis and Research	<p>‘Follow standard procedures to gather and access data’</p> <p>‘Collate and analyse data from a range of sources’</p> <p>‘Design appropriate methods of research’</p> <p>‘Establish models and set the context for research projects’</p>	<p>Examples of having conducted library searches or experiments; or provided accurate data for payroll purposes.</p> <p>Examples of having analysed statistics on student destinations; or decided which experimental technique will provide appropriate evidence for research activities.</p> <p>Examples of having developed theories to explain relationships between data - in a research, financial or administrative context.</p> <p>Examples of having determined the overall direction of a project to be conducted by students or other staff, or liaised with national research bodies.</p>
9 Sensory and Physical Co-ordination	<p>‘Basic level of co-ordination, dexterity and physical effort’</p> <p>‘Apply skilled techniques and co-ordinating sensory information’</p> <p>‘High levels of dexterity, where precision is essential’</p>	<p>Examples of having effectively used simple tools or equipment that are necessary for competent performance of their job, e.g. a spade, drill, telephone or a keyboard, or lifted heavy equipment, is fit enough to stand all day, climb stairs etc.</p> <p>Examples of having used tools or equipment that take longer to learn how to use, e.g. touch-typing or using a desk top publishing package.</p> <p>Examples of where the candidate has performed highly complex practical tasks using specialist technical equipment such as a microscope.</p>
10 Work Environment	<p>‘Deal effectively with temperature, noise or fumes’</p> <p>‘Handle dangerous, or potentially dangerous, equipment or substances’</p> <p>‘Work outdoors or travel between sites’</p>	<p>Examples of having responded to the impact of the weather on outdoor activities or followed correct procedures for the use of machinery.</p> <p>Examples of having responded to situations by taking appropriate precautions, e.g. carrying out a risk assessment, carrying out maintenance where the use of hazardous chemicals is necessary or when asbestos is present.</p> <p>Examples of having done so in the past, and being prepared to do it again.</p>

COMPETENCY	TASK	EVIDENCE
11 Pastoral Care and Welfare	<p>‘Awareness of support services available locally and nationally’</p> <p>‘Give supportive help and guidance’</p> <p>‘Provide formal counselling on specific issues’</p>	<p>Examples of having drawn on staff handbooks, student regulations, counselling services or appropriate external providers to give support to a colleague or student.</p> <p>Examples of having been supportive of colleagues or students in distress and helped resolve their problems, e.g. comforted a student with problems at home; advised staff experiencing accommodation or financial difficulties.</p> <p>Examples of the candidate having been formally trained to help others experiencing academic or work related stress, or a personal crisis.</p>
12 Coaching, Development and Instruction	<p>‘Induction of new colleagues’ (or similar task)</p> <p>‘Give guidance to peers on specific aspects of work’</p> <p>‘Mentor, coach and appraise performance of direct reports’</p>	<p>Examples of having ‘shown new starters the ropes’ or talked colleagues through set procedures.</p> <p>Examples of having shown colleagues how to use equipment or software packages, or guided them through complicated procedures, such as health and safety requirements or timetabling exams.</p> <p>Examples of having used formal or informal means to identify development needs, plan and follow up on objectives to identified and co-ordinated training activities.</p>
13 Teaching and Training	<p>‘Provide instruction to staff or students new to a particular service or area’</p> <p>‘Deliver internal training courses to colleagues’</p> <p>‘Assess and teach students’</p>	<p>Examples of having introduced people to library, computing or laboratory facilities and databases.</p> <p>Examples of having delivered courses (developed by others or themselves) in specific practical areas, e.g. COSSH, IT skills, teambuilding or using a software package.</p> <p>Examples of having developed modules for undergraduate courses, delivered courses and supervised and supported student academic activities.</p>
14 Knowledge and Experience	<p>‘Sufficient experience to carry out basic day to day tasks’</p> <p>‘Breadth of knowledge or experience to act as a point of reference for others’</p> <p>‘Capacity to act as an authority in a given field’</p>	<p>Examples of having experience of using required word processing or spreadsheet packages, or understands established practice in functional areas, e.g. Inland Revenue regulations.</p> <p>Examples of having used specialist knowledge to support or advise others, e.g. knowledge of computer programming, the interpretation of complex regulations, understanding how complicated equipment works.</p> <p>Examples of having developed sufficient specialist knowledge to influence or lead departmental or institutional policy.</p>

14. Appendix 2

Templates and Example Online Forms

APPENDIX 2

TEMPLATE AND EXAMPLE ONLINE FORMS – PRE, DURING AND POST INTERVIEW

All available on the HR section of the intranet

1. HERA Role Outline Form – NEW POST template

(https://intranet.rvc.ac.uk/HR_internal/Docs/HERARoleOutlineFormfornewjobs.doc)

2. HERA Role Outline Form – REGRADING template

(https://intranet.rvc.ac.uk/HR_internal/Docs/HERARegradingapplication.doc)

3. Job Description template (HERA version)

(https://intranet.rvc.ac.uk/hr_internal/docs/JOBDESCRIPTIONFINAL.doc)

4. Person Specification template - (HERA version)

(http://intranet.rvc.ac.uk/HR_internal/Docs/PERSONSPECIFICATIONFINAL.doc)

5. Draft advertisement template

(http://intranet.rvc.ac.uk/HR_internal/Docs/Templateadvert.docx)

6. Example Online Staff Request Form

(<https://jobs.rvc.ac.uk/osrf>)

7. Example Candidate Assessment Sheet

8. Example Chair's Decision Sheet

(documents 7 and 8 can be found on pages 62 and 63)

Please note:

Documents 1 - 5 are Word documents which managers can print off as hard copies, essentially using them as templates.

Documents 6 and 7 are linked to an online recruitment system that all managers must complete online; access depends on the stage reached during the recruitment process.

Document 8 - will only be accessible to the Chair via the online recruitment system. The Chair must complete the online form once they have reached the appointment stage.

EXAMPLE CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT SHEET



CANDIDATE SCORE SHEET INTERVIEW STAGE

Candidate's Name:	Doe, Jane
Job Title:	Assistant Named Veterinary Surgeon
Reference:	BSU-0086-11
Department:	Biological Services Unit
Interview Date:	11/08/2011

Selection Criteria at Interview

Essential Criteria	Score
Training and education. Membership of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.	
Experience. Strong experience as a Veterinary Surgeon.	
Experience. Familiarity with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act.	
Skills and knowledge. Good communication and interpersonal skills; able to deal with clients on behalf of the College.	
Special circumstances. Able to undertake regular out of hours work on a rota basis.	
Total Essential	
Desirable Criteria	
Training and education. Practical NVS experience.	
Training and education. Experience of working with research animals.	
Skills and knowledge. Experience in writing reports.	
Total Desirable	
Overall Score	

Chair of Panel
(Name)

Signature

Date

Possible Scores:

0 = does not meet criteria 2 = fully meets criteria
1 = partially meets criteria 3 = exceeds criteria

EXAMPLE CHAIR'S DECISION SHEET

Offer Details: Name ✕

[Offer Details](#)

Job reference:

Job title:

Department:

Grade: Scale point: Salary:

Please give reasons if scale point is not at first point of the scale:

Remuneration package agreed:

Job type:

Contract type:

