

Selection Criteria

This tool gives general guidelines for writing and using Selection Criteria, as well as a range of examples of the selection criteria for academic positions.

Selection Criteria form the list of skills, knowledge, experience and attributes:

- that a candidate requires to do the job
- that a candidate should use when completing his or her applications
- against which the selection committee will assess the candidate

The Appointment Committee is responsible for drawing up the Selection Criteria, based on the guidelines and taking care to ensure that equity and diversity issues are considered. The Committee is also responsible for making sure that the criteria are available to candidates. The Selection Criteria are recorded on the Selection Criteria proforma (doc 77kB).

Selection Criteria Guidelines

The purpose of Selection Criteria

Selection Criteria provide both candidates and the Appointment Committee with a definitive list of the skills, knowledge, experience and attributes that a candidate needs in order to undertake successfully the responsibilities and duties of a position. In addition, they assist in ensuring that selection is based on merit.

Their main use is to aid in the selection of staff by creating a measure against which all candidates can be fairly judged throughout the appointment process.

The responsibilities of the Appointment Committee

Before advertising any position, the Appointment Committee should agree on and document Selection Criteria for the position. Establishing Selection Criteria before advertising the position or considering applications means that Selection Criteria are available to candidates, enabling them to:

- address the criteria in an application and/or interview
- provide relevant and necessary information to the Appointment Committee

The Appointment Committee must ensure that the Selection Criteria are available on request to any potential candidates, and distributed to those referees who provide comments on candidates to the Appointment Committee.

Considerations when setting Selection Criteria

The following points should be considered when writing the selection criteria:

- provide a logical and consistent link between the selection criteria, the Duty Statement (for general staff positions), the Role Statement (for academic positions) and the advertisement
- ensure equity and diversity principles are observed
- list criteria in priority order
- decide which criteria are essential for the satisfactory performance of the job and which criteria are only desirable, and list them separately
- ensure the number of essential criteria does not exceed 10-12 and the desirable characteristics are kept brief
- avoid setting the criteria either so high that they become unrealistic or so broad that most candidates will satisfy them – requirements should be realistic
- exercise care in the selection of adjectives to describe the extent to which a particular attribute is required (eg. 'some knowledge of ...', 'extensive experience in ...')
- ensure essential specialist knowledge generally relates to the relevant field of practice, with knowledge of the specifics of the university environment included as 'desirable'
- decide whether minimum qualifications identified are essential, as many skills and abilities can be acquired without formal education
- list educational qualifications not considered to be 'essential' as 'desirable' for the specific position
- take care not to overstate the attributes which are essential, as the essential criteria limit the group of people likely to apply
- consider desirable characteristics where it is difficult to differentiate the relative merit of candidates on the basis of the essential criteria
- write criteria in a way that aids the assessment of a candidate's skills by using terms that describe observable specific behaviours rather than personal qualities, as these are less easy to measure. For example, the term 'initiative' describes a personal quality that can be defined in different ways by different people and in different job contexts. It would be better to define it in terms of behaviour in the selection criteria as, for example, 'the ability to identify tasks which need to be done and to complete these tasks with limited supervision'
- ensure that if the degree of achievement on particular criteria is regarded as having greater weight than for other criteria, that this is stated as part of the selection criteria. In some circumstances, for some essential criteria, a level of competence above the minimum required carries greater weight than for other items in distinguishing between suitable candidates
- avoid using terminology which might be unfamiliar to intending candidates from outside the University
- describe the skills and experience required but not the type of person who might have them, for example:
 - Do use: "demonstrated ability to supervise administrative staff"
 - Don't use: "minimum of 5 years supervisory experience", or "mature person with supervisory experience"

Selection Criteria for Academic Staff

The primary duties for academic staff are research, scholarship and teaching. Selection Criteria for academic positions are statements of the attributes necessary to carry out the duties of the position, and relate to the levels of skills and experience needed to perform those duties.

To a degree, academic staff are assumed to possess these attributes by virtue of their professional training. For example, anyone who has completed a PhD could be expected to have written communication skills, the ability to plan and organise work, and the ability to achieve agreed targets under constant work pressure. However since candidates will be measured against these criteria, it is best to list them to avoid confusion.

Selection Criteria should be based on the Classification Standards. Review some Academic Staff Selection Criteria examples.