



## Student Employment Guide – How to get a diverse pool of applicants

The University of Edinburgh is committed to supporting students from a widening participation background enter and successfully transition through University. Undertaking a quality, paid internship contributes to upward mobility after university.

*“Doing an internship was associated with upward mobility for 74% of working-class graduates, compared to 66% of those who did not do an internship.” Pay as you go? The Sutton Trust<sup>1</sup>*

- It engages students with the wider university community, assisting with retention.
- It increases students’ confidence and networks
- It offers good rates of pay and a supportive working environment
- Students are supported to make the most of their experiences through the Careers Service and to balance their academic commitments with work and other responsibilities.

Benefits to university staff in recruiting students from a variety of backgrounds are:

- Introducing a broad student voice to your team’s work and projects
- A diverse team is a more innovative and productive team<sup>2</sup>
- It provides an opportunity for your team to develop their management skills

### What can you do to diversify your pool of applicants?

Taking steps to improve your recruitment practices generally will have the knock-on effect of improving the chances of widening participation students applying for and being successful in securing an internship with your department. *You cannot explicitly state in your job advert that you will only recruit Widening Participation students.* The Careers Service can help with keeping the job advert wording legal.

### Planning for your recruitment

#### Flexibility

Consider how flexible you can be about how and when the student works. Students may have caring responsibilities, time-consuming commutes to University or other part time work. Demonstrating this in the job advert will encourage applications from students that require flexibility or set expectations if this isn’t possible. Encouraging this on the Employ.ed on Campus programme has increased WP participation on the programme from 20.4% in 16/17 to 32.2% in 17/18

#### Job Criteria

Consider what is essential for the role and what is desirable. Many people can be overwhelmed if there are too many essential criteria and decide not to apply. An internship should be designed as a learning experience so think carefully about what really is essential and what can be learned on the job as this will encourage more applications. *Consider having no more than 5 essential criteria.*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/internships-pay-as-you-go/>

<sup>2</sup>McKinsey Report – Delivering through Diversity: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity>





## Experience

For students, work experience is an opportunity to work on their existing skills and develop new ones. When recruiting, **look for potential**. For example, you could think about what a student may have the ability to do rather than experience of. Consider how much a student is likely to gain from the experience, particularly if they have had limited opportunities to build up valuable work experience in professional environments.

## Development

Put the skills that a student could develop on the job in the job advert. This also provides a framework to assist the student's skills development. The [Graduate Attributes framework](#) is a great starting point for ideas.

## Recruitment

Please ensure you are familiar with the [HR Recruiters guide](#).

A welcoming and friendly advert implies a welcoming and friendly work environment. A simple way to do this is use the word 'you' rather than 'the successful candidate'. Give the students an idea of the context e.g. what is the working culture of your team or what training is offered.

Think about using phrases such as:

- Ability to...
- Aptitude for...
- Capacity to....
- Potential to....

Keep it simple

- Avoid superlatives such as expert, superior and world class.
- Use bullet points.
- Do not use jargon, abbreviations and acronyms

Use non-discriminatory language. Avoid any reference to gender, age, religion, disability or race. You can find a list of protected characteristics in the:

Equality Act: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

Total jobs Gender Bias Decoder: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

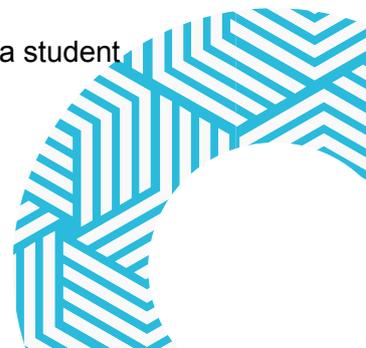
The Careers Service can help by reviewing your job advert before we advertise on MyCareerHub.

You can find more tips in our guide "[How to write a great job advert](#)"

## Application Process

This may be the first time a student has applied for a job. The Careers Service has a wealth of resources to support students and applicants will be encouraged to read these before applying. Consider what you need a student to provide at this stage; asking for a CV is good not just for you, but a good reason for a student to develop CV writing skills.

If you are asking for a covering letter, be explicit about what you are looking for a student to demonstrate e.g. motivation for the role, expand on relevant experience.





Ask students to tell you how they will benefit from the experience, this will help to identify students that are engaged with the process and those who will benefit most. The clearer you are with your requirements, the more tailored they can make their applications.

## Shortlisting

Ensure you have more than one person shortlisting, have a colleague with a different perspective to shortlist with you to avoid unconscious bias. You can learn more on the [Equality and Diversity webpages](#):

If you can, interview all the candidates that meet the essential criteria. To support as many students as we can to gain work experience, depending on the position, also consider who would benefit from the experience. You can identify this from their application:

- Does their CV show that they are in need of professional level experience?
- Does the position allow them to apply their academic experience to a work setting? e.g. technical or research skills
- Does the student demonstrate a real desire to work in your area or a passion for the type of work you are offering?

## Interviews

Students may not have much experience to draw on to answer competency based questions effectively. Strengths based questions give students an opportunity to evidence their potential for the role and express their personality. You may want to consider asking students to complete a task e.g. excel test, role play or in-tray exercise.

[More about strengths based interviews](#):

Consider practicalities for students such as giving them plenty of notice, being specific about the location of the interview and prioritising academic commitments. This could be their first interview, help them to feel comfortable by being friendly and welcoming.

## Feedback

Please provide students with constructive feedback, it is so valuable for students to have something to work on to improve their future applications and interviews. Direct unsuccessful applicants to the Careers Service where we can support them with future applications and interviews.

Advice on giving feedback is on the [University Online Development Toolkit](#).(link)

## Resources.

Skills development support for students: [MyDevelopmentHub](#)

[Advice on combining work and study](#):

