



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 Trust¹

Benefits to students:

- It engages students with the wider University community, assisting with retention
- It increases students' confidence and networks
- It offers good 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 recruiting students from a variety of backgrounds:

- Introducing a broad student voice to your team's work and projects
- A diverse team is a more innovative and productive team²
- 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 description and advert that you will only recruit widening participation (WP) students.* The Careers Service can help advise you on the policy and legalities of writing a job advert.

Planning for your recruitment

Flexibility

Consider how flexible you can be about how and when the student works. Students, of all backgrounds may have caring responsibilities, longer 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. Grade profiles are available at <https://www.ed.ac.uk/human-resources/pay-reward/promotions-grading/documents-guidance> and the Internships Team have example job descriptions they can share with you. Many

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

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



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 five essential criteria.*

Experience

For students, work experience is an opportunity to work on their existing skills and develop new ones. When recruiting, **look for potential and their motivation for the internship.** For example, you could think about what a student may have the ability to do rather than experience of, and ensure this is reflected in the essential criteria in the job description. 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 University's recruitment process - [HR Recruiters guide](#).

When shortlisting roles, to ensure a fair process, we must do so against the essential and desirable criteria stated in the job description. To encourage applications from a diverse pool, clearly differentiate what the 'essential' (minimum) and 'desired' (preferred) skills and qualifications are to encourage students to apply for the opportunity. There is evidence that men apply for jobs when they meet 60% of the criteria, but women apply only if they meet 100%³

We recommend the job advert include three to five things that the student will find exciting about the role (e.g. team, culture, challenges and goals) to interest them and make them want to read the rest of the job description.

Think about using phrases such as:

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

Asking students to demonstrate their desire to work in your area or a passion for the type of work you are offering, gives students with less experience the opportunity to demonstrate their enthusiasm for the position. Putting some thought into how their academic experience could apply to the positions e.g. technical or research skills, and putting this into the job description can encourage applications.

Keep it simple:

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

³ Harvard Business Review, Why Women Don't Apply for Jobs Unless They're 100% Qualified, August 2014



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

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 application.

Shortlisting

One early decision you will need to make is who to include on your selection panel and who will Chair the panel. The panel should be a small but representative group of relevant stakeholders who know the job and its requirements well. The gender balance of the panel should be carefully considered in line with equality principles and the panel should contain both men and women (except in exceptional circumstance only when this can be justified).

Wherever possible panel members should have knowledge of equality legislation and recruitment good practice and it is recommended that panel members have completed the relevant University recruitment and selection training courses and completed eDiversity in the Workplace training on line.

[eDiversity in the Workplace online training](#)

[Overcoming Unconscious Bias training](#)

Shortlisting and interviewing should be completed by the same panel members. Students selected for interview should meet the essential criteria outlined in the job description. It is great experience for students to attend an interview, please interview as many as you are able to provide them with this valuable experience.

Interviews

Students may not have much work 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/data, role-play or in-tray exercises.

[More about strengths based interviews](#)



Other considerations for interview:

- Consider practicalities for students such as giving them plenty of notice
- Be specific about the format
- Provide detail about who will be on the panel and location of the interview
- Check if they require any additional assistance to attend the interview and check if there are any prioritisation issues with their academic commitments
- This could be their first interview, help them 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 available on the [University Online Development Toolkit](#)

Resources

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

[Advice on combining work and study](#)