

Inclusive Recruitment Guide

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COGNITA

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Introduction

In a rapidly evolving world, the future belongs to diverse and inclusive organisations. This is essential to us at Cognita, and as such, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) is an integral part of who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

As part of this commitment, we want to ensure that we attract a diverse range of applicants and that our recruitment processes are as inclusive as possible. This guide demonstrates our commitment to driving diversity and inclusion within our recruitment process and serves as a guide for all those involved in the hiring decisions.

By implementing the ways of working below; we will, together, make a big difference to the diversity in our hiring and the inclusion of prospective employees

1. Role profiles and job adverts

1.1 Review the language you use to describe your needs

- Define the key competencies and behaviours needed to be successful in the role.
- Make the role requirements clear and specific avoiding corporate acronyms and jargon (especially those which are specific to the education sector). Keep it straightforward and easy to understand.
- Focus on the essential skills and qualifications required for the role rather than unnecessary criteria.
- When your written language is English consider using:
 - the [Hemmingway](#) to improve the wording of your role profiles.
 - the [Gender-Decoder](#) to assist you with using gender-neutral language to avoid unintentional bias and steer clear of language or requirements that may perpetuate stereotypes.

1.2 Objectively evaluate the experiences and skills you need

- Consider what qualifications are truly necessary for the role and avoid unnecessary requirements. For example, is having a degree essential for the candidate to be able to do the job? If not, remove it from the role profile and job advert.
- Remove any requirements which are not essential and try not to exceed more than 10 bullet points in this section.
- Consider industries and skills that could be transferable for this role and incorporate them into the job description where possible.
- Think about the demographics and competencies of the existing team and what different backgrounds and skill sets could make the team more successful.
- Consider changing from 'experience of' to 'ability to'.

1.3 Promote our approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion

- Include our DE&I commitment at the bottom of the job description and advert which states:

At Cognita, we value diversity and are committed to creating an inclusive culture where everyone can be themselves, reach their full potential, and thrive in a rapidly evolving world. What we gain from our diverse communities is immeasurable, and we will continue to foster an environment where diverse teams can grow, connect and innovate. We actively encourage applications from people of all backgrounds and cultures and believe that a diverse workforce will help us bring an

inclusive worldview to our decision-making, keep us competitive, and drive impact.

- Where teams would benefit from greater diversity in certain areas (e.g. by way of background, experience, or skill set ect.) consider using a positive attraction statement. One such example is: *"We particularly encourage applications from women with transferrable experience in ** sectors"*. Please speak to your Regional HR lead for further advice on this.
- Where photography/ imagery is being used in the attraction content, consider the visible diversity of the employees and/or students featured.

1.4 Be as transparent as possible with benefits, and flexible working

- Promote the inclusive benefits we offer on job adverts.
- Ask yourself (and be open-minded) whether the role being advertised can be done flexibly and if it can, ensure you include this on the role profile and job advert

2. Application and selection process

2.1 Ensure there is consistency and transparency within the application process

- Job applicants should use the relevant regional/school application form to apply for a vacancy. This helps us to comply with the region's safer recruitment policy, and ensure consistency and objectivity in the process. This applies to both internal and external applicants.
- Where you receive direct applications, please direct those individuals to the application form.
- It is good practice to share the application deadline and when interviews will take place. Try to avoid making decisions until that deadline, and accepting applications past the deadline.

2.2 Create a clear and objective framework for shortlisting candidates

- To help limit bias, we recommend that a minimum of two people should carry out the shortlisting process.
- Where possible, ensure that your shortlist is diverse by way of skill set, experience, and background. If you are working with recruitment agencies to support your selection process, please make it clear to them that you are looking for a diverse shortlist, with specifics of the diversity in the shortlist clearly stated.
- Consider asking core screening questions of candidates at the application stage to aid with your shortlisting.
- The shortlisting criteria should be agreed in advance of the shortlisting process. It is good practice to use the person specification for shortlisting candidates to ensure there is consistency. Please use a matrix to score candidates.
- When inviting candidates to an interview, please ensure that you ask if any reasonable adjustments need to be made.

3. Candidate interviews and assessments

3.1 Assess a diverse range of candidates

- Aim to meet with at least 4 candidates per vacancy to ensure a diverse range of candidates with differing skills and experiences are being considered.
- If the role has been advertised externally, please aim for a range of both internal and external candidates.

- It is good practice to meet different candidates who might bring something that your team is missing by way of experience, skill set, and background.

3.2 Prepare your assessment process in advance

- Ensure that candidates are aware of the full assessment process in advance. This should be communicated to them during the initial screening call.
- Check that if the candidate asked for reasonable adjustments to be made, these have been made.
- If you are using specific assessment tools, tests, case studies, or exercises, please consider whether they accommodate different learning and communication styles, and whether they are culturally unbiased and relevant to the job.
- Ensure that all candidates are asked the same core assessment questions to ensure fairness, consistency, and objectivity in the assessment process.
- Try to avoid questions based on assumptions or personal biases which are unrelated to the candidate's ability to do the job. An example may be *"What are your plans for Christmas, or Easter"*, *"Do you have any children"*, *what does your husband or wife do for work"*? It is better practice to allow candidates to volunteer such information about themselves instead.

3.3 Ensure you have a diverse interview panel

- Ensure that your interview panel is diverse representing people with a range of different skills, experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds.
- It is good practice to ensure the interview panel contains diversity in the length of time served at the business, as well as demographic diversity by way of age, ethnicity, gender and other historically marginalised characteristics.
- The panel should familiarise themselves with our DE&I statement, approach, and key objectives before engaging in the interview process, to enable them to speak authentically and proactively about our inclusive culture, as well as answer any questions candidates may have.

3.4 Give and collect constructive interview feedback

- Interview panel members should provide constructive feedback based on the job criteria rather than subjective impressions.
- Avoid giving and collecting feedback on subjective terms such as "team fit", "culture fit", "executive presence" or "gut feel". However, if you or any member of the interview panel does comment on such concepts, you should start with a clear definition of what you mean by them, assess them against all candidates, and keep track to ensure such concepts are applied consistently, and fairly.

4. Selecting the successful candidate and making an offer

4.1 Consider all the feedback before making a final decision

- Slow down your decision-making and if possible, reflect overnight before making your final decision on the candidate you want to hire. This will help avoid snap judgements and potential biases.
- Written feedback should be collected from the interview panel, along with assessment or test results, and put together in a candidate pack (one for each candidate).
- It is good practice to have a wash-up with the interview panel to go through the final candidates and talk through your final decision.

4.2 Be conscious of pay equity

- Before you start your hiring process, ensure that the salary range has been benchmarked to avoid bias pushing the salary over the appropriate level and banding.
- When making an offer, please consider salaries within the wider team or for similar roles to ensure the salary is appropriate for the level of the candidate, in addition to considering both the gender and ethnicity pay gap.
- Please familiarise yourself with our equal pay guide and speak to your Regional HR lead for more guidance on this.

5. Further actions we are taking to drive diversity and inclusive recruitment practices within the Cognita Group

In addition to supporting inclusive recruitment practices as outlined above, we are taking the following steps to monitor and measure the diversity and inclusiveness of our recruitment processes in line with our diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy. The actions detailed below will be carried out by the human resources function. However, we encourage all staff members to be aware of our commitments and actions.

5.1 Recruitment training

- All hiring managers, interview panel members, and anyone involved in shortlisting candidates will be asked to complete our Safer Recruitment Training before engaging in hiring processes.
- In time, we plan to roll out inclusive hiring training for managers, and a suite of conscious inclusion training programmes for all employees and staff.

5.2 Collating equality information

- Once the recruitment module has been implemented on Cognita People, all applicants will be asked to complete a diversity and equality monitoring form.
- We will collect this data in all countries where it is legal for us to do so.
- This data will be analysed from all steps within the recruitment process (eg applications, shortlisted, interviews, offered etc.) and reviewed on a bi-annual basis.
- This data will be used by HR to measure the effectiveness of our diversity and inclusion efforts within our recruitment processes, as well as help us prioritise our needs and efforts for the future.

5.3 Feedback requests from candidates

- We will collect feedback anonymously from candidates after the recruitment process comes to a close.
- Feedback requests will be automated as soon as a candidate interviews with us, and we will invite them to share their experience of our recruitment process including how included they felt every step of the way.
- This feedback will be analysed by the HR department in line with our diversity and inclusion efforts, and wider talent acquisition approach.

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