**Recruitment and Selection – Operational Guidance Notes**

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**For Recruitment and Selection Policy – See Separate Document**

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**1. Vacancy Review**

1.1 The occurrence of a vacancy whether through resignation from a current postholder or from ministry allocation on a Presbytery Plan should be taken as an opportunity to review the need for the post and its duties, responsibilities and workload. Feedback, if available, from appropriate exit interviews may also help.

1.2 The MDS Staffing Approval Request Form should be completed by the line manager/minister and sent to the Presbytery Clerk for submission to the MDS Staffing Approval Panel. Ministries Council (MC) will advise on the outcome from the meeting and the next steps. All documents relating to the MDS Staffing Approval Panel can be found on ASCEND or by emailing [MDSapproval@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:MDSapproval@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**2. Job Profile**

2.1 The job description is a key document in the recruitment process. It sets out the main duties and responsibilities of the position and so must be readily understandable to potential applicants; be clear on the accountability of the role and avoid jargon and unexplained acronyms and abbreviations.

2.2 The person specification details the essential and desirable skills, abilities and knowledge that are required to do the job. The person specification is of equal importance to the job description and is used both in the shortlisting and interview stages of the recruitment process. The person specification should be related to the job, and not unnecessarily restrictive. The inclusion of criteria that cannot be justified as essential for the performance of the job may be deemed discriminatory if the criteria unjustifiably exclude those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. The person specification enables potential applicants to make an informed decision about whether to apply for the post and gives sufficient relevant detail and evidence of the skills and experience they should include on their application form.

2.3 The terms and conditions of the post including contracted hours, working pattern, travel requirements etc form the final part of the job profile.

2.4 Human Resources (HR)will work with the Recruiting Manager (normally the line manager of the role) to assess whether a post requires PVG Scheme Membership or Disclosure Scotland check where this is considered necessary to the particular position. PVG Scheme membership or a Disclosure Scotland check would only be carried out for the successful candidate and the offer made would be conditional until this check had been completed.

2.5 The requirement for a qualification should be carefully considered and if required, equivalent qualifications e.g. gained out with the UK may also be relevant. Guidance should be sought by HR from relevant awarding bodies e.g. Scottish Qualifications Authority where necessary on qualification equivalency.

2.6Under the Equality Act 2010 there are exceptions to the law regarding discrimination, entitling an employer to impose particular recruitment requirements in relation to protected characteristics if such requirement is, because of the nature or context of the work, an occupational requirement and is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Where the Recruiting Manager proposes that a post should impose a particular requirement in relation to a protected characteristic, prior to recruitment an assessment will be carried out by the HR with guidance if necessary from the Law Department to determine whether this is appropriate. All roles will be considered on an individual basis.

**3. Advertising the Vacancy**

3.1Following MDS Staffing Approval Panel approval the Recruiting Manager should identify the shortlisting and interview panel and their availability, including HR.

3.2The Recruiting Manager and the HR Adviser assigned to the role will agree the job advert and discuss the most appropriate advertising methods which will always include notifying vacancies to all MDS staff and Presbytery Clerks, advertising on the Church of Scotland website, normally web based advertising and only in exceptional circumstances will a press based advert be considered. Recruitment costs are managed within the MC budget.

3.3 On occasions, when an employee already in the MDS group is unable to remain in their current post, they may be offered the opportunity to apply or be placed into an appropriate vacancy. For those offered the opportunity to apply for a post, the application will take the form of an written expression of interest in the appropriate post, demonstrating how their experience fits in with the new job role.

**4. Application Process**

4.1 Applicants are required to complete the MDS application form and CVs will not be accepted. While online applications are encouraged, hard copies are acceptable.

4.2 HR will normally deal with enquiries relating to vacancies however the Recruiting Manager should also put their own, or another appropriate person’s, contact details as part of the recruitment pack for anyone wishing an informal discussion about the role.

4.3 The MC support and encourage internal recruitment to assist in providing development opportunities to current employees. Internal candidates should apply in the same manner as external candidates, however they will not be guaranteed an interview where they fail to meet the essential criteria for the role.

4.4 If there are staff at risk of redundancy, a separate process will be followed and further details are available in the MC Redundancy policy.

**5. Shortlisting and Interview Panels – General Terms**

5.1 Shortlisting and interviews should be conducted by the same panel members, selected prior to advertising by the Recruiting Manager. Confidentially must be ensured at all times (which includes not releasing the names of applicants and details of any informal enquiries which have been made).

5.2 In general, the interview panel should not normally exceed four people and should normally include the immediate line manager and members of the kirk session or other people familiar with the area of work. HR will play an active role interview process and review shortlisting records. Wherever possible the panel should reflect a gender balance.

5.3 Panel members must (other than in the case of internal candidates) declare an interest if they are a personal friend or acquaintance of a candidate. This however does not exclude them from being part of the decision making process.

**6. Shortlisting - Process**

6.1 Shortly after the closing date, HR will collate all completed application forms (removing Section B) and email them to the panel along with a shortlisting record.

6.2 For good use of time and resources shortlisting can be conducted using teleconference facilities as well as the panel meeting face to face.

6.3 A standard shortlisting record will be provided by HR and the panel should identify if the candidate meets the essential criteria outlined in the person specification of the job description. The panel should make comment as to why the candidate does or doesn’t meet the criteria required for the role.

It is the responsibility of the shortlisting panel to ensure candidates are measured against the requirements outlined in the person specification. The decisions should be based on the evidence supplied on the application form and not from drawing on any personal knowledge as this could create an inequality between candidates. Shortlisting panel members should avoid dismissing applicants who appear to be over qualified and assumptions should not be made about any applicant’s reason for applying for the post.

6.4 The signed shortlisting record, completed in ink, must be returned to HR along with the shortlisting summary completed by the Recruiting Manager. These documents will be held for a minimum of 3 months following the appointment of the successful applicant, and potentially longer where there is an obligation to do so.

6.5 The Recruiting Manager should advise HR of the outcome of the shortlisting process and HR will advise candidates invited to interview of the outcome of their application.

6.6 The Recruiting Manager and HR should then work together, where necessary, to timetable the interview day and discuss the content of the interview.

6.7 No travel or other expenses will be paid to candidates.

**7. Presentations & Assessment**

7.1 Consideration should be given to using job-related selection tests or asking candidates to give presentations as part of the selection process if there are some areas of the person specification that are difficult to test at interview. The HR Adviser will discuss with the recruiting manager/panel the appropriateness of selection tests/presentations and will be able to advise on the content and style of these.

7.2 Depending on the nature of the post and the local context, it may be helpful for candidates to be invited for a tour of the parish, or similar informal time together. HR will advise on the appropriateness of this.

**8.**  **Interviewing**

8.1Interview questions must be relevant to the job role and person specification and criteria will be explored through questioning by the panel. The same questions should be asked of all candidates to avoid assumptions regarding their expertise or ability because of their employment history. Supplementary questions should be used to probe for further information or clarification where answers are incomplete or ambiguous.

8.2 The structure of interviews should be decided in advance but the format should include:

A welcome by the Chairperson

An introduction to the panel members

A brief explanation of the interview format

An overview of the role and where it sits in the local context

A questioning session with reference to the person specification for the post

A section where candidates are offered the opportunity to ask any questions

In some circumstances, following first interview, selected candidates may be invited to attend a second interview.

8.3 Interview notes must be taken and answers scored to help the panel to make an informed decision based on the content of the interview. Such notes must relate to how the candidates demonstrate their education, knowledge, skills, ability and experience in relation to the person specification. The Data Protection Act allows applicants to request disclosure of such notes in the event of a complaint and an Employment Tribunal would expect the MC to have notes of every selection decision. Any inappropriate comments contained within the notes could be considered discriminatory and are unacceptable.

8.4 The individual scores from interview assessment (and presentation if appropriate) should be used as a measure for selecting the successful candidate. The scoring system helps to indicate which candidates have performed the best. Whilst scores help to indicate performance other relevant factors such as team fit should also be considered. The chair of the panel is responsible for ensuring a fair discussion of the interviews.

8.5If a candidate being interviewed has a disability for which adjustments may need to be considered, the candidate’s requirements should be discussed after the assessed interview.

8.6 Except in limited circumstances, it is unlawful to ask a candidate about their disability or health until after they have been offered the job (on a conditional or unconditional basis). No such questions should be asked other than after consultation with the HR Department.

8.7 Signed interview score sheets completed in ink and any other relevant paperwork must be returned to HR along with the interview summary completed by the Recruiting Manager.

8.8 Panel members must destroy electronic and hard copies of application forms that they hold.

**9. Appointment**

9.1 HR will verbally offer the successful candidate the position and send out the paperwork for the conditional appointment, subject to satisfactory references being received, proof of eligibility to work in the UK, and if appropriate, proof of relevant qualifications and registered bodies and Disclosure/PVG check. An occupational health clearance will also be requested.

9.2 The salary offered will automatically be on point one of the relevant scale but should the candidate request consideration of a higher placing this will be discussed with HR and the Depute Secretary, Ministries Council. In the case of internal candidates moving to a post of the same grade they will retain their salary point, if moving to a post of higher grade they will be placed on point one and in the case of a lower grade, the point placing will be determined on length of service.

9.3 References (one of which should be the current/most recent employer where applicable) will be taken up by the HR team . If there are any concerns about the references received advice and guidance will be given by HR. References are only taken up for the preferred candidate and due to the varying standard of information given in references, decisions on appointment should be made primarily from the interview process with references, hopefully, confirming the decision made.

9.4 For successful internal candidates, a reference will be requested from their current line manager.

9.5 When all pre-employment checks are satisfactorily completed, HR will confirm appointment after agreeing a mutually convenient start date with the candidate and Recruiting Manager.

9.6 HR will be responsible for advising internal departments within the National Offices of the appointment and will also notify the Presbytery Clerk. Departmental induction is the line manager’s responsibility and should follow the induction guidelines with support available from HR. New employees are also expected to attend a core induction; these are held regularly throughout the year. MC will notify employees and line managers about upcoming inductions.

9.7 Internal unsuccessful candidates will be advised by phone and external candidates by email. Feedback is available to all candidates if requested.

**10. Candidates who were born outside the UK or who have lived outside the UK**

**The process followed reflects the Church of Scotland’s Safeguarding Act.**

10.1 There are two issues to consider when recruiting candidates who were either born outside the UK, or who have lived outside the UK for three months or more. The first is to be able to confirm someone’s identity and the second relates to checking their criminal record. It is the policy of The Church of Scotland to obtain an overseas police check from candidates who:

* Have spent three months or more (in a single period) in a non-UK country in the last ten years
* Were born and have lived overseas until adulthood

10.2 Confirmation of Identity

Particular care should be taken during the recruitment process, ensuring they follow up references and making other relevant checks before making an appointment.

* 1. Criminal Record Check

Each post will be assessed to identify if a PVG check through Disclosure Scotland is required. For candidates applying for roles requiring a criminal record check, who were born outside the UK or who have lived outside the UK (see 10.1) a criminal record check from their home country or countries will be required.

If the above applies to an applicant, they must obtain an official statement confirming that they do not have any criminal record proceedings pending. The police check should cover the entire country and not just one state or province.

* + 1. Statements are only valid for application purposes for a period of 6 months.
    2. Should the situation arise that a candidate is not able to meet the above requirements, further rigorous checking will be required to account for time spent abroad, for example:
* Proof of Itinerary
* Suitable proof of residence of time spent abroad e.g. document from landlord
* Overseas employee or academic references/certificates, including UK departments and agencies based overseas (eg Foreign and Commonwealth Office missions, British Council or Non-Government Organisations.
* Bank/Credit card statements and
* Character references, quoting dates and places of meeting.

Confirmation of dates can be cross-referenced with passport and work permits and by contacting employers/educational establishments.