

Accommodation and Universal Design Suggestions

As an employer, under the University's Employment Accommodation policy, we have a duty to accommodate job candidates at all stages of the application process as well as once they are hired. When a duty to accommodate arises, the request for accommodation must be met unless it would cause undue hardship to the University.

The two main terms used to refer to modifying standard arrangements for candidates are:

- Accommodation
- Universal design

Moving beyond accommodating on a case by case basis, it can be an advantage to take a "universal design" approach to recruitment processes and the workplace. In this approach, we design processes and procedures that are barrier-free from the start, creating a smoother experience for all applicants. If you do integrate accommodations into your process, be sure to share the details with all candidates in advance of their interviews to minimize the need for special accommodation requests.

Accommodation

Accommodations and universal design can relate to all types of disabilities (visible, invisible, physical or mental), family status, religion, or other human rights status elements. One commonly overlooked area is accommodations for chronic conditions where energy management is a challenge. Building in recovery time, breaks, and a schedule that allows candidates to recuperate will allow these candidates to perform at their optimal level.

Examples of accommodations that you may offer during the recruitment process are to:

- schedule events that are accessible (e.g. use of ramps and/or elevators; ensuring that rooms have good acoustics and limited background noise)
- facilitate alternate formats for communication and/or presentation material
- provide support for the use of technical aids and/or assistive devices
- ensure interview schedules take into account religious holidays, nursing of children requirements, need for breaks for medical reasons, and other human rights-related needs
- ensure acoustics are good in all rooms and dining facilities
- book meals in locations where there is a wide range of dietary choices

Universal Design

In addition to these required accommodations, there are many other modifications possible in a recruitment process. These would be categorized as best practices that enhance the openness of the university and its appeal to diverse candidates.

- have someone available for applicants to answer questions about the search process
- offer candidates the opportunity to arrive a day early to rest
- build in breaks during the day so that candidates can attend to personal needs
- provide access to facilities such as washrooms, a refrigerator, stores/cafeterias, a computer, internet access, and private space

- set up the interviews to promote success: challenge candidates but treat them warmly and provide information for them to succeed
- recognize a diversity in personalities (e.g., introverts and extroverts) and design recruitment activities that assess candidates based on job-related criteria rather than judgment about personalities or “fit”

Creating a Welcoming Environment

There are other practices that can create a more welcoming environment for all applicants and showcase UVic as a caring, organized and capable institution:

- provide the candidate with contact information in case of an emergency, a last minute need for clarification, or change in plans.
- assign a host who is responsible for ensuring, in collaboration with unit staff, that all arrangements are made for the visit, including those involving other members of the unit. It is recommended that candidates be accompanied throughout their visits on campus, recognizing that some candidates may desire unaccompanied free time. Where at all possible, candidates should be accompanied into the city if they are travelling by plane or ferry.
- provide an itinerary to each person who will be meeting with the candidate.
- if desired by the candidate, arrange an opportunity for a candidate from a under-represented group in the unit to meet with other members with similar backgrounds.
- address special considerations, such as an overview of local housing or information related to a candidate's partner, spouse or children. This information should be provided to all applicants.