

Barrier-free Hiring

Workshop on fair and equitable selection for search committees

Kamilla Milligan, Manager, Equity and Human Rights (EQHR)

equitymanager@uvic.ca x4121

Agenda

1. Introductory work & group check in
2. Overview of hiring and why equity matters
3. Unconscious bias
4. Scenarios on different stages of the search
5. Reflections

Process

- Sign-in sheet
- Interactive: questions, ideas and concerns
- Please move about, come & go as needed
- Concepts need to be applied and further developed within search committee
- Safety: Exits, muster points, washrooms
- Accommodations

Guidelines for participation

- No judgment
- Confidentiality
- Listen with respect and to learn
- Anything else to add?

Goals for the Workshop

- Explain why UVic supports equity work
- Understand how bias affects decisions
- Commit to minimize bias & use criteria
- Understand importance of good prep

Please write down one or more learning goals or questions.

Check-in

- Name
- Pronouns if you'd like
- One question or idea you hope to learn



Section 2. Overview of equity elements in hiring

- Why does it matter?
- Major components of effective and fair hiring
- Overview of stages of hiring and role of individual, group and institution in promoting fair hiring
- Legal considerations

Consider...

**Why does UVic support
diversity, equity and
inclusion work?**

Attend to four key elements to support effective, fair hiring:

Preparation

Bias

Criteria

Processes

OVERVIEW OF HIRING PROCESS

Within each stage of the hiring process there is important work to do to create barrier-free processes that help find the best candidate.



3 aspects of the work required for hiring processes

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO PAY ATTENTION TO PROCESS & BIAS

GROUP / TEAM COMMITMENT TO EQUITY PROCESS

FOUNDATIONAL AND REQUIRED UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES

Legal Considerations

Privacy &
confidentiality

Conflict of
interest

Apprehension of
bias

Preferential &
limited hiring

Human rights
law

Accommodation

Section 3. Unconscious Bias

- What is unconscious bias?
- How does it affect our evaluations and decisions?
- What are ways to reduce the impact of unconscious bias?

**Unconscious bias is everywhere
and has significant impacts.**

Write down any biases you think the committee should discuss.

Add biases to workbook

Section 4. Scenarios for each stage of a search

For each scenario, we will

- Identify the biases
- Discuss ways to counteract or do things better
- Add bias solutions to the workbook

STAGE 1: PREPARATION

An email has gone out in the department asking for volunteers for an upcoming search committee. The invitation states, “The work should be minimal as this is a core position so the expectations are clear.”

At the first meeting, you notice that the members are all white and all male. When you raise the question of diversity, the chair shrugs and says, “Well, this is who volunteered. What are you going to do?” and continues the meeting. On the agenda: How to appeal to candidates from high quality institutions. Confirming the job ad. Setting a date to review applications.

As the committee discusses the position, a senior academic says, “Since we’re replacing Bill, I hope we can find someone with a similar outlook. Otherwise how are we going to keep standards up?” Another comments, “Since the position is for our core offerings, we don’t need to do our usual diversity search. We’ll save time and money!”

Discussion questions

- What biases are built into this discussion and process?
- How could the committee counteract the biases and get off to a strong start?

Handout: add ways to reduce bias

Follow-up for committee: develop guidelines



Activity: We need to create an inclusive definition of “fit”

“Good fit” means many things:

- Valued abilities like working well with others, engaging in complementary research, collaborating
- Problematic expectations like similarity in culture, personality, gender, etc.

“Bad fit” also means many things:

- Belief that the person won’t fit in with the working culture and values of the unit
- Evidence that the person may engage in bullying or other problematic behaviour
- Some aspects of fit are essential for success, and some are discriminatory.
- “Fit” needs to relate to and be part of the other job criteria.
- Build an inclusive culture to help you recognize "good fit" in a wide diversity of candidates.

Individually: Write an inclusive definition of fit.

Group: Discuss definitions. Explore how broadly you can define "good fit" to include diverse cultures, personalities and communication styles, and skills in working together.

STAGE 2: CRITERIA & JOB ADS

The committee now has diverse membership. The department has gone through a detailed conversation to identify their direction and how diversity intersects with this core position.

They begin developing criteria and the senior academic says, “We know what it means to teach well: speak clearly and know your stuff. And excellent research is easy to spot. I’ve got a good eye for that. I think we’re done here.”

As they write the job ad from the criteria, the chair directs, “We want to keep this short, so we’re going to focus on the academic qualifications. Let’s pump them up so we make sure we get a really qualified person. We can talk about the diversity stuff later.”

Discussion questions

- What biases are built into this discussion and process?
- What are examples of unbiased criteria?
- Where might these biases pop up in your hiring processes?

Handout: add ways to reduce bias

Follow-up for committee: develop criteria

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Developing good criteria leads to a stronger selection processes

What are good criteria?

- Define the best candidate, broadly and deeply
- Reflect core (vs. peripheral) responsibilities of a position
- Identify what skills (vs. qualifications) are needed within evolving work
- Open to a diversity of persons; unbiased
- Fleshed out: description, evidence, weight

Why criteria matter

- Create unity of vision and focus for committee
- Basis for job ad, interview questions, and decisions

STAGE 3: OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT

With a clear set of criteria and a job ad, the committee starts discussing recruitment. Someone pipes up, “We know where we advertise. All the best candidates look in the same location so we’ll just focus our resources there.”

You suggest some alternate venues, but there is a ripple of objections: “That’s probably too expensive ... you don’t really expect to find someone there, do you? ... people on that list are specialists and won’t be interested in our generalist position ... they probably all have special needs and we don’t have the capacity to accommodate right now.”

Discussion questions

- What biases are built into this discussion and process?
- In addition to advertising in diverse locations, what are other ways to reach out for more diversity?

Handout: add ways to reduce bias

Follow-up for committee: develop outreach plan

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STAGE 4: REVIEWING & SHORTLISTING

The committee has gathered to discuss the applications. One member starts the meeting with, “Harris seems like the clear winner to me. He studied right here at this university, so we know we can trust him and he’ll fit right in.”

Another chimes in, “I didn’t have time to review them all, but there’s just something special about the Jones application. I can’t say why, but I really think he’s exceptional.”

Another says, “I’m concerned about this one ... how do you say the name? I don’t know that university, and her publications are in some obscure journals. And she even lists some irrelevant community work.”

You draw attention to the criteria, but another member says, “We don’t want to let those hold us back from really finding the best candidate. Sometimes people stand out, and it would be a shame not to hire an amazing person just because they don’t match the criteria.”

Discussion questions

- What biases are built into this discussion and process?
- How could the criteria be used to guide the discussion and decision-making process?

Handout: add ways to reduce bias
Follow-up for committee: review
materials on bias

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Section 5. Reflections

- What practices can the committee undertake to remove barriers and unconscious bias in the search process?
- What have you learned?
- What is still left to do?
- What actions will you take to create a barrier-free search?

Activity: Identify ways to counteract unconscious bias

Using the diagram of a search process, write down methods that can counteract unconscious bias at each stage of a search.



Follow-up Work for Search Committee

- Review Guide to Faculty & Librarian Recruitment
- Sign confidentiality and other papers
- Decide which guideline(s) you believe are most critical for a fair and successful search. Print a copy for each member.
- Develop criteria as a group, then use to draft job ad and interview questions/process. Include “fit” in the criteria
- Review the job ad to ensure it is unbiased
- Develop strong outreach strategy to build a diverse pool
- Discuss how biases may affect search and decisions
- Review materials on human rights, confidentiality and accommodation

Check-out: Biggest learning

Preparation

Bias

Criteria

Processes



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