Disrupting bias at shortlisting and interview

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Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team

'Implicit or unconscious bias happens by our brains making incredibly quick judgments and assessments of people and situations without us realising. Our biases are influenced by our **background, cultural environment and personal experiences.** *We may not even be aware of these views and opinions, or be aware of their full impact and implications'.*

Advance HE definition

This guidance is focused on how we can disrupt the influence that unconscious bias may have on hiring decisions and move towards a consciously inclusive approach to shortlisting and interviewing.

Conscious Inclusion

Conscious inclusion is about recognising our unconscious biases and purposely changing behaviours to be more inclusive. When scoring candidates at shortlisting or interview stage, you can pause to reflect and consciously question the reasons for your scores to prevent bias from influencing your decision, ensuring that your decision is fair and evidence-based.

Pause to Reflect

Ask yourself, am I awarding this score because:

✗ *They remind me of the previous post-holder*

✗ *They would fit in well with our team*

✗ *We have something in common e.g. same University, previous employment*

✓ **I can point to evidence that supports my decision in terms of how they meet the job criteria** *(this should be your answer)*

Key Principles

- Adopt an approach based on 'culture add' - which means 'people bringing different perspectives' – rather than 'culture fit' – which often means people like 'us'.

- Polite challenge is one of the most powerful forms of mitigating bias: it is easier to recognise bias in others than in ourselves. Respectful intervention can increase accountability and improve decision-making.

- Pause to reflect and consciously question the reasons for the decisions you are making.

- Allow sufficient time to shortlist and interview: bias is more likely to influence decisions when we are tired, stressed or hungry.

Disrupting bias at shortlisting stage

- Each member of the shortlisting panel should produce an initial shortlist independently assessing each candidate against the job's essential criteria. The job's desirable criteria should only be used when necessary as a deciding factor.

- Do not compare one candidate's application against another – you should be comparing each candidate's application against the set criteria.

- Once each panel member has produced an initial shortlist independently, all panel members should then meet to discuss their selection.

Disrupting bias at interview stage

- Develop interview questions and agreed evaluation criteria that are linked to the job description and apply them consistently to each candidate - providing a clear basis for validation against criterion.

- Independently score each candidate against the criteria - a candidate's evaluation should not be contingent on who was interviewed immediately before them.

- Hold a panel discussion at the end of all the interviews – and not after each candidate - where you share your reasoning for how you have ranked them.

The role of the Chair

- Ensure there is diversity of representation and perspective on the shortlisting and interview panel: this will lead to better decisions and better confrontation of bias.

- Ensure the same members who were on the shortlisting panel are on the interview panel.

- Encourage all panel members to respectfully question and challenge each other – including yourself as Chair - on the basis that it is easier to detect bias in others than in ourselves.

- Allow panel members to speak first before providing your own view to avoid people 'following the leader'.

- Actively invite contributions from all panel members so that everybody has a voice.

- Ensure all decisions are grounded in the evidence presented and agree a clear rationale for each decision made, encouraging panel members to pause to reflect on the reasons for their scoring.