



Reasonable Adjustments for Application Forms

What can the application form be used for in the recruitment process?

To gather applicant information which will be used to support the on-boarding of the successful applicant:

- Personal data e.g., name
- References
- Contact details
- Criminal Convictions

To test suitability of the applicant against the criteria set out in the person specification i.e., shortlisting. This could involve:

- Competency based questions
- Qualifications
- Job Experience
- Personal Statement
- Language skills

To gather statistical data to support future recruitment

- Details of where they saw the advert
- Equality data

Where could discrimination arise?

- The format of the application form could prevent applicants from applying as they are unable to use or understand it.
- Unconscious bias from those that handle the form. For example, someone's name could cause the assumption of a person's sex, age, race or belief.
- If using the application form to shortlist there needs to be clear role related criteria which is used consistently. Otherwise, subjectivity could encourage bias in the process.

- The requirement to state sex, although required later for on-boarding, is not essential at application. Applicants who are non-binary could feel excluded from the start of the process.
- Use of gender language on the form e.g. title
- The requirement for a full academic history could indicate the age, belief, or sex of the applicant
- Being too prescriptive or requesting a candidate's full history of skills or experience could make the applicant feel excluded e.g., a large section for past experience could make a younger applicant feel they don't have enough to offer.
- Asking for specific academic levels on the application form may exclude candidates. For example, requesting a GCSE in English could exclude candidates who, due to circumstances, did not attain this level of education, however if tested could work at this literacy level.
- Asking for specific skills or qualifications could exclude certain groups and could be discriminatory if there is not specific role related purpose e.g., driving – this could prevent applications from younger applicants as societally young people are opting not to drive or applicants with a disability where specific medical conditions prevent driving but don't prevent them doing the role e.g., diabetes
- De-selecting an individual who has a criminal conviction. You must carry out a risk assessment of that conviction in relation to the role.
- Asking for a specific language skill or fluency. Any language other than English you will need to prove there is a genuine occupational reason for requesting. Take care in asking for fluency of English. If they are meeting the literacy levels with support English language skills can be improved.

Reasons why you could de-select at application stage?

The following could be reasons why an individual could be lawfully de-selected at the application stage:

- They do not have the right to work in the UK
- They are under the age of 18
- They are a warranted officer for the Police
- They are unable to meet the turnout area for the station. Note: care should be taken as different contract offers may eliminate this requirement.
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How to reduce or eliminate discrimination

Sex:

- Ensure gender neutral language is used on the application form and remove non-essential sex related data e.g., title
- If you need to include title, then have something more inclusive e.g., Mx

- Provide an option on the application form to select an alternative to male or female, avoid using “other”, you could say “sex not listed” Alternatively you could ask for sex when you on-board your successful applicants, recognising this will prevent you from measuring this data.
- Remove access to names of applicants from the selection team or consider substituting the name with a candidate number.

Race

- Remove access to names of applicants from selection team or consider substituting the name with a candidate number.
- If you are asking for vetting on the application form recognise that some cultures may have greater frequency with visiting overseas.
- Some cultures may require family members to undertaken caring responsibilities therefore work histories may have gaps.
- Consider the format of the application for those with English as a second language and explore alternative methods e.g., virtual applications via video or forms in different languages.
- Care needs to be taken in ensuring that the qualifications for the role are relevant. If there is a specific academic level requirement for the role e.g., level 3 literacy, there should be the ability to test this in the process rather than through the application form. Research has shown that Black Caribbean or dual white/Black Caribbean are more commonly entered into lower ability sets and exam tiers.
- When asking for a name be aware that some nationalities use their last name first. Therefore, make it clear on the form what names you are seeking e.g. First name, Surname, and provide the option of what name would you like to be referred to during the recruitment process.

Disability

- Are your application forms accessible to all? Consider the format/fonts/colours, read aloud for applicants
- Consider different ways by which applications can be made e.g., virtually.
- Consider extending the application deadlines – this could link to candidates suffering with psychological issues e.g., due to a period of depression they may need an extension.
- Applicants should be encouraged to declare any disability early in the process and the best place to gather this would be through the application form. However, it is important to ensure that applicants understand why this data is being requested and what support will be open to them.
- If a disability may preclude an application this should be made clear before or on the application stage, with a clear explanation of why.

Religion & Belief

- Remove access to names of applicants from selection team or consider substituting the name with a candidate number.
- Ensure all application information is inclusive by demonstrating flexibility should religious observance or celebrations impact on the process.

Gender Re-assignment (including non-binary)

- Remove non-essential gender related data e.g., title
- Gender can be fluid and individuals may identify across multiple genders. Therefore, provide a checklist by which applicants can self-identify against a number of options.
- Avoid the terms “other”. If your data system only allows three gender options on forms, try woman/man/gender not listed.
- Remove access to names of applicants from the selection team or consider substituting the name with a candidate number.
- Add the option for applicants to state their pro-nouns on the application form e.g. “Please share your pronouns. Pronouns are part of speech used to refer to someone in the third person. We want to know how to reflectively refer to you”.
- Apply an additional level of sensitivity for disclosure of trans identity. It’s a good idea to include an explanation that this information will be kept confidential and is only being used for legal purposes.

Age

- Provide non-digital methods of application e.g. hard copies.
- Remove access to names of applicants from the selection team or consider substituting the name with a candidate number.
- Only request qualifications specific to the Job Description and Person Specification.
- Only request skills and experience related to role, therefore no requirement to provide academic or job history which are irrelevant to the job.
- Be careful in specifying specific times for level of experience as this could disadvantage younger applicants. Think about the quality of that experience, rather than how long they have done the role.
- Qualifications can change over time. Ensure when asking for them that you do not discount applicants because qualifications not exactly match e.g., “O” levels versus GCSEs.
- Be careful not to bring in personal biases when considering qualifications e.g., discounting vocational qualifications if these were not the norm when you were at school.

Others:

- If equality data is gathered as part of the process, then this should never be shared with those involved in the selection process.

- Applicants should be informed why the equality data is being collected.
- Train your recruitment team to understand where discrimination in the recruitment process could happen, their role to reduce this and how they identify their own biases.
- Narrow down the personal information requested on the application form to only that which is essential to progress applicants to the next stage. Then gather any additional data when on-boarding the successful applicant. By limiting the data you collect, this helps to prevent stereotyping and bias.
- Only gather academic attainments and specific experience relevant to the role. The use the process to test skills and potential.
- Remember one size does not fit all and you may lose good candidates because your application form is too complicated, long or promotes a culture of inflexibility.
- If using the application form to de-select applicants be clear on the application form how you will use the information provided e.g., if asking for a personal statement make clear how the statement will be used in the selection process.

Other things that may want to consider encouraging applicants

- Have a transparent policy or statement about your commitment to an inclusive recruitment process, which is published on your website. This will link to your positive action activities.
- When advertising job roles, make sure that you refer or signpost applicants to your policy or statement.
- Show your organisations support to disabled applicants through the governments Disability Confident scheme – by showing affiliation to this scheme could give applicants the confidence to declare a disability early in the process.
- Include statements and examples of your commitment to inclusivity of under-represented groups through affiliation to support groups/charities on your website.
- If you have Employee networks or forums, ensure you promote these in your recruitment literature.
- Provide information on your website to promote inclusivity and direct applicants to your website via your application form