Guidelines for the ICRAR-UWA recruitment process

The aim of these guidelines is to ensure best practice for recruitment within ICRAR-UWA. This ranges from student recruitment, to hiring academic and professional staff. These guidelines include UWA policies as highlighted, but do not replace UWA policies and include other suggestions for a more inclusive hiring process. A transparent and genuinely open competition should be arranged for every position, including implementation of objective selection criteria, avoidance of unconscious bias and encouragement of a diverse applicant pool. The following checklist summarizes the key points, with the details of each stage of the process listed below.

Checklist

- ☐ Assemble a selection committee with no more than 60% of a single gender.
- ☐ The selection panel must be at least three members consisting of:
  - o (Academic position) the head of department or nominee, two other ICRAR members and one member outside ICRAR is needed
  - o (Professional position) one person with detailed knowledge of the position, preferably the supervisor, and one ICRAR member outside the immediate work area. A further member outside of ICRAR is recommended.
- ☐ At a minimum, the chair should have undergone unconscious bias training within the last two years.
- ☐ The committee should agree on clear selection criteria relevant to the position, differentiating those that are required from those that are "recommended but not necessary"
- ☐ Establish a clear timeline for each stage of selection process, including what will occur in the case of an unsuccessful search.
- ☐ Position description must be approved by HR before advertising
- ☐ Advertise broadly, encouraging diverse candidates, with gender-neutral language. Consider targeted recruitment to increase diversity.
- ☐ Applications must be handled through UWA job register
- ☐ References, if required, should be requested towards end of process
- ☐ Review diversity when selecting shortlist: Aim for at least 40% of historically under-represented groups
- ☐ Applicants should only be assessed on their merit and the extent to which they meet or exceed the defined selection criteria
- ☐ Use the same interview format and questions for each candidate
- ☐ Selection Committee must record key elements of interviews and subsequent deliberations
- ☐ Pass on final search metrics and inform all unsuccessful candidates

Before the selection & advertising process

- **Assemble a selection committee as the first step of the process.**
  - o Use a diverse committee including members with different perspectives and expertise and under-represented groups. UWA policy is that no more than 60% of the panel should identify as a single gender in any panel (the accepted best practice is 40-40-20 Male-Female-Open distribution). For example, in a 3 member panel no more than two should identify as male.
  - o Having a member from a different department within UWA can help with increasing the diversity of viewpoints on the selection panel.
  - o The chair of the selection committee should have undergone Unconscious Bias training in the past 2 years, with other members encouraged to have done so as well.
  - o Familiarise the selection panel with university hiring policies and how to access the application material and ensure confidentiality.

- **Selection Committee should compromise of (UWA Policy):**
  - o At least 3 members.
  - o If an academic position, then the Program/Group Lead or nominee, two other ICRAR members and one member outside ICRAR is needed
  - o If a professional, one person with detailed knowledge of the position, preferably the supervisor, one ICRAR member outside the immediate work area. A member outside of ICRAR is also recommended.

- **Agree on clear selection criteria relevant to the position before advertising or assessing applicants.** Sending CVs/applications to the selection committee with no prior discussion of the selection criteria will encourage subjectivity and unconscious bias.
  - o Establishing these criteria is needed for the position description, and the selection committee should be involved in this step.
  - o Ensure that the criteria are broader than a simplistic metric, such as the numerical evaluation of the candidate's research record.
  - o The criteria should be split into those that are required (ie any candidate not meeting these criteria will not be considered) and those that are recommended but not necessary for the position.
  - o Define clearly at this point what will be considered an unsuccessful search
  - o Discuss with the selection committee examples of how such criteria will be evaluated in practice. Wherever possible, minimize the ambiguity in selection criteria and use examples to assist.
  - o It is recommended first to make a longlist based on application material and then request references to avoid unconscious bias.

- **Establish a clear timeline for:**
  - i. Advertising the position
  - ii. Accepting applications
  - iii. Reviewing and selecting a longlist for requesting references
  - iv. Selecting a shortlist for interviews
  - v. The window for holding the interviews
  - vi. Date for making the initial offer
  - vii. Date for notifying unsuccessful applicants
  - viii. Preferred start date of the position

The advertising process

- **Draft a position description and advertisement with broad, not narrow, definitions.** Narrow job descriptions limit the potential pool of applicants. If their "fit" to a position seems poor, candidates from under-represented groups are even less likely to apply. Job ads can include any information we want the candidates to know.

- o Include text in job adverts encouraging applications from diverse groups.
- o All positions should be advertised with UWA supporting policies, such as parental leave, child care options, and include the option of part-time working conditions, if possible. This includes cultural support and visa support when available.
- o Describe the position in a neutral way, noting that the use of certain language can narrow the pool of potential applicants. Check the wording using gender bias software (see below) or seek advice from HR.
- o Invite applicants to address the selection criteria and mention any relevant career breaks in their application materials.
- o State in the job advertisement that the successful candidate should meet most but not necessarily all of the job selection criteria
- o Try to be clear in the advertisement the timeframe over which a decision will be made.
- o Include a preferred start date to make clear position timescale.
- o If uncertain, the position description and advert can be sent to the chair of the ICRAR-UWA DEI committee for approval.
- o Applicants are not required to submit a specific written statement addressing the selection criteria; however, applicants do need to demonstrate they have the required capabilities to meet the selection criteria of the position. Applicants are required to submit their resume and a covering letter to demonstrate they can meet the selection criteria. (UWA Policy).

- **Position description must be in place and be approved by HR before advertising.**
  - o This process can take 2 - 4 weeks depending on HR availability.

- **Advertise the job as broadly as possible**.
  - o Advertising in a single location, like the AAS job register, may not reach all potential candidates. Other options include using the ASA exploder, and asking international colleagues to circulate the advertisement within their networks.
  - o Any networks where the job ad is shared MUST contain the link to the UWA jobs website for candidates to apply. NO applications will be accepted outside the UWA eRecruitment system

- **Pro-actively encourage good applicants, including those from under-represented groups and diverse backgrounds, before the application deadline**. This will produce a higher-quality and more diverse field than just waiting for applications to arrive.
  - o If the pool of applicants is highly biased, it is likely that the pool is not as strong as it could be. Pro-actively encourage good candidates from under-represented groups such as female and minority-genders to apply.

- **UWA's Human Resources system must be used to receive applications**. This enables application diversity statistics to be collected.

- **Consider what to do if applicant pool is not as broad as hoped for**. A general aim is to have at least 35% of applicants from historically under-represented groups. It is acknowledged that this is not always possible.
  - o If possible, re-advertise the position, considering how a broader pool could be achieved using the above points.
  - o If not possible, then correct as much as possible for this bias in the short-list.
  - o If re-advertising is not possible, then determine where this bias arose from and correct for this in the next call for positions.

During the selection process

- **In selection committee deliberations, recognize the reality of unconscious bias in forming assessments.**
  - Give extra weight to opinions formed by objective examination of the application materials with respect to the selection criteria. Use a scale to help with this objectivity.
  - If possible, consider making the longlist assessment anonymous, removing names and obvious gender and cultural identifying information.

- **Make an assessment relative to opportunity, taking into account non-traditional career paths.**
  - Excellent candidates may have taken career breaks or had periods of part-time work. They may be situated in less well-ranked institution.
  - Examples include:
    - Caring responsibilities such as parental leave or elderly parents
    - Ongoing health conditions, including disabilities
  - Flag situations where candidates may have excellent potential but have not yet had the chance to build up a strong resume (e.g. finishing PhD students)

- **Recognize that reference letters may not always be reliable guides.**
  - People write references in different styles. A good strategy can be to proactively ask referees to address specific, objective points in their recommendation.
  - Providing a template reference report can reduce subjectivity.
  - Discount any subjective comments in letters.
  - One option is to only request references for shortlisted candidates, rather than all candidates.
  - Be wary of informal references for candidates such as impromptu, off-the-cuff comments from colleagues, which may be biased by schemas.

- **When selecting shortlist, review diversity**
  - If not diverse, compare to both applicant list and long list. At what level were biases found, and could a different approach ameliorate this.
  - Consider whether an explicit aim of balance (i.e. gender) would better suit or what other changes could be made.
  - A quota of at least 40% in the short-list for historically under-represented groups is considered best practice. If this is not possible, the reason for this should be noted in the final selection report.

- **Short listed applicants should only be assessed on their merit and the extent to which they meet or exceed the defined selection criteria (UWA Policy).**

During the interview process

- **Decide early whether virtual or face-face interviews are required. Use the same format for all interviewees.** Using the same format, minimizes biases due to the format.
  - Give early warning to candidates, and explicitly ask if any assistance is needed for interview process.

- **Ask the same questions for each candidate.**
  - This enables direct comparisons between candidates
  - Make sure each panel member asks a question, as this allows the interviewee a different response for each panel member, and allows each panel member to observe indirectly at least once.

- o   Include an opportunity for the candidate to share anything that was not raised during the interview, e.g. as a final interview question along the lines of "is there anything else that you would like to share with the panel?"
- o   If work tests are applicable, inform candidates beforehand, and make sure tests are sufficiently similar for each candidate.

- **Take care when soliciting panel feedback**
  - o   Apparent interview performance is strongly influenced by candidate personality as well as scientific merit, and can be given undue weight in deliberations. Keep the focus on objective selection criteria as far as possible.
  - o   Assessment should be made on the basis of the written application, responses to the set interview questions, performance in work tests and/or presentations if undertaken and the information gained from referees and/or background checks (UWA Policy).

- **Selection Committee must record key elements of interviews and subsequent deliberations (UWA Policy)**
  - o   Details of the selection process needs to be recorded to ensure transparency and be capable of review.

Special Requirements

- **Working with Children (UWA Policy).**
  - o   When a Working with Children Check or a National Police Clearance Certificate is required, ensure the applicant is advised at the interview that appointment to the position is subject to this requirement. If the applicant does not provide a copy at the time of interview, they are to apply for a Certificate in a timely manner when directed by the University.
  - o   The Selection Panel must include questions to applicants to positions working with children on the understanding of compliance of the requirements to the Child Protection Policy. Successful applicants must be trained in child protection awareness to understand their obligation to protect children when carrying out their work.

Post-search Assessment

- **Make sure to inform unsuccessful candidates that position has been filled.** HR will assist in this process.
  - o   A simple response shows respect to all candidates, and increases probability of another application later

- **Pass on Search Metrics**
  - o   Coordinate with the administration staff the search metrics (Gender, culture etc) of both applicants and panel
  - o   These metrics help DEI in determining whether our current processes are helping in improving diversity in ICRAR

Further material

These guidelines build upon existing material that help us achieve best practice in this area:

https://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/policies/policies/recruitment

https://astro3d.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2021-A3D-Hiring-Guidelines.pdf

https://careers.uw.edu/channels/diversity-inclusion-toolkit/

Gender Bias Checker: https://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/

Some relevant UWA documents and policies

https://uniwa.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet-people/SitePages/Appointing%20and%20renewing%20staff.aspx

https://www.uwa.edu.au/policy/-/media/Project/UWA/UWA/Policy-Library/Policy/Employment/Talent/Selection-for-Appointment/Selection-for-Appointment-Policy.rtf

https://www.uwa.edu.au/policy/-/media/Project/UWA/UWA/Policy-Library/Policy/Employment/Talent/Advertising/Advertising-Policy.rtf

https://www.uwa.edu.au/policy/-/media/Project/UWA/UWA/Policy-Library/Policy/Code-of-Conduct/Inclusion-and-Diversity/Gender-Balance-on-Committees/Gender-Balance-on-Committees-Policy.rtf