Newcastle University policy on the use of search consultants

1. Purpose

The continued success of the University is dependent upon recruiting high quality staff. The vast majority of recruitment is carried out in accordance with the University’s recruitment guidelines and attraction of candidates normally involves open advertising of opportunities. There may be instances when the use of search consultants is necessary to identify a pool of high calibre candidates and this policy sets out a framework for their use.

2. Scope

This policy is applicable to all recruiting managers who are contemplating the use of search consultants. It is important that recruiters are aware of the University’s commitment to recruiting and supporting staff and students from all sectors of society and search consultants will be expected to actively engage with that commitment.

3. Circumstances when use is recommended

There would normally be two types of circumstance when it would be appropriate to use search consultants. The first is when managers are seeking to recruit to high value positions such as Professorial posts or senior management roles. Candidates for these types of role may not respond to advertisements but could be attracted if the opportunity is drawn to their attention. They may not be looking to move positions so it is essential, when preparing the search brief, to consider what would make the role sufficiently attractive to settled candidates.

The second circumstance is when the available post is of a specialist nature and there are likely to be a small number of suitable candidates nationally or internationally.

4. Types of service provided

Search consultants provide a range of services including:

- Analysis of the market and attractiveness of the proposition
- Desktop research on available candidates
- Initial identification and contact with potential candidates
- Interviews and analysis of candidates
- Recommendations for long/short list
- Maintaining candidate engagement throughout the process
- Feedback to candidates at various stages of the process

The University would normally manage the assessment and interview process and negotiation with the successful candidate.

5. Engagement with the process

It is important that recruiting managers actively engage with search consultants. This involves ensuring they are given a comprehensive briefing to ensure the consultant understands the role and its context in the University so that the offer is packaged as attractively as possible. Recruiting managers should identify a single point of contact or
main client in the University who should obtain regular updates from the consultant. It is also important that the recruiting unit or area actively engages with candidates.

6. Selection of consultants and contract terms

The University will maintain a list of consultants appointed through a tender process. In consultation with HR, recruiting managers can select the appropriate consultant from the list taking into account the experience and expertise of the consultants. Approval for use of a consultant outside the list, who must be selected using the University procurement procedures, can be given by the Executive Director of HR.

The University normally works on a fixed fee basis to avoid the risk of salary inflation and fees are usually paid by instalment. It is important to consider the level of service required when determining the fee structure.

7. Monitoring

As part of its public sector equality duty the University is required to monitor and publish information showing compliance with equality of opportunity based on protected characteristics. Search consultants will be required to provide information on candidates to enable monitoring. This information is not made available to those responsible for assessment and interviewing.

Data from recruitment campaigns utilising search consultants will be incorporated into recruitment and selection statistics included in the Equality and Diversity Annual Monitoring Report considered by Diversity Committee, Executive Board, Senate and Council. The report is also published on the HR web site.

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