

Recruitment in the teaching service during COVID-19

Overview

Current circumstances regarding COVID-19 have impacted working environments in schools, which includes processes for recruitment and selection. The [Recruitment in Schools Guide](#) and the [Principal Selection Guidelines](#) continue to be the key references for recruitment policy and procedures, and must still be complied with however the following additional information can assist during these times. The intent of this document is to provide an additional resource to assist with recruitment and selection practices in the teaching service when working remotely.

While procedures may differ, the Secretary to the Department of Education and Training is required under the *Public Administration Act 2004* to establish employment processes that ensure:

- employment decisions are based on merit; and
- public sector employees are treated fairly and reasonably; and
- equal employment opportunity is provided; and
- human rights as set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities are upheld; and
- public sector employees have a reasonable avenue of redress against unfair or unreasonable treatment; and
- in the case of public service bodies, the development of a career public service is fostered.

Public sector employers must also comply with any employment standards issued by the Public Sector Standards Commissioner. One of those standards addresses merit in employment. The merit principle requires that employment decisions are based on a proper assessment of an individual's work-related qualities, abilities and potential as assessed against the selection criteria.

There is a risk that a recruitment process that materially deviates from a department's established recruitment policies and processes, will give rise to a claim that the process failed to enable a 'proper' assessment of an individual's work-related qualities, abilities and potential and may give rise to a selection grievance.

The key message is to conduct your normal recruitment process to the best extent possible while adjusting in a fair and equitable way those processes that may previously have occurred face-to-face. For example, where an in-person panel interview is not appropriate, alternative methods should be explored by the selection panel.

Applicant consideration

Given the current situation regarding COVID-19, it is integral that selection panels demonstrate care of the applicants in the selection process. Consistent with existing recruitment policy the diversity of applicants' backgrounds and capabilities should be viewed as an attribute and should in no way diminish the assessment of the applicant's suitability for the position and the selection process must be undertaken in an inclusive manner. For example, if an applicant prefers a phone interview and other applicants prefer a video interview, this is fine.

Panel members should be aware that the Department has a positive duty under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* to provide reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination and a duty to provide reasonable adjustments for people with a disability. For example, explain each step of the recruitment process and make it clear you'll offer reasonable adjustments if needed. The best way to do this is to ask the applicant what they need to perform at their best throughout the selection process. Understand that an applicant with a disability may find some assessment methods harder than others. Work with applicants to make the process equitable and inclusive.

The selection process

The selection panel will need to consider alternatives to meeting face-to-face to manage the various elements of the selection process (i.e. shortlisting, interview, referee checks, ranking and assessment, completing selection documentation). To allow these processes to be undertaken effectively, the following should be considered:

- Ensure panel members have a shared understanding of how the selection process will be conducted
- Ensure panel members have the necessary technology available to conduct the selection process, and a contingency where tools (i.e. video conference) are not able to be accessed, such as the use of phone calls
- Communicate with panel members using online tools
- Use secure means of communication for sharing notes to maintain confidentiality
- The use of electronic signatures may need to be considered

Tips for interviews

When planning and organising each interview, the following should be considered to improve the experience and functionality of the process:

- Provide each shortlisted applicant with the options they may select for the interview, such as the use of an online tool or a phone interview. The same option does not need to be used for each interview
- Consider preparing a guide or links to assist with how to access, set up, and connect to the online tool
- Be patient with applicants, as everyone has different abilities with their use of technology
- Check what reasonable adjustments may be needed for the applicant for the interview
- Recommend the applicant find a suitable location for the interview that is quiet and isolated
- Suggest the applicant give themselves time prior to the interview to set up their connection if using an online tool
- Advise the applicant that they should prepare and approach the interview as they normally would if it were to be conducted face-to-face
- If the applicant wishes to provide additional documents to support and assist them with their interview responses, they may provide those to the panel prior to the interview

During the interview process, the following may be useful to assist with the effectiveness of the interview:

- Explain how the interview will be conducted, and establish etiquette with asking questions and providing responses
- Have each member of the panel introduce themselves by name each time they speak if the interview is being conducted via phone

Further assistance

Further information, advice or assistance on any matters related to recruitment in schools is available by:

- accessing the A-Z topic list on [HRWeb](#);
- using the [related topics](#) list; or
- contacting the Schools Recruitment Unit on 1800 641 943
- contacting Policy and Employee Relations Branch on 03 7022 0013 or email any query to employee.relations@education.vic.gov.au