

Conducting Shortlisting

The first stage of the selection process following the closing dates for applications will be the shortlisting meeting. Where the Board of Governors has agreed to delegate the process to a Committee to act as selection panel, this may be the first formal meeting of the panel.

There are a number of important decisions that must be taken before panel members are given the application forms to read and consider.

All terminology used in the criteria should have been clearly explained in the advertisement for the benefit of the applicants. The panel must ensure that they are clear about the interpretation of any terminology, and they must ensure that they fully understand the detail of each criterion before any application forms are examined. For example, terms such as 'significant' or 'relevant' are often used in criteria, and it is essential that panel members are absolutely clear exactly what is required to be deemed to have met the criterion.

It is important to remind panel members that only the information provided on the application form can be considered and panel members must set aside any prior knowledge of any applicants.

The selection panel must also agree how the shortlisting will be conducted. If the advertisement has attracted a high number of applicants, the panel will need to consider how many candidates they can reasonably progress through the various stages of assessment. They may wish to determine a manageable number of applicants to progress beyond the shortlisting. This is extremely important to agree before any panel members have sight of the applications, as they cannot fairly make decisions to enhance any criteria if they already know which candidates the enhancement will exclude.

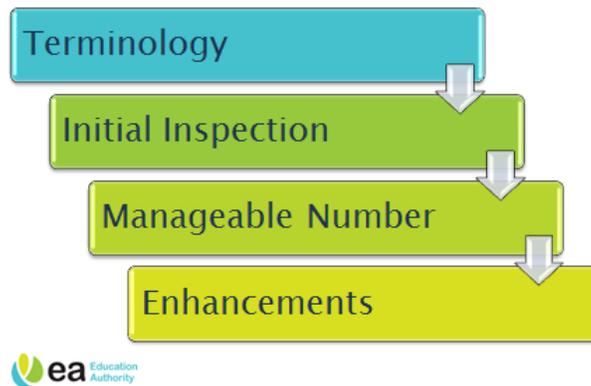
Where the advertisement attracts a very high number of applicants, it may be appropriate for the secretary, as a non-voting member of the panel, to conduct a basic inspection of the application forms, prior to the shortlisting meeting. The purpose is to gather enough information to advise the panel how many applicants are likely to be successful, if enhancements are applied. This approach is only suitable where the criteria, and the agreed enhancements, are easily quantified. No names should be disclosed at this stage.

The panel must decide what enhancements they will apply if too many applicants meet the shortlisting criteria. Any enhancements agreed must be justifiable, and clearly linked to the requirements for the post. The panel must agree the order in which the enhancements should be applied and, if required, they should be applied incrementally.

It is important to assess the equality implications of any proposed enhancements, and to consider if the enhanced requirement might directly or indirectly discriminate against any group of applicants.

Remember, if the panel expects a high level of interest in a post, and believes that it might be necessary to enhance the essential criteria, this must be stated in the advertisement so that applicants are clear about the process by which their application will be considered.

Summary



In summary, the panel will ensure a common understanding of all terms used in the advertisement, and the criteria in particular - The secretary may undertake an initial inspection of the application forms to inform decisions regarding how the process will be conducted. The panel may agree a manageable number where a significant number of applications has been received, and the panel will agree what enhancements may be applied and in what order.

All these steps must be completed before the applications are provided to the panel members for consideration.

The panel will consider each application form in turn against the shortlisting criteria. It may be useful to remind the panel members at this stage that they must consider only the information that has been provided on the form. It is also important to invite any declarations of interest that panel members may only now be aware of, having received the application forms.

For each applicant, panel members must be given enough time to examine the form in detail before the panel members discuss each shortlisting criterion.

The chair of the selection panel will invite each panel member to comment on their individual assessment of each application, and they should only comment on the information provided as it relates to the criteria. If necessary, the selection panel will then apply any enhancements that have been agreed, in the correct order, until the pre-agreed manageable number of candidates has been reached.

Every panel member will complete an individual record of the shortlisting indicating the outcome for each candidate against each criterion, using the templates provided by the Authority.

The secretary will record the outcome of the shortlisting centrally using the template provided by the Authority, and will summarise the position after each step. The secretary will also record any discussion and whether or not any essential criteria have been enhanced or any desirable criteria applied.

There may be occasions when the school receives very few applications for a post, or where a very small number of applicants meet the shortlisting criteria. Where the selection panel can reasonably deem the number of applicants, or the number of shortlisted candidates, to be insufficient, they may agree to re-advertise the position.

Application forms contain sensitive personal data which must be safely stored. Applicants submit their applications in good faith, trusting that their information will be handled sensitively and stored securely. Applicants should be assured that their details will only be used for the intended purpose and will be disposed of at the appropriate time.

The selection panel may agree that members should be allowed to retain the applications to read through, in detail, before the next stage of assessment. If this is agreed, every panel member who chooses to retain the applications must sign a 'Statement of Confidentiality' confirming that they undertake to keep the applications safe and secure. By signing the statement, they also undertake to return them to the relevant officer on time. This is an extremely important step in managing the secure and confidential handling of personal data.