

IUA Guidelines

Regarding Accessibility, Inclusiveness
and Responsiveness of Recruitment
Procedures for Persons with Disability



Purpose

These guidelines have been developed by a working group comprised of recruitment and EDI practitioners at the request of the IUA VPs EDI and HR Directors. The purpose and objective of the guidelines is to enhance the accessibility, inclusiveness, and responsiveness of university staff recruitment procedures, as they are experienced by persons with disability.

Working Group Outputs

These guidelines are intended as a good practice guide to inclusive recruitment procedures. The guidance draws on and supplements resources currently available in relation to employment of persons with disability. (See Appendix 1).

These guidelines are premised on the social model of disability (which is discussed in further detail in the preamble below).

This guidance takes an end-to-end approach to the recruitment cycle from pre selection (job specification and advertising) through selection, and finally, the pre-employment stage.

Universal Design Principles

In order to ensure that recruitment procedures are inclusive and responsive a universal design approach is required in the design of all stages of the recruitment process.

Preamble

Our approach to employment of persons with disability is to be 'person first', not 'identity first'¹. For that reason we generally use the term 'person with disability', rather than 'disabled person', although we recognise that both terms can be used.

Our approach is premised within a social model that looks at how society is structured and how it disables people. A social model of disability "isn't based on a person's impairment. It is about the barriers that exist in terms of attitudes, policy development, access, or lack of supports that prevent people from participating in society as equals, with choice and control over their own lives. In this model it is society that disables people from achieving their hopes and dreams, not a person's impairment"².

Our objective is to ensure that the design of our recruitment systems, processes and structures do not exclude persons with disability from equal access to job and career opportunities within our universities.

¹Our approach is person first, but we recognise that the terms person with disability and disabled person can be used interchangeability. The term "disabled people" is widely recognised reflecting that people with an impairment are disabled by barriers in the environment and society, whereas the term "persons with disabilities" imputes that a person with disability is first and foremost a person, and that their disability is just one component of their whole self.

²Independent Living Movement Ireland (ILMI) - [Disability Equality and Language](#)

Issues to be considered

1 Pre-Selection

1.1 Recruitment Documentation - Job Design and Description

The description of the job, and the language used in the relevant documentation should be appropriate to the needs of the role.

Use a job analysis approach to describe the tasks, and not the individual. Particular requirements should only be included in the essential criteria section of the person specification if they are critical requirements necessary to carry out the role competently. Consider what aspects of the job could be adjusted to facilitate reasonable accommodations and support a person with a disability.

The recruitment documentation, whether in the job description or elsewhere, should include any specific working environment requirements relevant to the role. This may include things like if the role is public facing, office based, has potential for remote working, the physical location or other requirements of the role (e.g. whether there is travel involved in the role, etc.).

It is recommended that recruitment materials should contain a positive statement in the documentation that reasonable accommodations will be provided as may be required by the successful applicant.

The core purpose of the job description and person specification documentation is to provide enough information about the role for prospective applicants, to encourage applications, and to provide a basis for assessment and selection criteria. In this context, recruitment

documentation should be relevant and concise, with broader institutional and sectoral information dealt with via separate documentation or hyperlinks.

In addition, the documentation created as part of the job posting should comply with best practice accessible information requirements (in terms of font size, formatting, text, and background contrasts, etc.). Your university's accessible information policy can be consulted in this regard, while general guidance on creating accessible documents can be found [here](#).

Care should be taken with the precision of language in job specifications. For example, a requirement for 'good communication skills' is very general. Recruiters should consider what is the nature of the communication skills that are important for the role, e.g. presenting, telephone work, report writing, etc.

We all know that language matters and can be very powerful. Accordingly, it is important that we understand the impact of language, and how our biases or blind spots in the use of language in our recruitment process may adversely impact on potential or actual applicants with disabilities.

It is essential that the language used in job advertisements, job descriptions etc. does not cause a prospective applicant with a disability to self-deselect themselves from the recruitment competition on the basis of their impression or assumption that they are not suitable for the position.

Use of Language

✓ Best Practice /Inclusive Language ³	✗ Phrases to avoid
Work to deadlines	Work under pressure
Bring ideas and creativity	Energetic and dynamic

1.2 Advertising and Applications

University job opportunities are now generally advertised digitally rather than via the traditional print media format. Key considerations for website job postings include the following:

- Are the websites that are chosen for the job posting likely to reach persons with a disability?
- Is the advertising website(s) welcoming – in terms of visual look and feel, and accessibility? (Recruitment websites must comply with the relevant Web Accessibility guidelines e.g. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) international standard.
- Does the website comply with the standards required by the European Union (Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies) Regulations 2020, which came into force in Ireland on 23 September 2020. The **Regulations** oblige universities, as public sector bodies, to ensure that their websites and mobile applications are accessible to everybody, including people with disabilities.
- Would a person with disability easily navigate the site or is there a risk that they might self-deselect?

Include a positive statement that applications are welcome from persons with a disability and that reasonable accommodations will be facilitated to ensure equality of opportunity in the selection process. Details of the relevant contact person/point for candidates to request reasonable accommodations during the interview process should be included here also.

³[WAM Advice for Employers Web Version.pdf \(ahead.ie\)](https://www.ahead.ie/pdfs/WAM_Advice_for_Employers_Web_Version.pdf)

1.3 Informal enquiries and Managing reasonable accommodations

Ensure that persons identified to deal with informal enquiries have been briefed and are cognisant of accommodating disability in the recruitment process and in employment.

Consideration of any question concerning the employment of people with disabilities should proceed from a position of presumed ability to do the job. It's important to remember that should an applicant require or request reasonable accommodation for the recruitment process, they may not necessarily require the same, if any, accommodations in the workplace. Equally, applicants who may not disclose or need any reasonable accommodations in the recruitment process, may require reasonable accommodations in the workplace.

In general, informal enquiries will be handled either by the HR recruitment team or may be devolved to the hiring manager. While the recruitment team may have more experience of dealing with potential candidates with disability (whether disclosed or not), it is important that any staff member tasked with dealing with informal enquiries is familiar with the relevant university policies e.g. disability policy, equality of opportunity policy, accessible information policy, code of practice for the employment of persons with disability, or similar policies. These staff also should be briefed to retain an open mind in relation to disability, and of the fact that not all disability is visible and/or disclosed.

In order to ensure that the management of reasonable accommodation is seamless, and person centred, it would be good practice to provide contact details for candidates to request reasonable accommodations during the interview process, and this may be incorporated within the informal enquiries process.

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1.4 CV Assessment

It is critical that all assessors (either at shortlisting, or at interview stage) are aware of potential bias in the consideration and assessment of CVs.

While a well-presented CV, devoid of e.g. syntax or spelling errors may be an indicator of good attention to detail, equally there may also be a valid reason for a less well-presented CV. Accordingly, assessors should not assume that spelling error or poor presentation in a CV are due to lack of attention to detail, or similar negative conclusions. It may be due to the candidate having a particular writing disability, (such as dyslexia or dysgraphia).

Similarly, assessors need to take care not to make negative assumptions in relation to any apparent gaps in an applicant's CV. Applicants with a disability may have taken a non-linear route to their point of application for a particular post, and in that regard could actually be considered to have 'achieved' more than a candidate who has followed a more traditional and linear route to their application for the post (see further comments in section 2.4 in relation to perceptions of disability).



2 Selection Process

The selection process should be informed by universal design principles. At the heart of these principles is an approach to ensure that the standard selection process is as inclusive as possible. While much of the guidance set out in this document sets out how a university might respond to certain disclosed needs or requirements, the benefit of universal design is that the need for individuals to make disclosures is minimised, and that potential candidates who are reticent or uncomfortable in disclosing at recruitment stage are not placed at any disadvantage.

In relation to the selection process and the candidate experience, universal design principles can be applied to both the selection process itself, and to the physical implementation of the process, all of which can help to demystify the selection process experience for candidates.

2.1 Process Design

In terms of process design, issues to be considered as standard practice⁴ may include providing information to all candidates in relation to;

- The assessment methodologies – e.g. interviews, presentations (if appropriate), use of psychometrics, in tray exercises etc.
- It is important that recruitment processes facilitate the demonstration of competence through action, in the form of practice-based tests, rather than over relying on verbal skills at interview. This applies particularly in relation to the use of presentations. Caution is urged that these should only be used where they contribute to assessment of core skills and aptitudes of candidates.

- The format and content of the interview i.e.:
 - the structure of the interview e.g. presentation plus interview;
 - the fact that the interview will be competency based (derived from the job description) or details of the competencies to be assessed;
 - the selection criteria to be used , and potentially, the questions to be asked/ sample questions for standard competencies.
- The use of selection/interview panels, including:
 - Composition of the interview panel (e.g. Hiring lead, subject matter expert, external member etc.);
 - Role of interview panel members, e.g. Chair, members;
 - Questioning/allocation of competencies to members.

Remember that using interviews as a selection method places a premium on interpersonal and verbal communication skills. While these skills will be important for many roles, the level of this skills requirement will vary according to the type of role available, and they shouldn't be attributed undue significance in the choice of selection criteria.

Care should be taken also in the use of automated recruitment tools⁵ and psychometric tests in the recruitment process which may bias the process to the detriment of persons with disability.

Recruiters and interview board members should also be aware of their own potential biases in relation to persons with different interpersonal and communication styles and/or abilities.

⁴Details in this regard which aren't specific to a particular post may be set out in a published recruitment policy and/or candidate pack.

⁵[Recruitment AI has a Disability Problem: anticipating and mitigating unfair automated hiring decisions \(openaire.eu\)](https://openaire.eu)

It is possible also that consideration could be given to establishment of a separate application channel for neurodiverse applicants⁶ or partnering with support organisations specialising in this area, such as Specialisterne⁷ for some of your recruitment needs.

2.2 Physical Facilities

In relation to the actual implementation of the recruitment process, as a general rule the university's physical facilities where interviews are conducted should be accessible.

This will involve ensuring that the interview environment is physically accessible e.g. accessible car-parking, push button to open doors, wheelchair accessible lift installed to allow access between floors, chair with arms to promote independent sit to stand transfers, doesn't depend on audio-only access points for entry to a building, etc.

In addition, the interview environment should minimise sensory stimuli. Issues to be considered in this regard could include, for example, the type of lighting in the room, the room acoustics, and potential echoes, avoiding placement of seating in front of a window which may create shadows on an interviewer's face, etc.

Noting also that interviews are likely to be taking place in an environment that the candidate is unfamiliar with, particularly for external candidates, providing advance information in relation to the physical layout of the interview location is recommended. The invitation to interview should provide as much information as possible, and may include:

- Campus map with location of the building where the interview will take place, and parking/transport options;

- Photo of the university building where the interview will take place;
- Room details e.g. room number and floor, along with instructions to find the room;
- A mobile contact number (allowing for voice/text contact) in case the candidate has difficulty in locating the room on the day.

2.3 Reasonable Accommodations

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 oblige employers to make reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities to ensure that they have equality of opportunity when applying for work.

Reasonable accommodation can include:

- An accessible interview room/building;
- Communication facilitation such as,
 - ISL interpretation ([Guidance](#) on working with sign language interpreters in employment settings is available);
 - Speech to-text STT translation (for individuals with auditory processing issues);
 - Entry points to the interview space/building not depending on audio intercoms;
- Additional time, or facilitation of a preferred interview time;
- Inclusion of job coaches in the interview process;
- Visual e.g. ensure that lighting in the interview space and contiguous spaces is adequate;
- Assistance animals – accommodate the use of registered and trained assistance animals;
- Assistive Technology – for interview presentations.

⁶See [Microsoft example](#) of a good practice diversity hiring programme.

⁷[Specialisterne – Building Inclusive Workplaces](#)

Research which has been published by AHEAD in relation to reasonable accommodations in recruitment within their Willing, Able, Mentoring (WAM) Programme from 2012 to 2022 highlights the types of accommodation sought by 750 job applicants (out of 3,665 job applications of graduates from the WAM programme).

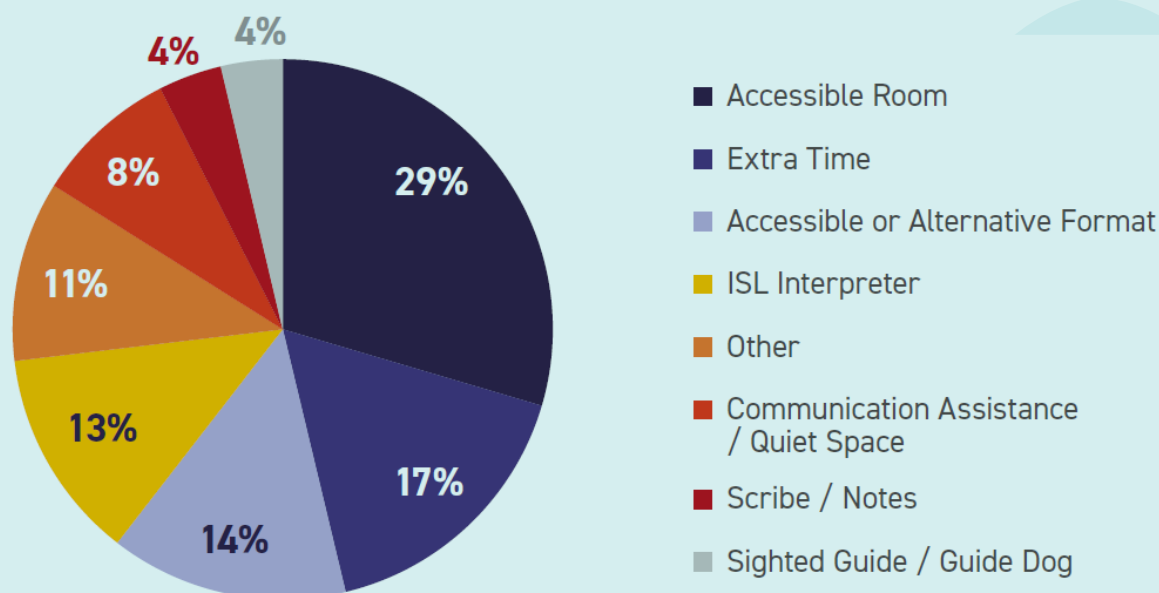


Figure 2 - Traditional Interview Accommodations requested within The WAM Programme (2012-2022)

In addition to the type of accommodation most commonly sought, the above research also shows that 4 out of 5 candidates, who attend a traditional interview did not require any support or accommodations and therefore may have disabilities which are not necessarily visible or observable, e.g. mental health difficulties, dyslexia, or an ongoing or chronic illness.

2.4 Selection Committee Training

Selection Committee training⁸ should aspire to promote a social model mindset in relation to disability.

In this context, perceptions around disability are extremely important. Personnel involved in recruitment should be aware that people with disabilities may present differently at interview and have different experiences and stories. These different experiences and stories may be evident in a candidate having a non-linear path to this point and have developed a range of transferable skills that have enabled them to navigate education

and work (e.g. self-organisation, advocacy, negotiation, resilience etc).

It is important to look at those with disabilities through the lens of ability. Rather than framing our thinking through a medical model of disability which assumes people are disabled due to their differences or impairments, the social model looks at the surrounding environment that creates further barriers to those with disabilities, and questions how those barriers can be removed.

⁸A starting point to gain an understanding into Disability is the free open access AHEAD eLearning Programme - [Disability 101: Awareness, Inclusion, and Equity](#)

2.5 Handling Disclosures

Applicants may disclose their disability either pre-employment or post-appointment, or at any stage of the recruitment and selection process.

In terms of informing a Selection Panel, the panel may know what accommodations are in place, but there is no requirement for the panel to know the reason for same.

accommodation is available from a central university budget. In addition it is also important that line managers have support and guidance from appropriate expertise to help expedite the process, for example from a designated Disability Liaison Officer⁹.

3 Pre-Employment

It should be noted that the majority of reasonable accommodations in employment do not incur a cost and are often very easy to implement.

Research from the WAM Programme states that 66% of accommodations are in relation to work tasks (style of communications, provision of training, templates, extra time etc.), 10% relate to hardware (this could be anything from a chair, a monitor etc.), 8% relate to Assistive Technology/ software, 8% regarding time off for medical appointments, 7% for work environment (i.e. remote working opportunities, positioning of desk etc.) and only 1% related to other accommodations such as ISL interpretation, car parking space, etc.

The need for a reasonable accommodation in employment should be addressed as part of the pre-employment and contracting stage with the employee. It is important to ensure that there is a discussion with the employee about what reasonable accommodation they require for aspects of the role before any determination is made regarding the implementation of it.

Where the reasonable accommodation that is identified requires funding, this process can be facilitated by ensuring that the requisite funding for a reasonable



⁹[Disability in the Workplace Guidelines](#), Maynooth University

Appendix 1

AHEAD

2023 - [Tips for Employers on being Disability Inclusive in Apprenticeships \(2023\)](#)

2023 - [Reasonable Accommodation on Professional Placements](#)

2019 - [You're Hired! Guide for Employers when working with deaf sign language users](#)

2016 - [Including Graduates with a Disability in your Workplace – Where to Start](#)

2013 - [Advice for Employers on Recruitment and Selection](#)

IHREC

https://www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/disability_resource_pack.pdf

Public Appoints Service

<https://www.publicjobs.ie/documents/2017-Code-of-Practice-for-Appointment-of-Persons-with-Disabilities-to-Positions-in-the-Civil-Service-and-Certain-Public-Bodies-.pdf> ;

National Disability Authority

[Research on good practice in the employment of people with disabilities in the public sector - National Disability Authority \(NDA\) June 2018](#)

Irish Jobs

<https://www.irishjobs.ie/recruiters/the-same-chance-toolkit-guide-to-becoming-an-autism-friendly-employer/>;



