United Learning Recruitment & Selection Guidance

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1. Scope

The policy and procedure set out in this document applies to all United Church Schools Trust (UCST) and United Learning Trust (ULT) employees; including teaching, support, fixed-term, part-time, full-time, permanent and temporary staff. The two companies (UCST and ULT) are referred to in this policy by their trading name, 'United Learning'.

Where this policy refers to 'School' or 'Headteacher' within Central Office this should be interpreted to refer to the department where a member of staff works and their Head of Department.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the 'United Learning Safeguarding Children – HR Procedural Guidance' and the Immigration information on the HRA section of the United Hub.

As a values-led organisation our values of ambition, confidence, creativity, respect, enthusiasm and determination are key to our purpose and underpin all that we do.

2. Objectives

2.1 To ensure that United Learning's Recruitment and Selection Procedures are non-discriminatory and that United Learning recruits the best candidate for a particular position.

2.2 To encourage applicants to apply for positions within United Learning, knowing that they will be selected solely on the basis of their suitability for the position.

3. General Policy

3.1 United Learning is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

3.2 To achieve this objective, it is essential that all those concerned with the recruitment and selection procedures have a clear understanding of the position to be filled, its requirements and the characteristics of the likely position-holder in terms of skills, qualifications, previous experience etc. It is equally essential that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is incorporated into every stage of the recruitment process.

3.3 Recruitment and selection within United Learning must be:

a) Effective – Producing quality candidates and the ability to distinguish between the suitable and the unsuitable by using sound criteria for each role;

b) Efficient – Using the most cost-effective advertising and recruitment sources and methods;

c) Fair – Maintaining United Learning's good name with existing employees and potential recruits alike by dealing fairly, honestly, professionally and courteously with all applicants;

d) Safe – Recruiting staff and volunteers who are trusted and trustworthy in the company of children and young adults, who have their safety, education and welfare at heart.

3.4 All recruitment and selection will be carried out in accordance with United Learning's Equality Guidelines, Safeguarding Children – HR Procedural Guidance, and all other associated procedures.

3.5 The Headteacher, Designated Senior Manager or Central Office Director responsible for recruitment will be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the recruitment and selection procedures, which will support the organisation and will ensure that all relevant legislation is adhered to. They will be supported by their local HR colleague.

3.6 The recruitment and selection of staff within this policy is carried out at a local school level, although assistance and monitoring will be available from the relevant HR Business Partner and United Learning HR Department.

3.7 The recruitment of Headteachers/Principals, Head of Schools, Executive Principals, Regional Directors, Executive Business Managers and Central Office Executive Directors is managed by the Central Office HR team.

4. Procedure

4.1 This procedure must be used for filling all vacancies, whether from internal or external advertisements.

4.2 No vacancy should be advertised until all the relevant documentation has been completed i.e. job description, person specification and approvals process.

4.3 When a vacancy arises for an existing post, the requirements of the job and department should be reviewed to ensure that a replacement is required and that the job description adequately reflects the duties to be undertaken.

5. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications

5.1 The Headteacher, Designated Senior Manager or Central Office Director authorised to recruit staff must ensure that the job description is up to date.

5.2 For all appointments within Schools and for any other position where the post-holder could visit United Learning's Schools (and thus be seen as a safe and trustworthy individual by children), the job description and person specification must make explicit reference to the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. In addition, the person specification must clearly set out the extent of the relationships/contact with children and the degree of responsibility for children that the person will have in the position to be filled. (N.B. all work in a school or similar setting involves some degree of responsibility for safeguarding children, although the extent of that responsibility will vary according to the nature of the post).

5.3 Person specifications must be attached to all job descriptions outlining the essential and desirable knowledge, skills and experience required by the successful candidate. The criteria identified must be objective, non-discriminatory and relevant to the requirements of the post.

5.4 At this stage, the Headteacher, Designated Senior Manager or Central Office Director will decide, in consultation with HR colleagues where appropriate, the appropriate pay range or spot salary for the post, using the relevant agreed pay policies.

6. Advertising the Vacancy

6.1 When a vacancy occurs, the job should be created on iTrent. Please see the iTrent User Guides on how to post a vacancy. iTrent enables the main aspects of the job to be recorded and then advertised through various sources as required, e.g. externally on the United Learning Careers website, school website, job boards, the Job Centre Plus and with support from United Learning's recruitment advertising agency.

6.2 All adverts must include at least:

a) Job title;
b) Main duties and responsibilities;
c) Location;
d) Salary package or range;
e) Skills, qualifications and experience required;
f) Closing date for application;
g) Who to contact for queries;
h) If known, possible interview dates;
i) Safeguarding statement;

6.3 HR Business Partners can provide advice and assistance on the appropriate method of recruitment, writing advertisements and drafting suitable interview questions and selection exercises/tests.

6.4 The decision to place recruitment with an external provider rests with the Headteacher or Central Office Director, in consultation with HR colleagues. Normal budgetary constraints will apply.

6.5 All posts will be advertised on United Learning's Careers website via iTrent.

6.6 All advertisements will clearly state the closing date for applications. This should generally be a minimum of 2 weeks from the date of the advert.

6.7 All advertisements must be non-discriminatory. They must make no direct or indirect preference to any of the protected characteristics.

7. Applications

7.1 All applicants should register on iTrent and complete the relevant documents online to apply for the post.

7.2 Incomplete applications or applications by CV and covering letter should not be accepted.

7.3 The Privacy Statement regarding how applicants' information is gathered and protected can be found at the back of the application form on iTrent and candidates will see this before they submit their application.

8. Shortlisting

8.1 After the closing date, the application forms can be sent to a short-listing panel, consisting of at least two people at a local level, who will sift the applications and compile a shortlist. At least one member of the shortlisting panel must be Safer Recruitment trained and you should have as diverse a panel as possible.

8.2 The short-listing pack, prepared by the local HR Administrator, should include the job description, person specification, application forms and any other information sent by the applicant, with the exception of the Applicant Monitoring Form and Confidential Disclosure which should be kept separately to remove any unconscious bias. When sending the applications electronically to the shortlisting panel, the Monitoring Form and Confidential Disclosure will automatically be excluded. For instructions on how to provide an anonymised shortlisting pack, see the iTrent guidance.

8.3 Criteria from the person specification and job description will be used to shortlist applicants for interview, based on the ability to demonstrate fulfilment of each of the objective, non-discriminatory criteria.

8.4 The short-listing panel must complete the short-listing form/matrix.

8.5 All applications should be carefully read to ensure:

a) That they are fully and properly completed;

b) That the information provided is consistent and does not contain any discrepancies;

c) To identify any gaps in employment;

d) The application form is duly signed and dated.

Any anomalies, discrepancies or gaps in employment identified should be noted so that they can be taken up as part of the selection process.

8.7 Online searches must be completed as part of the recruitment process. Please see the HR Procedural Guidance (section 21) for details on how to complete the checks

9. Interviewing and Testing

9.1 Interview Panels:

a) A minimum of two members of staff will form the interviewing panel. Interviews must never be undertaken by any staff member acting alone.

b) The interview panel should include the direct supervisor/manager of the position for which recruitment is taking place.

c) The panel should nominate a chair, normally the most senior person on the panel.

d) It is United Learning policy that at least one member of any interview panel will have completed appropriate safer recruitment training. Please see section 28 of the United Learning Safeguarding Children – HR Procedural Guidance for further details (available on the United Hub).

9.2 Selection Methods:

In addition to panel interviews, a number of selection methods may be used to assess a candidate's suitability for the post. Selection methods to consider include:

a) Presentations;

b) Panel discussions with staff or pupils;

c) In-tray exercises;

d) Aptitude tests (verbal and numerical);

e) Technology based tests;

f) Written exercises;

g) Psychometric personality questionnaires, with the express agreement of the HR Business Partner and only with appropriately qualified HR staff.

When considering selection methods, other than interview panels, guidance should be sought from the HR Business Partner.

9.3 Interview Packs:

Panel members will be issued with interview packs prior to the day of interviewing. These will be prepared by the HR Administrator at the School. The pack will contain:

a) Copies of all application documents, excluding Confidential Disclosure and applicant monitoring forms;

b) Job description and person specification;

c) Interview summary forms, including questions;

d) Shortlisting matrix.

9.4 Interview Questions:

a) All questions must be objective, non-discriminatory and will relate directly to the skills, knowledge and experience required by the post holder, as detailed in the person specification.

b) The questions must explore the candidate's suitability to work with children as well as their suitability for the post.

c) The panel should agree the core questions in advance. A candidate's response to a question will determine whether and how a question is followed up. Where possible it is best to avoid hypothetical questions because they allow theoretical answers. It is better to ask competence-based questions that ask a candidate to relate how they have responded to, or dealt with, an actual situation, or questions that test a candidate's attitudes and understanding of issues.

d) See the Interview Guidance for example safeguarding questions for interviews.

e) In addition to assessing and evaluating the applicant's suitability for the particular post, the interview panel should also explore:

   i. The candidate's attitude toward children and young people;

   ii. Their ability to support United Learning's policy for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children;

   iii. Gaps in the candidate's employment history;

   iv. Concerns or discrepancies arising from the information provided;

   v. Whether the candidate wishes to declare anything in light of the requirement for an enhanced check for regulated activity (DBS).

f) The interview panel should explore any issues that have been identified as part of the online search.

g) Once each candidate has been interviewed, an interview summary must be completed. At the end of the full interview process, these sheets must incorporate the results of any additional selection tests/exercises undertaken.

h) The sheets must clearly state the outcome and provide objective, clear reasons as to whether a candidate is suitable for appointment or not, directly relating to the job description and person specification.

i) All papers, including notes taken during interview, and test results if undertaken, should be retained by the Chair of the panel, and a nominated representative of the school will contact the successful candidate and inform unsuccessful candidates of the outcome. Feedback should always be offered as good practice.

j) Following the completion of the recruitment process, all papers should be retained for a minimum of 6 months at the School/Central Office.

10. Use of References

10.1 Written information about previous employment history should always be sought and checked to ensure it is not contradictory or incomplete. Applicants are required to provide their referee contact details during the online application process .

10.2 Two satisfactory references are required from all successful applicants, one of which must be the current or most recent employer. Open references usually entitled "to whom it may concern", are not acceptable.

10.3 A reference must always be obtained from the Headteacher of the last school that an applicant worked in.

10.4 The reference request letter and reference request form (Teacher, Support Staff) (available on the United Hub) must be used to obtain references. A copy of the job description and person specification should be attached to this letter.

10.5 References will be held by the Chair of the panel and the interviewing panel will only have access once a decision has been made in principle.

10.6 References will not be used to aid the decision-making process but solely to confirm the decision.

10.7 Any unsatisfactory references will be investigated further by the Headteacher or Designated Senior Manager, usually in consultation with the HR Business Partner.

10.8 If all questions have not been answered or the reference is vague or unspecific, the referee should be telephoned and asked to provide written answers or amplification as appropriate. Some organisations have a reference policy to only supply factual information.

10.9 The information given should also be compared with the application form to ensure that the information provided about the candidate and their previous employment by the referee is consistent with the information provided by the applicant on the form.

10.10 Any discrepancy in the information should be taken up with the applicant and must be satisfactorily explained by them before proceeding further with any offer of employment.

10.11 In the event that references were not obtained prior to interview, they must be obtained prior to making any offer of employment.

11. Making Offers of Employment

11.1 Decision to Recruit:

a) The final decision to offer a position within United Learning is taken by the Headteacher or the Designated Senior Manager (usually the Chair of the panel).

11.2 Remuneration and Benefits:

a) The authorised recruiting manager must determine the appropriate remuneration package in line with United Learning's pay policies. It must comply with equal pay legislation providing the same salary level for staff performing broadly similar duties (like work), and where they are of corresponding responsibility (work of equal value).

b) Reference should be made to United Learning's flexible benefits scheme and other relevant benefits such as contractual holiday entitlement, pension etc.

11.3 Writing to the Successful Candidate:

a) The Headteacher or Designated Senior Manager is responsible for making offers of employment and will write to successful candidates with the following details:

i. Main terms and conditions of employment (offer letter (Academies, Independent Schools) and contract templates are available on the United Hub);

ii. Online pre-employment medical check;

iii. Enhanced DBS check;

iv. Induction information, including start date, any forms and information that will need to be completed on the first day (emergency contact, bank details, P45/P46).

12. Pre-Employment Checks

12.1 United Learning Safeguarding Children – HR Procedural Guidance (sections 1 to 23) should be strictly adhered to at this stage.

12.2 An offer of appointment to a successful candidate, including one who has lived or worked abroad, must be conditional upon satisfactory completion of pre-employment checks.

12.3 When appointing new staff, schools must:

a) Verify candidates' identity using photographic ID and supporting documents such as a birth certificate, passport, photo driving licence, and recent proof of address like a utility bill or P45/60, while being mindful of name changes.

b) Obtain a certificate for an enhanced DBS check with barred list information for all staff;

c) If an individual will start work before the DBS certificate is available you must undertake a written risk assessment and obtain a barred list check separately;

d) Check that a candidate to be employed as a teacher is not subject to a prohibition order (as part of the barred list check) issued by the Secretary of State, using the Employer Access Online service;

e) Check that a candidate who is a former teacher and is to be employed as a teaching assistant is not subject to a prohibition order issued by the Secretary of State, using the Employer Access Online service;

f) Verify the candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities;

g) Verify a person's right to work in the UK. Guidance can be found here: Checking a job applicant's right to work - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk);

h) Verify any mandatory professional qualifications and professional status, e.g. QTS status (unless properly exempted), NPQH; (for teaching posts) verification of successful completion of statutory induction period (applies to those who obtained QTS after 7 May 1999) the TRA Employer Access Service should be used to verify any award of QTS;

i) Carry out additional checks for individuals who have lived or worked abroad for 6 months or more in the last 10 years from age 18, including overseas criminal record checks, a Certificate of Good Conduct, and a letter of professional standing from the relevant teaching authority, which should be obtained before employment unless there is a valid reason not to. Guidance can be found here: Criminal records checks for overseas applicants - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

j) Check that a candidate to be employed is not disqualified from working in a relevant setting, as set out in the Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2018.

k) Check for disqualification from management (Independent Schools and certain management roles only. See United Learning Safeguarding Children – Procedural Guidance, section A).

l) We require at least two satisfactory written references to be obtained prior to employment commencing. Ideally they should be obtained prior to interview or as soon as practical. One of the references must be the current or most recent employer. Where the applicant has worked in a school, a reference must be obtained from the Headteacher of the school they have most recently worked in.

13. Commencing Employment

13.1 All relevant documentation will be completed by the Headteacher, Designated Senior Manager or Central Office Director (or an HR Administrator acting upon their authority) on the new post holder's first day, or as soon as possible thereafter. New employees will also be directed to the relevant staff terms and conditions.

13.2 The post holder will be issued with a Contract of Employment by the Headteacher, Designated Senior Manager or Central Office Director (or an HR Administrator acting upon their authority) within eight weeks of commencing employment with United Learning.

13.3 An induction programme should be arranged and where possible sent to the individual in advance of their start date.

13.4 The HR Administrator will complete the new starter check list on iTrent, enter the new employee on the HR System and SCR and ensure all relevant paper work has been forwarded to the payroll administrator at Central Office.

14. Timescales and Record Keeping

14.1 It is envisaged that the following timescales will apply:

a) Applicants should normally be given at least two weeks from the date of a post being advertised to complete their application.

b) Applicants not shortlisted for interview should normally be notified of this decision within one week of the closing date for applicants. Applicants who are not successful following

interview should normally be notified of this decision within one week of the interview and offered feedback.

c) Candidates for interview should normally be given at least one week's notice of the date of interview.

d) iTrent enables those managing recruitment and selection to track candidates' progress from application to appointment by moving individuals along at each stage of the process.

e) All recruitment documentation (including short-listing) must be retained for a minimum of 6 months for unsuccessful candidates and as part of the personnel file for successful candidates. Where the decision is in dispute (including any formal employment tribunal case) no records should be destroyed until the case is resolved.