	Staff Recruitment Policy

1. Context

1.1 The continued success of the Royal Irish Academy of Music, hereinafter referred to as RIAM or the Academy, depends on its ability to recruit and select high quality staff at all levels. It is, therefore, essential that the recruitment and selection process is properly planned, organised and conducted in a way that is most likely to achieve this. In any process of employee selection, a high level of subjective judgment is inevitable, but these judgments must sit within a framework of policy and procedural guidance which ensures that the staff involved in the process make their decisions in a systematic manner and with a high degree of objectivity.

2. Purpose

2.1 This policy provides such a framework, where the emphasis is on implementing best personnel practice which aims to ensure that staff are recruited and selected on the basis of their relative merits and that decisions are made following a fair, consistent and justifiable process as befits RIAM's commitment to equality of opportunity in employment.

2.2 The policy also ensures that RIAM's procedures are consistent with all relevant employment equality legislation.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to the recruitment of RIAM employees in all departments.

4. Benefits

4.1 This policy ensures that staff are recruited and selected on the basis of their relative merits.

4.2 Applicants may be assured that recruitment decisions are made following a fair, consistent and justifiable process

5. Principles

5.1 The policy identifies the following as the key elements of the recruitment and selection process:

  (i)   clear identification of the nature of the vacancy to be filled;

  (ii)   production a job description;

  (iii) production of a person specification identifying selection criteria for the post;

  (iv)   drawing up of an advertisement for the post;

  (v)   shortlisting applicants against the agreed selection criteria;

(vi)   ensuring appropriate preparation for the interview;

(vii)   agreeing core areas for questioning by interview board members, based on the selection criteria;

(viii)   evaluating applicants against the agreed selection criteria;

(ix)   making and communicating the final selection decisions.

6. Policy

6.1   *Overview of the Recruitment and Selection procedures*

Planning and preparation are the keys to a successful recruitment and selection process, with the first task being to identify clearly the job that needs to be done.

6.2   *Job Description*

6.2.1   The job description sets out the overall context and purpose of the job, the key duties and responsibilities, the reporting structure and the operating environment within which the job is to be done.

6.2.2   The benefit of a job description is that it provides those involved in the recruitment and selection process with clarity and agreement on the purpose, content, duties and responsibilities of the job.

6.2.3   It is also of benefit to job applicants as it provides them with a clear insight into what exactly the job involves.

6.2.4   The extent to which it is necessary to describe the different duties associated with the job will vary depending on the nature and the responsibilities of the post. However, clarifying these at the outset will demonstrate transparency and ensure objectivity.

6.3   *Person Specification*

See Section 7.1.

6.4   *Advertising the Post*

See Section 7.2.

6.5   *Further Particulars*

6.5.1   The provision of further particulars in relation to the post being advertised should enhance the quality of the applications received.

6.5.2   Details may include *inter alia* information on the Academy, its location, faculties, facilities, information on the selection criteria for the post, the terms and conditions of the post etc.

6.5.3   This information will assist potential applicants to decide whether or not to proceed with their application.

6.6   *Confidentiality*

6.6.1   All those involved in the selection process are required to treat applications in strict confidence.

6.7   *The Role and Responsibility of the Chair of the Interview Panel*

6.7.1   The Chair has overall responsibility for ensuring the integrity of the selection process.

6.7.2   The duties of the Chair begin in advance of the interview itself and therefore, in general terms, the person taking on the role needs to be available to take part in all stages of the process. If this is not possible for the shortlisting stage, it is the duty of the Chair to make sure that the process is carried out in accordance with the appropriate guidelines.

6.7.3   The responsibility of the Chair at the interview itself is to introduce the interview panel members to the applicant, to outline the way the interview will be conducted, to ensure that panel members fully explore the selection criteria with each applicant, to complete the interview at the appropriate time, and to oversee the evaluation process.

6.7.4   At the end of the interviews, the Chair ensures that all members have signed the record of the decision arrived at and that the appropriate documentation is passed on to the RIAM Secretary.

6.7.5   It is the Chair's responsibility to ensure that all the applicants, whether successful or not, are informed of the outcome. This task will usually be performed by the RIAM Secretary's office.

6.8   *Interview Panel*

See Section 7.3.

6.9   *Shortlisting*

See Section 7.4.

6.10   *References*

6.10.1 References can sometimes provide useful additional information that can be used as part of the assessment process. However, their main benefit is that they can confirm factual information on issues such as dates of employment, attendance record and whether the applicant has the experience claimed.

6.10.2 The quality of references can be enhanced by providing referees with the job description and person specification for the post and by seeking specific information, which is related to the selection criteria.

6.10.3 Subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 1997, references are normally confidential to the members of the interview panel and should not be passed on to third parties, including the applicant.

6.10.4 For academic appointments, references are usually taken up prior to interview and are made available to the members of the interview panel. In the case of other appointments, references are usually taken up at the post-interview stage.

6.11   *Conflict of Interest*

6.11.1   It is essential that the recruitment and selection process is fair and seen to be fair.

6.11.2   In situations where a member of the interview panel has a potential conflict of interest because of a personal or other relationship with an applicant or applicants, this conflict must be made known to the Chair and to the other panel members before the shortlisting or interview stage.

6.11.3   In such circumstances, the panel may then decide that the involvement of the member might detract from the fair and balanced application of the relevant procedures, and the said member should, therefore, be required to withdraw from the process.

6.12   *Demonstration Lessons/Performance*

6.12.1   Demonstration lessons/Performance are often used to supplement the interview for academic appointments.

6.12.2   If Demonstration lessons/Performance are being used, it is essential to provide shortlisted applicants with advance notice of what is expected from them.

6.12.3   The interview panel should be clear about the purpose of the Demonstration lessons/Performance and about what exactly is being evaluated.

6.12.4   The panel will also need to agree on what weighting will be attached to the Demonstration lessons/Performance in relation to the overall evaluation of applicants.

6.12.5   Where Demonstration lessons/Performance are used, it is recommended that these be incorporated in the interview process and that all panel members be in attendance for the Demonstration lessons/Performance. Any deviation from this practice would require to be agreed in advance with the chair and the RIAM Secretary.

6.13   *Medicals*

6.13.1   The primary purpose of the pre-employment medical is to assess the individual's ability to carry out the duties associated with a particular post.

6.13.2   The doctor with responsibility for carrying out the medical should be made aware of any special factors or issues relating to the job, which might impact on the individual's ability to perform it.

6.13.3   Given the broad definition of disability under the Employment Equality Act, 1998, an organisation cannot withdraw a job offer if, following a medical, it becomes clear that the prospective employee has a disability, e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, heart disease, unless the doctor certifies that he/she could not do the job or because of the health and safety risks to the applicant or others in a particular employment situation.

6.14   *Verification of Qualifications*

6.14.1   RIAM reserves the right to obtain and verify the applicant's academic and other relevant qualifications before confirming an offer of employment.

7. Procedures

7.1   _Person Specification Procedure_

7.1.1   The person specification is prepared after decisions about the responsibilities of the post have been made and the job description finalised.

7.1.2   It defines the skills, knowledge, experience and personal attributes and other relevant factors, which are required for effective job performance.

7.1.3   The purpose of the person specification is to set out the agreed criteria to be used in the selection of applicants.

7.1.4   Agreed criteria provide a consistent and objective set of standards for all applicants and a structured means of applicant assessment.

7.1.5   It is important to ensure that all criteria are clear, relevant to the job, justifiable and non-discriminatory in terms of the grounds set out under the Employment Equality Act, 1998. For example, the use of age limits or the requirement to have particular academic qualifications, which are not justifiable, may be contrary to the legislation.

7.1.6   There is no pre-determined set of criteria, which should be included in the person specification, but factors, which are typically covered, include:

(i)   skills;

(ii)   experience;

(iii)   qualifications;

(iv)   relevance to the particular job.

7.1.7   The selection criteria can be divided into those that are **_Essential_** and those that are **_Desirable_**.

7.1.8   The essential criteria are the minimum requirements deemed necessary for satisfactory job performance.

7.1.9   Desirable criteria are those factors that would be beneficial to optimising job performance.

7.1.10   All applicants must normally meet each of the essential selection criteria in order to be shortlisted

7.1.11   The desirable criteria are those that may be used to further reduce the numbers to be called for interview.

7.1.12   Care should be taken to ensure that the criteria included in the person specification are clearly defined and capable of being assessed and evaluated by the interview panel at both the shortlisting and interview stages.

7.1.13   The person specification will be used throughout the process when drafting the advertisement, shortlisting, structuring the interview, preparing interview questions and evaluating the applicants.

7.2 *Procedure for Advertising the Post*

7.2.1 Effective advertising will help to ensure that the widest pool of suitable applicants is made aware of the vacancy to be filled.

7.2.2 Job advertisements will usually be placed by the RIAM Secretary. This is to ensure that they are consistent with the RIAM's visual identity and organisational style and that the content is accurate and does not contravene the provisions of the Employment Equality Act, 1998.

7.2.3 The following information is typically included in the job advertisement:

(i) job title;

(ii) location;

(iii) salary;

(iv) key duties;

(v) closing date for applications.

7.2.4 The RIAM Secretary will provide advice in relation to the appropriate media for placing the advertisement and the closing date for receipt of applications.

7.3 *Interview Panel Procedure*

7.3.1 The composition of the interview panel will vary according to the level and type of post being filled. Consideration should be given to ensuring that:

(i) The interview panel includes members with the relevant subject/ technical expertise to assess applicants.

(ii) There is gender balance within the panel, as far as feasible.

7.3.2 For academic positions, the composition of the interview panel will normally include:

(i) Director

(ii) Chairman of the Board of Governors or his nominee

(iii) Relevant Head of Faculty

(iv) External Specialist

7.3.3 For non-academic appointments the interview panel may not require an external specialist. The panel may include members of the management team, Governors and other specialists as are deemed appropriate.

7.3.4 Members of the interview panel take collective responsibility for the decisions arrived at and for ensuring that their performance on the panel conforms to the agreed guidelines.

7.3.5 It is important that interview panel members, including external members meet immediately prior to the interviews to agree on how they will conduct the interview, the

areas and sequencing of the interview questions and the applicant evaluation procedures.

7.3.6   The Chairman of the Board of Governors or his nominee will chair the interview panel.

7.4   *Procedure for Shortlisting*

7.4.1   The responsibility of the interview panel is to select for interview only those applicants who meet the selection criteria.

7.4.2   This must be done in a manner that is valid, fair and consistent.

7.4.3   The applications are forwarded to the interview panel as soon as possible after the closing date for receipt of applications.

7.4.4   The shortlisting process involves reviewing each application and eliminating, in the first instance, those applicants who fail to meet the essential criteria.

7.4.5   If it is considered necessary to reduce the number of applicants further, the board may then apply the desirable criteria in a fair, consistent and objective manner to agree the final shortlist.

7.4.6   It is important to remember that no new criteria should be introduced at the shortlisting stage.

7.4.7   Subjective or personalised comments about individual applicants should not be made and the focus will be on whether or not the applicants meet the agreed criteria.

7.4.8   It is, therefore, important to ensure that sufficient time and thought is put into identifying appropriate selection criteria when the person specification is being produced.

7.4.9   It is good practice to ensure that more than one person carries out the shortlisting.

7.4.10   Those involved in the process may decide either to carry out the shortlisting at a joint meeting or alternatively to draw up their own lists of applicants on an individual basis and then engage in a meeting to agree the final shortlist.

7.4.11   In the case of academic appointments, the Director and faculty Head fulfil this function. In non-academic appointments, this role is performed by members of the senior management.

7.4.12   It is recommended that the panel keeps a record of the reasons why some applicants are shortlisted and others not.

7.4.13   This record identifies the selection criteria, which have been met by the successful applicants and those that the deselected applicants failed to meet.

7.4.14   It is important to avoid including in the record any subjective or personalised comments about individual applicants.

7.4.15   In the letter inviting shortlisted applicants to attend for interview it may be appropriate to suggest that they highlight any special needs they may have in relation to their attendance at interview. This will assist in making practical arrangements or

reasonable accommodations in advance for candidates with special needs in relation to the interview location, room layout or other aspects of the interview.

7.5   *Preparation for Interview*

7.5.1   Careful preparation and organisation are needed to ensure that all aspects of the interview process are effective. Practical arrangements should be made in the following areas:

Reception of Candidates:

(i)   Has clear information on the venue been provided both to the applicants and to external panel members?

(ii)   Is there an appropriate waiting area?

(iii)   Have arrangements been made to receive the applicants and direct them to the interview venue?

Scheduling of Interviews:

(iv)   Has sufficient time been allocated for conducting presentations/interviews?

(v)   Has appropriate time been scheduled for panel members to prepare themselves for each interview?

The Interview Environment:

(vi)   Is the interview room accessible?

(vii)   Is there appropriate light, heat and ventilation in the room?

(viii) Have steps been taken to prevent interruptions and noise?

(ix)   Is there an appropriate layout of the table and chairs?

(x)   Is water available for the panel and applicants?

7.5.2   The interview panel will also need to be well prepared for the interviews.

Areas for consideration include:

(i)   Ensuring that all panel members have reviewed the relevant documentation, including applications, job description and person specification.

(ii)   Agreeing the format and structure of the interview.

(iii)   Clarifying each individual's role on the panel.

(iv)   Agreeing on the areas and scheduling of interview questions.

(v)   Agreeing on the evaluation procedures.

7.6   *Procedure for Conducting Interviews*

   7.6.1   To be effective, the selection interview needs to be well structured and conducted. All members of the interview panel will need to take joint responsibility for:

   (i)   Ensuring that the interview concentrates on gathering information that relates to the selection criteria already identified in the person specification.

   (ii)   Ensuring that the control of the interview remains with the panel and that it is not diverted from its task by a particular applicant.

   (iii)   Participating as appropriate.

   (iv)   Ensuring that applicants have sufficient time to talk through their applications and to ask and answer questions. The appropriate use of silence can sometimes be helpful to applicants in collecting their thoughts and formulating their responses to the questions.

   (v)   Inviting applicants to provide any additional information relevant to the selection criteria, which they consider, has not been covered.

   (vi)   Taking notes to assist the panel with the evaluation of applicants.

   (vii)   Conducting the interview in a fair and professional manner.

   7.6.2   It is important to remember that the interview is a two-way process in which RIAM is deciding on the applicants and they in turn are deciding on RIAM as an employer.

   7.6.3   The interview stage is primarily for information gathering; premature judgments about applicants should be avoided at this stage. The evaluation of applicants is carried out at the post-interview stage.

7.7   *Procedure for Interview Questions*

   7.7.1   The choice of interview questions and the manner in which they are asked determine the quality of the information elicited from applicants.

   7.7.2   In advance of the interview itself, it is important that the interview panel agrees the areas and sequencing of the questions. This will ensure that all the relevant selection criteria are covered and that the questions are presented in a logical sequence that avoids confusion for both the panel and the applicants.

   7.7.3   To ensure fairness and consistency, the same areas of competence should be explored with all applicants. This will also provide the basis for an objective approach to evaluating the comparative merits of the applicants at a later stage.

   7.7.4   Where necessary, the panel may ask supplementary questions to ensure that specific areas of an applicant's application are explored in full, for example:

   (i)   Questions should be phrased in a manner best suited to obtaining the information sought.

   (ii)   Open questions are used to introduce a topic or to initiate a general discussion on an issue.

(iii) Probing questions can be used to explore a specific subject more closely.

(iv) Closed questions generally elicit 'yes' or 'no' answers but can be useful to confirm particular details.

(v) Leading questions which prompt a desired or expected answer and multiple questions inviting answers to a number of separate points should be avoided.

7.7.5 As far as possible it is important to avoid confusing the applicant by the use of jargon or specialised terminology which is not relevant to the job.

7.7.6 Questions that could be construed as indicating an intention to discriminate on any of the grounds identified in the Employment Equality Acts, 1998 to 2015 should not be asked.

7.8 *Procedure for Applicant Evaluation*

7.8.1 The underlying principle of applicant evaluation is that the panel be objective, systematic and fair.

7.8.2 The panel will use an agreed marking system in all interviews.

7.8.3 The marking system will be agreed at the person specification stage.

7.8.4 The benefit of an agreed marking system is that it provides a systematic approach to evaluating the applicants against agreed criteria.

7.8.5 It also gives all panel members the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation process.

7.8.6 In discussing the merits of the applicants, the Chair should invite each panel member in turn to outline his or her evaluation of each individual applicant.

7.8.7 This evaluation is based on weighing the merits of each in relation to the selection criteria.

7.8.8 It is advisable that the Chair waits until the other members have given their views before putting forward a personal opinion. This avoids unfairly influencing less senior members of the panel.

7.8.9 Following discussion, interview panel members will agree a final selection, including if appropriate a ranking order of successful applicants.

7.8.10 Each will sign the marking sheet as a record of the decision.

7.8.11 If there is uncertainty about the final selection decision, the Chair will usually have a casting vote.

7.8.12 In particular cases, the panel may decide, in consultation with the RIAM Secretary, to arrange a second interview or, in exceptional circumstances, to re-advertise the post.

7.9 *Offer of Appointment*

7.9.1 Once the interview panel has made its selection decision, the agreed procedures for making an appointment are followed. It is the responsibility of the RIAM Secretary to

contact the successful applicant and make a written offer, subject to satisfactory references and successful completion of a pre employment medical.

7.9.2   Alternatively, the Chair or a person designated by the Chair may telephone the successful applicant and offer the post subject to the terms above, and of a contract of employment being prepared by the RIAM Secretary's Office.

7.10   *Feedback Procedure*

7.10.1   The area of providing feedback needs to be handled with sensitivity. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the desire to be helpful to unsuccessful applicants does not prejudice RIAM's position.

7.10.2   The responsibility for providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants may be assigned to the RIAM Secretary or to the Chair or other designated member of the interview panel. Any other panel member approached for feedback should refer the applicant to the appropriate person.

7.10.3   Feedback should be constructive and focus on the applicant's performance in relation to the selection criteria.

7.10.4   It is not appropriate to discuss with the person seeking the feedback the relative skills and abilities of other applicants, or to comment on their interview performance.

8. Responsibility

8.1   The Secretary is responsible for overseeing this policy and its operational procedures.

9. Legislation and Regulation

9.1   Employment Equality Acts, 1998 to 2015.

9.2   Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 to 2014.

9.3   Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

9.4   Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2005).

9.5   Code of Practice for Provision of Education and Training to International Learners (2015).

9.6   National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

10. Related Documents

10.1   Employment of People with Disabilities Policy.

11. Document Control

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