



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT (APIR)

End of Project Report

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1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1 CONTEXT

This project was set in the context of an increased profile on the world stage for diversity issues - the world has seen a raft of protests and demonstrations regarding the Black Lives Matter Movement, which has highlighted many inequalities in society. Within the University, the Vice Chancellor has launched the Race Equality Taskforce and the University has become a signatory of DORA, the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment (this is discussed later in the report).

As a public body, the University has an active duty to consider the impact on equality in all decision making. The central aim of this project will be to design an inclusive recruitment process which also meets the requirements of DORA. It is considered that execution of the DORA action plan will also have a positive impact on equality by providing appropriate guidance to enable supporting the use of evidence in making judgements that directly impact on the career of individuals.

In 2018, the University became a signatory of DORA, the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment. All signatories to DORA support the general recommendation to: not use journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an individual researcher's contributions, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions.

In MT2019 Research & Innovation Committee approved a set of Principles to promote the responsible use of research metrics at Oxford and noted that the most effective way to implement the principles would be within the recruitment and progression of academic and research staff. During the summer of 2020, the officers of the Personnel Committee met with officers of Research Services to draw up an action plan to ensure compliance with the DORA commitments.

In addition to what is a clear mandate for change on the diversity agenda, several approaches have been made to the University HR Recruitment team regarding the multitude of processes that are currently in operation for the recruitment of APs. Whilst it is widely recognised that there are subject-specific steps that need to be taken in the recruitment process, e.g., Disclosure and Barring Checks for regulated activity, there are a core number of steps which are common to all AP roles.

The DORA action plan required HR, Research Services and Divisional Office teams to collaborate and work at pace throughout MT2020 to ensure that a programme of work, underpinned by a clear and detailed action plan to meet the DORA principles was in place and published on the University's website by January 2021.

This deadline was driven by the Wellcome Trust's new Open Access policy (linked to funding) which came into force on 1 Jan 2021.

1.2 PROBLEM

Achieving a diverse profile in the Associate Professor cohort has been a significant challenge for the University for a number of years. In 2013/14 the University set a target to have 35% of Associate



Professor posts occupied by women by 2020. To date this has not been achieved, with 30% of AP posts occupied by women (2018/19) whilst there have been some small increases in certain specialisms, the gender profile has generally remained stagnant. At the time of writing, the Equality and Diversity Unit were consulting on the diversity targets to be set for the next review period.

The recruitment of Associate Professors is a joint process, managed by Divisions, Departments and Colleges. There are currently five separate sets of guidance for Associate Professor recruitment, one for each Academic Division, plus guidance issued by the central Senior Appointments Team (SAT). This has created consistency issues for Colleges who manage recruitment with a number of different University departments across the four academic divisions.

The Colleges are not bound by the University's policies and procedures, or the recruitment guidance. If University Officers are not able to obtain consent from the Colleges to work in accordance with the guidance, the reliability and efficiency of the process is compromised, which in turn will negatively impact the achievement of the University's strategic aims, specifically recruiting the best talent and reaching diversity targets.

1.3 IMPACT OF PROBLEM

The University's diversity targets for the Associate Professor cohort were not being met and positive progress towards meeting the targets had been disparate and modest for several years across the University. The stagnant gender profile of the AP staff profile has a negative impact on the University's employer brand and its ability to recruit and retain the best talent. In turn this is likely to impact on the ability to secure research funding. However, the University does not have any baseline data to quantitatively assess the full impact of the problem.

It was of paramount importance that the University's DORA action plan was published, and that progress was being made to complete the work, as the Wellcome Trust's Open Access policy, (effective 1 January 2021) requires all institutions to which it provides funds, to be DORA compliant.

As stated above, there were five sets of recruitment process guidance in operation within the University for the recruitment of Associate Professors. There was much commonality between the processes, which the project aimed to draw out, before considering the existence of waste in the process and the ways in which it could be eliminated and enhancements that could be made to increase the diversity of the candidate pool.

There was an assumption at the outset following previous consultation to change the recruitment process that Colleges found the operation of the number of different processes cumbersome and that a single set of steps would enable a more efficient recruitment process.

1.4 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project's objectives were to:



- 1) To understand the barriers to broadening the race and gender diversity of Associate Professors (AP), by bringing together colleges, divisions, and departments/faculties in facilitated workshops and collaboratively identify practical solutions;
- 2) To understand the impact the Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA) will have on the AP recruitment process and collaboratively identify practical solutions that enable us to adhere to the DORA principles;
- 3) To ensure consistency of approach to AP recruitment, whilst still recognising the broad differences between stakeholders and academic disciplines.

2 PEOPLE AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT

Due to the many demands and pressures placed on student-facing staff (particularly academics and professional services staff both within the University and colleges) due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the project had a staggered start, with the first Engage workshop taking place in January 2021 and the project being completed in June 2021. Due to the ever-changing pandemic restrictions and the demands placed upon staff, all workshops, meetings and interviews were carried out online.

The project was sponsored by Professor Anne Trefethen, Pro-Vice Chancellor (People and Digital) and the project team comprised:

Phil Taylor, Head of Recruitment, University HR

Sue Morris, Senior Appointments Officer, University HR

Lotte Boon, Research Information Lead, Research Services

Sarah Doolan, Continuous Improvement Practitioner, Focus

The University's Race Equality Taskforce (RETF), of which Professor Trefethen is a Co-chair, was launched on 2 December 2020. Due to the synergies between the Taskforce's work and that of the project, the Taskforce undertook the role similar to that of a project board.

As a project team we also consulted and worked closely with Adrienne Hopkins, Head of the Equality and Diversity Unit.

The project consulted and engaged with a broad range of stakeholders (55+ members of staff) from across the collegiate University, including:

Heads of Administration and Finance

Heads of Department

Senior Tutors

HR Managers and staff



Academics (recruitment panel chairs)

Recently recruited Associate Professors

3 APPROACH

An initial scoping exercise was undertaken with the Head of Recruitment in late 2020 to identify the key areas for the project to focus on, the key deliverables and the timeframe for review. Both the Research Lead and the Head of EDU were consulted on the project charter to ensure that the project's aims were in line with the University's broader work in the equality, diversity and inclusion arena and the principles of DORA.

As the recruitment of Associate Professors is a joint responsibility between the University and the colleges, the Senior Tutors' Committee was consulted on the scope and broad programme of work in October 2020. Based on feedback received it was decided that the engage phase would begin in January 2021.

In January 2021 two engage workshops were held with a cross-section of stakeholders from the aforementioned list. These workshops introduced Focus, the project and facilitated initial discussions between all stakeholders involved in the recruitment of Associate Professors.

These workshops were invaluable in discovering not only the barriers to an inclusive recruitment process, but also the existing good inclusivity practice within the University.

Following the engage workshops and follow-up meetings with key stakeholders, in February 2021, the high-level recruitment process was mapped in preparation for a diagnose workshop. At the diagnose workshop the high-level process was interrogated with the aims of:

- Understanding the similarities and differences in the recruitment process between different departments and colleges;
- Understanding where the challenges and barriers to inclusion occur within the process;
- Collation of ideas for the improvement of inclusivity and the adoption of the DORA principles in the AP recruitment process.

It was evident following the workshops that the operation of several different recruitment processes was not causing as much difficulty as previously assumed. Stakeholders were keen to share their inclusivity good practice and to know from others how they could improve the inclusivity of the process.

In order to obtain a holistic view of the recruitment process, discussion groups and interviews were held with recently recruited Associate Professors and recruitment panel chairs. In addition to providing candidate and panel chair perspectives, these engagement activities also provided insights into the recruitment practices of other Higher Education institutions.

Given the amount of good practice that was discovered in the engage and diagnose phases of the project and the enthusiasm of stakeholders to learn from each other, the project delivered a



showcase series. These shared the existing good practice from across the University as well as having facilitating discussions about inclusivity, and engaging external experts to provide advice and insights into implementing inclusivity initiatives. This approach meant that colleagues were able to learn from each other and implement small-scale changes in their own work areas ahead of the launch of the inclusive recruitment guidance.

During the Diagnose phase, data was collated on the number of Associate Professor recruitment exercises that are undertaken, the gender profile of the AP staff group and the presentation of promotional materials such as job advertisements and job descriptions.

4 BENEFITS

The benefits the project aimed to deliver (as set out in the project charter) are summarised below:

Benefit	Measurement	Status
Compliance with DORA	Review of job adverts and Further Particulars, shortlisting notes and selection committee reports.	DORA compliant guidance and template documents drafted for approval
Improved diversity in the AP staff profile	Equality and Diversity Unit annual report figures relating to gender and race	To be reviewed on an annual basis, with the expectation of improvement over the next five years
Promote the use of a single standard for recruitment of APs	Review consistency of recruitment and selection documentation, new recruit survey data and feedback as part of annual review process from Divisional contacts	Inclusive recruitment guidance drafted. Requires approval from Personnel Committee
Recruitment process efficiency through reduction in the number of different recruitment processes and changes to research assessment.	Review time to hire data, focusing on shortlisting to selection decision.	De-scoped as not identified as a priority by key stakeholders.*

*At the outset of the project, it was envisaged that there would be efficiency savings to make through the creation of a single set of inclusive recruitment guidelines for Associate Professors. However, it became clear through the Engage and Diagnose phases that whilst a single set of guidance would improve clarity and the inclusivity of the process, there were limited process efficiencies that could be gained.



5 DELIVERABLES

At the outset of the project it was envisaged that the key deliverable would be a guide to inclusive Associate Professor recruitment which would also meet the DORA principles.

In the design phase, the existing good practice, discovered earlier in the project was developed through the delivery of the showcase series, categorised into the four key stages of the process (planning, attraction, recruit and appoint) and assigned a category - mandatory, advisory or for consideration to create the inclusive recruitment guidance.

Deliverables	Status
Inclusive Recruitment Guidance for the appointment of Associate Professor	Being re-edited on the basis of extensive feedback.
DORA compliant template job descriptions	Guidance on wording of selection criteria has been issued. Advice being sought by departments from the senior appointments team on a regular basis on compliant approaches and wording of job descriptions.
Advice to candidates on research assessment	DORA Principles published on Research Services website.
Published action plan for meeting DORA principles	Action plan published and is being delivered.
Delivery of showcase series demonstrating good inclusive recruitment practice from across the University and providing advice and guidance from external experts.	Showcase delivered April-May 2021. Recordings of each session are available on the HR Support website.

6 OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Extensive consultation was carried out as part of the project activities on the potential content of the inclusive recruitment guidance and the template documents and whilst feedback was overwhelmingly positive, it is still necessary for the University HR Recruitment team to consult with the academic divisions ahead of the guidance being published on the HR Support website.

Extensive feedback has been received by the Senior Appointments Team, Central HR on the contents of the guidance. Whilst there is much support for the guidance, there are some concerns about the use of equality, diversity and inclusion criteria in job descriptions. Therefore, a pilot will be undertaken to gather evidence on the impact of their use in professional services job descriptions.

The use of unconscious bias observers was showcased as an initiative to improve diversity in the AP staff cohort. There are many examples of unconscious bias schemes operating across the HE sector. The role of an observer is to observe the key parts of the recruitment process, including shortlisting and interviews to highlight and challenge biases.



An application was made to the Vice-Chancellor's diversity fund for funds to run a pilot project to test the use of an Unconscious Bias Observer in Statutory Professor recruitment and to obtain advice on the most effective way to implement an Unconscious Bias Observer scheme at the University.

This pilot is currently on hold until the outcome of the pilot of using EDI criteria in job descriptions.

SUSTAIN AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES

As part of the sustain plan, the Focus Continuous Improvement Practitioner will keep in regular contact with the Head of Recruitment to monitor progress with the outstanding actions and to provide advice and guidance on preparations for benefits measurement.

Given the low turnover rates and the 'time to hire' data for Associate Professor roles, in order for there to be evidence of a significant improvement in the diversity of the AP staff cohort, recruitment data will need to be monitored on an annual basis for the next five years. In addition to this, Divisions will be asked for feedback on their experience of using the inclusive recruitment guidance.

The diversity data will be collated in accordance with University HR's existing data reporting schedule. Therefore reports are due to be supplied in July of each year.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of feedback received from the Race Equality Taskforce and workshop participants, it is recommended that consideration is given to expanding the inclusive recruitment guidance to all areas of recruitment at the University, with the aim that recruitment is inherently inclusive.

8 OUTCOMES/IMPACTS

The project commenced at a time when diversity issues were spotlighted on the world stage and as the collegiate University was managing the transition of students from Oxford back to their families for the festive break, during an active pandemic. This project was the first 'Business as usual' project delivered entirely using online platforms.

The project showcased the good inclusive recruitment practice that was already happening at the University and through utilisation of online platforms, made it possible for the knowledge to be shared across the collegiate university. It highlighted the appetite that people have for sharing this knowledge internally and for gaining insights from other organisations and external experts. The Showcase format should be considered in future Focus projects.

9 TESTIMONIALS

'The workshops revealed how many good ideas had already been put into practice in different parts of the University. Bringing these together and learning from other organisations will provide us with a much better platform for inclusive recruitment – attracting a diverse set of candidates to our Associate Professorships.' **Professor Anne Trefethen, PVC People and Digital**

