

# United Learning Recruitment & Selection Policy

## 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 'Head Teacher' 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.

The recruitment of Headteachers/Principals, Executive Principals, Regional Directors and Central Office Executive Directors will be managed by the Central Office HR team in accordance with the principles and processes set out in this document, unless otherwise stated.

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.

## 1. Objectives

- 1.1 United Learning's vision is to provide excellent education so all young people are able to make a success of their lives. To deliver this vision, United Learning aims to attract, retain, develop and reward outstanding members of staff.
- 1.2 United Learning places great emphasis on being a values-led organisation with an ethos established to bring hope and aspiration to the communities we serve in our schools. Our values act as a yardstick for how we behave, interact with each other and deliver our mission. These values are: Ambition, Confidence, Determination, Creativity, Respect and Enthusiasm.
- 1.3 To ensure that United Learning's Recruitment and Selection Procedures are non-discriminatory and therefore ensure that United Learning recruits the best candidate from those who have applied for a particular position. Further details can be found in United Learning's Equality Guidelines.
- 1.4 To encourage applicants to apply for positions within United Learning, knowing that they will be selected solely on their suitability for the position.
- 1.5 To help United Learning become an Employer of Choice through good practice.

## 2. General Policy

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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 be incorporated into every stage of the process.

**2.3 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.

**2.4 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.**

**2.5 The Head Teacher, 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 support.**

**2.6 The United Learning HR Department will monitor the activities of the Schools. The procedure will also conform to any relevant legislation and codes of practice.**

**2.7 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. The recruitment of Headteachers/Principals, Executive Principals, Regional Directors and Central Office Executive Directors is managed by the Central Office HR team.**

### **3. Procedure**

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

**3.2 No vacancy should be advertised until all the relevant documentation has been completed i.e. job description and person specification.**

**3.3 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.**

### **4. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications**

**4.1 The Head Teacher, Designated Senior Manager or Central Office Director authorised to recruit staff must ensure that the job description is up to date.**

**4.2 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).

- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 At this stage, the Head Teacher, 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.

## 5. Advertising the Vacancy

- 5.1 When a vacancy occurs, the job should be created on the Applicant Tracking System (ATS). The ATS enables the main aspects of the job to be recorded and then advertised through various sources as required, e.g. internally on the United Hub and/or 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 The decision to place recruitment with an external provider rests with the Head Teacher or Central Office Director, in consultation with HR colleagues. Normal budgetary constraints will apply.
- 5.5 All posts will normally be advertised in local papers, national publications and professional publications as appropriate, and on United Learning's Careers website.
- 5.6 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.
- 5.7 All advertisements must be non-discriminatory. They must make no direct or indirect preference regarding age, beliefs, colour, disability, ethnic origin, HIV status, marital status (including civil partnership), nationality, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, social status, trade union membership, gender reassignment, part time and fixed term working, pregnancy or maternity.

## 6. Applications

- 6.1 All applicants should register on the ATS and complete the relevant documents online to apply for the post.
- 6.2 Incomplete applications should not be accepted.
- 6.3 Please refer to the Privacy Statement on the ATS for details regarding how applicants' information is gathered and protected.

## 7. Short-listing

- 7.1 After the closing date, the application forms can be printed off the ATS and given to, or sent electronically to, a short-listing panel, consisting of at least two people at a local level, who will sift the applications and compile a shortlist.
- 7.2 The short-listing pack, prepared by the local HR Administrator, should include the application forms, job description, person specification and any other information sent by the applicant, with the exception of the Applicant Monitoring Form and Confidential Disclosure which should be kept separately. When sending the applications electronically to the shortlisting panel, the Monitoring Form and Confidential Disclosure will automatically be excluded.
- 7.3 Criteria from the person specification will be used to shortlist applicants for interview, based on the ability to demonstrate fulfilment of each of the objective, non-discriminatory criteria.
- 7.4 The short-listing panel must complete the short-listing form/matrix.
- 7.5 Checking Application forms. 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 or discrepancies or gaps in employment identified should be noted so that they can be taken up as part of the selection process.

## 8. Interviewing and Testing

### 8.1 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 D of the United Learning Safeguarding Children – HR Procedural Guidance for further details (available on the United Hub).



- e) Where candidates have requested any specific requirements to attend interview due to a disability, this must not be revealed to the interview panel.

## 8.2 Selection Methods

In addition to panel interviews, a number of selection methods may be used to assess a candidate's suitability for the post. All selection tests/exercises should be properly validated and only marked by trained staff. Selection methods to consider include:

- a) Presentations;
- b) Group decision making/discussion exercises;
- c) Group discussions with pupils;
- d) In-tray exercises;
- e) Aptitude tests (verbal and numerical);
- f) Technology based tests including word-processing;
- g) Written exercises;
- h) 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.

## 8.3 Interview Packs

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

- a) Copies of all application documents, excluding references<sup>1</sup>, Confidential Disclosure and applicant monitoring forms;
- b) Job description and person specification;
- c) Interview summary forms, including questions;
- d) Short-listing forms.

## 8.4 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. These should be transposed on the interview summary sheet. A candidate's response to a question will determine whether and how that 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 s/he has responded to, or dealt with, an actual situation, or questions that test a candidate's attitudes and understanding of issues.

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<sup>1</sup> References will be included for Headteacher/Principal, Executive Principal, Regional Director and Central Office Executive Director roles.



- d) 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).
- e) Once each candidate has been interviewed, interview summary sheets must be completed. At the end of the full interview process, these sheets must incorporate the results of any additional selection tests/exercises undertaken.
- f) 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.
- g) All papers, including notes taken during interview, and test results if undertaken, should be retained by the Chair of the panel who will contact the successful candidate and inform unsuccessful candidates of the outcome. Feedback should always be offered as good practise.
- h) Following the completion of the recruitment process, all papers should be retained for a minimum of 6 months at the School/Central Office.

## 9. Use of References

- 9.1 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 on the ATS.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 If a candidate for a teaching post is not currently employed as a teacher, it is also advisable to check with the school, college or local authority at which they were most recently employed, to confirm, details of their employment and their reasons for leaving.
- 9.4 The reference request letter (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.
- 9.5 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.<sup>2</sup>
- 9.6 References will not be used to aid the decision making process but solely to confirm the decision.

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<sup>2</sup> When recruiting a Headteacher/Principal, Executive Principal, Regional Director or Central Office Executive Director, the references will be shared with the panel in advance of the interview.



- 9.7 Any unsatisfactory references will be investigated further by the Head Teacher or Designated Senior Manager, usually in consultation with the HR Business Partner.
- 9.8 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. It should however be borne in mind that some organisations have a reference policy to only supply factual information.
- 9.9 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.
- 9.10 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.
- 9.11 In the event that references were not obtained prior to interview, they must be obtained prior to making any offer of employment.

## **10. Making Offers of Employment**

### **10.1 Decision to Recruit**

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

### **10.2 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), in jobs that have been evaluated (work rated equivalent) and where they are of corresponding responsibility (work of equal value). Remuneration should not be influenced in any measure by age, beliefs, colour, disability, ethnic orientation, social status, trade union membership, gender reassignment, part time and fixed term working, pregnancy or maternity. Part-time staff should not suffer any detriment, for example, in the number of weeks in the year that are paid.
- b) Reference should be made to United Learning's flexible benefits scheme with Perkbox which offers over 250 exclusive benefits, all through their easy-to-access platform and mobile app. Featuring a huge range of perks, from discounted cinema tickets and holidays, to money off meals out at restaurants and savings on food, gym memberships, technology and clothes shopping. They also offer salary sacrifice schemes such as Cycle to Work - which offer tax and NI savings on new bikes. More information is available on the United Hub once employment has started.

### **10.3 Writing to the Successful Candidate**

- a) The Head Teacher 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 and contract templates available on the United Hub);





- ii) Medigold 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).

## 11. Pre-Employment Checks

- 11.1 United Learning Safeguarding Children – HR Procedural Guidance (sections A and C) should be strictly adhered to at this stage.
- 11.2 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.
- 11.3 When appointing new staff, schools must:
  - a) Verify a candidate's identity, preferably from current photographic ID and proof of address;
  - b) Obtain a certificate for an enhanced DBS check with barred list information for all staff;
  - c) Obtain a separate barred list check and undertake a written risk assessment if an individual will start work before the DBS certificate is available;
  - d) Check that a candidate to be employed as a teacher is not subject to a prohibition order 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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/checking-a-job-applicant-s-right-to-work);
  - 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);
  - i) If the person has lived or worked outside the UK, make any further checks considered appropriate. Teachers will be requested to provide proof of their past conduct as a teacher. This should be a letter of professional standing issued by the professional regulating authority in the country in which they worked. Guidance can be found here: [Criminal records checks for overseas applicants - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/criminal-records-checks-for-overseas-applicants).
  - 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).





## 12. Commencing Employment

- 12.1 All relevant documentation will be completed by the Head Teacher, 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.
- 12.2 The post holder will be issued with a Contract of Employment, by the Head Teacher, Designated Senior Manager or Central Office Director (or an HR Administrator acting upon their authority) within eight weeks of commencing employment with United Learning.
- 12.3 An induction programme should be arranged and where possible sent to the individual in advance of their start date.
- 12.4 The HR Administrator will complete the new starter check list, enter the new employee on the HR System and ensure all relevant paper work has been forwarded to the payroll administrator at Central Office.

## 13. Timescales and Record Keeping

- 13.1 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 short listed for interview should normally be notified of this decision within three weeks 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) The ATS 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.

## 14. Equality Guidelines

- 14.1 At every stage, the recruitment and selection procedure will conform to the United Learning's Equality Guidelines and relevant legislation and codes of practice.

## 15. Training

- 15.1 All those involved in the recruitment and selection of staff must be properly trained. The United Learning People Development Team will provide advice and assistance on training issues.



## 16. Review

- 16.1 The Recruitment and Selection Policy and procedures will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure consistency, fairness and effectiveness and in the light of changes in employment legislation, but at least on an annual basis.

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|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Version number:                      | 6.0   |  | Target Audience:                           | All staff   |
| UCST/ULT/Both:                       | Both  |  | Reason for version change:                 | Aug 2018: Remove Disqualification by Association<br>Jan 2021: Brexit (EEA checks and immigration)<br>May 2021: audit action to include DSPs |
| Date First Authorised & Issued:      | May 2012  |  | Name of owner/author:                      | Reward & Policy Team  |
| Date Last Amended & Issued:          | August 2018<br>1 <sup>st</sup> January 2021<br>May 2021 |  | Name of individual/department responsible: | HR  |
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