

2018 EMPLOYMENT EQUITY REPORT FOR THE STUDENTS' SOCIETY OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

Employment equity involves addressing systemic barriers so that each candidate may access employment opportunities, benefits and promotions based on having appropriate qualifications rather than accessing or being denied opportunities due to belonging to an advantaged or disadvantaged group.

At both the federal and provincial level, employment equity has become an increasingly important consideration as organizations seek to comply with federal and provincial legal requirements.

The federal *Employment Equity Act* states that its purpose is:

To achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability and, in the fulfilment of that goal, to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities by giving effect to the principle that employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences¹

This creates four designated groups for the consideration of employment equity namely women, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and visible minorities. The Employment

¹ <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-5.401/page-1.html#h-2>

Equity Act applies to federally regulated industries, Crown corporations and certain federal public administration.

The Quebec *Act Respecting Equal Access to Employment in Public Bodies* (2001) creates employment equity standards for the federally designated groups in addition to “persons whose mother tongue is neither French nor English and who belong to a group other than the aboriginal peoples group or the visible minorities group.”² This provincial legislation applies to public bodies such as McGill University.

McGill has taken a broader approach to employment equity than is legally required by including LGBTT2SQ* people as a designated group in its Employment Equity Policy in addition to women, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, racialized people/visible minorities and ethnic minorities.³

Both the federal and provincial legislation apply to McGill University, but they do not apply to the Students’ Society of McGill University, which is independent from McGill. In developing an employment equity policy, the SSMU may consider the approaches of various organizations seeking to comply with federal and provincial laws, such as McGill, but is free to create its own designated groups based on its consideration of which groups are facing systemic barriers in employment.

The Quebec *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* prohibits the discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, a handicap or the use of any means to palliate a handicap.⁴ The Quebec Charter applies to anyone in Quebec and so an organization such as SSMU, which

² <http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/ShowDoc/cs/A-2.01>

³ <https://www.mcgill.ca/employ-equity/groups>

⁴ <http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/C-12>

caters to the interests of students, has to respect the rights in the Charter and is prohibited from discriminating on the aforementioned prohibited grounds of discrimination. Further, any employer in Quebec must ensure that their human resource policies and practices are not discriminatory. Thus, the prohibited grounds of discrimination and legislated designated groups are helpful in determining which persons are most likely to face barriers in employment at SSMU.

While recognizing that different groups face systemic barriers to fair and equitable employment, providing employment equity requires a comprehensive problem-solving approach. There are special measures required to address the principle of employment equity such as:

identifying and eliminating barriers in an organization's employment procedures and policies; establishing positive policies and practices to ensure the effects of systemic barriers are eliminated; and ensure appropriate representation of "designated group" members throughout their workforce.⁵

In order to recommend best practices for SSMU, research conducted on employment equity largely focused on best practices and procedures for hiring candidates. It will be divided into the following areas: Training and Composition of the Hiring Committee, Developing the Job Post and Advertising the Position, Self-Identification of Candidates and Employees, Reasonable Accommodation for Candidates and Employees, Preparing for the Interview Process, During the Interview and Post-Interview Evaluations.

The current practices of hiring for SSMU student positions were reviewed and evaluated to determine existing challenges or weaknesses in relation to employment equity. It is anticipated that with the research gathered as well as the review of current SSMU practices,

⁵ https://www.mcgill.ca/equity_diversity/links/toolbox/equityrelatedfaqs/employmentequity

the recommendations proposed for SSMU will allow for the development of an employment equity policy that is in line with best practices for ensuring employment equity.

Review of Literature

An employment barrier is an “employment policy or practice that disproportionately excludes certain groups based on factors unrelated to the nature of work or merit.”⁶ Where the employment barrier disadvantages a group with the designated characteristics under the Quebec Charter, then the employment barrier constitutes systemic discrimination.

In order to eliminate any employment barriers, it is important to identify them and review best practices informed by employment equity. It is possible to identify employment barriers by questioning the legality, consistency, adverse impact, validity, job relatedness and operational necessity of employment practices or policies.⁷ First, it is essential that employment practices conform to human rights legislation and any applicable employment equity legislation. It is also important that employment policies are applied in a consistent and equitable manner. Consistency of an employment practice must be balanced with avoiding any adverse impact on designated groups where an employment practice applies to all employees, and so the potential or existence of any negative impact must be determined to identify a barrier. The validity of employment policies stem from the use of objective, fair and meaningful practices. Validity goes hand in hand with employment practices needing to be based on bona fide occupational requirements. Finally, employment practices that are not necessary for the safe or efficient operation of the organization may be a potential employment

⁶ <https://novascotia.ca/psc/pdf/employeeCentre/diverseWorkforce/employmentEquityPolicyGuidelines.pdf> at 6.

⁷ <https://novascotia.ca/psc/pdf/employeeCentre/diverseWorkforce/employmentEquityPolicyGuidelines.pdf> at 7.

barrier. The identification of barriers requires steps for the removal of these barriers and an awareness of appropriate plans and policies which do not create other barriers but instead facilitate employment equity.

A. Training and Composition of the Hiring Committee

One of the initial considerations of ensuring there is employment equity is to create a more informed hiring committee aware of systemic barriers and methods to remove them. Educating the hiring committee is an important part of improving employment equity as they have the greatest impact on how any employment equity policy is carried out in the hiring process.

It is recommended that it be mandatory for hiring committee members to receive training on how to recognize and combat implicit and explicit biases.⁸ To raise awareness about unconscious bias, it would be helpful to ask hiring committee members to take an Implicit Association Test such as the ones found here: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/> to uncover implicit biases on a personal level that may need particular attention.⁹ There would be no need to disclose the results of the tests, but information on combatting various implicit biases could be provided to everyone nonetheless. On an ongoing basis, it is helpful to identify biases, stereotypes and micro-aggressions of hiring committee members and support them in working through them.¹⁰

In training, it should be stressed that it is inappropriate to make “judgments on a person’s character, experiences, or background based on details unrelated to job performance

⁸ http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_exemplaires-eng.aspx

⁹ https://diversity.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/recruiting_a_more_diverse_workforce_uhs.pdf at 12.

¹⁰ http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_exemplaires-eng.aspx

and work ethic.”¹¹ Broader equity training will also improve the hiring committee’s ability to practice employment equity and so training could also include ally training, inclusive communications and workplaces, reconciliation, intercultural competence, accessibility and accommodations.¹²

Being open about specific hiring goals can help in the hiring process where the demographics of current staff and demographics of the community are examined to determine any equity goals for the department.¹³ After evaluating demographics, where increasing diversity is a goal, diversity has to be reflected in the hiring committee. It is ideal to ensure representation from designated groups on the hiring committee – which at the federal level are women, aboriginal peoples, visible minorities and persons with disabilities.¹⁴ Where a candidate, who has been selected for an interview, has self-identified as a member of a designated group, it is best to also have a member of that designated group as part of the hiring committee.¹⁵

B. Developing the Job Post and Advertising the Position

When thinking of hiring for a new position, it is best to identify the needs and goals of the organization which the position can meet.¹⁶ This helps craft the selection criteria for the position to meet organizational needs. An essential consideration is that any listed requirements in the job posting must not create unnecessary barriers to candidates.¹⁷ Further, the selection

¹¹ https://diversity.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/recruiting_a_more_diverse_workforce_uhs.pdf at 12.

¹² http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_exemplaires-eng.aspx

¹³ https://diversity.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/recruiting_a_more_diverse_workforce_uhs.pdf at 12.

¹⁴ https://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/fac_employ_equity_guide.pdf at 9.

¹⁵ <https://novascotia.ca/psc/pdf/employeeCentre/diverseWorkforce/employmentEquityPolicyGuidelines.pdf> at 11

¹⁶ https://www.uleth.ca/sites/default/files/FacultyEquityHiringGuideOct07final_web.pdf at 2.

¹⁷ https://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/fac_employ_equity_guide.pdf at 9.

criteria for the position should relate to the ability to perform the job, not personal preferences.¹⁸

Determining the essential qualifications without which a candidate would be unable to perform the job and optional qualifications which would be favourable to performing the job will help clearly define the position.¹⁹ It may be helpful to designate a percentage of time for each task/responsibility to help determine which sets of skills are more important than others for the position.²⁰ When including optional qualifications, these ‘nice-to-have’ skills should be clearly demarcated from the ‘must-have’ skills so that an applicant who excels at the required skills is not discouraged from applying due to the belief that all skills in the description were essential.²¹

In order to ensure that the largest number of qualified people can be considered, the skills listed should not be too general as this can exclude talented candidates with specific strengths. For example, the requirement of ‘excellent communication skills’ could “discourage applications from individuals who are outstanding in information and data processing, essential skills for the role, but less confident and competent socially.”²² Avoiding general skillsets is particularly helpful for neurodivergent candidates²³ but can benefit all candidates.

Clear and concise language in the job posting will be easier to understand for all candidates. Further, the job posting should use inclusive, unbiased, ungendered language.²⁴ For example, it is better to use “all genders” than to specify “women and men”, and it is preferable

¹⁸ https://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/fac_employ_equity_guide.pdf at 9.

¹⁹ https://www.uleth.ca/sites/default/files/FacultyEquityHiringGuideOct07final_web.pdf at 4.

²⁰ https://www.uleth.ca/sites/default/files/FacultyEquityHiringGuideOct07final_web.pdf at 4.

²¹ https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/neurodiversity-at-work_2018_tcm18-37852.pdf at 23

²² https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/neurodiversity-at-work_2018_tcm18-37852.pdf at 23.

²³ Neurodivergent: having cognitive functioning different from what is seen as ‘normal’ – e.g. people with autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, or ADHD, read more: https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/neurodiversity-at-work_2018_tcm18-37852.pdf at 8.

²⁴ http://www.chairs-chaire.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_examplaires-eng.aspx

to use the pronoun “them” instead of “him” and/or “her”.²⁵ An important part of the inclusive message in a job posting is an equity commitment statement. This statement should encourage members of the organization’s designated groups to apply, and it should also promote an organizational culture that values diversity and inclusion.²⁶

The hiring committee should discuss specific ways of reaching members of the designated groups and attracting their applications.²⁷ It may require outreach to professional associations, advocacy groups and media outlets which serve the needs and interests of designated group members.²⁸ If possible, there should be a list of relevant contact associations representing designated groups to which the job posting is sent to encourage applications.²⁹

C. Self-Identification of Candidates and Employees

The self-identification of candidates and employees can provide valuable information on the equity goals an organization may seek to accomplish. At the application stage, candidates can be encouraged to self-identify in a number of ways such as on the application form, cover letter or on a resume.³⁰ It is also possible that a candidate may disclose a disability (especially invisible) during the interview, and this requires the interviewer to respond appropriately.³¹ An interviewer should not ask further questions about the disability but may

²⁵ http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_exemplaires-eng.aspx

²⁶ <https://novascotia.ca/psc/pdf/employeeCentre/diverseWorkforce/employmentEquityPolicyGuidelines.pdf> at 8.

²⁷ https://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/fac_employ_equity_guide.pdf at 10.

²⁸ https://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/fac_employ_equity_guide.pdf at 10.

²⁹ https://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/fac_employ_equity_guide.pdf at 10.

³⁰ <https://novascotia.ca/psc/pdf/employeeCentre/diverseWorkforce/employmentEquityPolicyGuidelines.pdf> at 9.

³¹ https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/neurodiversity-at-work_2018_tcm18-37852.pdf at 25.

ask if they need reasonable accommodation, all while taking precautions to not be negatively influenced by the information disclosed when making a hiring decision.³²

To have a better understanding of the representation within the workforce, a self-identification survey should be provided to all new employees and they should be encouraged to fill out the survey.³³ If asking a respondent to identify as a member of a designated group, the survey must provide a definition of each designated group.³⁴ Each question must provide inclusive responses and should have the option to not respond.³⁵

In providing a self-identification survey, the organization must explain to the respondents the purpose of the survey, how the information gathered will be used, privacy concerns and considerations, and the importance of self-identification for a better understanding of equity representation.³⁶ Nonetheless, self-identification is a choice and the organization has to be respectful of the reasons why someone may choose not to self-identify.³⁷

D. Reasonable Accommodation for Candidates and Employees

Human Rights legislation, such as the Quebec *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, provides that employers have a duty to accommodate by providing reasonable accommodation to allow employees to fully exercise their rights. Accommodation may involve “adapting a practice, or a general operating rule or granting an exemption to a person in facing

³² https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/neurodiversity-at-work_2018_tcm18-37852.pdf at 25.

³³ http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_exemplaires-eng.aspx#i

³⁴ http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_exemplaires-eng.aspx#i

³⁵ http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_exemplaires-eng.aspx#i

³⁶ http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_exemplaires-eng.aspx#i

³⁷ http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_exemplaires-eng.aspx#i

discrimination.”³⁸ Reasonable accommodation provides for a duty to accommodate unless it would impose undue hardship on the employer.³⁹ Nonetheless, “undue” implies that some hardship is acceptable but the analysis of undue hardship has to consider several factors such as safety, financial cost, employee morale, operational requirements and any impact on collective agreements.⁴⁰

Providing accommodation in the selection process sets the tone for an organization that is willing and prepared to fulfil its duty to accommodate its employees. First, it is important that all interviews be held in accessible locations.⁴¹ All candidates selected for an interview should be asked if they need any accommodations for a successful interview when they are contacted for the interview.⁴²

While it is important that the organization state that it can provide reasonable accommodation, candidates should not be asked during an interview whether they need any accommodations to fulfil the requirements of the position.⁴³ It is best that accommodations only be discussed in an interview if they are raised by the candidate.⁴⁴ After a candidate is offered employment, then the successful candidate may be asked whether they need any accommodations to fulfil their duties.⁴⁵

³⁸ <http://www.cdpcj.qc.ca/en/droits-de-la-personne/responsabilites-employeurs/Pages/accommodement.aspx>

³⁹ <https://novascotia.ca/psc/pdf/employeeCentre/diverseWorkforce/employmentEquityPolicyGuidelines.pdf> at 11.

⁴⁰ <https://novascotia.ca/psc/pdf/employeeCentre/diverseWorkforce/employmentEquityPolicyGuidelines.pdf> at 11.

⁴¹ https://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/fac_employ_equity_guide.pdf at 13.

⁴² <https://novascotia.ca/psc/pdf/employeeCentre/diverseWorkforce/employmentEquityPolicyGuidelines.pdf> at 12.

⁴³ <https://novascotia.ca/psc/pdf/employeeCentre/diverseWorkforce/employmentEquityPolicyGuidelines.pdf> at 12.

⁴⁴ <https://novascotia.ca/psc/pdf/employeeCentre/diverseWorkforce/employmentEquityPolicyGuidelines.pdf> at 12.

⁴⁵ <https://novascotia.ca/psc/pdf/employeeCentre/diverseWorkforce/employmentEquityPolicyGuidelines.pdf> at 12.

While providing an environment where individuals feel safe to disclose their needs for accommodation is essential, providing adjustments to persons who may not disclose or recognize their own disability can make a big difference.⁴⁶ For example, providing interview questions to a candidate in advance can allow a candidate to prepare in a less stressful manner or providing agenda organizers to employees may assist with time management and prioritization.⁴⁷

E. Preparing for the Interview Process

Selection of the candidates to be interviewed must be based on the principles of merit, fairness and equity.⁴⁸ It is necessary to remain conscious of the real needs of the position. The job applicants who meet or exceed the minimum job qualifications are to be considered for the short-list for a job interview.⁴⁹ Where candidates self-identify, if no members of the designated groups are selected for the interview, take the time to consider why.⁵⁰ If possible, revisit the job posting and advertising methods and attempt to get a more diverse group of qualified candidates apply for the position.

It is essential to avoid bias as much as possible in the interview process so that the interview can focus on how much the candidate meets the bona fide requirements of the position.⁵¹ Hiring managers need to plan ahead that they can have sufficient time to prepare for the interview, accommodate the candidate and debrief. Research shows that when people slow down, they are less likely to rely on bias and more likely to make more equitable hiring

⁴⁶ https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/neurodiversity-at-work_2018_tcm18-37852.pdf at 28.

⁴⁷ https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/neurodiversity-at-work_2018_tcm18-37852.pdf at 28.

⁴⁸ <https://novascotia.ca/psc/pdf/employeeCentre/diverseWorkforce/employmentEquityPolicyGuidelines.pdf> at 14.

⁴⁹ http://www.hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/right-people-selection.cfm#_secA1

⁵⁰ https://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/fac_employ_equity_guide.pdf at 11.

⁵¹ https://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/fac_employ_equity_guide.pdf at 12.

decisions.⁵² Hiring committee members should schedule at least 15 minutes between each interview to be able to fully debrief and avoid bias.⁵³

Preparing the candidate in advance may allow for better performance from candidates with varying abilities. In advance, the candidate should be told how long the interview will be, who the panel members will be and the types of questions that will be asked.⁵⁴

A variety of evaluation formats may provide a more accurate assessment of a candidate's qualifications simply because candidates may differ in communication and presentation styles.⁵⁵ When using various evaluation methods, it has to be determined which criteria are being tested by each method and to then rate each candidate according to how they meet the requirements.⁵⁶ If possible, using a work placement visit as an alternative evaluation format to a formal interview can allow candidates to understand the job context and better showcase their capabilities, particularly for neurodivergent candidates.⁵⁷

When using an interview format, evidence suggests that a structured interview approach with questions that focus on the essential duties of the job, as well as the organization's goals and missions, provides the best interview results.⁵⁸ When using the structured interview format, one of the manners to avoid biases is to prepare a series of set questions, which all candidates are to be asked, and which are equitable and relate directly to the job requirements.⁵⁹

⁵² <https://www.cityofmadison.com/employeeenet/documents/human-resources/RESJequitableHiringTool.pdf> at 7.

⁵³ <https://www.cityofmadison.com/employeeenet/documents/human-resources/RESJequitableHiringTool.pdf> at 7.

⁵⁴ http://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/best_practices-pratiques_exemplaires-eng.aspx

⁵⁵ https://www.uleth.ca/sites/default/files/FacultyEquityHiringGuideOct07final_web.pdf at 5.

⁵⁶ https://www.uleth.ca/sites/default/files/FacultyEquityHiringGuideOct07final_web.pdf at 5.

⁵⁷ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-can-employers-meet-challenge-interview-setting-supporting-kirby/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.linnbenton.edu/faculty-and-staff/college-services/human-resources/recruitment-and-hiring/recruitment-and-hiring-guidelines-for-contracted-positions.php#Types>

⁵⁹ https://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/fac_employ_equity_guide.pdf at 12.

It is suggested that these set questions do not rule out individualized follow-up questions as long as the need to provide equitable experiences for all is respected.⁶⁰

The questions asked should be tied to the essential duties of the job which can help candidates understand the reality of the position while also allowing the candidates to provide more informative responses that enhance the dialogue between the candidate and hiring committee.⁶¹ The questions asked should also be clearly defined and measurable, targeting responses about the knowledge, skills and abilities required to successfully carry out the essential duties of the position.⁶² The hiring committee should also create an answer guide showing the desired answers and the corresponding marking scheme before the interviews.⁶³ This will allow the interviewer to rely on more objective considerations as during the interview, the interviewer can record and score the candidate's answers against the answer guide.⁶⁴

Where using behaviour-based questions, these questions may focus on job-related experience, but candidates should be encouraged to offer hypothetical responses when they may not have certain experience in a particular area.⁶⁵ The questions should be open-ended to allow the candidate to elaborate on their experiences when responding.⁶⁶

Questions that require any self-identifying information that is protected by human rights legislation such as questions about race, religious beliefs., sexual orientation, national or

⁶⁰ <https://www.linnbenton.edu/faculty-and-staff/college-services/human-resources/recruitment-and-hiring/recruitment-and-hiring-guidelines-for-contracted-positions.php#Types>

⁶¹ <https://www.linnbenton.edu/faculty-and-staff/college-services/human-resources/recruitment-and-hiring/recruitment-and-hiring-guidelines-for-contracted-positions.php#Types>

⁶² <https://www.linnbenton.edu/faculty-and-staff/college-services/human-resources/recruitment-and-hiring/recruitment-and-hiring-guidelines-for-contracted-positions.php#Types>

⁶³ <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/5-interviewing-and-making-hiring-decisions>

⁶⁴ <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/5-interviewing-and-making-hiring-decisions>

⁶⁵ <https://www.linnbenton.edu/faculty-and-staff/college-services/human-resources/recruitment-and-hiring/recruitment-and-hiring-guidelines-for-contracted-positions.php#Types>

⁶⁶ <https://www.linnbenton.edu/faculty-and-staff/college-services/human-resources/recruitment-and-hiring/recruitment-and-hiring-guidelines-for-contracted-positions.php#Types>

ethnic origin, or physical or mental disability, should be avoided, unless it is based on a bona fide occupational requirement.⁶⁷ Consideration should be made to how questions may be perceived from candidates from different cultures, perspectives and experiences so that questions and anticipated responses are not just from the dominant culture perspective.⁶⁸

To be more accommodating to neurodivergent candidates, there are other methods of modifying the interview process which once again benefit all candidates. First, candidates should be made aware in advance that they can come with someone as needed.⁶⁹ Candidates should also be told that they are allowed to bring notes in the interview session or to take notes during the interview as needed so that there will be less pressure on memorizing materials.⁷⁰ In creating questions, avoid preparing hypothetical or situational questions and instead replace them with explicit questions targeted at eliciting similar information.⁷¹

F. During the Interview Process

All candidates should have the opportunity to answer all questions. Where necessary, follow-up questions should be posed to allow for enough information to be gathered to make an evaluation.⁷² Also, where questions are not answered appropriately, questions should be rephrased to elicit an appropriate response.⁷³ During the interview, the interviewer should give the candidate sufficient time to answer each question without interrupting.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ https://www.uleth.ca/sites/default/files/FacultyEquityHiringGuideOct07final_web.pdf at 7.

⁶⁸ <https://www.linnbenton.edu/faculty-and-staff/college-services/human-resources/recruitment-and-hiring/recruitment-and-hiring-guidelines-for-contracted-positions.php#Types>

⁶⁹ <https://www.autismandneurodiversitytoolkit.org/interview-settings>

⁷⁰ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-can-employers-meet-challenge-interview-setting-supporting-kirby/>

⁷¹ <https://www.autismandneurodiversitytoolkit.org/interview-settings>

⁷² https://www.uleth.ca/sites/default/files/FacultyEquityHiringGuideOct07final_web.pdf at 6.

⁷³ https://www.uleth.ca/sites/default/files/FacultyEquityHiringGuideOct07final_web.pdf at 6.

⁷⁴ https://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/fac_employ_equity_guide.pdf at 12.

Consistency is very important in the interview process. It is best to keep the order of the questions and the person who asks the questions the same as these variables can affect the candidate's response.⁷⁵ Each member of the hiring committee should independently note the responses of each candidate in order to debrief later with the entire committee.⁷⁶ This will require each hiring committee member to actively note a candidate's suitability for the job with informed and targeted observations rather than having to rely on emotion and conjecture for post-interview evaluations.

With special consideration of neurodivergent candidates, there are additional practices than can create a more equitable interview experience. It is best if interviewers wear name badges or have name cards clearly visible as well as introduce themselves and their roles.⁷⁷ At the beginning of an interview, it can help a person who is feeling anxious to be provided with water or explicitly being told they can have some water at any time during the interview.⁷⁸ Further, it is best to avoid having multiple interviewers asking questions rapidly as this can increase stress and anxiety and make the questions more difficult to follow particularly for neurodivergent candidates.⁷⁹

G. Post-Interview Evaluations

When evaluating interviewed candidates, it is essential to avoid implicit bias that may come from inconsistent and biased assessments. Responses provided by a candidate in an interview should be scored against pre-set criteria based on the essential job requirements.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ https://www.uleth.ca/sites/default/files/FacultyEquityHiringGuideOct07final_web.pdf at 6.

⁷⁶ https://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/fac_employ_equity_guide.pdf at 12.

⁷⁷ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-can-employers-meet-challenge-interview-setting-supporting-kirby/>

⁷⁸ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-can-employers-meet-challenge-interview-setting-supporting-kirby/>

⁷⁹ https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/neurodiversity-at-work_2018_tcm18-37852.pdf at 26.

⁸⁰ <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/5-interviewing-and-making-hiring-decisions>

This will avoid the biases from any inconsistent weighting by hiring committee members or evaluations based on “fit”.⁸¹ In selecting a candidate to be offered the position, there has to be adequate documentation showing the non-discriminatory reasons for hiring or not hiring each candidate interviewed.⁸² The discussions for selecting candidates should therefore address any unconscious or biased assessments of candidates or any assumptions of merit, based on unstated criteria or subjective standards, to ensure that biases, stereotypes and assumptions do not interfere with assessing a candidate’s competence for the position.⁸³

Evaluating answers of a candidate from a ‘first impression’ and neglecting to engage in follow-up questions when not given an appropriate answer initially can result in bias.⁸⁴ Therefore, when noting or rating responses from a candidate, it is important to consider what the job will be and whether or not the essential duties of the job include eloquent and immediate communication.⁸⁵

It is important to be sensitive to cultural differences which may exist between the interviewer and the candidate such as response styles, language styles and non-verbal differences. In many indigenous cultures, humility is more valued than self-promotion and so these candidates may not be as comfortable talking about their achievements as other candidates.⁸⁶ Some minority group members may respond indirectly to questions before concluding with a direct response and need to be given the opportunity to complete their response.⁸⁷ In other cultures, members may prefer to pause and think before speaking and so

⁸¹ <https://www.linnbenton.edu/faculty-and-staff/college-services/human-resources/recruitment-and-hiring/recruitment-and-hiring-guidelines-for-contracted-positions.php#Types>

⁸² <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/5-interviewing-and-making-hiring-decisions>

⁸³ <https://www.linnbenton.edu/faculty-and-staff/college-services/human-resources/recruitment-and-hiring/recruitment-and-hiring-guidelines-for-contracted-positions.php#Types>

⁸⁴ <https://www.linnbenton.edu/faculty-and-staff/college-services/human-resources/recruitment-and-hiring/recruitment-and-hiring-guidelines-for-contracted-positions.php#Types>

⁸⁵ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-can-employers-meet-challenge-interview-setting-supporting-kirby/>

⁸⁶ Nova Scotia Barrister’s Society Employment Equity Guide at 7.

⁸⁷ Nova Scotia Barrister’s Society Employment Equity Guide at 8.

interviewers should allow a candidate sufficient time to respond.⁸⁸ Other individuals may respond with a minimal answer without elaborating or volunteering additional information, but this does not mean they are not interested in the position or experienced.⁸⁹ These should all be considered valid response styles in an interview.

As for language styles, individuals who do not have French or English as first languages may use different stress or intonation when speaking than native speakers or they may not use certain courtesy phrases that do not exist in their native languages but which do not reflect a lack of respect.⁹⁰ As for non-verbal differences, eye contact as well as hand and head shakes may be avoided or approached differently by certain cultures and so interviewers should be wary of allowing these behaviours to negatively influence evaluations of such candidates.⁹¹

Similarly, with neurodivergent candidates, the hiring committee should avoid evaluating a candidate poorly based on unconventional body language or an apparent lack of social interaction skills.⁹² Some candidates may provide ‘overly honest’ responses, may not be able to make and/or maintain eye contact, and may need to take time to think about their responses, but these actions should not necessarily be seen as an inability to complete the essential duties of the job.⁹³

⁸⁸ Nova Scotia Barrister’s Society Employment Equity Guide at 8.

⁸⁹ Nova Scotia Barrister’s Society Employment Equity Guide at 8.

⁹⁰ Nova Scotia Barrister’s Society Employment Equity Guide at 8.

⁹¹ Nova Scotia Barrister’s Society Employment Equity Guide at 8.

⁹² https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/neurodiversity-at-work_2018_tcm18-37852.pdf at 26.

⁹³ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-can-employers-meet-challenge-interview-setting-supporting-kirby/>

Methodology

SSMU practices for hiring new staff for paid and unpaid positions were reviewed from January to October 2018. The SSMU equity policy was reviewed to consider existing equity practices at SSMU and the existing gap from which to build an employment equity policy.

Senior Employment Equity Advisor at McGill, Tynan Jarrett, provided insight on McGill's employment equity policies and practices, including the voluntary job applicant equity survey, designated groups at McGill and diversity training and advising available at McGill.

Interviews were conducted with permanent HR staff and student staff involved in the hiring process for both the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 academic years. Of the hiring managers interviewed: one student staff member was hired for the 2017-2018 academic year; two student staff members were hired for the 2018-2019 year; 2 HR staff members were hired for both the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 years. These interviews addressed questions in relation to determining qualifications necessary for the job, selecting candidates to interview, evaluating the points-based system for comparing candidates and addressing any problems or dangers with the current hiring practices.

Various job postings were reviewed on the SmartRecruiter interface to assess the ease of use and the quality and quantity of information provided. The points-based ranking system was also reviewed on SmartRecruiter which allowed for the ranking of candidates to determine which 2-4 candidates would be selected for an interview.

The job postings, candidate comparison grids and SSMU Interview Guide were reviewed specifically for the positions of Secretary General, Chief Electoral Officer, Judicial Board Justice and Students from Care Project Assistant. The CVs and interviews of the candidates for these aforementioned positions were also reviewed and compared to how these

candidates were evaluated in oral discussion between the interviewers and then scored on the candidate comparison grids.

Of the four positions reviewed, three were for paid positions while the position of Judicial Board Justice is unpaid. Nonetheless, the interview process was similarly reviewed for all four positions.

For further research, it would be helpful to observe and review the training that new student staff receive in order to fulfil their roles as hiring managers. It would also be beneficial to attend meetings of the SSMU executive where new staff members are approved to review the considerations that are prioritized in individual cases of hiring, particularly where the proposed candidate isn't necessarily the one with the highest points as determined by the candidate comparison grid.

It would also be beneficial to look at employment equity for SSMU employees after being hired in the areas of contract extension and/or re-hiring for another academic year, compensation, conditions of work and performance appraisal to provide for a more robust employment equity policy.

Findings & Discussion

The SSMU equity policy does not address employment equity at SSMU and so there is a gap in equitable practices for SSMU employees at the policy level.

In general, the SSMU hiring process was described as follows:

- For recurring position: Review job posting from previous years for vacant position and update it as necessary or advertise it as is.

- For new position: Create new job posting for new position from reviewing similar job postings and advertise.
- On smart recruiters, review candidates' cover letters and CVs and rate candidates out of 5 stars to isolate the top 3 candidates to be interviewed
- Candidates interviewed usually by 2 interviewers using the SSMU interview guide for interview instructions and the questions to ask candidates as well as for rating candidates' responses.
- Interviewers debrief about candidate's interview and discuss points awarded for responses in the interview process after each interview
- Usually select the candidate that has the highest points after all candidates are interviewed as candidate to be offered the position. If not the candidate with the highest points, the rationale for hiring a different candidate is prepared
- The choice of candidate for the job offer is presented at the executive meeting, as well as any rationale for candidate selection
- Candidate is offered position and is presented with employee contract and necessary documents upon acceptance

The interest and desire to attract, interview and hire the most qualified candidates in the most equitable process was evident in the hiring process for the four positions reviewed. Hiring managers complied with the SSMU interview guide when asking questions during the interview but there were usually differences in how the interview was introduced and the types of questions described. The hiring managers appeared to be as accommodating during the interviews but there were subtle differences in tone and responses for different candidates. The debriefs post-interviews were helpful in discussing the rating based on merit and fairness but did not reflect on equitable considerations that could impact the evaluations.

Therefore, barriers such as insufficient recruiting, numerous transitions and insufficient training of hiring managers, difficulties with managing the timeline of the interview process, dated interview processes which staff don't understand or seek to change, and general capacity constraints have resulted in an employment equity framework at SSMU that is inadequate for SSMU to achieve its employment equity goals.

Common issues addressed by hiring managers were:

- Re-hiring of staff from previous years without input of new executive
- Insufficient training for hiring managers beyond the basics – information was lacking details such as tips, nuances, avoiding biases, guided responses
- High turnover of staff
- Subjectivity and inconsistency in rating and ranking candidates throughout the process
- Rigidity of interview guide
- Not advertising positions properly or long enough
- Not paying employees a living wage

While in practice, there were certain steps in the employment process that encourage employment equity, the uniformity and consistency of equitable practices was lacking. The review of the SSMU interview Guide, SmartRecruiter ranking process, job postings, Candidate comparison grids and the interview and de-brief process, revealed many of these issues raised by hiring managers.

The Judicial Board Justice candidate selection process highlighted the difficulty of attracting diverse candidates and the challenges of a reasonable timeline for interviews and job offers. With no female candidates interviewed initially, the position had to be re-opened for submissions of candidacy which caused further delays in the candidate selection process. Where designated groups are determined, much more effort will have to go to reach out to their

particular communities to advertise SSMU jobs in order to attract and hire diverse and qualified candidates for certain positions. There also seemed to be a challenge with organization for processes such as when job postings went out, when payment would be approved by HR and how long the posting was available for the application deadline. This would make it more difficult to attract candidates and could create a more stressful process for candidates when timelines are not clearly communicated or are unreasonable for the candidate.

Selecting candidates for interviews used a simplistic ranking system that was open to interpretation for each hiring manager using it. This created uncertainties in how equitable the selection process was as the ranking was very subjective. Since job experience usually has to be considered in terms of transferable skills, subjectivity was still necessary but could be balanced with greater objective criteria in how points were to be awarded to candidates. Different hiring managers had developed different strategies to come to a 'fair' ranking out of 5 but a detailed step-by-step process would be needed for a consistent approach to selecting candidates.

The post-interview evaluation process was also challenging for hiring managers due to a lack of consistency and training. There was an experiential portion of training so new hiring managers would see how the interview operated before being responsible for conducting interviews themselves. However, the nuances of the interview process were not discussed with any particular attention to avoiding bias and being as accommodating as possible. Learning by observation should also be accompanied by other resources to guide new hiring managers on the most equitable interview process. Different hiring managers also described differing understandings of what the points awarded meant when evaluating a candidate post-interview, which highlights inadequate training which would cause further inconsistent evaluations.

Some of the interview questions themselves did not match up to the grading rubric which in turn did not accurately reflect the necessary qualifications for the position. For example, the rating out of 5 for ‘communication skills’ in some interviews vs ‘communication skills-written’ AND ‘communication skills-verbal’ in other interviews required analyzing the response from the same interview question “Explain a situation where you have had to use verbal or written communication to get your point across.” This could also mean that in the job posting the emphasis on communication skills (where two points-based categories for communications existed) would not be clear since written and verbal communication skills are still quite general as requirements.

Therefore, some of the issues were interconnected throughout the hiring process and would require substantive reworking of the process to overcome these challenges and improve employment equity at SSMU.

Recommendations

It is recommended that SSMU develop an employment equity plan, an employment equity policy and an employment equity self-identification survey. The employment equity policy and plan should both recognize the systemic barriers to employment that marginalized groups face and the SSMU commitment to employment equity and its goals to combat these systemic issues in employment.

An employment equity plan can be introduced before the policy or self-identification survey are developed. Such a plan will be beneficial to create a timeline for the employment equity goals of SSMU and increase accountability for meeting these goals over a 5-year or 10-year period. Since there is so much transition within the SSMU employee pool, particularly due to contract positions and staffing on an academic year basis, an employment equity plan

will provide consistency and direction for SSMU despite changes in leadership which will provide a much more positive environment for adopting employment equity practices.

The employment equity policy should address the six areas discussed in the Review of Literature namely: Training and Composition of the Hiring Committee, Developing the Job Post and Advertising the Position, Self-Identification of Candidates and Employees, Reasonable Accommodation for Candidates and Employees, Preparing for the Interview Process, During the Interview and Post-Interview Evaluations. It would also be beneficial to include employment equity practices which would also apply to current employees such as the Possibility of Promotion and Career Mobility, Fair Compensation and Conditions of Work.

While the employment equity policy should state that it applies to all SSMU employees, there should be consideration of students in unpaid positions that do not necessarily fit the definition of employees. Since employment equity policies require significant constraints on the employer, it may not be reasonable for the employment equity policy to directly apply to volunteers, although this would be ideal. This would account for the nature of unpaid positions with SSMU which may be short-term or have limited time recruitment, etc. However, it is strongly advised that where unpaid positions are similarly structured to paid positions that the same employment equity practices be applied, even if not mandatory in the policy.

SSMU should develop an employment equity plan that affirms:

A. *Training and Composition of the Hiring Committee*

- **Hiring managers should receive robust employment equity training.** Employment equity training should be an ongoing process that involves open and honest discussions about privilege, oppression, bias, accommodation and equity. It is best if training is facilitated by a trained equity advisor either from McGill or the community as often as needed, but at least annually due to the nature of the turnover of hiring managers at

SSMU. Training should include aspects such as ally training, reconciliation, inclusivity, intercultural competence, accessibility and accommodation. There should be reading material available on employment equity for hiring managers to continue to familiarize themselves with the concepts. On an individual basis, hiring managers could be encouraged to complete Implicit Association Tests to better understand their own implicit biases and therefore where they may need to consciously put more effort into overcoming these biases as they fulfil the role of hiring manager.

- **Develop an Equitable Interviews 101 Guide that goes beyond the set interview questions provided for in the SSMU Interview Guide.** This guide should be available for hiring managers to review and refresh their understanding of employment equity as needed and before interviews. With the development of an employment equity policy there will not need to be a comprehensive 101 Guide but it should at least be 1-2 pages of the most pertinent information including tips on use of language and nonverbal communication to avoid bias (including what to say and what not to say), ways to provide reasonable accommodation, guidelines on objectivity, outline of interview structure for consistency, etc.
- **If possible, include a member of a designated group on the hiring committee for each interview.** Since there are usually two hiring managers in an interview, this would require at least one to be a member of a designated group where possible. Where the candidate has identified as a member of a particular group, if a hiring manager identifies as belonging to that same designated group, then it is preferable that the hiring manager be included in the interview – except where there is a deemed conflict because the hiring manager knows the interview candidate. Requiring representation on the hiring committee may come at a cost where there are only few hiring managers who are members of designated groups. Therefore, work allocation has to be done in

consideration of which hiring managers may be called on frequently for interviewing candidates who are not a part of their own staff. Where possible, staff who are not generally part of the hiring committee, may with the requisite training, take part in the interview process when self-identifying as a member of a designated group to facilitate a more representative hiring committee. This may include, for example, a SSMU equity commissioner who identifies as a woman of colour.

- **Ensure consistency in ranking and rating candidates before, during and after interviews by ensuring consistent training of hiring managers.** Due to the turnover of hiring managers, hiring managers will be trained at different times by different persons. It is thus very important that the training is consistent and includes pre-set criteria for ranking candidates at different stages of the hiring process. When training is subjective and done by various hiring managers, the new hiring managers will also have different ideas and understandings of the ranking process which contributes to a lack of uniformity in the hiring process and too few guidelines to reduce bias and subjectivity.

B. Developing the Job Post and Advertising the Position

- **Ensure reasonable timelines for candidate recruitment to attract qualified and diverse candidates.** There has to be efficient organization for the posting of positions to be well enough in advance to recruit enough qualified candidates before the time for interviews. The process should also be transparent enough that interview candidates are made aware of the period in which interviews will be scheduled and when they will be informed if they have received the job offer or not. Making these timelines transparent and reasonable is as important as sticking to them as best as possible.

- **Make qualifications more job-specific and avoid requiring general skills and qualifications that over exclude potential candidates.** For example, ‘strong communication skills - written’ can be more job-specific depending on the type of communications skills that the job requires. A secretarial position could clarify the writing skills required by qualifying that the candidate ought to be able to take notes quickly and effectively. The required skills and responsibilities should directly relate to the performance of the job and organizational needs. While specifying the required and preferred skills may lead to a larger number of qualifications listed, when these skills required are more specific it can allow more candidates to apply as they are able to truly evaluate if they meet the requirements and not be dissuaded by vague or general qualifications. Further, these detailed qualifications on the job listing provide the framework for the evaluation of candidates based on specific criteria from the posting which increases the objectivity in the process.
- **Use inclusive, unbiased and ungendered language in all job postings.** This prevents othering and excluding potential candidates. This is currently well done but has to be considered when job postings are edited to increase specificity for job-relatedness.
- **Include an employment equity commitment on all job postings.** It would be best to include that all designated groups are encouraged to apply but to also affirm human rights legislation of non-discrimination on the basis of “race, colour, sex, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, a handicap or the use of any means to palliate a handicap” as per the Quebec Charter. It is important that this statement not be a generic equity statement but be meaningful and affirmative in its use of employment equity language.

- **Advertise positions to specific community and student groups which cater to underrepresented groups or designated groups as adopted under the policy.**

Traditional models of advertisement may not be as effective as reaching members of underrepresented or designated groups. Therefore, a list of community and student groups who are willing and able to share SSMU job postings with their members should be used to attract more diverse candidates and encourage their applications to SSMU positions. These particular groups should be contacted initially as soon as the job posting goes live and not at a later date as half-hearted attempt to increase the diversity of the applicant pool.

C. Self-Identification of Candidates and Employees

- **Determine designated groups for the SSMU employment equity policy.** These designated groups would be determined with the consideration of the federal and provincial designated groups, which both include women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and visible minorities with Quebec legislation also including ethnic minorities. It would be ideal for SSMU to include more marginalized and underrepresented groups in its designated groups for employment equity such as including persons who are not cisgender and not heterosexual but of minority gender identity or sexual orientation.
- **Create a self-identification survey for existing SSMU employees.** A self-identification survey would assist with identifying members of the designated groups who are current SSMU employees in order to identify the diversity and equity goals of SSMU when hiring for new positions. It is essential that any self-identifying questionnaires are not obligatory and also include the option of ‘prefer not to answer’

as self-identification must be voluntary. A self-identification survey could include questions related to gender identity, sexual orientation, indigenous status, disabilities (visible & invisible), racialized persons/ people of colour, and ethno-cultural identity.

- **Encourage candidates to self-identify on the application form when applying to SSMU positions through SmartRecruiter.** It would be helpful to ask for self-identifying information from candidates who apply to SSMU positions which could be a separate question included on the SmartRecruiter platform when applicants upload their cover letters and CVs. As with all self-identification, this should be voluntary. Where self-identifying information is provided by candidates, the hiring committee may be able to tell how many members of designated groups are applying and evaluate whether members of designated groups are being selected for interviews and determine why.
- **Disclose the purpose of collecting self-identifying information and keep the information confidential.** Respondents must be aware of the purpose of a self-identification survey or self-identifying application question before they are asked to respond as it relates to the importance of self-identification for understanding equity representation. Respondents also should be assured that any information provided would be kept private and confidential.

D. Reasonable Accommodation for Candidates and Employees

- **Provide accommodation as needed to candidates throughout the hiring process.** In job postings, the willingness and ability to accommodate candidates should be stated. It is also necessary to ask if a candidate would need to be accommodated for a successful interview when contacting candidates to set up interviews. When asked for an accommodation, SSMU should respond to the candidate within a reasonable time

addressing how the candidate will be accommodated. If there is an accommodation requested that is deemed to be undue hardship, communicate the limitations on accommodation to the candidate promptly. Responses to requests for accommodation must be recorded and records maintained confidential for as long as needed.

- **Remind current staff of SSMU's duty to accommodate and offer to provide reasonable accommodation.** At regular intervals, SSMU employees should be updated about reasonable accommodation in terms of how to make requests, timelines for requests to be met and opportunities to speak confidentially to HR about how accommodation needs have been met. SSMU should provide reasonable accommodation to employees unless doing so would result in undue hardship.

E. Preparing for the Interview Process

- **Ranking used to select candidates for interviews must be consistent and based more on objective criteria.** This would require a simple grading rubric that includes different categories in order to rank required and preferred skills. This would need a step-by-step detailed process so that hiring managers would be able to complete the grading rubric in a consistent manner without developing their own methods of ranking candidates. There should be clear comments for the ranking of the candidates so that the rating out of 5 for certain skills required are pinpointed to the skills outlined in the CV and cover letter provided. Further, this helps when the ranking process has to be revisited because there may be too many or too few high-ranking candidates for the average 3 candidates to be interviewed.
- **Where no candidates from designated groups apply, revisit the advertisement of the job and/or extend the application deadline.** The same community and student groups that cater to underrepresented groups should be contacted and informed about

the extended application deadline. Where it is not possible to extend the application deadline, this must be noted and debriefs done to assess how to avoid such challenges with the applicant pool for future positions.

- **Schedule interviews within a reasonable time after the application deadline has closed and provide essential information such as the availability of reasonable accommodation, the length of time for the interview, the identity of the interviewers and the types of questions or evaluation to be used.**
- **Include offers to accommodate candidates when inviting them to interview.** This includes ensuring that the interview will be held at an accessible location. Candidates should be told they are able to bring a support person or support animal as needed.
- **Schedule interviews with enough time for hiring managers to prepare for the interview before and fully debrief afterwards.** There should be at least 15 minutes scheduled for the debrief of a candidate post-interview.
- **Include job-specific interview questions for each particular position to ensure job-relatedness for questions in the Interview Guide.** All candidates for the same position are to be asked the same set of questions, with allowance for follow-up for clarity and additional information as needed. While the interview guides currently include job-specific questions, the proportion of these questions related to other questions may need to be revised so that the interview is predominantly job-related. Behaviour-based questions and general questions can also be edited to explain the purpose of the question in relation to the specific job within SSMU. The weighting of the different categories of questions may also be assessed in terms of whether the structure creates any unnecessary barriers for members of the designated groups.
- **Grading rubric for interview must be detailed and contain specific information on the rating scale and sample responses.** Sample responses are necessary to better avoid

the inconsistency in grading on a 1-5 scale with some hiring managers being considered 'hard graders' or easily distinguishable from their colleagues. For example, differentiating between a 3 out of 5 or 4 out of 5 can be facilitated by making pre-set criteria that has to be included to differentiate the two. This may not be clear to do with some open-ended question but creating a guideline is a more equitable step than working without one.

- **Where possible, develop alternative evaluation formats such as a work placement to provide greater accessibility to candidates who may not present well in the standard interview format.** This may be more possible for certain positions, so in re-advertising an older position or creating a new one, there should be consideration of using a more inclusive evaluation format.

F. During the Interview

- **Provide candidates with information about the interview in advance to reduce anxiety.** It would be best to provide the interview questions at least 15 minutes before the interview to the candidates so they may prepare. Once the interview is about to begin, it is best to explain the structure of the interview, the notes that will be taken, the format of alternating questions and other pertinent information. While it may be difficult to do the same introduction verbatim, avoid missing to address certain information with some candidates when other candidates are given more information.
- **Require consistency where the same interviewers should conduct all interviews for a particular position and maintain the order in which they ask questions.** When on average, there are 3 candidates to be interviewed for a single position, using the same interviewers is an attainable goal. However, where there may be extensive interviews

this may not be possible but should be attempted. All candidates should also be asked the same set of questions in the same order.

- **Give candidates the opportunity to answer all the set questions sufficiently enough for their responses to be evaluated.** This may require the use of follow-up questions or giving the candidate more time to arrive at the appropriate response.
- **Provide an accommodating environment for the candidate whether or not there have been special requests for accommodation.** Interviewers should wear name badges and properly introduce themselves and their roles. Candidates should be offered water and pen and paper to use at any time. If a candidate needs to take notes during the interview or takes long pauses, the interviewer should provide the candidate with sufficient time to respond without interrupting them.
- **Ask questions clearly and respond appropriately to responses.** Questions should be asked clearly and should not be hurried to reduce some of the stress and anxiety of the interview process. Interviewers should appear interested in the candidate's responses and express satisfaction with the responses as they take notes or if not satisfied with the response, politely rephrase or follow-up in an appropriate tone.
- **Each interviewer must record the responses of each candidate in as detailed a manner as possible for debrief after the interview.** While intimate knowledge of sample responses that receive different rankings may facilitate the ranking of a candidate's response during the interview, this should be avoided until after the interview. Grading the candidate should be a matter of comparison with the sample responses and not just based on instinct which can be subject to bias. When each interviewer makes note of the content of the responses and the strengths or weaknesses of the responses, these notes are to be detailed as they are more valuable than the split-

second ranking of a response during an interview. This will allow for a more equitable debrief process between interviewers when deciding on ranking a candidate's response.

G. Post-Interview Evaluations

- **In debrief, compare candidate's responses to sample responses and pre-set criteria to evaluate candidate responses and rank them.** Each interviewer should still independently rate the responses and then discuss with other interviewers. With sample responses or the characteristics of a sample answer for various points (e.g. out of 5), ranking responses can be more objective. For example, a substantive guide that requires a 5-point answer about SSMU to include mention of the role/purpose of SSMU, various bodies within SSMU and services and resources offered by SSMU is a better objective marker of a response than using one candidate's response (usually the first) to evaluate other candidates' responses. If a sample answer cannot necessarily be provided for each rating, each rating can still be assigned a definitive value based on content. For example, a question asking for 3 qualities needed could differ where a 5-point answer includes 3 distinguishable qualities and the reasoning of their importance, while a 4-point answer could be 2 distinguishable qualities and 1 quality similar to one of the first two but with reasoning of their importance.
- **In all evaluations take into consideration the belonging to designated groups or having different communication styles and social skills.** Discussions of bias do not end during training to avoid bias, so there must be an evaluation of any ranking of a response to determine what impact bias may have had and how certain responses can be considered in light of members belonging to designated groups and those of various backgrounds and abilities. For example, a candidate who had to pause and make notes before responding to a question should not be ranked more harshly on a knowledge-

based question than a candidate who answered the question immediately when the substance of their answers is similar.

- **The criteria included on the rubric need to be more job-specific and less simplistic.** For example, ranking based on the category “communication skills” is not that job-specific if the position requires editing and proofreading predominantly, minimal writing and only basic verbal communication with other staff. This is why the post-interview evaluation grid has to match with the more specific candidate requirements from the job posting. When evaluating the candidate pool, there also has to be a discussion of how the skills required on the grading rubric may be inaccessible to certain groups and an evaluation of how necessary these skills are for successful completion of the job.
- **Make notes and keep records from the post-interview debrief highlighting the reasons why a candidate is selected or not selected.** This provides proper documentation if there is ever a claim of discrimination in the interview process. It is also helpful practice to have clear reasoning for hiring decisions rather than a simple point majority, especially for when the candidate who does not have the highest points is selected.

H. Possibility of Promotion and Career Mobility, Fair Compensation and Conditions of Work

While much research was not conducted in this area, SSMU hiring managers have raised concerns about how equitable current practices are in relation to promotion and career mobility, compensation and work conditions. There has to be an objective mechanism to evaluate employees to ensure the most qualified candidates are retained, especially as the

executives change. Nonetheless, it requires caution for the evaluation to not be a subjective endeavour where new executives want to work with new employees they simply like, when competence and qualifications should be determinative. The compensation and conditions of work need to be addressed specifically in relation to employment equity to ensure adequate worker protection and improve employee satisfaction. Further research and discussion with employees would be needed to include these categories in a robust employment equity policy.

Conclusion

SSMU has taken the initiative to evaluate employment equity at SSMU over the past few years. This is an admirable approach which requires one of the next steps to be the development of an employment equity plan which would lay out the goals for SSMU over the next coming years. Developing an employment equity policy will be an extensive process for which the employment equity plan can outline the year of its development and enforcement.

While many of the recommendations outlined in this report will require significant investment in initiatives and resources to enhance employment equity at SSMU, an early first step that can be done as of 2019 would be requiring substantive employment equity training for hiring managers by external trained equity advisors. SSMU should continue to take strides in creating a more equitable workplace for candidates and current employees.

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