Academic Appointment Procedures

Use of Technology in the Interview

The College's recruitment procedures exist to ensure the recruitment of the best possible staff, within legal and other constraints. It is very important, therefore, that Departments and Faculties plan well ahead when recruiting, in order to allow sufficient time for the full recruitment process.

The purpose of the interview is to ascertain the overall suitability of a candidate for a post at the College. Academic posts, and the people who fill them, have an important impact on the College's reputation, standing, effectiveness, and ability to fulfil its mission as a world class institution. It is therefore imperative that all interviews provide the best possible opportunity to select the appropriate candidate. This includes the need for candidates to be physically present at the interview.

It is inevitable that, under very exceptional circumstances, there may be a need for speed or alternative procedures, and candidates for academic posts have then been interviewed remotely, using video conferencing or Skype.

Experience with remote interviews

Experience shows that interviewing remotely can adversely affect the decision-making process. The technology can exacerbate the interpersonal distance between interviewers and interviewee. Remote candidates may appear less impressive than those that are interviewed in person who may appear to have better presentation skills (voice, appearance, charisma). While candidates with charisma and excellent presentation skills will come across well almost anywhere, candidates with less presence may therefore be at a disadvantage when interviewed remotely. It may also be more difficult for the panel to ask deep and searching questions in a free and seamless exchange, as is possible when a candidate is physically present. In short, remote interviews are more stilted and tense, and can be adversely affected by technological problems.

Recommendation

The recommendation is that Skype and video conferencing should only be used as a last resort. Such occasions might be due to:

- Extreme weather conditions;

- Sudden ill health, accident, disability of candidate or an immediate family member whom the candidate has to care for.

Any request for a remote interview must be submitted to the HR member of staff who is coordinating the recruitment and she/he will liaise with the Senior Dean. The request should indicate why an interview cannot be held with the candidate(s) physically present.

Additional remarks

- The College cannot afford a reputation for casual recruitment to important posts, hence the need to limit remote interviewing.

- The College expects external experts (for senior academic appointments) to attend interview panels in person. It follows, therefore, that candidates should also be present. However, in exceptional circumstances, the same rules for remote participation of an external expert should apply.

- While the College's HR and IT staff do everything in their power to ensure a smooth, seamless process, it is inevitable that at times there will be problems with the technology. While it is generally possible to move seamlessly and speedily from one interview to the next when candidates are physically present, this is not always possible with remote interviews, either because of technology problems at the candidate's end or at the College's end. Additional time will have to be factored into the interviewing timetable to allow for such eventualities.

- Selection panels should consider the option of making a *provisional* offer to a candidate selected on the basis of a remote interview. The offer could then be *confirmed* after the selected candidate has visited the College, seen a suitable subset of the selection panel members and satisfied them that their earlier judgement regarding the candidate's suitability was sound.

June 2014