

From: Freedom of Information

Sent: 24 November 2020 13:46

To:

Subject: Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/441)

Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/441)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 30 October 2020, reference K/20/441.

Your request read:

“Please provide me with your:

(a) (i) Unconscious Bias Checklist and (ii) your procedure for the use of Unconscious Bias Observers

(b) information on how unconscious bias is mitigated later in the recruitment process when assessing employment references, because this stage does not appear to be included in (a) above, and yet deciding whether employment references are satisfactory to the university is a similarly subjective judgement and decision.

(c) background information that the following quote is based on, from page 5 of your Recruitment Guide "Ultimately it's the candidate who will make the decision to join us, should we make an offer." when the truth appears to be that you make conditional offers, which ultimately gives the university and not the candidate the final say.”

The University of Leeds holds some information relevant to your request. For your convenience we have responded to each of your questions in turn below.

(a) (i) Unconscious Bias Checklist and (ii) your procedure for the use of Unconscious Bias Observers

It is not University practice to use Unconscious Bias Observers and the University Recruitment Guidance does not include an Unconscious Bias Checklist. We have recently started a small-scale trial of Unconscious Bias Observers in one department. The trial is in the very early stages, with the staff who are going to be involved have recently received training. Once complete, a review of the trial will take place.

(b) information on how unconscious bias is mitigated later in the recruitment process when assessing employment references, because this stage does not appear to be included in (a) above, and yet deciding whether employment references are satisfactory to the university is a similarly subjective judgement and decision.

Unconscious bias is mitigated in the recruitment process because all members of University staff are required to undertake equality training, to ensure they have the same introductory grounding in key principles of equality, inclusion and diversity. Specifically, in the later stages of the recruitment process and as the [University Recruitment Guidance](#) (page 32) outlines, references should not be used as a means of initial selection and should be used to 'back-up' a decision which has already been made. Our recommended practice therefore is to try to obtain references after an offer of employment is made. This process is managed by the University Human Resources Department and the decision on whether references are satisfactory is made in conjunction with the recruiting department. The decision is, therefore, not made by one person.

(c) background information that the following quote is based on, from page 5 of your Recruitment Guide "Ultimately it's the candidate who will make the decision to join us, should we make an offer." when the truth appears to be that you make conditional offers, which ultimately gives the university and not the candidate the final say."

This point in the University's Recruitment Guidance is intended to convey the following point: As an employer, the University of Leeds makes an *offer* of employment. Only the recipient of the offer can decide whether to accept that offer.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions about this email, however, please do not hesitate to contact us on foi@leeds.ac.uk

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you can request an Internal Review. Requests for Internal Review should be made in writing using the following contact information:

Post: Mr D Wardle
Deputy Secretary
The University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9JT

Email: foi@leeds.ac.uk

Requests for Internal Review should be submitted within 40 working days of receiving the University's response to your request. Further information about how the University manages Freedom of Information requests and about our complaints procedure is also available on our website (www.leeds.ac.uk).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review/complaints procedure provided by the University. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Kind regards

Chloe Wilkins

Freedom of Information Officer

Secretariat

University of Leeds