

Best practice in graduate recruitment

Revised January 2007

Best practice in graduate recruitment works to everyone's advantage – students and graduates, recruiters and businesses, careers advisers and higher education institutions. A Code of Practice has been in circulation for many years and this updated guide has been produced to take account of significant changes that have been taking place in the worlds of higher education and employment including:

- the expansion of and the widening participation in higher education
- graduate expectations and aspirations
- the demands and expectations of employers
- developments in recruitment practice such as increasing use of the Internet and external agencies

The guidance within this code, if adhered to, will ensure a balanced, fair approach to graduate recruitment for the benefit of all concerned.

Agreed by:

AGR - Association of Graduate Recruiters

AGCAS - Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services

NUS - National Union of Students

Students

Should:

1. Research the career options available via their institution's careers service, students' unions, job shops and recruitment facilities, web sites, databases, careers fairs and academic departments and other sources.
2. Be prepared and committed to the recruitment process by:
 - I. fully reading the employers' information
 - II. carefully following employers' or their agents' application procedures
 - III. acknowledging promptly an invitation to interview
 - IV. being professional in all dealings with employers seeking only repayment of reasonable expenses incurred during the selection process.
3. Be honest in making applications and accept that false claims and statements are not in anyone's best interest.
4. When accepting an unconditional offer, decline all other offers and withdraw any outstanding applications. Be aware of what is being signed up to. The acceptance in writing of an unconditional offer forms a contract. If students wish to qualify or defer acceptance, they should contact their careers service for advice first whether the offer is in made in writing or verbally.
5. When declining an offer, do so as soon as possible to enable to employer to make alternative arrangements.

Employers

And those acting on their behalf should:

1. Take responsibility for all actions taken by staff and agents acting on their behalf.
2. Provide up-to-date accurate information on the organisation and on positions likely to be on offer to graduates.
3. Recognise the increasing diversity of the graduate market and ensure that all aspects of the recruitment process comply with equal opportunities legislation and best practice.
4. Keep careers services informed of:
 - I. direct approaches being made to academic departments for recruitment purposes
 - II. proposals to use the services of intermediates such as outsourcing and recruitment agencies.
5. Be flexible and provide alternative times and dates for selection activities where these may clash with exams and other important academic demands, religious and cultural obligations or disability requirements or where travel arrangements may be difficult.
6. Ensure selection processes and methods are fair, seen to be fair and clearly explained in advance and during the process. Clarify the availability of any feedback.
7. Keep candidates informed if offer/process is delayed.
8. Allow a reasonable time for decision making (a minimum of 2 weeks). Don't subject candidates to undue or excessive pressure to accept offers - particularly current students.
9. Pay reasonable expenses for off-campus selection processes. Always make it clear before an interview if this is not being offered and give accurate information about how expenses may be claimed.
10. Agree referees with the candidate. Indicate clearly to the candidate and to the referee whether or not the offer is conditional on the reference
11. Clearly explain the terms and conditions of service and the nature of the contract in the offer letter. State whether or not an offer is conditional.
12. Recognise that both the offer of a post and its acceptance forms a contract unless conditions are attached to either.
13. Recognise that any support provided to the career advisory services should not compromise their impartiality.

Careers Services

Should:

1. Make available high quality and inclusive careers education, information and guidance to all their students.
2. Be clear about what services students, recent graduates and employers are entitled to receive from you.
3. Facilitate the recruitment programmes of employers, of those acting on their behalf and of independent recruitment agencies and be clear about any associated charges.
4. Accommodate, where possible, the extension of facilities to graduates/diplomates of other institutions under services to graduates arrangements.
5. Be objective and impartial in relationships with employers and students and avoid entering into any arrangements that might be construed as undermining the neutrality of the careers service.
6. Challenge practices not considered to be in the best interests of students and/or employers.
7. Have discretion relating to the display and distribution of unsolicited materials.

Recruitment agencies

Should:

1. Only put graduates forward for jobs that they are interested in and made aware of.
2. Treat every applicant on merit regardless of age, race, gender and disability.
3. Only advertise vacancies that exist and be prepared to inform careers services in confidence of the employer(s) on whose behalf they are recruiting.
4. Update candidates on progress with their job search through regular feedback.
5. Supply adequate information to prospective candidates on job specifications, terms and conditions, locations etc.
6. Do not resubmit candidates who have applied directly for vacancies or been referred by another agency.
7. Only look to place graduates into jobs that are considered appropriate eg: not purely commission based.

Employers, recruitment agencies and publishers of directories/websites are encouraged to promote their acceptance of the guidance above by including it in their publicity material and, of course, to adhere to it in their professional capacities.

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