

Recruitment and selection:

A guide

Educational Competencies Consortium Ltd is a not-for-profit, member-driven organisation, offering a unique mix of high quality, integrated human resource management web-based products together with consultancy and training services.

Our real added value is that we help universities and colleges develop people and performance in a transparent and objective way.

Developing people, delivering results

Our HERA (Higher Education) and FEDRA (Further Education) products provide a range of methods that can be used individually or as a fully integrated web-based package. Role analysis provides the foundation on which to build the links between recruitment, development, reward and recognition, targeted directly at achieving the objectives of the university or college.

Our products have been uniquely developed by and for the Higher and Further Education sectors and can be tailored to meet individual requirements.

The ECC team provides expert support. We do this with a deeply held belief that our work has a positive impact on the results our members are able to achieve. These are not just HR results, but the achievements of the organisation overall.

Please call us to talk about how we can help you achieve your objectives.

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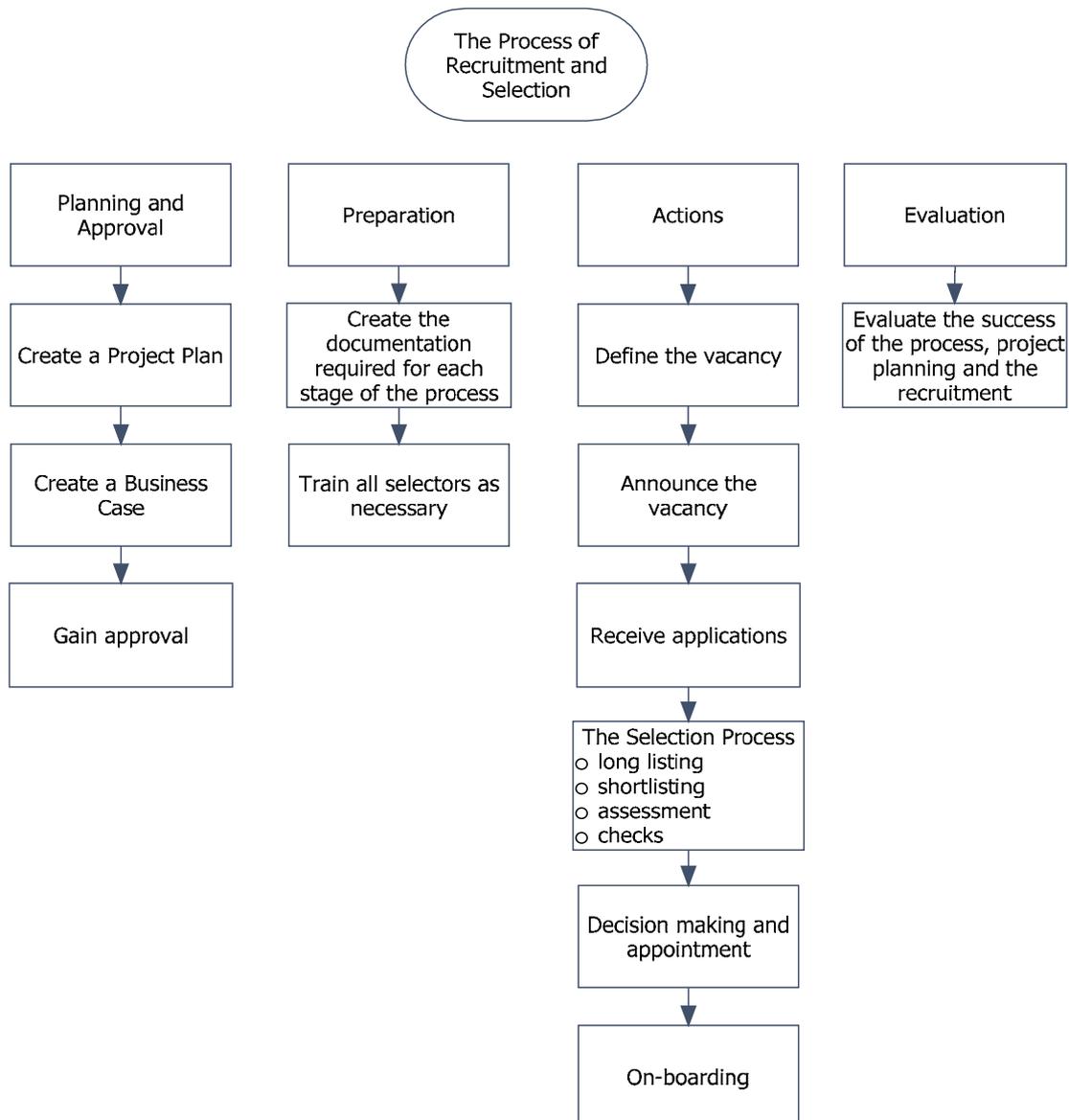
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Introduction

This brochure describes the various stages of the recruitment and selection process and outlines how the use of role analysis (HERA and FEDRA) can underpin and add value to each.

Even where an organisation already has well defined recruitment and selection procedures, examining them individually and collectively is a worthwhile exercise to ensure that they complement each other and provide a robust and efficient process. The following diagram sets out each stage under four headings, however it should be noted that the stages used under the heading Actions define some of the requirements under Planning and Approval and Preparation on the diagram, consequently the sections should not be viewed as completely sequential and a holistic view of the process should be adopted.



Two important factors should be borne in mind at all stages of the process:

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- 1) The organisation is putting itself on display to the outside world. This means that the recruitment and selection process provides the opportunity for the organisation to promote itself, its brand and its reputation. This is potentially extremely positive if done well, however it can also have a significant negative impact if the process looks ill conceived, irrelevant, disorganised and unprofessional.
- 2) At every stage, the candidate is making decisions, not only about the vacancy but also about the organisation, the people, the way it appears to manage itself and their fit, personally and in career terms. The ultimate success of the appointment is dependent on both the organisation and the candidate making the right choice.

Each stage will be looked at in more detail in the following sections.

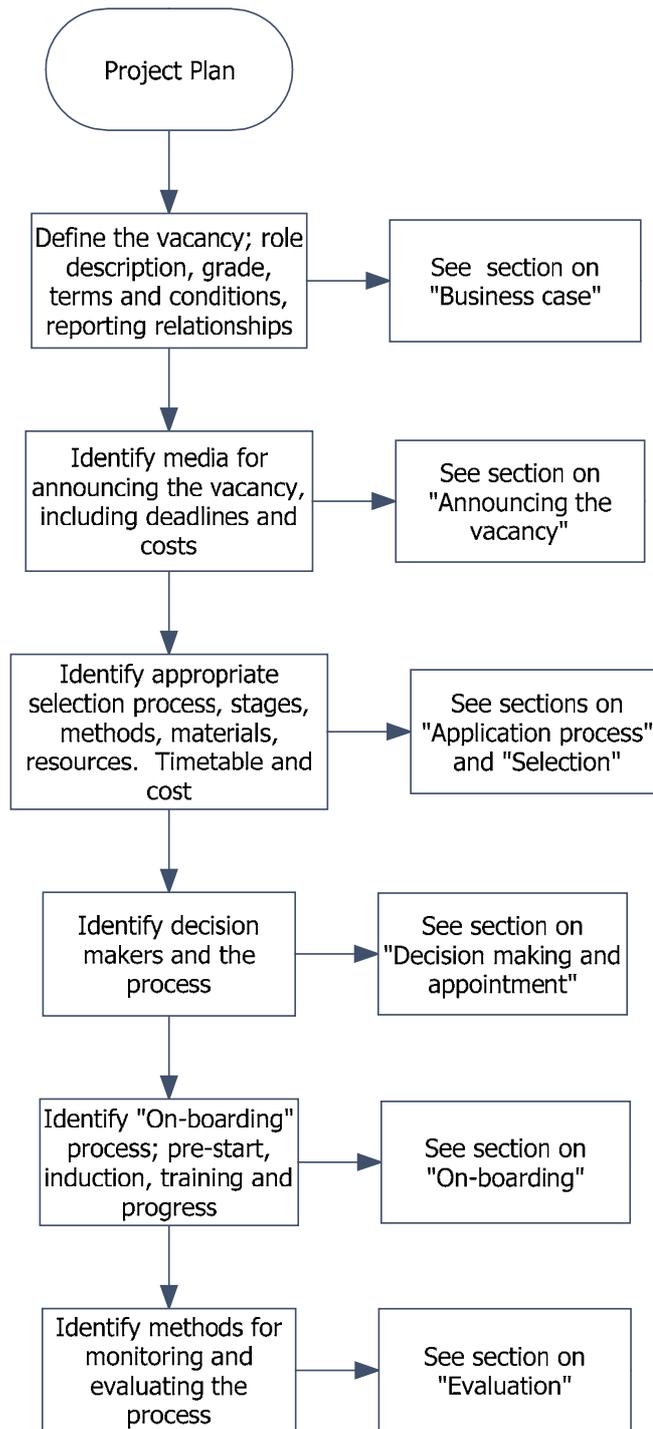
The project plan

Many organisations would not actually consider creating a formal project plan for each vacancy as their internal procedures will determine many of the recruitment and selection processes. However, these as well as the approvals process will almost by default create a plan – even if it is not formally written down.

The use of a project management approach is helpful as it encourages the organisation to think about the appropriateness and effectiveness of its accepted way of working. It also provides a new degree of flexibility by allowing adjustments to be made to suit the needs of each particular vacancy as well as providing better control over cost and timescales. But this approach demands a different organisational mindset.

The diagram indicates some of the areas that a project plan for a recruitment exercise would cover.

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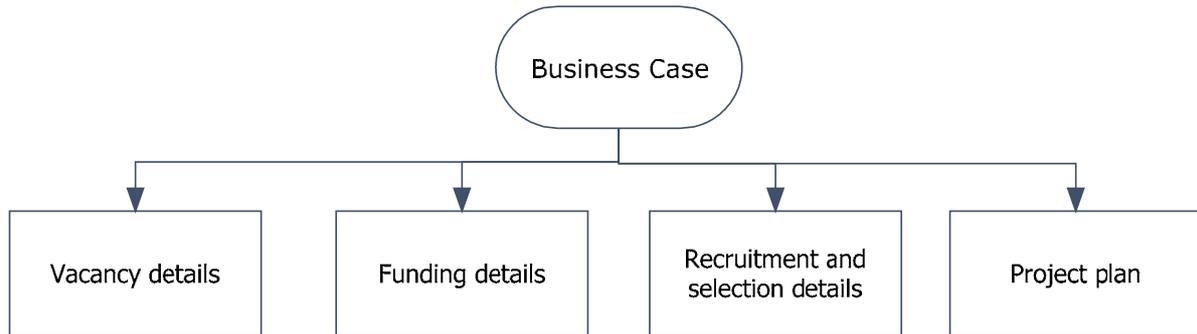
There are a number of ways in which ECC can provide assistance directly, through experience of project planning, project management and the management, design and implementation of recruitment and selection processes, or indirectly through Capita for pay, resourcing and labour market data information.

The business case

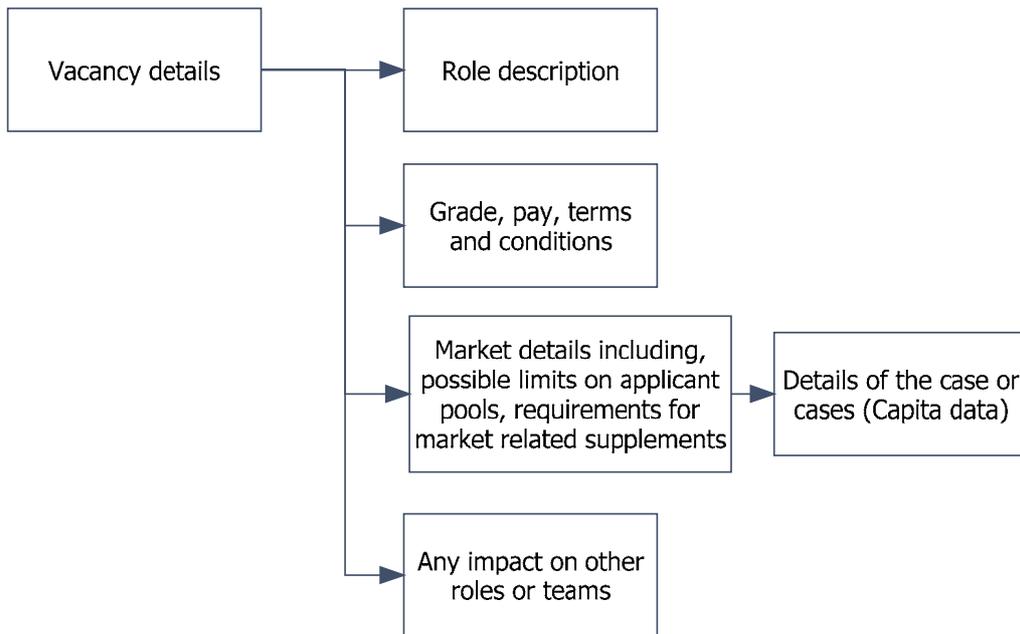
A business case can be drawn up from the elements of the project plan, the details of the vacancy and the cost implications of the recruitment and selection process as well as identifying the funding for the post itself.

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The business case typically will form one of the documents that support the application for approval to recruit depending on how the organisation's processes work.

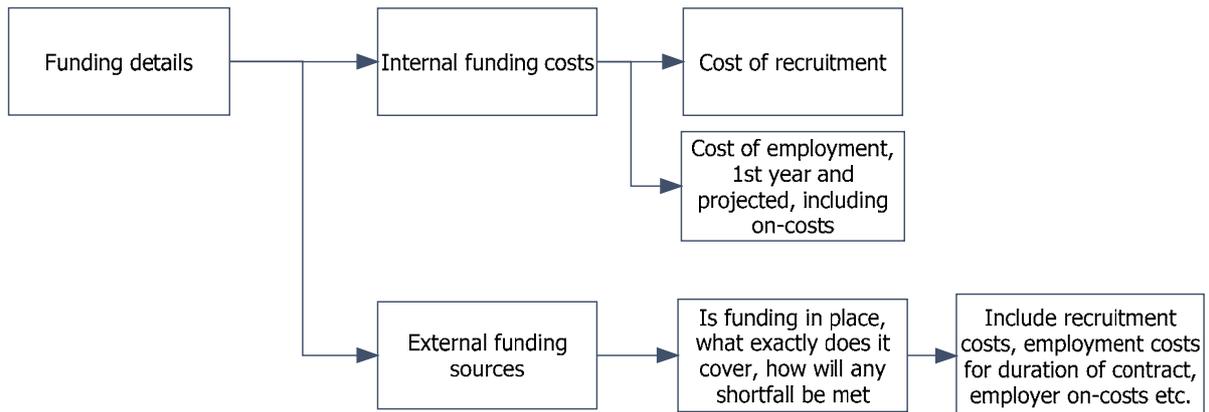


The initial phase of both the business case and the project plan are the details of the vacancy itself, see also the section called Define the Vacancy. The business case would not just include the description of the role but also the grade, pay parameters and any particular market issues that must be considered. Thought also needs to be given to how the role fits in to the organisation at a team or department level to ensure there are no overlaps of responsibilities or any gaps.

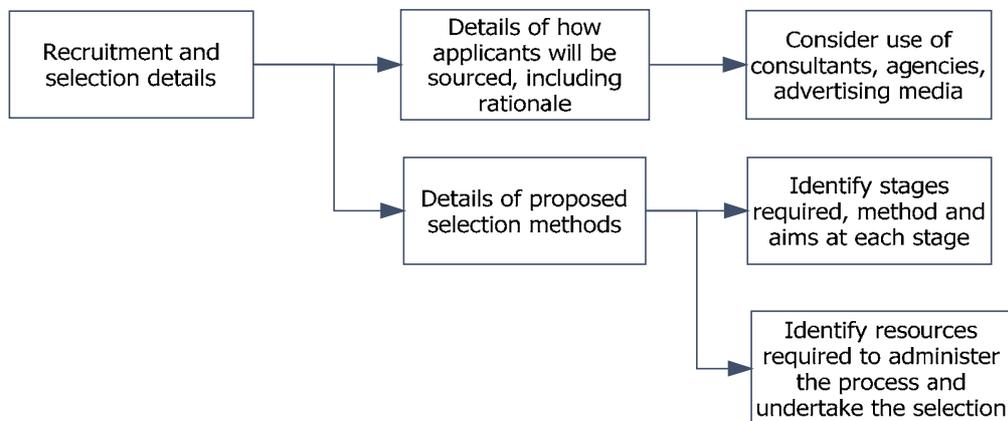


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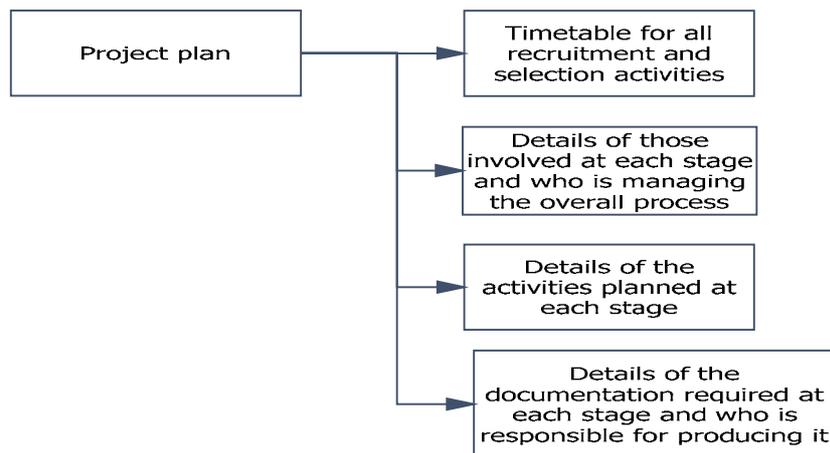
The identification of costs and funding is critical to the business case:



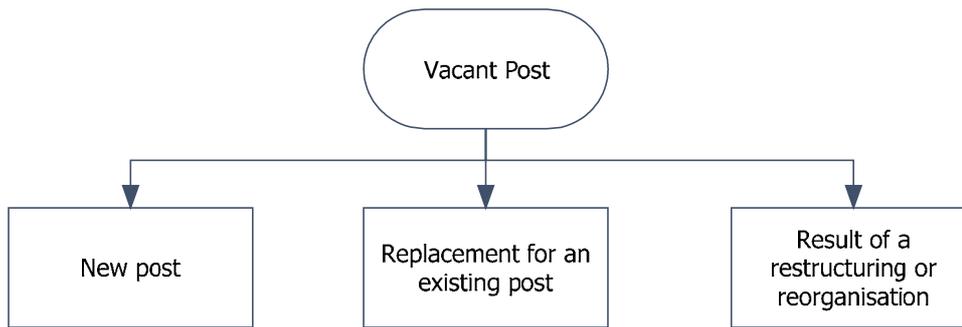
The business case also needs to include all aspects of how the recruitment and selection will be conducted and managed:



Finally, the business case should incorporate relevant sections from the project plan:

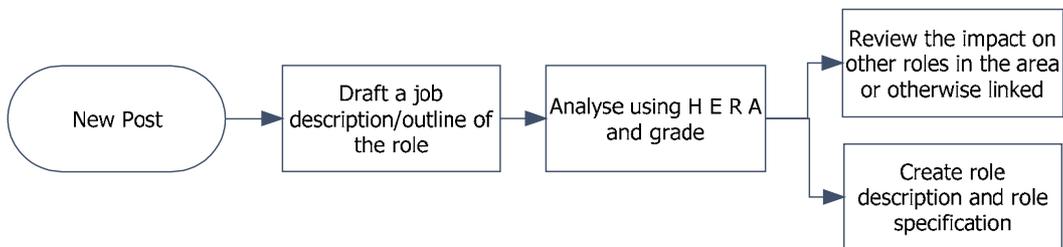


Define the vacancy

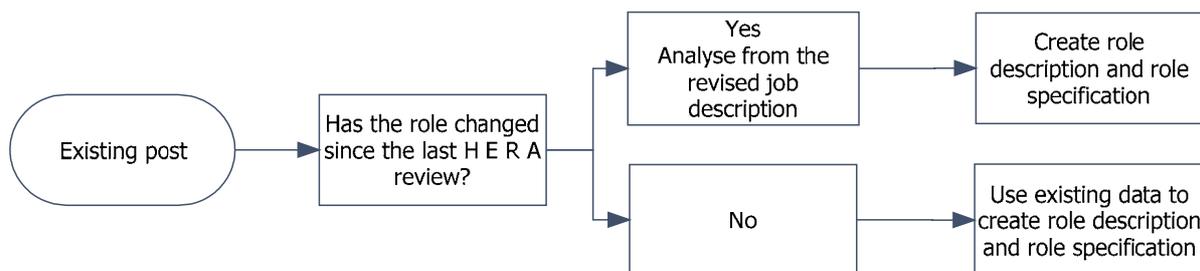


The vacancy could arise for a number of reasons as outlined above. Whatever the reason, a number of questions should be asked and a number of documents created.

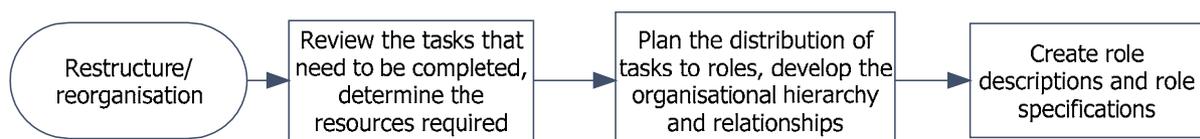
In the case of a new role the requirements are, perhaps, a little more obvious. There must be a document which defines the role usually through a job description setting out the main purpose and key accountabilities and ideally information outlining what is expected from the role against each of the HERA elements.



For an existing post it can be easy to assume that the role is unchanged. However, challenging this will ensure that any growth or shrinkage to the role over time can be identified and the job description amended accordingly. This will also enable the role to be correctly sized in advance of the recruitment.



Restructuring or reorganisation can create the most complex recruitment and selection situations as they seldom affect only one role. Therefore the kind of process outlined below is necessary for all affected roles before starting any recruitment.



In all cases the role analysis (points evaluation) component of the software provides a role description report and the career map component creates a competency based role

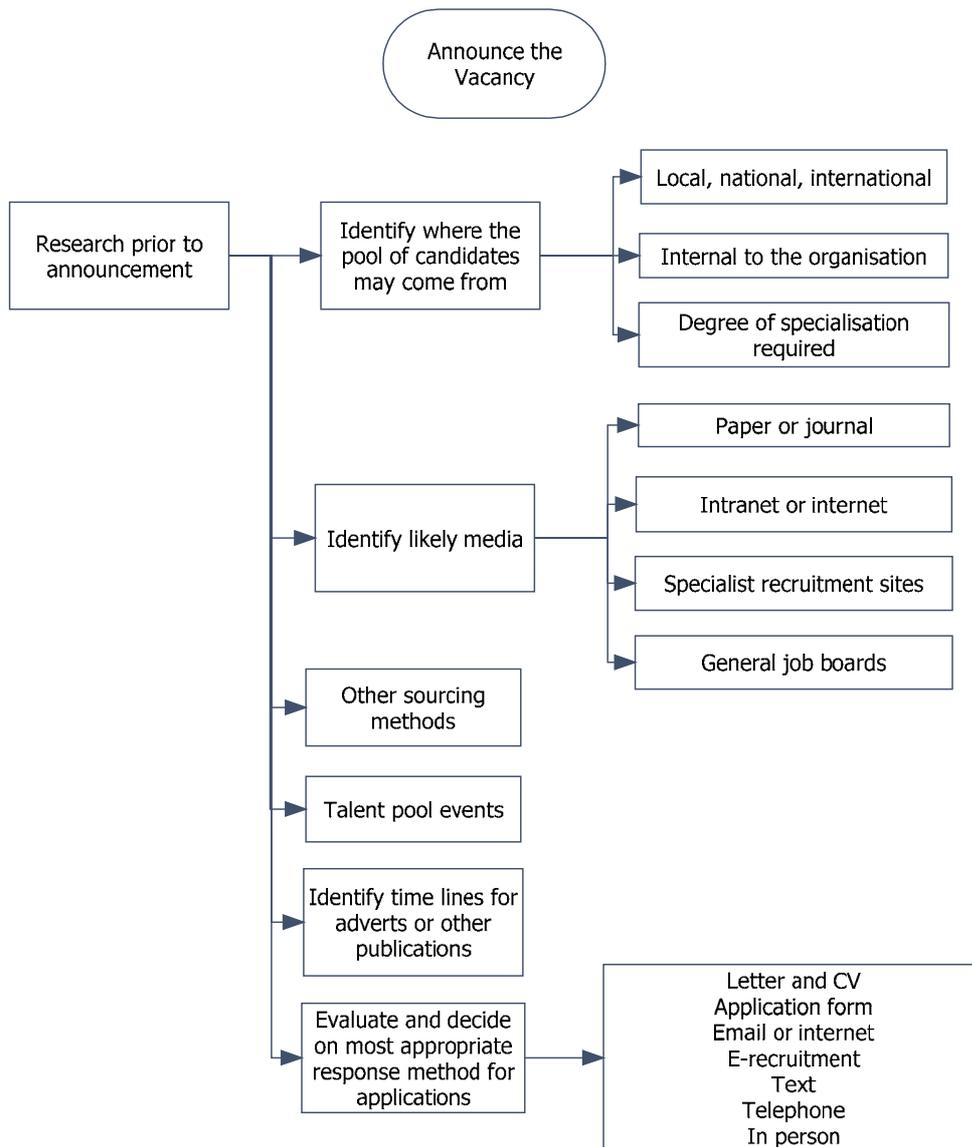
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specification. The software identifies which of the fourteen elements are the most important i.e. the top 6, so these can be used as selection criteria. Other required abilities, attainment and achievements can also be added to the selection criteria at this stage.

In addition in the case of reorganisation or restructuring the software allows the organisation to model the impact of different role configurations in terms of tasks, role shape and size to ensure the resultant roles meet the organisational needs and are affordable when assimilated into the grade and pay structure.

Announce the vacancy

Once approval to fill the role has been given, the next stage is to determine where and how to announce the vacancy.



The research phase identified above will enable the organisation to think about the vacancy in more detail and where potential applicants could be found.

Some organisations have relationships with advertising agencies who give advice on where to advertise to best advantage, costs, publication deadlines, copywriting etc. Others have relationships with search consultants who provide advice on the management of the recruitment process or employment agencies who can help fill particular types or levels of vacancy. The use of role analysis can help to focus the consultant or agency on the most important aspects of the role in question and the values of the organisation.

However, it is likely that for most organisations the vast majority of adverts will be drafted in house. The role description and specification created through the HERA software can help focus attention to the key aspects of role requirements. This will ensure adverts are relevant and to the point.

Additional consideration must be given to the information provided to candidates about the vacancy, the area of work, the organisation and the location.

The way a vacancy is announced and the additional information provided convey an image of the organisation; this is not always considered fully. The choice of media also says something about the organisation. Does an advert, containing traditional text and a logo, placed only in a reputable newspaper or journal mean that the organisation is traditional and out of touch with job seeker behaviour? Does the job's page on the organisation's web site mirror the standard of the student recruitment pages or does the latter present a picture of a more vibrant organisation? There are many ways of attracting applicants and as these are changing it is worth keeping the methods currently in use under review to ensure these are the most effective.

ECC has a relationship with three e-recruitment providers who have agreed to give members a discount and are working with us to build HERA and FEDRA into their software. ECC's staff therefore understand how the e-recruitment software works and it can be used in conjunction with role analysis to greatest advantage.

ECC has produced a publication called "The Use of Recruitment Consultants in Higher Education – Issues and Solutions" which is can be obtained from the ECC website, it also has contacts with executive search agencies and jobs.ac.uk so can provide additional advice and guidance on how these can be used to best effect.

Applications

The application process should also be planned. There may be tried and tested organisational practices but these should be challenged (at least periodically) to ensure they provide the information required for a robust selection without making onerous demands on applicants.

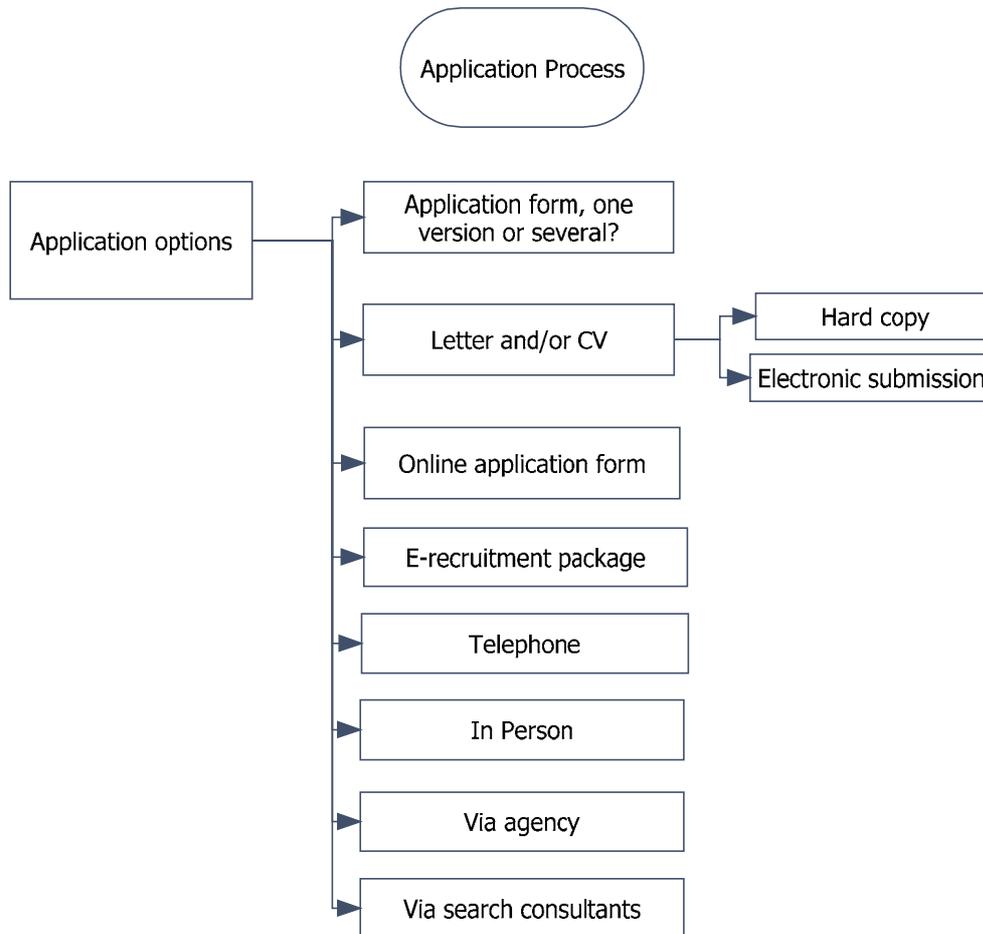
Advances in technology make it easy to design an appropriate application process for each vacancy. This will make sure the process used and the information gathered is directly relevant to the vacancy thus making the long listing and short listing stages as straightforward as possible.

"Killer" questions either in the details of the role or on the e-recruitment software should be clearly written and directly related to the requirements of the role, and applicants should be made aware that they need to be able to answer "correctly" to progress. The use of such screening techniques allows potential applicants to self select in or out of the process at this stage.

As shown below, there is a variety of options when it comes to getting applications in for a vacancy. It is possible to identify one which may be most appropriate for each vacancy, but a mixture could be equally appropriate.

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Care should be taken that any application route selected does not limit applicants with disabilities or make any other discrimination possible.



The link between role requirements and the application process is vital and should be direct. The analysis of the role, the production of a role description and a competencies based role specification creates robust selection criteria. Candidates should be encouraged and helped to provide evidence to support their application against each.

ECC has considerable expertise in the design of application processes and can work with members to ensure they are effective and appropriate whether using traditional methods or in conjunction with an e-recruitment provider.

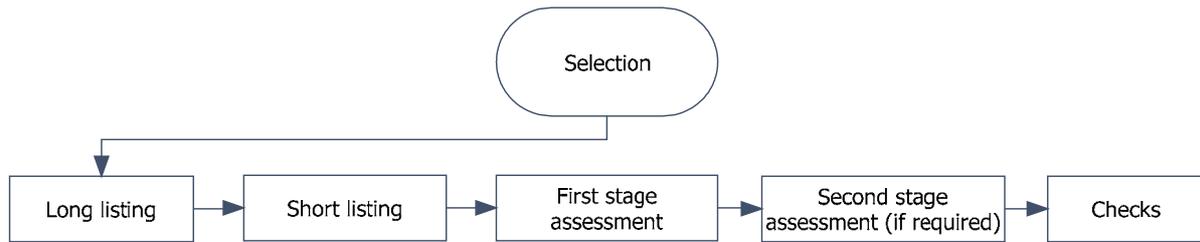
The selection process

There are many options when designing a selection process. The key is to ensure that the tools used are relevant to the vacancy in question and provide sufficient information to identify the most appropriate candidate. The tools should therefore be reliable predictors of performance in the role and provide the candidates adequate opportunities to show how well they meet the criteria.

The tools should also aim to continually reduce the number of suitable candidates being considered by increasing the sophistication and rigour at each stage of the process. ECC can provide guidance on the use and design of the full range of selection tools in common usage.

The key stages are set out below:

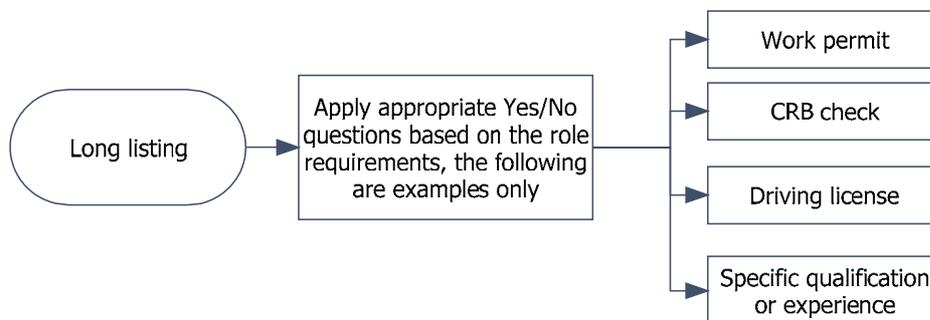
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LONG LISTING

This can be done quickly and easily by focusing only on requirements that represent the minimum for the role.

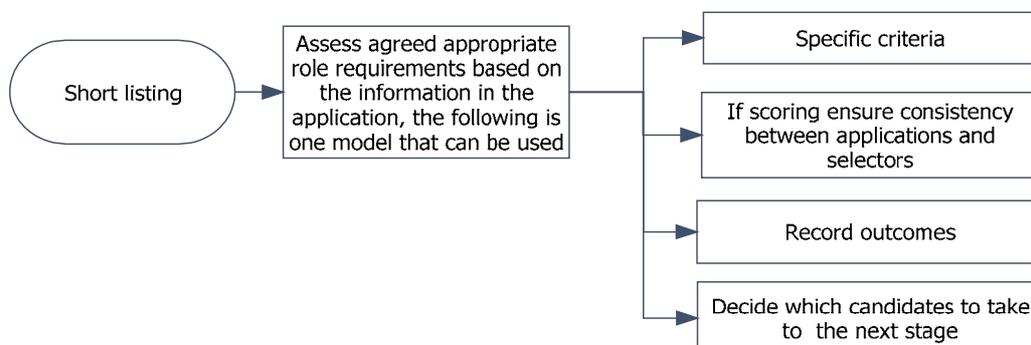
The use of qualifications here is potentially problematic. Different groups of people have unequal access to qualifications and the large variety of qualifications can make comparison difficult. Whether a qualification is absolutely necessary or whether experience could provide the requisite skills should also be considered when drawing up the selection criteria.



SHORTLISTING

This is a more qualitative process, relying on judgement and interpretation so care is needed to avoid bias and to ensure the evidence provided by the candidates is assessed against the selection criteria.

As well as having explicit criteria, it is important to be clear about how the assessment is going to be made and by whom. The assessors need to have a shared understanding of the meaning of the criteria and any scoring of requirements must be agreed. If there are significant differences in assessments these must be discussed fully to understand the reasons for the differences in interpretation of the evidence and their implications.

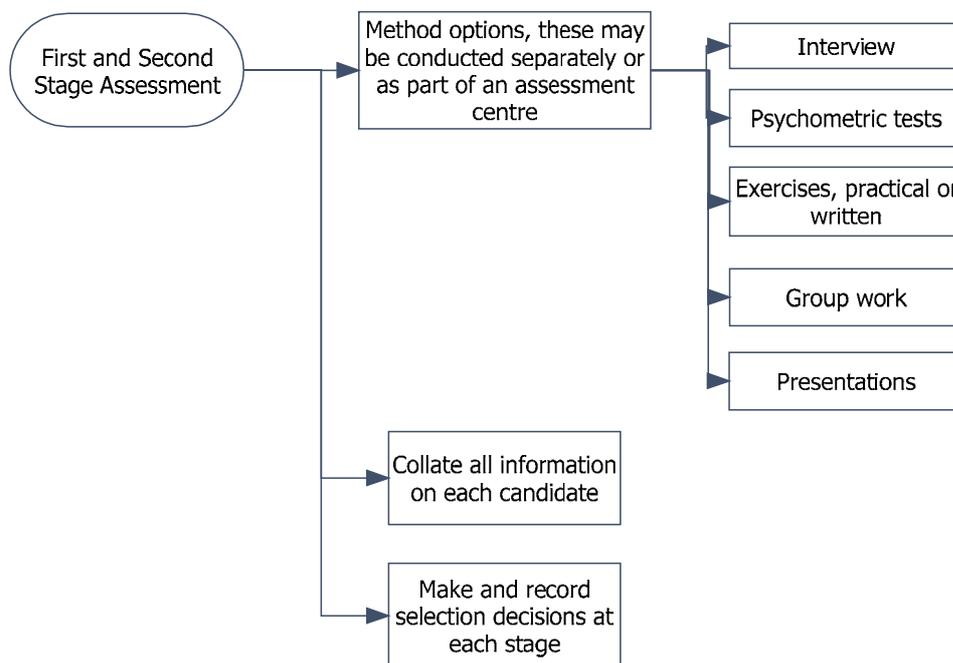


FIRST AND SECOND ASSESSMENTS

Not all organisations or vacancies will require more than one stage. However, given the importance of the selection decision to both the individual and the organisation, providing more than one opportunity to allow both parties to assess their fit with the other could be time well spent.

There is a wide range of selection methods that can be used at any of the stages. ECC can provide advice on which are best for assessing the different criteria for each role and can help to design the selection process and material.

There may be some cultural resistance in some quarters to increasing the range of selection methods. Evidence and experience backs up claims that a rounded and richer process provides better predictions of the candidate's success in the role than panel interviews and the commonly used presentation.



The same options on selection methods exist at the first and second stages of the selection process; it would be unlikely that these will be duplicated in both stages. The only possible exception would be with interviews where these were held with different people to assess different aspects of the role requirements.

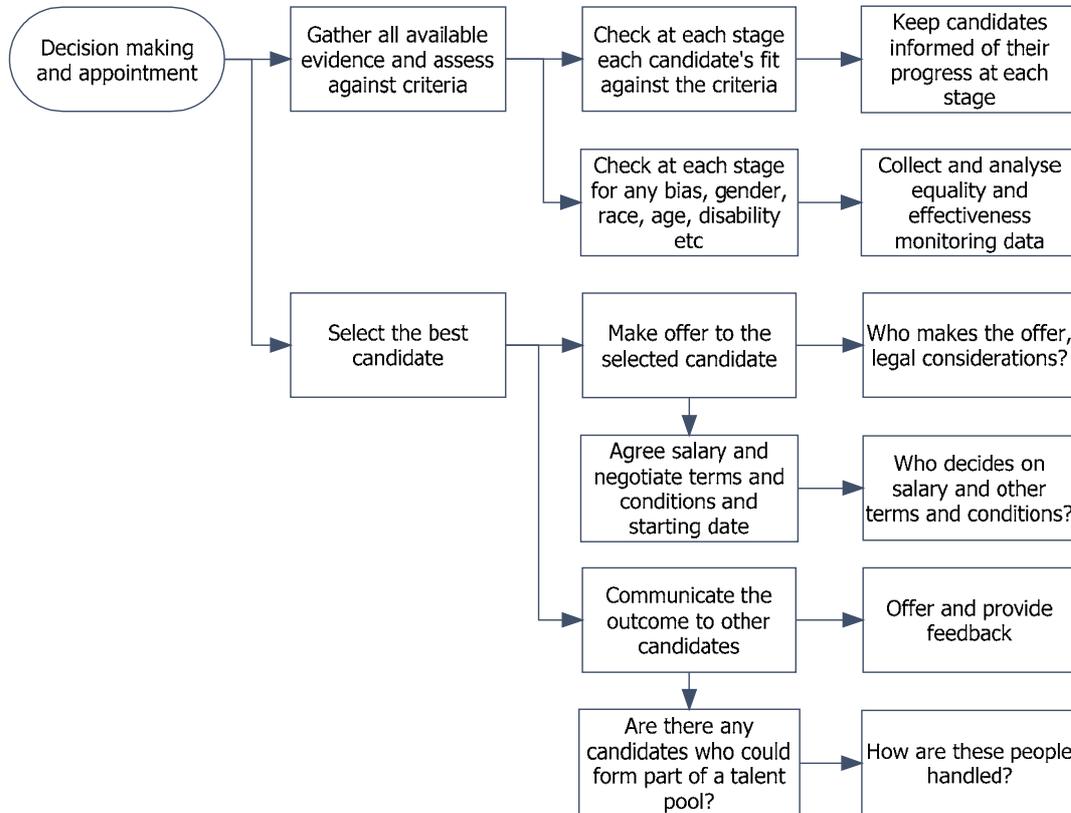
CHECKS

The penultimate stage before offering employment is to ensure the candidate meets the requirements of any necessary checks. Different posts will have different requirements and the timing of the checks may vary through the selection process or be carried out alongside one or more of the stages above.

The more usual checks would include taking up references, medical check, qualification checks, CRB checks and permit to work status. Other statutory checks may be required in specialist roles.

DECISION MAKING AND APPOINTMENT

The employer and the candidates both make decisions about each other at every stage of the process. The final decision centres on the offer of the job and whether the selected candidate decides to accept it. The final point is reached once a contract acceptable to both parties has been negotiated.



Candidates appreciate being kept informed. This is straightforward when e-recruitment is in operation. Some organisations still give candidates a date beyond which they should assume they are not successful. Given the widespread use of email and changed candidate expectation there is no reasons for continuing this practice.

It may also be worth revising the policy of limiting the feedback given to candidates. Submitting an application for a job is a time consuming activity and candidates do appreciate guidance on how they can improve their applications. This is particularly important for internal candidates who will want to know if there is a realistic chance of future applications being more successful.

The use of e-recruitment software makes it a lot easier to store and retrieve the details of candidates who were not successful but who may be suitable for other vacancies in the future. Many organisations are using talent pools to maintain contact with potentially appropriate candidates; however applications held in the pool should be reviewed regularly to ensure continued relevance. The talent pool should be used as one source of potential applicants for a vacancy; it would be unusual if it were the only one.

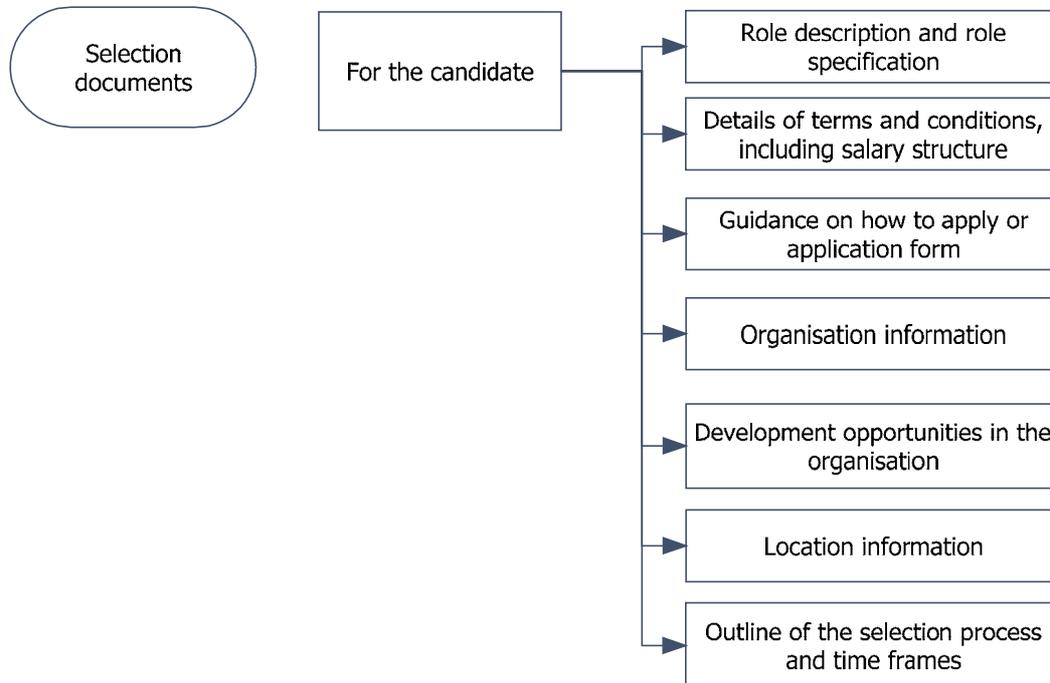
DOCUMENTATION

Certain records must be maintained to provide an audit trail should decisions be challenged. They are also useful for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the process.

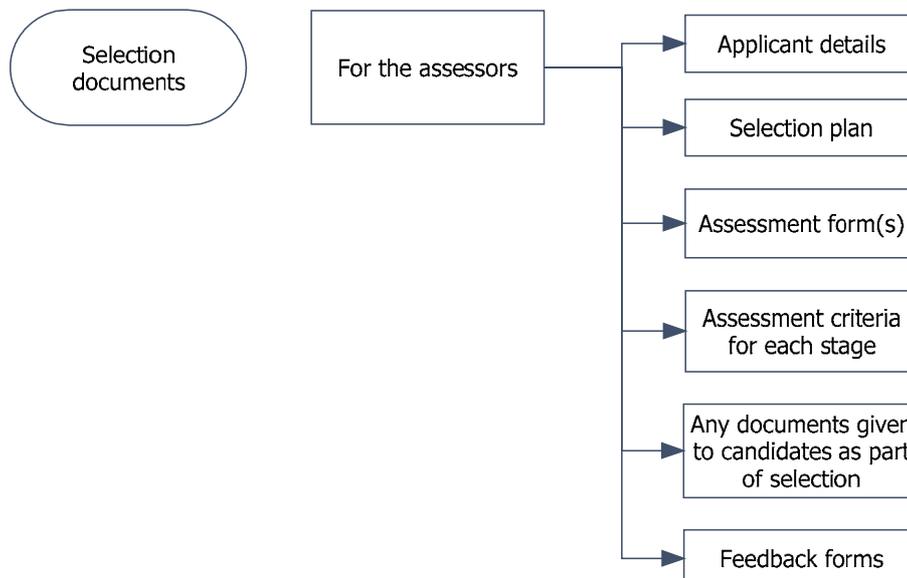
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There are other documents which should be produced at the various stages of the whole process for example, the project plan and the business case; the advert; reference request templates.

The following diagrams illustrate the documents required for the selection process by the candidates, for the assessors and for communication throughout the process.



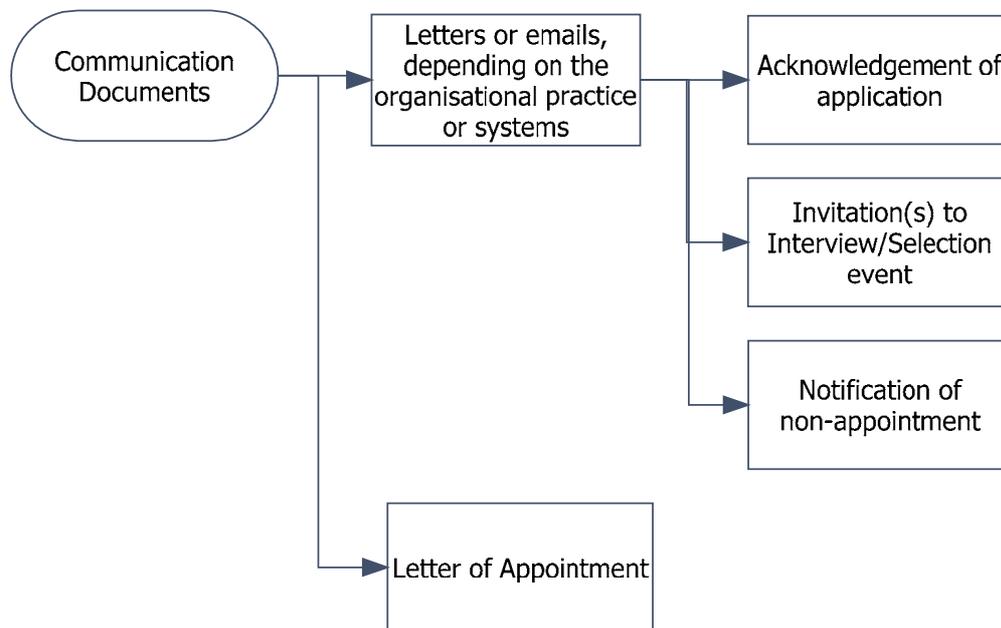
As previously mentioned, many of these documents are about marketing the vacancy and the organisation so care needs to be taken to ensure the candidate can form an accurate and hopefully favourable impression and that any corporate image is maintained.



Many of the documents will be based on the selection criteria and can easily be replicated using templates. ECC can help with the design of the selection documents.

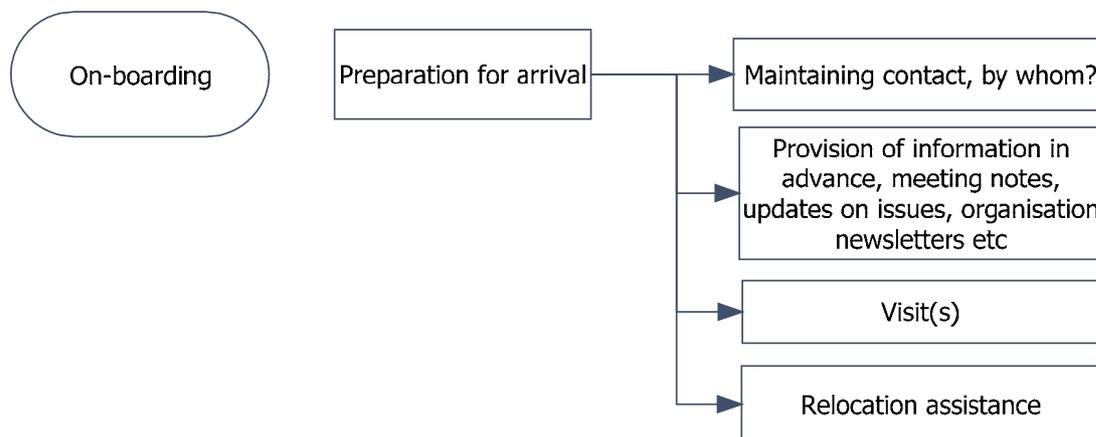
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In addition to those documents necessary to the selection process those below will be needed to communicate to applicants and candidates through the various stages of the process. The use of email and e-recruitment systems can ease the burden and cost of the traditional letter in many of these stages and will provide a better candidate experience.



On-boarding

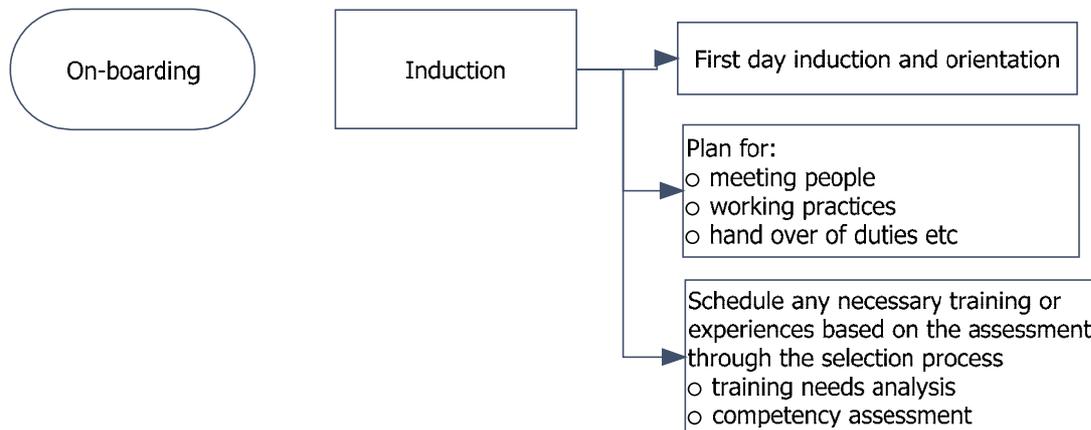
This is the final stage linking the offer of employment and the point when the occupant is fully competent in the role. This process is becoming known as “on-boarding” and encompasses getting the person appointed prepared to take up the appointment, induction and initial training and development.



The time after a person has accepted a new role can be strange: they are no longer a member of their old team or organisation and not yet a member of the new. Therefore the provision of information about their new organisation and increasing insight into their new role can help bridge the gap. This is particularly important for those people having to serve long periods of notice. The amount of contact possible will vary depending on individual circumstances but there is a compelling body of research that suggests there is a greater chance of the appointment being successful if the individual has good quality information about the role and the organisation particularly during this period.

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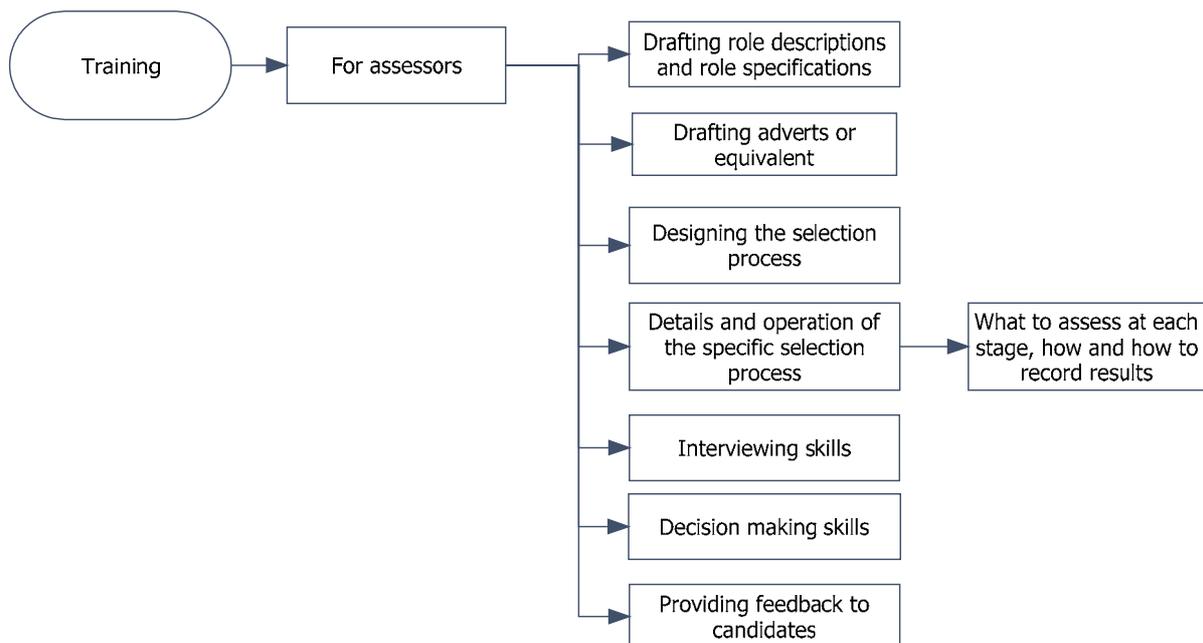
The assessments carried out during a selection process are perhaps the most rigorous of any carried out during the employment life cycle, yet very little use is made of the assessment information. The use of selection criteria, based on the role description and key competencies as set out in the role specification will have provided a structure for the assessment which can be used to assist in mapping out part of the induction programme and initial training/development needs. The assessment information and criteria can also provide a framework for assessing and agreeing performance levels throughout an agreed period. This period may be the probation period.



Training of assessors

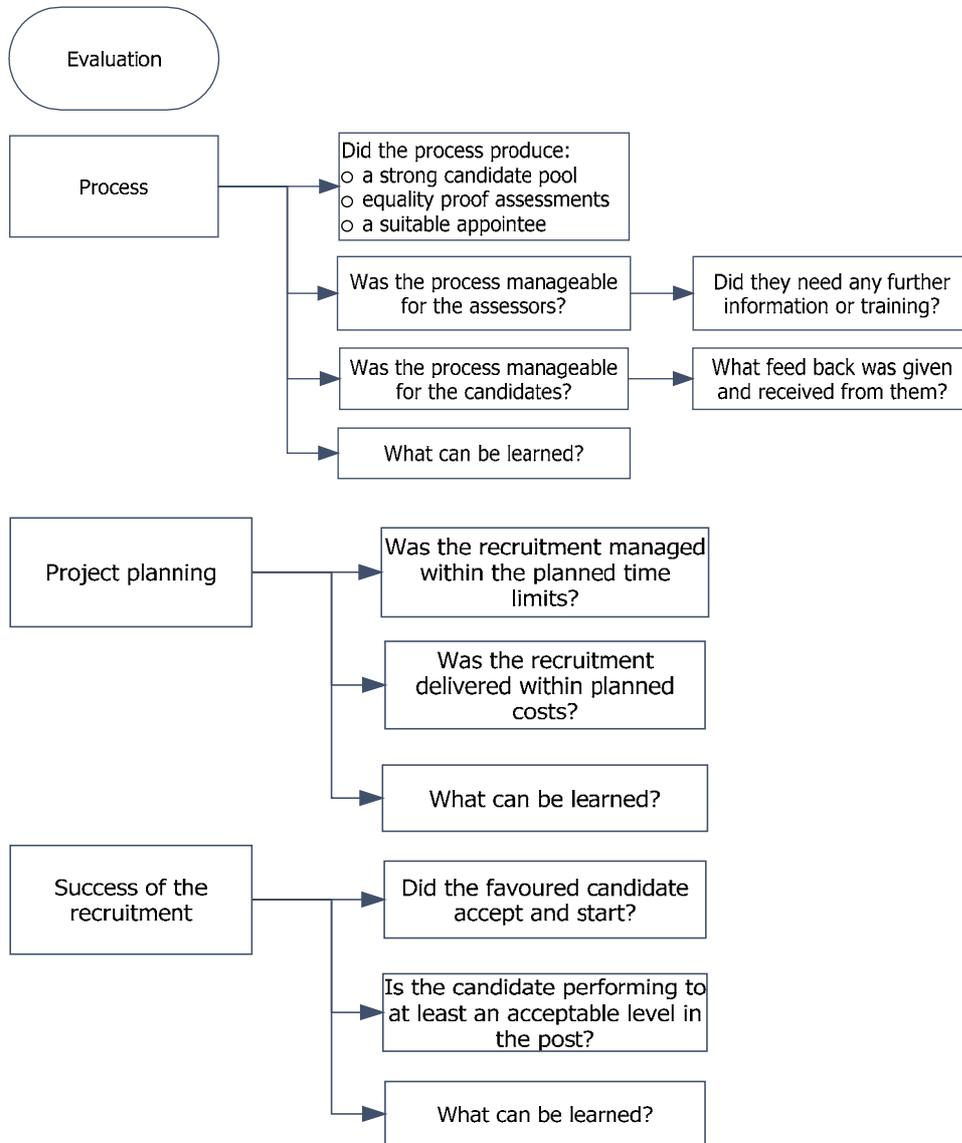
This is a key part of the process. Often organisations focus on the factual aspects of recruitment, including equal opportunities considerations and internal processes. The development of the assessors' skills to enable them to gather evidence against explicit criteria is less common.

ECC can help train managers and the HR team on both the technical aspects of recruitment and selection as well as the development of the "soft" skills essential to ensuring that the recruitment and selection are successful and effective.



Evaluation

For the organisation there is one more stage which is rarely carried out, this is to ensure that the whole recruitment and selection process remains fit for purpose, by evaluating it and applying the learning gained.



Monitoring sits alongside evaluation and is usually driven by equal opportunities considerations. The monitoring should also produce information to help assess the cost-effectiveness of each stage of the process and contribute to the creation of metrics which will help inform future decisions, for example how best to target advertisements or the use of particular selection methods.

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