

# How to write job advertisements that attract the best candidates

Effective recruitment and selection are essential for the future health and reputation of any university. In an increasingly competitive world, universities can no longer rely on word of mouth or personal networks to attract the highest calibre candidates, making investment in the crafting of powerful and attractive job advertisements crucial.



**University recruitment and selection can be a complex, many-layered process, with several stages to complete even before a position is approved. Once approval has been given, attention can quickly shift to the demanding task of managing a selection committee.**

**Producing a well-written job advertisement to capture the attention and elicit the application of the best candidates is a vital task but one sometimes neglected between these two stages.**

## **Invest time now to improve your likelihood of success**

When you advertise a job, you are asking applicants to invest time finding out about your university and department, writing their application, preparing for and attending interviews and then – if they are successful – spending a key part of their academic career working with you.

You are asking for a significant commitment from applicants, which means that your job advertisement should merit the same level of attention as, for example, a request for research funding. Recruitment and selection are time-consuming processes, and a well-written job advertisement improves your chances of getting it right first time.

Take the time to identify how your ideal candidate will hear about your job, where they will learn about your university as an institution and an employer, and what they value. You need to make a compelling case if you want the best potential candidates to invest their time and effort in applying for your position.

## Start with your opening paragraph

Don't start with the job title, but with a first paragraph that captures and keeps your reader's attention. A generic opening paragraph will not attract strong candidates.

Write about who you are as an employer, the culture of your workplace and why you are looking for a specific kind of person.

Direct candidates to places online where they can learn more about your university, your location and your team.

## Include the right search terms

Throughout your advertisement use language that your ideal candidate might enter in an online search. Global Academy Jobs can show you the descriptions other universities use in your discipline.

Don't rely on your research titles; if you want to attract environmental science researchers, for example, make sure that specific phrase appears in your advertisement.

At Global Academy Jobs we have expertise in making the most of targeted search terms, so please do get in touch for help.

## Provide as much information as you can

Be open and specific with salary details, the degree of flexibility of working hours and location and contract types; including this information will help jobseekers to find you and encourage the right candidates to apply.

Don't be vague or hide this information as you are unlikely to receive strong applications without it.

## Give careful thought to job advert title

The title for your job advertisement does not need to be the exact job title for the role but might include it, for example: 'Three research positions in the University X biology faculty xxx project team' will show up in more online searches than 'Junior research assistants in xxx', especially if xxx is a newer field in biology.

Avoid complex scientific or technical terms, or industry jargon. While the right candidates will understand the terms, they may not use them when searching for jobs.

Do include any specific requirements in the job title, such as languages, qualifications or experience necessary for the role. 'Three research positions in the University X biology faculty xxx project team, PhD or MSc level, Russian or Arabic fluency an advantage' is likely to attract applications from well-qualified candidates.

## Avoid job title inflation

Match the title to the job description. Job title inflation often leads to junior roles being given over-ambitious titles.

Don't advertise for a senior lecturer if you are offering a research assistant's salary, or a director if there is no team to direct.

Your best candidates will not search for those terms, and more senior applicants will not apply if the job description does not match their expectations. Younger universities often make this mistake and receive fewer applications as a result.

## Be precise

Make every word count. Include internet links to additional information or forms to ensure that your advertisement stays under 600 words and can fit on to one page.

## Don't be too prescriptive

Set out the combinations of qualifications and experience that a qualified candidate could offer.

A good candidate might, however, offer a different combination, so encourage applicants with non-standard backgrounds to apply, especially for hard-to-fill roles.

Being too prescriptive can discourage applications from promising candidates.

## Post specific job advertisements for each discipline

Growing universities often hope to save money by using general job advertisements for 'Faculty positions' or 'Lecturers and other teaching roles'.

These advertisements rarely attract applications because they fail to capture candidates' attention and don't show up in online searches.

A news story about research or teaching at your university is a better way to reach a wide audience.

Discipline-specific advertisements can then link back to the news story and are likely to attract many more applicants, for example 'University X creates 25 new teaching posts under Y programme'.

You can then link to the story to give more detail in advertisements for teaching posts in the different disciplines.



## Make the application process straightforward

Having captured the attention of the right candidates, make it quick and easy for them to apply.

Global Academy Jobs-registered candidates can use our one-click applications if you use our application form. Otherwise, check that the link to your online application system is working effectively.

'Apply by email' yields fewer applications than direct online applications. If this is unavoidable, set up a special email address to ensure you receive all applications safely and acknowledge each one in order to minimise the number of applications that go astray.



### More in this series

Global Academy Jobs supports universities in the recruitment process by providing useful tools and insights, in addition to recruitment advertising.

Topics covered:

- The pitfalls of recruiting from your personal network
- Why mobile matters for candidates and applications
- How to create a successful new starter induction
- Diversity and unconscious bias
- Flexible working

We also provide tips and tools for your academic community to increase the reach and impact of their research.

Access these resources on our blog site [www.globalacademyjobs.com/blog](http://www.globalacademyjobs.com/blog) and through our social channels.

### Final thoughts

To attract the attention of the very best candidates, your job advertisement needs careful thought and planning. Key points to consider as you write your text are:

- catch your candidate's attention with an inviting, non-generic opening paragraph
- target your ideal candidate by using the specific terms they will be searching for online
- be open and comprehensive in the detail you provide about salary, working conditions and contract type
- avoid jargon but include relevant detail when you choose the title for your job advertisement
- ensure the job title fits the job description and is not inflated
- be precise and concise so your advertisement is no longer than 600 words and one page long
- don't be too prescriptive, particularly with hard-to-fill roles, or you may overlook promising candidates
- make it quick and easy for applicants to apply, using online application forms wherever possible