ems STAFF HIRING PROCESS

# BACKGROUND

As EMS strives to meet both our recruiting goals and those of the University, the Associate Deans and EMS HR have pulled together some action items and thought pieces which will help us move forward. The process and ideas described over the next 5 pages focus on the staff hiring process and will be one component in a comprehensive initiative to recruit and retain a wide variety of staff and create a welcoming and inclusive environment. Additional components will include onboarding of new staff, faculty, and administrators, and the annual staff performance management process.

Overall, the procedures detailed below are straight forward and have already been implemented by EMS HR. The overall purpose of producing this guide is to further develop a mindset amongst our faculty and staff who are involved in search committees or serve as hiring authorities. This guide is meant to complement and advance the central HR staff hiring process by focusing on actions that are tailored to EMS’s goals. This guide steps the reader through each phase of the staff hiring process and lets them know what specific things they can do (with EMS HR’s assistance).

# CHECKLIST FOR SEARCH COMMITTEES

* The Hiring Manager/Department leads should contact EMS HR for help with the job posting language and any hiring requirements/approvals.
* The Hiring Manager should coordinate with EMS HR and assigned Recruiter for a kick-off meeting
* The Hiring Manager should review the [committee](#Committee) section.
* The Search Committee should review the [resume](#Resume) screening process.
* The Search Committee should review the [interview](#Interview) process.
* The Search Committee should review the [selection](#Selection) process.

# HOW CHANGES TIE TO STRATEGIC PLANS

The College of Earth and Mineral Sciences is committed inclusive excellence as a guiding principle and a strategic priority for the college.

* [The strategic goals of the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, as well as our five departments and three research units, that serve to guide our decision-making as we train future leaders and advance earth, energy, and materials sciences and engineering](https://www.ems.psu.edu/about/who-we-are/mission-vision-values-and-strategic-plan).

Additionally, these recommendations are in alignment with university goals and expectations for recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce:

* [Fostering Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging](https://strategicplan.psu.edu/fostering-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-belonging-2/)
* [Penn State Statement on Belonging](https://equity.psu.edu/equity-at-penn-state/belonging-statement)

# STAFF SEARCH PROCESS

* When EMS HR is notified that a search will be conducted, HR and the hiring manager discuss conducting the hiring process. Aspects of the discussion include conducting a comprehensive search; avoiding pitfalls; avoiding inappropriate or illegal questions; and contributing to the College’s and University’s strategic goals of creating an environment of inclusive excellence.
* EMS HR and our assigned recruiter will proactively assist in conducting the search.

## Defining and Posting the Position

* Determine competencies and characteristics necessary to effectively perform in the position, or which would be helpful. The ability to work effectively with other individuals and across differences is relevant to any staff or administrative position. The ability to effectively advance Penn State and EMS goals should also be considered. Examples include:
  + Creating an inclusive environment within the office and for students
  + Proven experience and successful initiatives
  + Demonstrated commitment to fostering a healthy work environment
  + Able to work effectively with individuals from different backgrounds and cultures
  + Thrives in an inclusive environment
* Compose a position description outlines the skills and experience necessary for the position. Suggestions include:
  + Proven expertise in working in multiple settings and engaging with individuals from different groups.
  + Demonstrated commitment to practices that support others across the College and the University.
  + “It is critical that the successful candidate have proven experience, skill, and ability to work with and engage with students, including diverse U.S. and international students, and have a comprehensive understanding of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [what this office does] which reflects understanding of issues surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusiveness.”
  + Additional suggestions are available from EMS HR.
* Central HR ensures that appropriate statements are included in all job posts including minimum education and experience requirements, Clery, EEO and inclusion statement.
* Only list skills essential to the job rather than wish list items. Some applicants may interpret these non-essential, wish list items literally and as strictly required, which could then discourage them from applying for the position.
* Or add in the phrase “with or without accommodation” to show that accommodations are available if a candidate requires them.
* Phrases like “lift up to 30 pounds,” “hear a telephone ring,” “sit for extended periods of time,” or “thrives in bright environment” might deter applicants with disabilities.

## Search Committee

* Assemble a search committee with expertise in the competency areas the position requires.
* Search committees will, at a minimum, include one Subject Matter Expert (SME) from the Dean’s Office staff (as applicable). For example, searches for MarCom positions will include the Director of EMS MarCom (or their representative), searches for Grad Coordinator positions will include the ADGER Grad Coordinator (or their representative), searches for Facilities-related positions will include the EMS Facilities Manager (or their representative), and searches for Academic Advisors will include the EMS Academic Advising Manager (or their representative).
* The search committee charge should include emphasis on developing a competent pool and on including a wide variety of candidates at each cut-off.
* Search committees should receive and discuss information about bias. The search committee chair should participate in bias training prior to reviewing candidates. Ideally, all search committee members would have the opportunity to participate in bias training.
* Consider awareness of any biases for applicants with a disability before the interview process begins by emphasizing the following:
  + Assess candidates by specific job skills rather than signs of sociability such as eye contact, amount of smiling, strength of handshakes, charisma, charm, or appearance (dress, hairstyle, etc.). Be aware of your primary bias and the tendency to judge candidates based on your first interaction with them.
  + Be accepting of stimming, fidgeting, posture issues, eye contact reluctance.
  + Allow candidates to disclose on their own terms rather than pressure anyone to do so. Some people may choose not to disclose at all, while others may wait and disclose later.
* The Hiring Manager will meet with the recruiter to discuss key qualifications and experience for screening the candidates and questions for the recruiter to ask during the phone screening. The hiring manager and recruiter should also discuss the salary expectations for this role as well as the general timeline.
* Search committees should utilize their professional networks to identify and recruit applicants who would contribute to the college’s initiatives and goals.

## CV/Resume and Application Screening Process

* The recruiter will screen candidate applications for minimum requirements, key qualifications and experience. The recruiter will share with the hiring manager a list of candidates the recruiter plans to interview.
* The hiring manager can ask for additional candidates to be included or removed if they meet the minimum requirements for the position.
* Candidates should be considered based on the skills and experience related to the job responsibilities. Any questions on candidate qualifications should be discussed with the recruiter and EMS HR.

## Interview

* The recruiter will contact candidates and conduct the first interview (typically a phone interview), asking questions determined by the hiring manager and sharing information related to the expected salary for this position and benefits offered by Penn State.
* The recruiter will share with the hiring manager notes from the interview so the committee can determine candidates to move to the next round of interviews.
* The interview should clearly signal to all candidates that EMS and the hiring area highly values active commitment to inclusive excellence and expect any incumbent to actively advance our goals, and that proven experience in this regard is a plus.
* Give an outline of what will happen during the interview in advance. This can reduce anxiety and distraction for candidates and allow them to feel more confident going into the process. If you will be interviewing via Zoom, let candidates know they can request breaks or to turn off their camera during the interview, if they need those accommodations.
* Ideally, having a more conversational approach rather than a “question-answer-next person question” approach may be more beneficial to determining the most qualified candidate.
  + It is ok to ask follow-up questions, if an answer provided either raises a new point you would like to consider or to ask the candidate to better clarify their answer.
* The interview should include behavior-based questions specific to the position’s requirements and EMS’s overall goals.
* To accommodate individuals who may find interviews overstimulating, it is important to provide an opportunity for candidates to follow up with additional responses after the interview is over. This allows them to provide more thoughtful and articulate insights that may not have emerged during the live interview, thereby fostering a fair and comprehensive evaluation process. At the end of the interview, be sure to provide (or reiterate) the candidate with your contact information.
  + This could be helpful to any individual, regardless of disability, to elaborate on their answers and provide the search committee with additional details that may be important. And it provides us with a sample of their writing ability to assess.
* Consider offering alternative evaluation options during the hiring process, such as requesting sample work or providing other opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their skills in a practical context. This approach allows candidates to directly showcase their abilities by completing tasks (such as putting together a PowerPoint presentation or using/developing an Excel spreadsheet).
* Ask specific, concrete questions based on experiences. Some candidates may find abstract questions or hypothetical scenarios confusing and difficult to interpret.
* Offer opportunities for breaks, or to step away to decompress, throughout the interview.
* Make lunch or other unrelated social events optional. Focus on specific skillsets rather than if a candidate “seems like a good culture fit.” Assessing candidates on sociability and “culture fit” can introduce bias and draw attention away from the question of which candidate is best qualified for the position.
* Conduct interviews in quiet, peaceful environments (applies to both in person and virtual interviews).
* Provide timely decisions regarding position openings.
* Suggested Training: Interviewing Techniques - <https://psu.csod.com/ui/lms-learning-details/app/course/1f8c4f6e-7320-5c3f-8080-a2473435cf3e>
* Evaluation of candidate responses should be based on the substance of the candidate’s answer. Responses should not be used as a means of assessing the candidates’ ability to respond under pressure or recover from a question they did not know how to answer.
* The search committee chair, EMS HR, and EMS Associate Dean for Educational Equity can assist committees with differentiating substantive responses to some questions.

# Checklist

## Before the interview

* When reaching out about arranging an interview, give the candidate the opportunity to ask for any accommodation that they need, phrased in an affirming way such as "Is there anything we could do to help make your interviewing experience as successful as possible?" This wording does not require candidates to disclose anything they might not want to disclose but opens the door for everyone to ask for what they need.
  + Provide a list of possible accommodations (including but not limited to):
  + Guidance getting to and from campus.
  + An interpreter.(<https://sites.psu.edu/aaoffice2/welcome/access-disability/american-sign-language-asl-interpreting-services-2/procedure-for-requesting-a-sign-language-interpreter/>)
  + Enabling Closed Captioning for Zoom.
  + From your Zoom dashboard, click on the gear icon on the right side.
  + From the menu, select “Accessibility.”
  + Click the box next to “Always show captions.”
  + For in-person interviews, if we are offering hotels for out-of-area applicants, we should do our best to ensure that options for disability accommodation are available.
  + Provide the candidate with the hotel’s contact information so, if needed, they can directly ask questions about accommodation without disclosing.
* Send a detailed schedule to the candidate before the interview day that lays out what they can expect (including but not limited to):
  + Clear directions to the interview room (ideally with visual cues) if in-person.
  + Length and format of interview.
  + Number of participants and their names/job titles.
  + Provide a dress code with examples and list anything the candidate should bring with them. The dress code should mirror our current office attire, since more professional attire may not be financially available to the candidates.
* Remind fellow interviewers to avoid primary bias before the interview and ask EMS HR about LRN (Learning Resource Network) resources if anyone wants to challenge their biases further.
* Provide a list of questions a couple of days before the interview. Also be open to requests from interviewees to expand on their answers in writing.

## Final Selection:

* Search committees should avoid bias, particularly in final selection (it may be helpful to review bias training at this point).
* The hiring manager should report to EMS HR and our assigned recruiter the qualifications and experience resulting in the final rankings.

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