

# 6 Steps to Improve Equitable Hiring Practices

## Overview

The UW Career & Internship Center values the diversity of our student body and believes that our work to address systemic inequities facing students of color, women, LGBT students, students with disabilities, international students, undocumented students, and more starts with access to meaningful employment and internship opportunities. Furthermore, the [benefits of a diverse workforce](#) are well documented, and all organizations should strive for their staffs to be diverse and for all employees to feel included, respected, and empowered. Implementing the steps below will ensure that your hiring practices are more inclusive and provide increased opportunity for underrepresented student populations to gain meaningful work experience.

This resource will help employers recruit UW students into their entry level jobs and internships in a more equitable way. These steps should be standard practice for all employers and are good first steps in diversifying your workforce. The information included below was gathered from existing resources and research on the topic of equitable hiring practices. You can find a full list of sources at the bottom of this document. For questions, contact Dan Herb, Internship Success Manager, at [dherb@uw.edu](mailto:dherb@uw.edu).

## Step 1: Develop the Position

### Requirements and Qualifications

#### Key Points

- Develop the position purpose and describe why this role is necessary.
- Focus on skills, abilities, and competencies needed for the role.
- Identify the benchmarks you want to see in applications before posting the job.
- College name, major, and GPA are not the sole indicators of knowledge or performance.

When developing a new role, or hiring someone into an existing role, it is important to identify the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the position and how the role contributes to the success of the organization. Think through the job or internship duties for your new hire and note what technical expertise, competencies, or information are required. These skills and abilities will become your minimum qualifications for your position description. You can rank or prioritize these qualifications as appropriate for the role. Also, be as specific as possible in your descriptions as they will be the basis of determining your benchmarks or anchors that you will use to review applicants later on.

Next, it is important to consider if your minimum requirements are actually necessary as written. How can candidates demonstrate competency or knowledge in a specific area? Do years of experience really translate to ability? Keep in mind that factors like college name, major or degree name, and GPA are [not necessarily good indicators](#) of performance in any given area. We recommend instead focusing on examples and evidence of how candidates have the skills and abilities needed for the role, rather than making inferences about their aptitude given your understanding of their education or experiences.

In addition to minimum qualifications, it is important to identify what knowledge and skills they will learn in the role and what training they will receive from your organization. These are not job requirements or qualifications, as a candidate will learn them on the job, but they should also be noted in the position description so applicants understand how they will learn and grow in the position.

## Compensation

### Key Points

- Ensure all wages are fair and equitable given your organization and industry standards.
- Abide by Department of Labor guidelines for unpaid work.
- Recognize that unpaid internships are often a barrier for low-income and students of color.

Research has shown time and again how fair and equitable compensation leads to an increasingly diverse workplace (e.g. [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). For college students, further inquiry has shown that unpaid and underpaid opportunities [act as barriers](#) for low-income students who are [proportionally more likely](#) to be students of color.

In addition to abiding by [Department of Labor rules](#) regarding intern pay at for-profit companies, reconsidering your pay structures for entry level employees and interns can significantly increase the diversity of your new hires. One tactic is to conduct a [pay equity analysis](#) of your organization and industry to align compensation with industry standards and ensure that pay across demographic groups is not misaligned within your workforce. Whatever your method, ensuring equitable pay for all your employees will lead to a more diverse and equitable workplace.

## Step 2: Write the Position Description

### Key Points

- Position descriptions introduce candidates to the job and your organization.
- Describe the position purpose and your organization's work towards equity and inclusion.
- Clarify your "must haves" or qualifications and skills that will be learned in the role.
- Use gender neutral language and review the description for any exclusive terms or verbiage.

The job or internship description is often the first thing that prospective candidates will see regarding your organization. Ensuring that your [position descriptions](#) are free of potential bias and explicitly highlight your organization's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion [will increase the diversity](#) of your candidate pool. [Research shows](#) that the Generation Z values corporate social responsibility and considers how companies are creating change when applying for positions. You also want to ensure that your position description is accessible to candidates with disabilities who may use screen readers or other technology to access the application. Ultimately, crafting a position description that is [clear, meaningful, inclusive, and informative](#) will help you stand out on the job board.

We recommend thinking of the position description as having multiple parts. Use each section below as an opportunity to describe how diversity and equity are valued in your organization.

- Organization Description
  - Describe your organization's commitment to equity, inclusion, and diversity-related work on multiple levels.
  - If you do not have a diversity and inclusion statement yet, [this resource](#) can help.
- Position Description
  - Include a description of the position's purpose and how the role relates to equity work.
    - Even if the role is not directly related, think about the community or clients served, or how the ideal candidate approaches their work through this lens.

- Clarify your “must haves,” or qualifications, for this position and enumerate them in the description. This will reduce the influence of bias among your interview and decision-making team and also make clear to the applicant what you are looking for in the role.
  - Focus on a candidates’ skills and abilities rather than their college or major. A student’s degree does not necessarily tell you about their competence for a job.
  - Consider removing GPA cutoffs for your role. [Studies show](#) GPA is not a good predictor of performance for new hires and can limit your candidate pool.
- Make clear to applicants what skills and abilities are required for the role, and which they will train on once they are hired.
  - [Studies have shown](#) that women are far less likely than men to apply for a position if they are not 100% qualified. It is rare to find a perfect candidate. Being clear on what is a “must-have” versus something candidates can learn will build a more diverse applicant pool for your position.
- If appropriate, note the importance of working directly with people from diverse backgrounds, speaking a second language, or communicating across cultures.

It should also be noted that simply describing your organization’s commitment to equity and inclusion in your job descriptions is not sufficient; you have to walk the talk. [Tangible actions](#) should be taken to embody the values ascribed in your position descriptions.

[See this example](#) of a graduate student internship description from the UW Career & Internship Center.

## Application Materials

### Key Points

- Be clear which materials candidates should submit including format and file types.
- Acknowledge that resume format can vary significantly, be sure to focus on content.
- Ask candidates to describe their work on equity and diversity with specific questions.

A resume is meant to describe a candidates’ skills, abilities, education, and experiences. However, many of us have expectations about how a resume should be constructed or what constitutes a “good” resume. It is important to acknowledge that low-income, first-generation, students of color, and international students may be [unfamiliar with resume conventions](#) in your industry or even in the United States. Examine resumes for their content, attention to detail, and clarity, not their format.

In addition to a resume, pose [a prompt](#) as part of a candidate’s cover letter, or a separate document, to describe their approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

- The purpose of a diversity related questions is not to assess the applicant’s personal identities, but to assess their skills, knowledge, and values about diversity, equity, and inclusion work.
- For example, you could ask - What are specific ways in which you will improve your knowledge of diversity, equity, and inclusion work? What privileges have afforded you the opportunity to apply for this position? How would you approach working with a diverse clientele whose backgrounds are different from yours?

## Step 3: Recruit Applicants

### Key Points

- Cast as wide a net as possible to ensure a diverse candidate pool.
- Be intentional about which groups and organizations you contact regarding your positions.
- Tailor your outreach to particular communities and explain why they are well suited for the role.
- Avoid tokenizing diverse communities or only contacting candidates because of their identities.

Many organizations have created goals and initiatives around increasing the diversity of their workforce. While this is laudable, it is important to approach recruitment in an [intentional and equitable way](#). Ideally, your recruitment process results in a large and diverse candidate pool from which to find the best person based on their application, and the skills and abilities needed for the position. Be sure to avoid soliciting candidates solely based on their race, ethnicity, gender, or background, but rather because you are interested in the perspectives or experience they would bring to the role.

When you do contact diverse communities of potential candidates it is important to highlight why you believe this opportunity suits them, not simply because it will “help with the numbers.” For example, a sales position at a large, national company requires skills in communication across differences in language, race, gender, culture, style, and more. People from diverse communities often have tangible experience, both personally and professionally, in communicating across difference, and this skill would be an immense asset to the role. Highlighting the value that diverse communities would bring to the position and to your organization will show that you are actively creating an inclusive environment in which they could thrive.

Here are additional resources for thinking about your recruitment plan.

- [UW Departmental Outreach](#) – contact faculty and/or academic advisers in relevant UW departments to advertise your opportunities to their students.
- [Student Organizations](#) – contact relevant Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) to advertise your opportunities to their members.
- [Diversity recruiting websites](#) – For full-time positions, these organizations can highlight job postings to a large, diverse applicant pool.

Finally, if you find that your candidate pool is not as diverse as you would like, consider why that might be the case. What about the position itself, the job description, your outreach efforts, etc. might have contributed to a homogenous candidate pool? Be sure to note areas of improvement for next time. As a point of reference, you can use the [demographics of the UW Seattle campus](#) as a point of reference.

## Step 4: Review Applications

### Key Points

- Use a rubric to score a candidate’s aptitude for the job.
- Avoid hiring based on ‘fit’ as it unfairly advantages candidates similar to the current culture.
- Find evidence in a candidate’s application materials to support your scoring.
- Acknowledge and move past your bias about a candidate’s schooling, experiences, or skills.

One of the most effective methods for maintaining balance and consistency in reviewing applications is to [use a rubric](#). A rubric is an assessment tool that aligns the stated position requirements and priorities in a way that can be used to evaluate an application package. Though they can be time-intensive on the

front end, one of the advantages of using a rubric is that it minimizes subjectivity and increases opportunity for a thoughtful and objective approach to applicant screening. Consider the following:

- Create a rubric that is based on candidates' competence, skills, and abilities.
  - Here is a [sample rubric](#) for a full-time role in Communications.
- Apply the rubric consistently for all applicants.
  - If possible, use multiple reviewers and compare scores to reach a consensus.
  - Train all reviewers assessing applications on the rubric scale and function. Check in regularly to discuss assessments to discover discrepancies among reviewers.
  - Avoid [potential bias](#) among your reviewers and be clear about what defines a 1, 2, 3, etc. on your scoring rubric.
  - Review applications blindly – remove a candidate's name and identifying information, including the school or college they attended. This information can lead to bias for, or against, a candidate's aptitude rather than focusing on their skills and abilities.
- Score an applicant's materials for 'proof points' during evaluation.
  - What evidence in the application led you to your scoring? Be specific and avoid assumptions about what a candidate might mean in their materials.
- Note that rubrics are not designed as a "highest score wins" tool. They should create a threshold for the candidates you want to investigate further.
  - For example, if a candidate scores 14 points or more on the rubric, they are eligible for the role and will be evaluated further.

In addition, avoid reviewing candidates simply based on their "fit" for the company. This often results in hiring someone you like personally or someone that is similar to you or others at your organization. While that may feel comfortable as a reviewer, it is a [biased way of reviewing](#) potential candidates and could lead to skipping over someone that would have been great in the role. Stick to your rubric and assess candidates based on their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

## Step 5: Interview Candidates

### Key Points

- Use a rubric to score candidates' interviews assessing their aptitude for the job.
- Ask standard, fair questions to all candidates that avoid bias and discrimination.
- Ask behavioral questions that assess knowledge and skills, rather than hypotheticals.
- Be honest about your organizational work culture regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The interview process is often the last step in finalizing a new hire. Ensuring that your [interview process is equitable](#), from the questions you ask to the scores you give candidates, is vital in avoiding bias and favoritism in your search process. See below for additional resources about running an equitable interview process.

- [Use a Rubric](#) – By using a standard set of questions and metrics, rubrics ensure that our unconscious bias does not influence decision-making. Rubrics allow hiring committees to identify evidence of why a candidate is right for a role rather than vaguely "being a good fit."
- [Ask Fair Questions](#) – To avoid hiring discrimination and ensure that your interview process is equitable, it is important that you ask questions in such a way as to not discriminate against a candidate's background. This list provides ways to think about appropriate question wording.
- [Ask Behavioral Questions](#) – Behavioral questions provide better information about a candidate's experience than hypothetical questions. They also allow applicants with a diverse background to connect their experiences, skills, perceptions, and knowledge to specific work situations.

- Consider including a live-action scenario or assessment as part of the interview. This will allow you to see a candidates' skills in action which levels the playing field between candidates who "interview well" and those who are more anxious in an interview setting.
- Be honest about how equity and inclusion factor into your organization's mission and work. Can you share data about your company demographics? What efforts has your organization made to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace? Are you open to implementing feedback from staff to address bias and systems of oppression within your industry? If so, how? Let candidates make an informed choice about whether they can succeed at your organization.

The final hiring decision is dependent upon carefully reviewing all data and making a recommendation to the position's hiring manager. Here are items to consider in the decision-making process:

- Avoid prematurely labeling any candidate as the "most promising" until all candidates are interviewed.
- Acknowledge that reviewers can have unconscious biases about a candidates' appearance, accent, word-choice, culture, etc. Avoid letting these factors influence your decision making.
- Debrief as a search committee/interview panel to compare notes and identify strengths and weaknesses for all candidates.
- Use identified strengths and weaknesses to help inform an individualized onboarding plan – especially if the candidate is new to the organization.
- Focus on each candidate's track record of achievements and qualifications to meet the requirements of the position as they have been ranked in the assessment rubric.

## Step 6: Onboard Your New Hire

### Key Points

- Develop an onboarding plan to orient new employees to the organization and the job.
- Provide opportunities for new employees to build connections with current staff.
- Inform new hires about your racial equity work and ask for their input and participation.
- Create an individual engagement plan for each new hire to ensure their success in the role.

Once a new hire has been approved, it is important to [invest in retaining and preparing them](#) for employment at your organization. Be sure that they have access to any needed technology and a usable workstation. Orient them to the office and the people with whom they will work. Thinking through these initial onboarding pieces is vital to their success in the new role. Within this context, it is important to consider differently abled employees and any accommodations they may require for work. Also, international students may require prior authorization in order to work at your organization in jobs and internships. The student you are hiring is responsible for completing this process which can take a couple weeks. [UW International Student Services](#) has an explanation [letter for employers](#) with more information and can answer any questions about hiring international students.

Overall, a concerted effort to welcome a new employee by hosting opportunities for members of the team to get to know one another will accelerate relationship building. Other components of the onboarding process over time can include:

- Discussion of organization culture and norms (i.e. communication norms, any expectations on appearance and time, statement of pronouns during introductions, etc.).
- Overview of racial equity work, organization functions, and how decisions are made. Where appropriate, provide opportunities for new employees to engage in this work.

- Connection with a “buddy” or informal mentor to help learn more about what to expect when working for the organization.
- Connection to activities and networks like affinity groups, lunch and learn sessions, employee gatherings based on their interests, etc.

In addition, create an individual engagement plan with your new employees to help ensure that they are thriving in their role. As part of this plan, schedule regular check-ins, especially during the first month or two, to answer questions, work through problems or challenges, and make sure that they feel included and valued at the organization. Be clear about how their work will be evaluated and the best ways for them to both give and receive feedback. Different employees succeed in different ways and developing a plan for communication, evaluation, and feedback that works well for the manager and the employee will ensure their long-term success in the role.

Such onboarding practices are not necessarily specific to diverse employees but are important to establish a sense of belonging for everyone. We encourage you to include existing employees in discussions about onboarding practices and ideas for creating an inviting and welcoming workplace.

## Case Study

The [Urban Sustainability Directors Network](#) has a great case study of equitable hiring in practice. You can also view [Inclusive Hiring resources](#) on the UW Human Resources website many of which are included in the steps above.

## Information Sources (in order of appearance)

- [Boston Consulting Group, The Mix That Matters](#)
- [Handshake, 2019 Campus to Career Report](#)
- [MIT Management Sloan School, Compensation bias is bad for business. Here's how to fix it.](#)
- [PayScale, Diversity Considerations in Compensation: Part 1](#)
- [Recruiting Brief, Part 7: Creating a Fair Compensation Strategy and Philosophy](#)
- [Association of American Colleges & Universities, Reducing Internship Inequity](#)
- [US Department of Education, Low-income and Minority Students](#)
- [Department of Labor, Fact Sheet #71: Internship Programs Under the Fair Labor Standards Act](#)
- [PayScale, Webinar Recording – How to Conduct a Pay Equity Analysis](#)
- [University of Washington, Position descriptions and job posting guidelines](#)
- [University of Washington, Staff Diversity Hiring Toolkit](#)
- [McKinsey, 'True Gen': Generation Z and Its Implications for Companies](#)
- [Handshake, 70 Inclusive Language Principles That Will make You A More Successful Recruiter](#)
- [G2, Craft the Perfect Diversity Statement for Your Organization](#)
- [Harvard Business Review, Why Women Don't Apply for Jobs Unless They're 100% Qualified](#)
- [CDO Insights, Proven Strategies for Addressing Unconscious Bias in the Workplace](#)
- [University of Washington, Sample Internship Description – Career Diversity Intern](#)
- [Purdue University, First in the Family: A Comparison of First-Generation and Non First-Generation Engineering College Students](#)
- [University of Washington, Diversity Statement Prompts](#)
- [Harvard University, Recruiting for Diversity](#)
- [University of Washington, Academic Departments](#)
- [University of Washington, RSO Directory](#)
- [University of Washington, Diversity Recruitment Websites](#)
- [University of Washington, Autumn 2019 Enrollment Statistics](#)
- [University of Washington, Candidate Review & Selection](#)
- [University of Washington, Evaluation Rubric](#)
- [Trakstar, 8 Rater Biases that are Impacting your Performance Management](#)
- [Harvard Business Review, How to Hire](#)
- [University of Washington, Candidate evaluation form tips and guidelines](#)
- [University of Washington, Fair and Unfair Pre-employment Inquiries](#)
- [University of Washington, Examples of Behavioral Questions](#)
- [University of Washington, Onboarding & Retention](#)
- [University of Washington, International Student Services](#)
- [University of Washington, Letter to Employers Hiring International Students](#)
- [Urban Sustainability Directors Network, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Recruitment, Hiring and Retention](#)
- [University of Washington, Inclusive hiring](#)