Guidance on writing a Job Advert

Writing a job advert is just like writing any advertisement. You need to know your target audience, address them in the language they understand and offer them what they want. Your advert needs to speak directly to them.

A well-constructed job advert will:

- Attract better candidates
- Discourage weaker candidates
- Reduce applications that waste your time
- Reduce total processing time
- Increase recruitment efficiency

Here are some tips to help you write a powerful advert:

- **Write an advert, not a job description**
  The job description defines what the role entails and the criteria required to be successful in the role, whereas the advert's primary purpose is getting the right candidates to apply. The advert should therefore skip a lot of the detail contained in the job description and instead convey a sense of UCL's and your team's culture and mission, and why it's a great place to work.

- **Consider your target audience**
  Ensure your advert connects with your audience through language and motivation. There are several ways you can do this, such as putting yourself into the shoes of your ideal candidate – what will they be looking for and what keywords will they use when searching for a job; searching for similar jobs to the one you're advertising will give you a feel for which search terms seem most relevant; or asking someone who is in a similar job what would entice them to apply.

- **Talk to the jobseeker**
  Avoid phrases like "the successful candidate" or "the ideal applicant" as this will make even the most suitable candidate question whether they're right for the role. Instead use the word "you", e.g. "In this exciting role you will be working with …" or "With a strong background in administration, you will be expected to …".

- **Use different content for different adverts**
  The UCL jobsite advert template is relatively rigid in terms of what content can be

posted, whereas adverts posted on other online channels or in print media allow more flexibility. Therefore consider using different and more creative content for adverts posted outside of the UCL site. E.g. provide an introduction to UCL and give details on the financial and non-financial rewards we can offer, relating both to what would be of greatest interest to your ideal candidate.

- **Structure your advert**
  You should look to include the following elements:

  o **Job details** – these should include**:**
    o Job title
    o UCL department/division
    o UCL specific unit/sub department
    o Location of position
    o Grade
    o Hours
    o Salary range (inclusive of London allowance if applicable).
  o **Short introduction** – ensure your opening paragraph is short, punchy and informative; this is often the first thing a jobseeker will read after the job title. Clarify on whether the role is permanent, fixed term, the length of/end date of the contract etc, providing any relevant context. If the role is part-time, provide clarification on what basis.
  o **About UCL** (for adverts not posted on UCL's website) – provide some background information about UCL, ideally in a way that relates to the job. This only needs to be brief as a jobseeker will do their own research if they want to know more.
  o **About your team** – give a brief overview of what your team does and how the job fits into the team structure and strategy.
  (Note that due to the current limitations of the ROME job advert template, it is advisable to include the short introduction / team information within the 'Duties and responsibilities' box before you start listing the duties/responsibilities)
  o **Duties and responsibilities** – include a couple of the key duties and responsibilities the successful candidate will undertake. The advert should not include every element of the job, only enough to get the right candidates to apply, therefore it's recommended to focus on the essential criteria (rather than desirable) as this may dissuade some potential candidates from applying, particularly from under-represented groups. If the role is part-time, ensure that that the duties/responsibilities clearly and realistically reflect the part-time nature of the job.
  o **Key requirements** – briefly outline the knowledge (including necessary qualifications), experience, skills, and person attributes (for Academic/Research roles) or 'Ways of Working' behaviours (for professional services roles) required to be successful in the job. Don't include the full person specification but instead the key criteria. Jobseekers take literal notice of this section and you can affect your response rate dramatically with just a few carefully chosen words.
  o **What we can offer** (for adverts not posted on UCL's website) – point out some of the key benefits and perks candidates can look forward to, and what financial and non-financial rewards would make them want to apply for your job rather than a similar position elsewhere.

- o **Further details** – include information on how to access the full job description and person specification, how to apply and who to contact should they have any queries about the role or the application process. Also specify on any flexible working arrangements you are willing to consider, for example, 'We are pleased to accept applications from candidates seeking a part-time opportunity (a minimum of 0.8 FTE with salary pro rata), or a job share will be considered.'
- o **'Ways of Working' for professional services roles** – please note that HR Services will automatically add the following line to the bottom of each advert for all professional services roles: The UCL Ways of Working for professional services supports colleagues to be successful and happy at UCL through sharing expectations around how we work – please see www.ucl.ac.uk/ways-of-working to find out more.
- o **Positive action statement** – the appropriate statement (see ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/recruitment-positive-action-statements-0) will be included in your advert based on the selection of Senior Staff, Front-line, or Lecturers or Researchers made in ROME, to encourage under-represented groups to apply. Be sure to include the relevant statement in all adverts you publish.
- o **Latest time for the submission of applications** – by including the closing date, candidates can appropriately plan their time to complete an application.
- o **Interview date** – if this is known at the time of advertising, ensure to include it as this will help manage the candidates' expectations on the timings of the recruitment process.

- **Grab the candidate's attention**

  - o Use sub-headings to separate the introduction, responsibilities, key requirements etc.
  - o Use short paragraphs and bullet points for easy reading.
  - o Avoid internal or technical jargon or unexplained acronyms – don't alienate or confuse your target audience with internal or technical terms that make little sense to jobseekers outside of UCL and the sector.
  - o Use clear, concise language – avoid ambiguous or elaborate wording.
  - o Use non-discriminatory and inclusive language.

- **Use your advert as a screening tool**
  You'll save considerable processing time if unqualified candidates can screen themselves out on the basis of the job advert. If you give specific and clear information about UCL, the team, the role and requirements, this will allow candidates to compare what is required with their own skills, experience and motivations, and discourage those not qualified from applying.

- **Ask someone else to read the advert before it is published**
  Ideally get someone who has applied for a similar position to look over the advert to find out how it might be interpreted by a jobseeker. Based on their feedback, consider making any relevant amendments to make the advert more appealing.