

Guide for Hiring Managers on Anonymous Recruitment

Anonymous recruitment is a hiring practice that removes identifiable personal information from job applications, allowing candidates to be assessed solely on their skills, qualifications, and experience. At Imperial, we offer the option of anonymous recruitment to reduce the potential for unconscious bias within the recruitment and selection process as part of our commitment to being an inclusive organisation.

How to request anonymous recruitment

- 1. Plan Ahead**
The decision to anonymize applications must be made **before the job advertisement goes live**. This ensures all relevant systems and workflows are prepared in advance. We will also need around an extra 3-5 days to process the recruitment request so you may need to factor that in to your timelines
- 2. Request to Recruit form**
You can select anonymous recruitment in when you complete the Request to Recruit form and, on submission, a member of the Recruitment Hub team will be in touch with the next steps including to ask about any customisation needed to the application form.
- 3. Anonymised Shortlisting**
Applicants' personal information (e.g., name, contact details, gender) will be encrypted upon submission of their application. Only fields essential to the role are left visible to you in the candidate pack.
- 4. After Shortlisting**
Once shortlisting is completed, the details of applicants who are invited to interview will be decrypted, allowing the hiring process to proceed as normal.

Case Study: The Gothenburg city council in Sweden analysed pilot data on how anonymising job applications affects actual interview and hiring rates for women and ethnic minority candidates. Applications were fully anonymised. This means that as well as removing the name of the applicant, all personally identifiable information was removed – for example, the name of the university attended or companies worked at. Making the application process fully anonymous made it more likely that women and ethnic minority candidates reached the interview stage. Anonymous applications also increased the chance of being hired for women, but not ethnic minority candidates.

Benefits

- **Reduces Unconscious Bias**
By removing personal information, the process focuses solely on the candidate's qualifications, skills, and suitability for the role, promoting fairness and equity.
- **Enhances Transparency**
This method reinforces Imperial's commitment to fair hiring practices and builds trust among candidates.
- **Potential Increase to Talent Pool**
Candidates from minoritised backgrounds may be likely to apply when they feel they will be evaluated based solely on merit.

Limitations

- **Attachments and Additional Materials**
Anonymous applications cannot include attachments such as CVs or publication lists due to system limitations. For recruitment types that heavily rely on these documents, alternative assessment methods (e.g., structured questionnaires) may need to be implemented.
- **Free Text Fields and User-Generated Content**
If an applicant includes personal or identifiable information in free text fields or uploaded documents, it may not be possible to fully anonymise the application.
- **Other opportunities for bias**
Once the applications are decrypted, biases may still re-enter the process during interviews or subsequent evaluations. Anonymised shortlisting alone will not make the recruitment process inclusive.

Things to note

- **Clear Instructions for Applicants**
The job advertisement and application form must clearly state that applicants should **not include identifiable information** (e.g., names, photos, or contact details) in any free text fields or uploaded documents. This reduces the risk of non-anonymous content being submitted.
- **Tailor the Process to the Role**
Consider whether anonymous recruitment is appropriate for the specific role. For example, research-heavy positions might require alternative ways to evaluate publication history or specialised credentials.
- **Briefing for Hiring Panels**
Ensure all hiring panel members are aware of the principles and objectives of anonymous recruitment. They should be briefed to evaluate applications based solely on the anonymised criteria provided.