Recruitment Policies & Procedures

By implementing these policies and procedures, the Mycetoma Research Center can effectively attract and select the best talent, furthering its mission to combat mycetoma and support the WHO's initiatives in this field.

Staff Recruitment Policy

Purpose:

To establish a clear, fair, and transparent framework that guides the recruitment and selection of staff, ensuring the Center employs qualified personnel who contribute to its mission of combating mycetoma and supporting WHO initiatives.

Core Principles:

Equality and Non-Discrimination:

Recruitment processes shall be free from bias related to gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or other protected categories.

Merit-Based Selection:

Hiring decisions shall be based solely on candidates' qualifications, experience, skills, and potential contribution to the Center's objectives.

Transparency:

All recruitment activities shall be conducted openly, with clear communication regarding job requirements, selection criteria, and decision-making processes.

Confidentiality:

Candidate information shall be handled with confidentiality and respect throughout the recruitment process.

Compliance:

All recruitment activities shall align with local labour laws and international standards.

Recruitment Procedures

Position Advertisement

Rationale:

Widespread and strategic advertising broadens the reach, attracting a diverse pool of applicants from different geographical, academic, and cultural backgrounds. This increases the likelihood of identifying highly qualified, innovative, and committed researchers who can make meaningful contributions to the centre's mission. Additionally, transparent and accessible advertising enhances the centre's reputation as an inclusive and reputable institution.

Procedure:

Develop a Clear Advertisement Template:

- Create a standardised template that includes essential information such as the job title, department, purpose of the role, key responsibilities, required qualifications, experience, skills, location, salary range (if applicable), application deadline, and contact details.

Select Appropriate Channels for Posting:

- Center's Official Website: Post all research and staff vacancies on the center's dedicated careers or vacancies page for direct visibility.
- Academic and Scientific Job Boards: Use reputable platforms such as LinkedIn, ResearchGate, Science Careers, and university-specific job portals to target qualified researchers and academics.
- Relevant Scientific and Professional Networks: Engage with regional and international research networks, especially those focused on tropical diseases, neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), or infectious diseases.
- WHO and International Health Agencies Channels: Leverage WHO's career portal and other international health organisation channels, given their relevance to global health initiatives.
- Social Media Platforms: Use LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to reach a broader audience, especially early-career researchers and postgraduate students.

Ensure Accessibility and Inclusivity:

- Use clear, jargon-free language accessible to diverse candidates. Highlight the center's commitment to diversity and equal opportunity.

Timeline Management:

- Specify application deadlines and plan the advertisement timeline to allow sufficient time for promotion, application submission, and initial screening.

Job Description and Qualifications

Rationale:

Clear, detailed job descriptions and qualifications ensure that applicants understand precisely what is expected and what is required. This prevents unsuitable applications, reduces screening time, and attracts candidates whose skills and experience align with the role's demands. Well-defined roles also establish a standard for evaluating candidate suitability during the selection process, leading to more informed hiring decisions and improved team performance.

Procedure:

Draft a Detailed Job Description (JD):

- Role Purpose: Summarise the main purpose of the position in a clear, concise statement.
- Key Responsibilities: List specific tasks, responsibilities, and expectations (e.g., research activities, data analysis, fieldwork, publication requirements, collaboration with partners).
- Reporting Line: Clarify who the position reports to and any supervisory responsibilities they may have.
- Duration and Contract Type: Specify whether the role is permanent, temporary, or project-based, and indicate contract length if applicable.

Define Qualifications and Skills:

- Educational Qualifications: Specify minimum degrees (e.g., Master's or PhD in relevant fields such as microbiology, epidemiology, public health, parasitology).
- Experience: Detail required years of relevant research, project management, or fieldwork experience.
- Technical Skills: List essential skills such as laboratory techniques, statistical software proficiency, field data collection, grant writing, or specific research methodologies.
- Soft Skills: Emphasise communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and cultural sensitivity.
- Language Requirements: Specify if fluency in specific languages is necessary, especially for fieldwork in multilingual settings.

Set Expectations and Desirable Attributes:

- Mention desirable qualities such as previous work in neglected tropical diseases, international research experience, or publications in peer-reviewed journals.

Review and Validation:

- Have senior researchers or HR specialists review the job description for clarity, completeness, and alignment with organisational goals.

Application Screening

Rationale

A structured screening process ensures that only qualified and suitable candidates progress to the interview stage. It upholds fairness, reduces bias, and saves time by filtering out applicants who do not meet the essential criteria. This process also enhances the organisation's reputation for transparency and meritocracy, attracting high-caliber candidates who value fairness**.**

Procedure:

Form a Screening Committee:

- Assemble a team of senior researchers, human resources personnel, and relevant administrative staff.
- Ensure diversity in the committee to incorporate multiple perspectives and reduce individual bias.

Develop Clear Screening Criteria:

- Use the qualifications, skills, experience, and research interests outlined in the job description as benchmarks.
- Create a scoring matrix or checklist to objectively evaluate applications.

Review Applications Systematically:

Initial Screening:

- Check for completeness (e.g., all required documents submitted).
- Verify that applicants meet the minimum qualification and experience requirements.

Detailed Evaluation:

- Assess research experience, publications, technical skills, and familiarity with relevant methodologies.
- Consider motivation, career goals, and alignment with the center's mission.

Shortlisting:

- Select top candidates who meet or exceed the criteria for an interview invitation.
- Document reasons for rejection to ensure transparency and for audit purposes.

Coordinate and Communicate:

- Notify shortlisted candidates promptly with interview details.
- Inform unsuccessful applicants courteously, providing feedback if appropriate.

Interview Process

Structured interviews standardise the evaluation process, minimising subjective bias and ensuring all candidates are assessed fairly against the same criteria. Diverse panels help reduce cultural or personal biases, fostering inclusivity and equitable opportunity. This approach results in selecting candidates who are not only technically qualified but also align with the center's values and team dynamics, ultimately strengthening the center's capacity to execute its mission effectively.

Procedure:

Design Structured Interviews:

- Develop standardised interview guides with predetermined questions focusing on both technical expertise and behavioural competencies aligned with the role.

Questions should assess:

Technical Skills:

- Research methodologies, laboratory techniques, data analysis, project management, and subject matter knowledge.

Behavioural Attributes:

- Problem-solving, teamwork, adaptability, communication skills, and motivation.

Assemble a Diverse Interview Panel:

- Include senior researchers, project managers, and administrative staff with relevant expertise.
- Where feasible, involve members from different disciplines or cultural backgrounds to promote inclusivity.
- Ensure panel members are trained on interview techniques and unconscious bias mitigation.

Conduct the Interviews:

- Follow a consistent format for all candidates to ensure fairness.

Use a mix of question types:

- Situational/Scenario Questions: To assess problem-solving and decision-making.
- Behavioural Questions: To explore past experiences and soft skills.
- Technical Questions: To evaluate specific research capabilities.

Allow candidates time to ask questions, fostering engagement and transparency.

Evaluation and Decision-Making:

- Panel members independently score or rate responses based on predefined criteria.
- Conduct debriefs to discuss impressions and reach consensus on the most suitable candidate.
- Document scores and rationale for selection decisions.

Offer and Feedback:

- Extend formal job offers to successful candidates promptly.
- Provide constructive feedback to unsuccessful candidates if requested, maintaining professionalism and transparency.

Reference Checks

Rationale

Reference checks are a critical validation step that provides insights beyond the interview and application materials. They help verify the candidate's qualifications, character, and ability to contribute positively to the center's research environment. Conducting thorough reference checks safeguards the center's reputation by reducing the risk of hiring individuals with undisclosed issues or misconduct, ensuring the integrity and quality of the research team.

Obtain Consent:

- Seek formal permission from the candidate before contacting previous employers or references, ensuring compliance with privacy and data protection policies.

Select References:

Request candidates to provide contact details of professional references, ideally:

- Supervisors or managers from recent employment or research roles.
- Colleagues or collaborators familiar with the candidate's work.
- Academic advisors or mentors, especially for research-focused roles.

Prepare Reference Questions:

Develop a standardised set of questions to ensure consistency, focusing on:

- Qualifications and Skills: Confirm the candidate's technical expertise and research capabilities.
- Work Ethic and Reliability: Assess punctuality, responsibility, and integrity.
- Teamwork and Collaboration: Evaluate interpersonal skills and ability to work in diverse teams.
- Problem-Solving and Adaptability: Assess how the candidate responds to challenges and changes in research environments.
- Character and Professionalism: Ensure the candidate's conduct aligns with the center's values and code of ethics.

Conduct Reference Interviews:

- Contact references via phone or email, record responses accurately, and ask clarifying questions if needed.
- Be objective and professional, avoiding leading or biased questions.

Analyse Feedback:

- Summarise the information obtained, looking for consistency with the candidate's claims and the results of the interview process.
- Pay attention to any red flags or concerns regarding honesty, reliability, or professionalism.

Make an Informed Decision:

- Use the reference feedback to confirm the candidate's suitability or reconsider the selection if significant concerns arise.

Selection and Offer

Offering a competitive and well-structured employment package is essential for attracting and retaining high-caliber researchers and staff. Thoughtful negotiation demonstrates respect for the candidate's value and fosters long-term commitment, which is vital for sustaining the center's research and advocacy efforts. A clear and fair offer process enhances the centre's reputation as an employer of choice in the global health and research community.

Procedure:

Identify Final Candidates:

- After completing interviews and selecting the preferred candidate(s), proceed with reference checks to verify their background.

Prepare a Formal Offer Letter:

Clearly outline the terms of employment, including:

- Job title and department
- Salary and benefits (e.g., health insurance, leave entitlements)
- Probationary period (if applicable)
- Start date and work location
- Expectations and reporting relationships
- Include information on professional development opportunities and organisational policies.

Consider Market Competitiveness:

- Ensure the offer is aligned with industry standards, regional benchmarks, and the candidate's experience level to attract top talent.

Engage in Negotiations if Necessary:

- Be open to discussions on salary, benefits, work arrangements, or professional development opportunities.
- Maintain transparency and fairness during negotiations.
- Consider the candidate's priorities and the center's capacity to accommodate requests.

Finalise Agreement:

- Once terms are agreed upon, prepare and sign a formal employment contract or appointment letter.
- Provide copies to the new employee and retain copies for HR records.

Plan Onboarding and Integration:

- Coordinate with relevant departments to facilitate a smooth onboarding process, including orientation, access to resources, and introductions.

Onboarding

Rationale:

Effective onboarding sets the stage for a successful and engaged workforce.

Procedure

Conduct Needs Assessment and Define Objectives

- Identify key onboarding components: Gather input from leadership, HR, current staff, and department heads to determine essential information and skills new hires need.
- Set clear objectives: Define what the onboarding programme aims to achieve, such as understanding the center's mission, familiarisation with research areas, and compliance with policies.

Design the Onboarding Framework

- Create a structured timeline: Outline the onboarding schedule (e.g., first week, first month, first 90 days).
- Develop onboarding modules: Segment content into logical modules, such as organisational overview, research focus areas, workplace policies, and cultural orientation.
- Incorporate various learning formats: Utilise a combination of presentations, e-learning modules, videos, interactive sessions, and written materials to accommodate diverse learning styles and preferences.

Develop Content and Materials

- Organisational overview: Prepare materials explaining the center's history, mission, vision, and core values.
- Research areas and projects: Develop presentations and documents detailing ongoing research, strategic priorities, and key collaborations, including partnerships with the WHO.
- Workplace policies: Compile policies on code of conduct, health and safety, data privacy, anti-discrimination, and other relevant regulations.
- Organisational structure: Create organisational charts, key contact lists, and role descriptions to help new staff understand reporting lines and collaboration channels.
- Additional resources: Prepare FAQs, glossaries of technical terms, and access instructions for internal systems and tools.

Assign Roles and Responsibilities

- Mentors/Buddies: Pair new employees with experienced staff to facilitate social integration and knowledge sharing.
- HR and Department Leads: Assign responsibilities for delivering specific modules, conducting orientation sessions, and providing support.
- Leadership Involvement: Encourage leadership to deliver welcome messages and reinforce organisational values.

Implement the Onboarding Process

- Pre-arrival preparations: Send welcome emails, onboarding schedules, and access credentials before the start date.
- First-day activities: Conduct orientation sessions, introduce staff, and provide necessary resources such as ID badges, workspace, and IT equipment.
- Initial training sessions: Facilitate initial training on workplace policies, safety procedures, and organisational tools.
- Ongoing engagement: Schedule regular check-ins during the first 30, 60, and 90 days to assess onboarding progress, answer questions, and gather feedback.

Incorporate Feedback and Continuous Improvement

- Collect feedback: Use surveys or informal discussions to gather new employees' input on the onboarding experience.
- Adjust content and processes: Update materials, improve delivery methods, and streamline procedures based on feedback and changing organisational needs.
- Monitor effectiveness by Tracking onboarding completion rates, time to full productivity, and employee engagement levels to evaluate success.

Document and Share the Onboarding Programme

- Create a handbook or guide: Develop a comprehensive onboarding manual or digital resource accessible to all new hires and managers.
- Maintain records: Keep documentation of onboarding completion, feedback, and updates to ensure accountability and facilitate continuous improvement.

Equal Opportunity and Diversity

Rationale:

Promoting diversity fosters innovation, collaboration, and a global perspective, which is crucial for a WHO Collaboration Center.

Procedures

Develop Inclusive Job Descriptions and Job Postings

- Use neutral language: Write job descriptions that are free from gendered, age-specific, or culturally biased language.
- Highlight commitment to diversity: Clearly state the organisation's commitment to equal opportunity and diversity, encouraging applicants from all backgrounds to apply.
- Specify essential qualifications: Focus on essential skills and qualifications, avoiding unnecessary requirements that may exclude diverse candidates.
- List preferred qualifications: Include desired but not mandatory skills to broaden the candidate pool.

Broaden Recruitment Channels

- Utilise diverse sourcing platforms: Publish job openings on international and local job boards, minority-focused networks, professional associations, and social media platforms.
- Partner with diverse organisations: Collaborate with community groups, universities, and organisations that support underrepresented groups to reach a wider audience.
- Encourage internal referrals: Promote internal diversity and inclusion initiatives to encourage current staff to recommend diverse candidates for future openings.

Standardise and Structure the Selection Process

- Implement structured interviews: Use standardised questions based on job competencies to ensure fair assessment of all candidates.
- Use objective evaluation criteria: Develop scoring rubrics aligned with job requirements to minimise subjective bias.
- Assemble diverse hiring panels: Include interviewers from different backgrounds, genders, and areas of expertise to provide varied perspectives and reduce unconscious bias.
- Train interviewers: Provide training on unconscious bias, diversity awareness, and fair assessment practices to all individuals involved in the recruitment process.

Conduct Unbiased Candidate Evaluation

- Review applications systematically: Screen applications based on predefined criteria, avoiding assumptions based on demographics.
- Blind resume review: When possible, anonymise applications by removing names, photos, and other identifying information to prevent bias.
- Focus on competencies and potential: Prioritise skills, experience, and cultural fit over personal characteristics unrelated to job performance.

Ensure Fair and Transparent Communication

- Provide timely feedback: Inform candidates promptly about their status, maintaining transparency throughout the process.
- Communicate organisational values: Emphasise the organisation's commitment to diversity and equal opportunity during interactions with candidates.
- Offer accommodations: Make reasonable adjustments for candidates with disabilities or specific needs during interviews and assessments.

Post-Hire Inclusivity and Support

- Onboarding and orientation: Reinforce the organisation's diversity policies and cultural inclusion initiatives during onboarding.
- Promote an inclusive culture by Encouraging respectful communication, fostering cultural sensitivity, and providing ongoing diversity training for all staff.
- Monitor diversity metrics: Track recruitment data, demographic profiles, and employee feedback to identify trends, disparities, and areas for improvement.

Continuous Review and Improvement

- Review recruitment policies regularly: Update procedures to align with best practices and evolving organisational diversity goals.
- Solicit feedback: Gather input from new hires and hiring teams to improve fairness and inclusivity in the process.
- Report progress: Share annual reports on diversity metrics and recruitment outcomes with leadership to foster accountability.

Quality Assurance

-All documents must undergo review regularly.

Documentation and Record-Keeping

-Maintain records of all documents.

Approval:

The Mycetoma Research Centre Director approves these policies and Standard Operating Procedures.

3rd June 2021