

## Vacancies and Selection Procedure

### Human Resources Management Reform

There has been a major shift in the administrative procedures of the UN system over the last ten years, initiated by the former Secretary General Kofi Annan. A key component of his Human Resources Management Reform programme was the introduction of a staff selection system integrating recruitment, placement, promotion and mobility of staff. The process was aimed at creating a more transparent, faster process across the system, answering the (then) Secretary General's vision of «an organizational culture that is responsive and results-oriented, rewards creativity and innovation, and promotes continuous learning, high performance and managerial excellence.»

While these changes were progressively and rigorously introduced into the Secretariat from 1997 onwards, other agencies in the system may have adapted some of the recruitment procedures subject to their own needs. The recruitment requirements of each individual agency are outlined and can be easily accessed on their individual websites.

In an attempt to demonstrate fairness and transparency to the recruitment process, the following changes have been introduced:

- Selection is now by the Head of Department
- Generic Job Profiles have been introduced for posts at most levels
- Central Review Bodies (CRB) review the process prior to the applications being shown to the Hiring Manager
- Department Head selects from a list of applicants approved by the CRB
- Pre-approved candidates may elect to be rostered (valid for one year)
- Mobility is managed
- Web-based system of application
- Average selection time has been reduced from 275 to 120 days

### Accountability mechanisms ensuring transparency in recruitment

The Heads of Departments and Offices are now accountable for selection of staff based on merit and competencies, and for the progress towards achieving the targets of geographical and gender balance.

The Central Review bodies ensure that the evaluation criteria accurately reflect the requirements of the post as stated in the vacancy announcement, that the pre-approved evaluation criteria are properly applied, and that the Head of Department certifies that the organization's human resources objectives have been taken into account in his/her choice of applicant, especially with regard to geographical distribution and gender balance.

The Human Resources Management ensures that vacancy announcements and evaluation criteria are consistent with the generic job profile of the specific post and that all eligible applicants and roster candidates are submitted at the appropriate time for review to the relevant programme manager.

### Mobility Policy

Mobility as a concept was introduced into the Secretariat by the former Secretary General, and came into force in 2007. All staff are now expected to move functions, departments, duty stations or organizations periodically (you may move after two years on any post, but you must move after five years). The aim of the policy is to increase flexibility, movement throughout the

organization and a broadening of the skills base of the staff, encouraging lateral moves, giving more possibilities for learning, growth and interesting careers.

### **The 15-day, 30-day and 60-day recruitment process**

All posts are now advertised both internally and externally and remain open for a sixty day period from the date of the vacancy announcement. Programme managers receive applications (already reviewed by the CRB) from internal candidates who are applying for lateral moves after fifteen days and can, if they choose, stop the process at that stage.

They receive the applications from internal candidates applying for a promotional move after thirty days, and again can choose to stop the process at that stage. After sixty days, they receive applications from eligible external candidates. Factors that may come into consideration in their choice can be the need for rapid filling of the post (the recruitment process whether internal or external has traditionally been quite long and complicated), the need for specific skills that cannot be found within the pool of eligible internal applicants and consideration of the geographical and gender balance requirement for which programme managers have been made accountable.

### **Status of applications**

Due to the large quantity of applications received online, there is no mechanism for informing applicants individually of the status of their application. Applicants can continue to check on line after the sixty-day period is over – the system will inform whether the vacancy is still under consideration or has been filled. Although the recruitment procedure can vary from agency to agency, the average recruitment time has been reduced from 275 days to 120 days (in the Galaxy system).

### **Recommendations for external candidates**

Given the large volume of applicants received by all agencies, external candidates are strongly advised to thoroughly prepare their applications and to study in detail the requirements of each individual vacancy announcement and to tailor their application to that specific vacancy. Use the language of the vacancy announcement and the competencies requested, as initial searches are often done using keywords.

### **Mission Service and temporary assignments**

In line with the reality of the working world in general, the UN system offers less and less opportunities for long-term employment with stable contractual status in the same organization. There are, however, more opportunities for interesting assignments and for movement across a unique, global organization. Serious consideration should be given by external candidates to accepting temporary assignments, and/or doing mission service, as this experience is widely acknowledged as invaluable in the need to create a more responsive, highly-skilled and results-oriented global workforce. The opportunities to move to other posts increase considerably, as do the possibilities of networking and understanding more thoroughly the individual characteristics of the various agencies and organizations within the global system. Being flexible, taking risks and getting visibility are all positive elements towards gaining the position of your choice.