

JAC Equality Objectives 2012 – 2016

The Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) seeks to deliver processes which are fair and ensure all applicants receive equal treatment.

Under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 the JAC must select solely on merit. That combined with the requirement to encourage diversity in the range of persons available for selection will ensure that the most meritorious candidates will succeed and that the best judges will be appointed.

The Equality Act 2010 applied a general equality duty to the JAC. The equality duty requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. In addition the JAC is subject to specific duties as set out in the regulations that came into force on 10 September 2011. The duty requires the JAC to publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating compliance with the equality duty and to set specific, measurable equality objectives.

The JAC objectives for 2012-2016 are split into four distinct areas; outreach, fair and open processes, monitoring, and promoting diversity within our staff. Each objective and the associated outcomes are detailed below. Reference to statistical data in Objective 4 refers to four specific areas, namely; gender, ethnicity, disability and professional background. This is in line with the Commission's identified under represented groups. However, all protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, are considered when carrying out equality assessments.

Objective 1

To widen the pool of candidates applying for judicial positions through communication and outreach activities

The JAC will continue to encourage the widest range of good quality candidates to apply for judicial vacancies. In order to meet this objective we will:

- Continue to explain the selection process through a balanced outreach programme linked to the exercise programme.
- Increase our online presence to help raise awareness and understanding.
- Continue to circulate details of vacancies to a wide network of partner organisations to promote opportunities to their members.
- Analyse candidate feedback following seminars and exercises to ensure available materials continue to be appropriate and relevant and meets candidate expectations.
- Improve feedback provided to candidates throughout the selection process.

Outcome measure

- Candidate applications will be in proportion with the eligible pool for each selection exercise
- Aim for 90% candidate satisfaction throughout the selection process, and methods encouraging candidates to apply e.g. seminars, webinars website, and outreach events run by the JAC
- Agreed outcomes of Barriers survey to be fed into the Diversity Forum Forward Look.

Objective 2

To ensure that all JAC selection exercise policies, procedures and practices are free of any unintended bias ensuring all candidates experience a fair and open process.

Ensuring that all JAC selection exercise policies, practices and procedures are free of any bias, so that fairness is embedded throughout the process, thus enabling the successful running of individual exercises. In order to meet this objective we will:

- Complete an equality impact assessment against all nine protected characteristics for all selection exercise materials and all changes to the selection process used to identify any bias (unintended or otherwise) and make amendments where necessary.
- All selection exercise material and changes to process to be agreed at Advisory Group
- Carry out 'dry run' sessions to further validate testing mechanisms, i.e. qualifying tests, role plays and scenario based questioning.
- Promote the Reasonable Adjustment Policy so that requests for a reasonable adjustment can be appropriately met.
- Continue to deliver equality and diversity training for all panel members as part of a tailored training package delivered before each exercise
- Conduct a full moderation meeting at the end of each selection day stage of an exercise to ensure panels adhere to published JAC selection processes, policies and procedures.
- Continue to work with the Judicial Diversity Taskforce and steering group to implement the Neuberger recommendations and other related activities
- Regularly appraise all JAC selection panel members.
- Provide feedback for candidates who were not selected following selection day.

Outcome measure

- Ensure progression rates for the reported groups are consistent throughout the selection exercise and where possible in line with or an improvement on the eligible pool.
- Met all valid reasonable adjustment requests. Monitor requests for reasonable adjustments and raise any concerns regarding the wider policy to the commission when appropriate.
- Upheld complaints or successful challenges do not relate to diversity.
- Equality assessments are conducted and recorded for all policy changes/amendments and selection exercise selection tools, for example, role play and qualifying test.

Objective 3

To monitor the diversity of candidates selected for judicial appointment (against the eligible pool where available) and take remedial action where appropriate

The JAC will continue to monitor and evaluate the progression of candidates applying for judicial office and seek to address disproportional dropout where appropriate. In order to meet this objective we will:

- Consider diversity at the three key checkpoints of the exercise, namely, application, short listing and selection day stage and seek to remedy any disproportional 'drop out' of candidates by protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010 on which we have data.
- Wherever possible we will use a previous comparator exercise to measure any increases/decreases in applications from women, disabled, black and minority ethnic candidates and solicitors in line with the Commission's identified under represented groups.
- Continue to publish official statistics containing diversity breakdowns for public scrutiny twice yearly on the JAC website
- Invite equality representatives from the legal professions, i.e. Bar Council, Law Society and CILEx to equality assess qualifying tests and role plays making recommendations for change where appropriate.

Outcome measure

- All selection exercise teams undertake diversity checkpoints at the key checkpoint stages
- Provide transparency on progression in selection exercises through the provision and publication of statistics twice yearly under the provision of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and compliant with the Code of Practice on Official Statistics

Objective 4

Promoting diversity in the workplace and ensuring that the JAC meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 as an employer

The JAC will continue to promote a diverse and inclusive work environment where staff feel valued. In order to meet this objective we will:

- Ensure regular updates and monitoring of the diversity breakdown of permanent staff through the HR system .
- Undertake a full equality assessment of any changes to JAC HR practices to ensure that they do not unintentionally discriminate against a group or groups of people.
- Provide an annual report to the Board on HR issues, with particular reference to equality issues
- Conduct a staff survey once a year, provided resources are available. Provide a detailed analysis of the results of the staff survey and develop bespoke action plans to address particular concerns. Staff will be regularly informed of progress in relation to the action plans;
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- Continue to support the Staff Forum as a platform for staff initiatives and as a consultative/advisory body for senior management.

Outcome measure

- Average engagement level of 70% obtained within the staff survey over the next four years.
- All proposals outlined in bespoke staff survey action plans are implemented, provided resources are available.
- Staff reflect the diversity of the general population at all levels.
- Quarterly meetings to be held with the Staff Forum and CEO to update on issues.