

# Guidelines for the Recruitment and Selection of UNDP Staff

## Executive Summary

A pilot system for recruiting and selecting staff and filling internal vacancies, known as QUARRY, was approved by UNDP's management to replace the previous Succession Management Exercise in March 2005. An independent Review of QUARRY was concluded in May 2006 and its recommendations were decided upon by management in June and July 2006. Highlights of the new Recruitment and Selection Guidelines include the following:

- The new Recruitment and Selection Guidelines, and the principles they contain, are applicable to the entire recruitment domain in UNDP, including QUARRY vacancies.
- QUARRY has now been mainstreamed as UNDP's corporate system for staff recruitment and selection.
- The QUARRY recruitment and selection process, and indeed all recruitment and selection in UNDP, is underpinned by five broad principles – competition, fairness, objectivity, transparency and accountability.
- QUARRY vacancies (and most other international vacancies) will be advertised for a minimum of two weeks in the newly consolidated UNDP jobs website as either internal or external vacancies.
- There is greater rigor and accountability of hiring managers in the recruitment and placement process, in particular when long-listing and short-listing candidates against objective criteria contained in the Vacancy Announcement.
- Hiring managers may elect (and are encouraged to) participate in the corporate panels that carry out interviews or desk reviews for positions reporting to them.
- Desk reviews are now discouraged. Hiring managers are strongly encouraged to use interviews to foster greater rigor, objectivity and transparency.
- Corporate panels will normally comprise a minimum of four persons including the hiring manager or another representative of the hiring unit, an OHR representative (from either within or from outside the hiring unit), and two additional persons external to the hiring Bureau and Unit, with a balanced gender and diversity mix.
- 100 series staff in core functions (e.g. DRR, ARR) will normally be long-listed only if they have completed two-years in their current post
- Selected applicants are required to report for duty within two months of receiving an offer of appointment.
- A new, simplified scoring mechanism has been introduced placing candidates into one of three categories ('Recommended', 'Recommended with Reservations', or 'Not Recommended') removing the requirement for successful candidates to meet an 80% threshold.
- OHR will maintain time capped 'rosters' of 'Recommended' candidates for specific country office positions.
- The effective date for implementation of these guidelines is September 18, 2006.

# **Guidelines for the Recruitment and Selection of UNDP Staff**

## **Background**

A pilot system for the recruitment and selection of staff and filling internal vacancies, known as QUARRY, was approved by UNDP's management to replace the previous Succession Management Exercise in March 2005. In its approval, management indicated that QUARRY should be piloted for one year concluding with a review to assess how the new arrangements had worked and how they could be improved. An independent Review of QUARRY was concluded in May 2006 and its recommendations were decided upon by management in June and July 2006.

Foremost amongst the recommendations approved was that QUARRY be mainstreamed as UNDP's corporate system of recruitment and selection. This and the other recommendations approved by the Operations Group in July 2006 are reflected in these new corporate guidelines for the recruitment and selection of staff in UNDP.

These guidelines are intended to give a broad overview of UNDP's systems and processes for the recruitment and selection of staff. They are consistent with UNDP's corporate Human Resources Strategy. More detailed guidance on how to carry out the various steps and processes involved in staff recruitment and selection, as well as templates and good examples, are provided in the recruitment toolkit, which is currently being developed, together with the recruitment policy, and will shortly be circulated for comment and posted on the OHR web site and HR User Guide.

## **Applicability**

These guidelines supersede all other recruitment and selection guidelines, including those relating to QUARRY, with effect from 18 September 2006. They are directly applicable to all recruitment and selection for core posts (100 series) up to and including the D1 level. Occasionally, some core posts in Country Offices may have a contractual modality other than 100 series. Such posts (e.g DRR, ARR) will normally be covered by these guidelines and will, at the discretion of OHR, be included in the QUARRY process. Recruitment for posts at the D2 level and above, as well as other strategic placement decisions remains under the direct prerogative of the Administrator. Recruitment and selection for non 100 series posts should be visibly aligned to these guidelines unless specifically exempted by the Director of OHR. The appointment of Resident Coordinators/Resident Representatives follows a separate process.

While the guidelines apply more to recruitment undertaken by Headquarters, Regional and Country Offices are expected to follow the same principles and, to the extent possible, use equivalent processes for filling local vacancies. To facilitate this, comparable guidelines for ready use directly by Country Offices will be prepared by OHR with inputs received from a series of regional workshops in which Country Offices will participate in the last quarter of 2006. The alignment of all recruitment and selection to this single set of guidelines is intended to improve consistency and transparency across the organization, irrespective of posts,

contractual modality or hiring unit and to build greater staff confidence in UNDP's placement and recruitment systems.

### **Objective and Principles**

These guidelines are intended to ensure that recruitment and selection processes result in the right person getting the right job at the right time. To achieve this, five principles should guide all recruitment and selection in UNDP:

- **Competition:** a visible competitive process to attract high quality candidates for all vacancies;
- **Fairness:** all candidates, irrespective of gender, race and background, should be assessed in the same manner;
- **Objectivity:** all recruitments and selections should be conducted with professional rigor, with candidates measured against clearly articulated criteria and job competencies.
- **Transparency:** the selection criteria and process should be transparent to all applicants.
- **Accountability:** hiring managers and hiring bureaus/units will have greater direct input into recruitment and selection decisions, matched by greater accountability for those decisions and the processes leading up to them.

#### **Definitions**

- **QUARRY** refers to the periodic (four to six times per year), consolidated, recruitment and selection exercises for 100 series professional positions as well as other core functions funded by other contractual modalities.
- **Corporate targets/lists** refer to the prioritization of women, LEAD candidates, candidates from OHR recruitment missions, unassigned staff and national staff.
- The **hiring manager** is the person to whom the incumbent of the vacant post will report.
- The **hiring director** is the director of the organizational unit hosting the vacancy.
- The **list of applicants** comprises everyone who applied for the vacancy.
- The **long-list** comprises all applicants that have met the criteria listed in the vacancy announcement and corporate eligibility requirements.
- The **short-list** comprises the two to four candidates who have been systematically selected from the long-list by the hiring manager, using criteria explicit in the vacancy announcement.
- The **roster** comprises candidates who have been recommended as leading candidates (without condition or reservation) by corporate panels, but not selected for a particular post.

The application of these principles may occasionally conflict with the pursuit of corporate placement targets for women, LEAD participants, candidates from OHR recruitment missions, and unassigned staff. OHR is the lead custodian of these principles on behalf of senior management. As such, any waiver of the principles for other objectives should involve consultation with OHR. While there may be situations in which targets take precedence, normally, the principles will prevail.

### **Vacancy Announcements (VAs) and Advertisement**

For international vacancies, the hiring manager, or his or her designate is responsible for drafting the VA and submitting it to OHR. For this, hiring managers are encouraged to use the on-line recruitment system with its drop down menus of generic job descriptions which can be readily adapted to the specifics of most vacancies in UNDP. OHR is responsible for monitoring VAs for consistency across posts and units and that the statement of requirements, competencies, qualifications and years of experience reflects corporate standards. To enhance transparency, each VA has to state all the competencies and other criteria which will be used in the selection process to assess candidates. Hiring managers will not be able to use selection criteria that have not been reflected in the VA. Hiring managers are allowed to add up to five mandatory questions in the creation of the VA (to facilitate screening).

When approved by OHR, VAs are automatically posted at <http://jobs.undp.org> (for external vacancies) and <http://jobs-intra.undp.org> (for all vacancies including internal) for a minimum of two weeks. These websites have replaced all the previous online jobs sites managed by OHR except that of the Inter Agency Mobility Programme (IAMP) website. All applications for international posts are now on-line through the job sites listed above. Country and Regional Offices are encouraged to use these sites for any post for which there is a potential pool of international applicants.

All 100 series vacancies have to be advertised internally, but may exceptionally (with the prior authorization of OHR) be advertised externally (only if previous internal advertisement has failed to generate a suitable pool of applicants). OHR may also approve the concurrent internal/external advertisement of a vacancy.

When staff are successful in filling vacant posts, their existing posts are vacated. For this reason, to encourage inter-unit mobility, to meet other corporate staff placement targets and to manage talent holistically, decisions relating to filling UNDP's core posts are made collectively through periodic QUARRY exercises. Thus most vacancies that are generated from, staff being selected for a post in one QUARRY exercise, are packaged for inclusion in the following QUARRY exercise. Depending on demand, four to six QUARRY exercises will be scheduled each year.

Advertisement of 100 series vacancies outside of the QUARRY process as an *ad hoc* vacancy requires the prior approval of the Director of OHR. All such exceptions should still be subject to the processes described in these guidelines, unless otherwise noted. Moreover, to the extent possible, the selection process will still be directly linked with any ongoing QUARRY process. For example, a corporate panel for screening short-listed candidates for an ad hoc vacancy advertised after the QUARRY may be timed alongside other corporate panels for the

QUARRY announced posts and the ad hoc post may be included in the next QUARRY Review meeting.

For the purposes of corporate talent management, as well as to minimize periods of post non-occupancy, each hiring director is required to keep up to date a list of all projected 100 series international vacancies for the next 12 months. These lists and changes to them should be promptly shared with the OHR Chief of Recruitment in a timely manner who will consolidate the lists and post a current "Demand Forecast" list of upcoming international 100 series vacancies assisting transparency and staff career planning.

### **Eligibility**

Equally qualified internal applicants will normally be given preference over external applicants in the absence of conflicting corporate priorities. For this purpose, the following candidates are considered internal:

- UNDP staff members appointed to the international professional and higher categories (P and D staff) under the 100-series of the Staff Rules; and LEAD participants, irrespective of contractual status.
- UNDP staff members appointed to the international professional category under the 200-series of the Staff Rules (L-staff) including UNDP Junior Professional Officers with more than 15 months of service; UNDP staff members appointed to the National Professional category under the 100-series of the Staff Rules (NO-staff); eligible UNDP General Service Staff, in Headquarters and Regional and Country Offices, at the G/ICS levels 6 and 7; UNDP staff on ALD appointments at the professional level (A3 and above) under the 300-series of the Staff Rules.
- Individuals from under-represented countries identified as possible candidates by OHR Recruitment Missions;
- Staff members, with 100 series contracts or the equivalent, of other ExCom. Agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP) as soon as reciprocal mechanisms have been agreed by the organizations concerned.

100 series staff carrying out core functions (e.g. DRR, ARR) are not eligible to be long-listed for posts without having served at least two years in their present post. Hiring managers will need to obtain a waiver from OHR before long-listing such staff. OHR will consult with the current supervisor of the staff concerned before granting a waiver.

### **Long-listing**

In essence, the long-listing process screens out candidates from the list of applicants that do not meet all of the criteria, competencies or mandatory information listed in the VA. To assist in the long-listing process, the data sorting and filtering capacity of the UNDP jobs site can electronically filter basic eligibility criteria (age and qualifications). However there is still a requirement to view and screen each application remaining following the initial filtering and

make a determination whether or not the applicant meets the criteria listed in the VA. This is done on the Jobs Site with only the hiring manager and OHR having confidential access to this processing of applications. Long-listing is the responsibility of the hiring manager or his or her designate (usually the HR Advisors and Specialists in the respective Bureaux). However OHR may add to the long-list suitably qualified candidates from corporate lists. The hiring unit, in consultation with OHR's Chief of Recruitment, may access corporate placement lists to add suitable candidates to the long-list, appropriately annotating the precise source of each addition. For international vacancies in Country Offices, the relevant HR Adviser will transmit the long-list to the Resident Representative concerned with a copy to the Bureau Director. The role of HR professionals, both in HQ and in Country Offices, is to advise and facilitate. The hiring director and, in Country Offices, the Resident Representative remains responsible, and will be held accountable, for selection decisions and the processes followed.

All applications will be automatically acknowledged. When submitting applications, all internal applicants should indicate their last three RCA ratings, if their performance has been rated in three or more RCA performance cycles (until the jobs site software is capable of automatically attaching RCAs to applications). Candidates that are short-listed may be required to provide copies of their RCAs upon request.

### **Short-listing**

Short-listing is also the responsibility of the hiring manager. Before finalizing the VA, the hiring manager should decide on the criteria for selection of candidates from the long-list in order to derive a short-list. The hiring manager is expected to systematically screen in, or out, each candidate from the long-list annotating a brief, but objective reason why for accountability, possible future audit and greater transparency. Only criteria that have been stated in the VA may be used for screening candidates in, or out. This is done by the hiring manager on the Jobs Site to which only the hiring manager and OHR will have confidential access. The hiring manager has to submit her/his short-list to OHR before a corporate panel can be constituted for interview or desk review. As a result, careful consideration needs to be afforded in the drafting of the VA.

The hiring manager is encouraged to enrich the short-listing process by additional pre-screening including one or more technical tests, review of work samples and/or telephone screening. If she/he does so, the weight to be given to each method and the criteria to be used in each should be decided beforehand, and be the same for each candidate in order to foster greater consistency, transparency and defendability.

The most reliable predictor of future performance is past performance. Hiring managers, in their short-listing of candidates, are expected to take into account the ratings and comments of previous and present supervisors on the performance of internal applicants, covering at least the last three RCAs. Similarly, hiring managers are expected to obtain comparable indications of the past performance of external applicants under serious consideration by reference checking with their previous supervisors. Hiring managers should inform an external candidate before contacting her/his past supervisors and should only contact the current supervisor, with the express permission of the candidate; typically after an offer is made.

In the short-listing process, hiring managers are responsible for pursuit of corporate placement targets, some of which will have been explicitly assigned to each hiring unit by the Associate Administrator at the beginning of each year. Hiring managers are also expected to promote mobility across Bureaux.

All short-lists should comprise a minimum of two and a maximum of four candidates unless prior OHR approval has been obtained for a longer short-list. The short-list should include a minimum of one and preferably two or more women. All short-lists of QUARRY posts require OHR endorsement prior to a corporate panel being convened.

### **Corporate Panel Desk Reviews vs. Corporate Panel Interviews**

Several UNDP surveys have indicated that competency-based interviews are regarded by applicants and staff as a much more transparent method of selection than corporate panel desk reviews. However, desk reviews are much easier to arrange and take less time. Concern at the perceived lack of transparency and rigor in desk reviews has caused senior management to actively discourage the sole use of desk reviews in assessing short-listed candidates. For all QUARRY posts, the prior approval of OHR must be obtained if a hiring manager wishes to use a corporate panel to desk review short-listed candidates. In the event that approval for a desk review is given, OHR will provide specific guidance for its conduct.

Whichever method of screening is used, all candidates for the same post should be compared by the same method. While this guide refers to corporate assessment panels which OHR organizes for filling all international 100 series vacancies, Country and Regional Office managers are encouraged to establish similar panels and follow similar procedures when filling locally advertised posts.

### **Composition of Panels**

For added transparency and consistency across the organization, all corporate panels (for both desk reviews and interviews) for 100 series posts will be managed by OHR. All corporate panels will normally include the hiring manager or her/his designated representative from the hiring unit. All panels will also include an OHR professional who may be from either the hiring unit or from another unit. Panels should include two other professionals from outside the hiring unit. Both should be graded higher than, or equal to, the post under consideration and should be reasonably familiar with the requirements of the position.

The hiring manager has to confirm her/his decision for an interview or, exceptionally, request approval for a desk review, in writing to OHR when she/he submits the short-list and indicate who from the hiring unit will participate in the panel. Hiring managers are encouraged to participate personally in the process of selecting staff for the unit(s) that they manage. Resident Representatives as well as other hiring managers may delegate this responsibility but they will remain accountable both for the proposed selections, and that the process is followed in accordance with the spirit of these guidelines. In Country Offices, if the hiring manager decides to participate in the panel, the panel will be chaired by one of the other professionals from outside the hiring unit and more senior in grade than the hiring manager. If necessary,

HR professional are advised to invite colleagues from other UN agencies or from other external partners to sit on such panels.

OHR will seek gender and geographical diversity in organizing panel composition. The OHR professional in panels will participate a full panel member and will be the panel facilitator and rapporteur. As such the OHR panel member will be responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the corporate panel assessment report. He/she is also responsible for its timely submission to the Director of the hiring Bureau/Unit for her/his acceptance or rejection of the panel recommendation prior to submission to OHR.

Each panel will elect its own chairperson. In the event that panel members fail to agree on which candidate to recommend for the post concerned or/and on the ranking of endorsed candidates, the varying viewpoints will be reviewed by OHR to arrive at a final recommendation to be submitted to the hiring director.

All staff and their supervisors are expected to make time available for serving in corporate panels. OHR will record staff participation in panels, encouraging full recognition of participation through the RCA. In order to ensure minimal quality standards in interviewing, from January 2008 onwards, interview panels will include only staff and retirees who have been awarded an OHR certificate in competency-based interviewing skills.

### **Conduct of Corporate Panel Interviews**

Professional HR practice indicates that it is generally not feasible to try to assess more than five competencies in the course of a standard 60 minute interview. Hence, for corporate panel interviews, the hiring manager should decide on up to five competencies to be assessed by the panel. This decision should be taken before the first interview and preferably be made at the time of drafting the VA to enhance transparency. All competencies (and any other selection criteria) must be derived from the VA with OHR being responsible for monitoring this when both approving the VA and commenting on panel reports.

OHR will consult hiring managers in drafting tailored interview questions to probe each competency. The same set of questions has to be asked to each candidate to facilitate comparison. Interviews and other tests should, to the extent possible, be conducted in the primary working language to be used in the position, especially for Francophone positions. To the extent possible, all candidates for a post should be interviewed by the same mode, (e.g. by phone, face-to-face or VTC), irrespective of their location, to foster greater consistency and transparency.

### **Assessment/Scoring in Corporate Panels**

The earlier QUARRY ratings system requiring a candidate to achieve an 80% threshold to be eligible to be endorsed, has been replaced by a simpler, but more rigorous rating system. This system is linked to systematic consideration of strengths and weaknesses of each candidate against each competency. Instead of a threshold, panels grade candidates into one of three distinct categories:

- Recommended for the post
- Recommended with Reservations (with reservations explicitly noted); or
- Not Recommended for the post.

Corporate panels should base their recommendations solely on the information provided in the interviews or documentation presented for a desk review. The corporate panels only make a recommendation to the hiring director and she/he may accept or reject this in the panel report. In considering the panel recommendation, the hiring director is urged to take into account past performance, RCA ratings and comments of past supervisors, any technical test scores, results from reference checking and other objective criteria in order to come up with her/his final selection proposal. Any disagreement between a hiring manager (who will usually be a member of the panel) and the hiring director should be noted in the corporate panel assessment report before its submission to OHR.

OHR will periodically organize feedback sessions with panelists to improve the interviewing and desk review processes.

The corporate panel assessment report, provides for the following:

- Each short-listed candidate to be rated against (up to) five competencies, with strengths and weaknesses briefly noted against each competency as appropriate;
- Corporate targets and past performance to be indicated to the panel;
- Candidates to be ranked in order of suitability for the post by the panel;
- Signature of all panel members, with comments if any disagree; and
- A space for the director of the hiring unit to indicate her/his acceptance of the panel ranking or, if she/he disagrees, to mandatorily provide an explanation and alternative recommendation.

When signing off on the panel recommendation, the director of the hiring unit is required to certify that she/he is satisfied that a competitive and transparent process has been followed in accordance with these guidelines, and that she/he has carefully considered qualified candidates from UNDP's corporate lists.

After the director of the hiring unit has endorsed (or disagreed with) the recommendation, the OHR panel facilitator will submit the completed panel report to OHR Chief of Recruitment. OHR is then required to certify that the process met corporate requirements and to submit its comments on the proposed selection (and process), with the completed panel report to the Associate Administrator, for the QUARRY Review meeting or, exceptionally in urgent cases, for e-QUARRY Review consideration.

### **QUARRY Review Meeting**

Periodic QUARRY Review meetings will be scheduled by OHR at the end of each QUARRY exercise. The Review meeting will include the Directors of all Bureaux and other Headquarters Units, including the Director of OHR. Deputy Directors may exceptionally

represent a unit in the absence of the Director but in the absence of both Director and Deputy, the unit will not be represented in the meeting. All participants are expected to participate from a corporate perspective except when presenting proposals relating to their own unit. They are also expected to participate for the full duration of the meeting.

The QUARRY Review meeting is intended to achieve annual corporate placement targets for women, LEAD participants and candidates from under-represented countries and to facilitate the assignment of unassigned staff and to foster staff mobility across units. The Associate Administrator will set numeric corporate placement targets annually, on the advice of OHR, before the beginning of each calendar year. The Associate Administrator will also assign disaggregated targets to each hiring unit in January of each year, to be achieved by December of the same year. OHR will open each meeting by giving a brief overview of shifts and trends in UNDP's talent needs and present scorecards which clearly compare the progress of each hiring unit towards its assigned placement targets. The Review meeting is expected to expedite progress, through its selection decisions, by those units which are lagging in the achievement of their assigned placement targets, at the time of the meeting.

Candidates who have been positively assessed as fully "recommended" by the corporate panels for a particular type/level of function, but who have not been selected for any specific vacancy, will be placed on a **roster**, maintained by OHR, for consideration for similar positions arising from any *ad hoc* vacancy outside of the QUARRY. They may also be considered during the QUARRY exercise for similar posts which have not attracted a suitable number of qualified candidates. They will remain on the roster for 12 months from the date of the Review meeting. Hiring managers will have the authority to access these assessed roster candidates, without going through a new recruitment process, if the candidate selected by the Review meeting subsequently declines the job offer. The roster will be suitably categorized by major functional area. OHR will update the roster during each Review meeting.

OHR will act as the Secretariat for the QUARRY Review meetings, scheduling them around the availability of the Associate Administrator at the end of each QUARRY process. OHR will propose to the Associate Administrator an agenda and arrangements for each meeting with the aim that relatively clear-cut proposals are dealt with quickly so that most of the meeting's time is allocated to more contentious, strategic or cross-cutting cases.

By 2008, all documentation for Review meetings will be placed on a password protected page on OHR's web site at least 5 work days ahead of each review meeting. Participants in the meeting will be expected to access the documentation on line and print it out as required, respecting the confidentiality of the data concerned. In the case of an e-SMT review a time-limit will be clearly indicated commensurate with the emergency nature of the placement. OHR will record both selection and any other decisions taken in the QUARRY Review meetings, or in e-SMTs, so that decisions for all positions can be communicated to staff and so that there is an agreed record to facilitate follow-up and monitoring thereof and for the purposes of audit.

## **APB Review**

Following the Review meeting, all proposals to recruit and/or place an external candidate or an internal candidate who has not previously been endorsed by the Appointment and Promotions Board (APB) have to be submitted for review by the (APB). QUARRY recommendations that require APB endorsement will be promptly considered by the APB, and if necessary electronically, as soon after the Placement Review meeting as possible. By 2008 all documentation for APB meetings will be placed on a password protected page on OHR's web site. APB members will be expected to access the documentation on-line and print it out as required, respecting the confidentiality of the data concerned.

## **Announcements of Results**

All the decisions taken at QUARRY Review meetings are subject to approval by the Administrator. When approved, a Bulletin announcement will indicate for each post, the post title, name, current position, gender and nationality of the selected candidate. If no successful candidate was identified for an advertised post, or if selection is on-going, the announcement will briefly indicate the status of the post concerned.

## **Reporting for Duty**

Successful applicants are expected to report to their new posts within two months of the initial job offer unless otherwise agreed by OHR. Any deviation from this two-month reporting period will need to be negotiated by OHR between the candidate, the receiving and the releasing Bureaux/Units.

## **Improving, Monitoring and Implementation of these Guidelines**

In order to help monitor implementation of these guidelines, an annual question in the global staff survey will ask staff to rate the transparency, fairness and professional rigour of the QUARRY recruitments and selections from the previous year. For similar reasons, and to identify improvement areas, the Associate Administrator will annually ask OAPR to audit a selection of recruitments/selections made in the past year. For this, OHR will annually propose to the Associate Administrator specific posts, Offices/Units, processes or panels where there may be concerns that one, or more, of the five recruitment principles and/or other basic guidelines have been compromised.

These guidelines will be updated in the first quarter of 2007 in the light of early experience in their implementation and feedback in a series of regional workshops with Country Office participation in the last quarter of 2006. Comments and suggestions to improve placement and recruitment in UNDP are welcome at any time and should be addressed to the Chief of Recruitment.