

Hiring Freeze Guidance

St Mary's University will be implementing a strict hiring freeze until the end of the financial year 24/25. It is recognised that recruitment will never completely cease and that there may be a small number of exceptions.

This guidance notes those exceptions to a hiring freeze. The below table summarise the positive aspects of a hiring freeze which should be borne in mind when looking at the hiring freeze criteria:

Job Security	By implementing a freeze, St Mary's is prioritising the retention of existing staff over bringing in new hires.
Growth Opportunities	The potential for personal and professional development: - The freeze creates opportunities for employees to take on new responsibilities and expand their skill sets appropriate to the grade. - Encourage internal mobility, allowing staff to explore different roles within the University. The use of fixed term secondments may be very beneficial.
Skill Enhancement	- Increase offer of training and development programs to help staff acquire new skills. Training should be given to support the strategic direction of the University and fill gaps in knowledge or expertise.
Increased Efficiency	The pause in hiring will reaffirm the emphasis on the streamlining of current processes. This should now be a priority. We need more efficient workflows to reduce workload in the long run.
Team Cohesion	Existing teams will need to strengthen their bonds and work more cohesively. Team building and development with emphasis on how to streamline workloads and working together collaboratively.

Hiring freeze criteria

The following criteria will be applied to the headcount control (HCC) process during the strict implementation of the hiring freeze. This criterion will be added to the HCC form and used by HR and Finance to advise recruiting managers on the viability of putting forward a business case. The focus must be exclusively on positions that are essential for business-critical continuity.

Recruiting managers will need to demonstrate that the role falls into one or all of the following categories before recruitment can commence on an exceptional basis:

- Role is directly linked to new revenue, cost saving or preventing significant revenue loss – must be demonstrated and confirmed by Finance Business Partner.
- Positions critical for regulatory compliance or health and safety
- Key leadership roles necessary for the stability of the University

Additional criteria:

- All roles will need to be pre-agreed in principle by SLT lead for the area before the headcount control business case is written.

An SLT Lead can sign off on the follow categories of worker, without reference to the full SLT Headcount Panel, if within agreed budgets; contractors, casuals and HPAs.

HCC forms will still be submitted for contractors and casuals on PeopleNet as now to provide an audit trail, and HPA approvals will continue using the current process and forms.

Recruitment strategies to consider during the recruitment freeze

1. Internal Mobility

If recruitment is needed, roles should be advertised internally for one week (at least) before considering external hires. Managers will be asked to consider the skills of their team to see where staff can be best deployed on either a permanent basis or on secondment for a fixed period and recruiting managers to consider if an internal candidate can meet the criteria for the role within 6 months. The benefits/opportunities of this are:

- High-potential employees can be identified and upskilled or reskilled
- Creation of opportunities for lateral moves to fill gaps
- Knowledge is not lost only gained.

2. Flexible Staffing Solutions

Consider alternative staffing arrangements to address immediate needs:

- Consider increasing the use of HPA's to fill temporary teaching needs.
- Consider increased use of casual/temporary workers for short-term projects or to cover known peaks for a fixed period of time rather than hiring permanent members of staff.
- Offer all roles as part-time or opportunity for part time. [08]
- Consider freelancers or consultants for specialised skills for very short-term specific time limited assignments rather than hiring permanent staff members.

3. Cost-Effective Hiring

If external hiring is unavoidable, we propose that we focus on cost-efficient recruitment methods:

- Utilise internal recruitment resources like LinkedIn and limit (unless absolutely necessary) the use of external agencies to help with sourcing candidates.

Establishment

Work is underway for HRPB's and Finance PB's to look at the Establishment within the HR System so that budget holders are presented with a holistic overview of vacancies, positions and realised cost savings.

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