**Overview: Effective Principal Appointment Processes**

*(to be used alongside the “Checklist for Principal Appointment” and the on-line module “Principal Appointment: A Board Responsibility”)*

**Who is involved?**

* The board must first evaluate the current board capabilities to determine what is required.
* NZSTA Employment Advisers (HR) are available to assist boards
* The outgoing principal should not be involved in any decisions
* The full board should make and record decisions on the size, composition and delegated authority of any appointment committee.
* If the people who wrote the role description/person specification are on the interview panel that ensures consistency of interpretation of the selection criteria.
* An independent consultant (at the board’s cost) or adviser (perhaps a local principal) may be required to provide educational and/or process advice to the board.
* Consultants or advisers should be selected on the basis of their previous experience and performance. Contact your NZSTA employment adviser (HR) for information about NZSTA endorsed consultants

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Tasks***  ***(who is/ may be involved?)*** | **current principal** | **Staff/ student trustee** | **All other board members** | **committee** | **staff** | **parent community** | **advisers/ consultant** |
| Deciding the details of the process, steps, delegations spending | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No |
| Deciding what will be in the job description | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Depends | Depends | Yes |
| Defining the person specification | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Shortlisting | No | Depends[[1]](#footnote-1) | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes |
| Conducting interviews | No | Depends | Depends | Yes | No | No | Yes |
| Seeing presentations from applicants | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes |
| Decision on preferred applicant | No | Depends | Yes | Yes | No | No | No |

**Plan and Prepare**

1. **Getting Started**

*The board chair or delegate should:*

* consult your [appointment policy](https://nzsta.org.nz/assets/Governance-framework-2018/Part-D-Operational-policies/D3.1-Appointments-policy.docx)
* complete the [principal appointment online module](https://www.nzsta.org.nz/advice-and-support/employment/recruitment-and-induction/principal-appointment/)
* contact your NZSTA employment adviser (HR) for advice including information about how NZSTA’s recruitment management system could assist in your process
* gather the guides and information found on appointing a principal and circulate to the board members
* ensure that all board members review the appointment policy, complete the online module on principal appointment and read the [guides and information found on NZSTA’s website](https://www.nzsta.org.nz/advice-and-support/employment/recruitment-and-induction/principal-appointment/)
* find out if the [Principal Recruitment Allowance](https://www.nzsta.org.nz/advice-and-support/employment/recruitment-and-induction/principal-recruitment-allowance-pra-recruitment-resources/), available to boards who are experiencing significant challenges, is an option

**2. Budgeting**

* The actual cost will vary depending on the circumstances. Identifying the likely costs of fees, travel and materials would assist in setting a general figure. NZSTA suggests a benchmark of 5% to 10% of salary.

1. **Determine the process and roles**

*The board will then meet to:*

* determine the appointment process and timelines to be followed. Use the appointment checklist and timeline to ensure the process stays on track
* identify and manage any conflicts of interest. Those with conflicts may need to be uninvolved in the process.
* discuss whether an advisor or consultant will be engaged to provide educational or process expertise to the process
* discuss and formalise the delegated authority and/ or roles of any selection group/committee or advisers
* designate who will be the contact person for applicants throughout the process.

1. **Selection criteria**

*The board will:*

* identify all the skills, experience and knowledge required for the role: these are your selection criteria
* consider the needs of the school: the board’s vision and charter’s strategic goals, ERO review and any recommendations, any special school requirements or character
* consult with the school community on what skills and experience they believe are required for the role
* enlist the advice of a consultant or adviser, if required, on the selection criteria
* describe what ‘fit with the school’ means for this school, and ensure no criteria are invalid or illegal such as gender, age or marital status
* use the selection criteria to create the role description/person specification and advertisement as well as in the shortlisting, interviewing, reference checking and decision making processes.

1. **Developing the application pack**

* This must be done before advertising
* An informative and professional looking application pack is important to appeal to applicants
* Applicants are looking for evidence that the process is being taken seriously and that their privacy will be preserved.
* Request contact details of referees, rather than written reports. Written reports can be overly favourable and provide minimal value to the process

**The application pack contents:**

*Key process information:*

* a covering letter including the appointment timeline
* role description (including selection criteria)
* person specification (including selection criteria)
* whether unsuccessful applicant information will be returned or destroyed
* communication on bringing support people to the interview
* the school contact person’s details and preferred times for being contacted

*Forms:*

* The [NZSTA template application form](https://nzsta.org.nz/advice-and-support/employment/recruitment-and-induction/forms-and-templates-for-appointmenting-employees/): Using the NZSTA template application form ensures:
  + that it is up to date with legal requirements
  + you have obtained permission to check references widely, not only of nominated referees
  + applicants demonstrate how they meet the selection criteria
  + the board has enough information to evaluate whether the applicant is safe to work with children

*School information may include:*

* the board’s charter and most recent annual report
* the most recent ERO review
* a school profile and information about the community

1. **Advertising**

* all principal positions of more than a year’s duration must be advertised nationally
* placing advertisements in the Education Gazette meets the above requirements
* ensure your selection criteria
* if advertising overseas, consider getting the advice and support of a recruitment agency. TeachNZ, in the Ministry of Education, can advise on recruitment agencies.

1. **Managing the receipt of applications**

* Using the NZSTA recruitment management system can assist in this process
* Ensure the privacy of applicant information is maintained and securely stored
* All board members must maintain confidentiality throughout the process

**Shortlist**

*The board will:*

* Evaluate application forms and CVs against the selection criteria on NZSTA’s shortlisting matrix to make shortlisting decisions.
* if first stage reference checks have been conducted, this information should be included
* check the Education Council online register for current practising certificates of the applicants
* the shortlist should only include applicants suitable for appointment, 3-45 strong applicants should be ample
* consider the recentness and nature of any declared convictions
* record shortlisting determinations in writing and against the selection criteria on the shortlisting matrix
* contact the shortlist by phone and letter
* notify those not shortlisted promptly and thank them for their time and interest
* the shortlist is confidential to the board
* re-advertise if there any concerns about the quality of applicants. If there is only one applicant who may be suitable for appointment then they can still be interviewed, but there is no compulsion to appoint them.

**Safety-Checking**

This is a critical step in the appointment process and required under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014**.** Safety checking requires: Identity confirmation and risk assessment including documentation, practising certificate/police vetting confirmation, interviewing and reference checking. Detailed information about safety-checking requirements is available in:

* NZSTA’s [Principal Appointment](https://www.nzsta.org.nz/advice-and-support/employment/recruitment-and-induction/principal-appointment/) and [Vulnerable Children Act](https://lms.cfs-api.com/v2/scorm/lms.aspx?token=fbfc3cf3-47fd-4b58-923d-9be84b03fd2e&lang=en-US) modules
* NZSTA’s [“safety checks”](https://www.nzsta.org.nz/advice-and-support/employment/recruitment-and-induction/safety-checks/)
* The Children’s Action plan “[How to do safety checking”](http://childrensactionplan.govt.nz/childrens-workforce/safety-checking-and-the-workforce-restriction/how-to-do-safety-checking/)
* Use NZSTA’s reference checking matrix for the reference checking portion of safety checks

**Interviewing**

* All applicants should be asked the same questions
* Questions need to be based on the selection criteria, job description and person specification and should include open ended and behavioural/situational questions
* contact your NZSTA employment adviser (HR) for assistance with interview questions
* Consider an interview dry-run to test the process and the panel’s understanding of the selection criteria
* The interview panel should comprise exactly the same people for each interview for the position
* Consider if the school site is suitable for uninterrupted interviews, and interview off-site if possible or necessary
* Configure interview space to be non-threatening so that the panel and applicant can relax
* Consider designating a host person to meet the applicants
* Don’t make spontaneous job offers during the interview
* Avoid applicants meeting each other
* Interviews should be between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours
* Leave time for discussion and scoring between applicants
* Let the applicant know when they can expect to hear from the board
* Provide and use NZSTA’s interview matrix for panel members to fill in immediately after the interview
* The matrix scores should be kept but evaluative notes and comments may be discarded

**Additional information**

* Identify areas of specific concern about each applicant and explore these during verbal contact with the referees to verify past performance
* Seek the agreement of referees to raise any areas of concern with the applicant
* Additional assessments, such as psychometric tests, should be standardised across all the shortlist and administered by specialists

Additional assessments should be designed to produce information relevant to the selection criteria, have a definite purpose and be used to supplement and confirm interview information

* Advance warning of the nature and duration of additional assessments should be given to applicants
* It is not necessary to visit an applicant’s school. Consider instead their school’s most recent ERO report as this will provide more useful information.

**Making the Appointment Decision**

* Review the delineation of roles between advisers and decision-makers
* Be prepared to take time after the interviews before deciding to make an employment offer
* Rank applicants by aiming for as close a match to the selection criteria as possible
* If there is no suitable applicant, do not appoint. Re-advertise the position.
* Remember the interview is only one component of the decision, references may paint a clearer picture of actual past behavior and experience
* Be prepared to stick with the selection criteria even if they generate surprise rankings
* Consider using consensus decision-making, rather than voting
* Verify the qualifications of the preferred applicant
* The top ranked applicant should receive a phone call followed by a formal letter of offer. Use the NZSTA template letter of offer
* Once that written offer has been signed and returned as accepted, all other applicants should be immediately notified they were unsuccessful and thanked for their time and interest

**Finishing up**

* Retain the successful applicant’s CV and application form and return or destroy the others
* Giving feedback to unsuccessful applicants who ask for it may be appropriate particularly for internal applicants as part of their development. It is best to give information on the selection criteria areas in which the applicant was not as strong as the preferred applicant. Do not give information on the other applicants. You can contact your NZSTA employment adviser for advice if feedback is requested.
* Evaluate the process and make any amendments to the appointment policy
* Plan for induction and draft performance management agreements

**Remember to:**

* Communicate promptly and professionally with applicants at every stage of the process
* Maintain an open and transparent process
* Be aware of conflicts of interest throughout
* Keep to the selection criteria determined by the board
* Be mindful of legislative requirements including:
* Respecting confidentiality of applicant information (Privacy Act 1993)
* Not discriminating on protected grounds such as gender, race, etc. (Human Rights Act 1993)
* Being a good employer (State Sector Act 1988)
* The relevant collective agreements
* Safety checking (Vulnerable Children Act 2014)
* Acting in good faith: being open and honest (Employment Relations Act 2000)

1. Where “depends” is indicated the board as the employer will determine the process, roles and delegated responsibilities. The decision of what parts of the process that various boards’ members are involved (including staff and student trustee) is a matter for consideration. Contact NZSTA’s employment advisers for specific advice. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)