APPENDIX 2M – EMPLOYERS’ HANDBOOK

**INTERVIEWING DO’S AND DON’TS**

People often ask for lists of acceptable or unacceptable questions. As a rule of thumb, ask only questions which are strictly related to the job and treat candidates consistently, asking similar questions which cover the criteria areas.

Applicants should be given a fair opportunity to answer the set questions e.g. applicants should not be unfairly interrupted. Nor should applicants be made to feel out-of-place by comments such as “We don’t get many women working here” or “We don’t get many older people working here”.

The interviewers should be very careful about asking unplanned questions i.e. not the pre-set questions, but extra ones that arise in the course of discussion and which might be asked to clarify points raised by the applicant. Such questions should always be job-related.

It is important to note that marks awarded should be fair and consistent and based on evidence that is presented by the applicant in his or her interview answers or application form e.g. a candidate with a degree in a relevant subject would not normally be expected to receive a lower mark than a candidate without one or a candidate who gives monosyllabic answers would normally receive a lower mark than a candidate who answers fluently and without prompting. Inconsistent marking like this will need to be explained with good reasons if the decision is ever challenged as being discriminatory.

More information is provided below.

**Acceptable**

• Do evaluate applicants on job-related criteria necessary for successful performance on the job.

• Do ask job-related questions necessary for determining an applicant’s suitability for the position.

• Do question applicants for a position in a consistent and uniform manner.

• Do keep objective notes of why an applicant is or is not hired. Unsupported subjective characterisations such as “bad attitude” could lead to trouble.

• Do make reasonable accommodations to the needs of disabled individuals during interviews, e.g. by providing interpreters for the hearing impaired or scheduling interviews in rooms accessible to individuals in wheelchairs.

• Do return all applicable documentation for each interview conducted (including rough notes and information on the candidates not hired).

**Unacceptable**

• Do not ask questions regarding the general physical or mental condition of an applicant. An employer may ask if an applicant is able to perform the functions of the job. If an applicant voluntarily discloses a disability, the employer may then ask whether he or she can perform the functions of the job notwithstanding the disability or with reasonable accommodation, and what type of accommodation would be required.

• Do not ask questions of a female applicant that would not be asked of male applicants, including such matters as marital status, birth control methods, child care arrangements, or hindrances to work hours or to travel.

• Do not ask questions concerning colour of eyes or hair, height or weight, age, marital status or maiden name, or number of children, since such questions are not viewed as job-related. Be careful when making conversation at the beginning or end of the interview not to stray into any of these areas.

• Do not assume that because a candidate introduces a topic, that it is ok to probe further.

• Do not inform an applicant that the position must be filled by a female or minority group applicant due to equal opportunities or affirmative action obligations or regulations.

• Do not ask questions of one religious or racial or ethnic group or age group that would not be asked of another, such as whether an applicant could work in a facility with members of another religious, or racial or ethnic group or age group.

**When in doubt, don’t ask!**