University of Liverpool Values and Ethics Principles Case Study: People

This example relates to the University value that states ‘We will treat all our employees fairly, recognise the contributions of all and provide a broad range of opportunities for training, development and personal growth to enable staff to develop their potential.’

The University undertook a project to encourage the broadest possible range of applications for academic promotion and to convert them to successful outcomes for all qualified staff.

In 2012 only 14% of University professors were female and despite the efforts to improve the promotion process, the 2013 staff survey had also shown transparency to be an area of concern, particularly for females. The equality and diversity team determined to radically change things seeking the best practices in HEIs and beyond and sharing emerging views with focus groups.

The result was that the University put together a successful multifaceted approach to promotions:

- Promotion panel members are now representative of the academic workforce and receive unconscious bias training.

- Particularly popular are small group sessions with recently promoted staff and panel members, including Pro-Vice-Chancellors. These
activities are open to all staff with some sessions restricted to certain groups.

- HR communications have been re-written to ensure clarity for applicants and managers.

- Promotion forms and interviews specifically focus on drawing out the work of the applicants.

- Results are accompanied by positive encouragement and equally important, feedback for unsuccessful applicants is automatically provided by institute heads.

- Film clips of successful candidates have been developed that have been drawn from across the protected characteristics, which share tips and stories.

- The University has invested in training packages, web resources and prioritising the project so that a difference could be made.

There is evidence of the success of the approach; the group sessions were fully subscribed and staff throughout the institution have volunteered their time to mentor, present sessions and be filmed. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Importantly, the number of staff (male and female) applying for a promotion at all levels and their success rates have increased.