



AXA Group

**Guide to Inclusive
Recruitment at AXA**



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Making AXA an inclusive and inspiring place to work - your role

At AXA, ‘we care and dare for progress’ with a culture that keeps us unique and united, by building skills needed for the future, and by role modelling inclusion and care for our people and society. With this in mind, we aim to recruit, engage, develop, and retain talented and diverse individuals coming from different backgrounds and with different life experiences. This diversity mirrors the variety of customers we serve as well as the society we live in.

Prioritizing diversity and ensuring an equitable and inclusive experience offers a variety of benefits for our people and for our business as we will: attract and retain the best talent, have higher levels of creativity, innovation, and performance, and have a more supportive and inclusive environment where employees feel seen, valued and can thrive within our diverse community.

Recruitment is about getting the most suitable candidate into a role and is crucial for us to deliver our business goals. But how do we know what makes a ‘suitable’ candidate? How do we make decisions when the stakes are high, and the time is limited? In these moments, there is potential for bias to creep in which can impact the

experience of some groups more than others and ultimately our reputation and brand. As we learned from our Inclusion Survey, the way we recruit can have a strong impact on the sense of trust and fairness people feel.

This is the reason why we commit to embedding a strong inclusion and diversity perspective into our recruitment practices globally. As HR professionals and hiring managers you have a key role to play to ensure we provide an equitable and inclusive experience to all, and this guide explains how you can do that. The guide encompasses a selection of practical actions and resources to help you. We have taken best practices and examples from across the Group and compiled them all in one place. They can be used either to improve your existing practices, or to look at the whole experience and identify where you can make it more equitable and inclusive for the future.

This is only the start, and we will continue to add to this Guide as we make progress together. We would like to hear your feedback and for you to continue to share your best practices and ideas with us. The Group Talent and I&D Teams as well as your Talent Acquisition teams are here to support you. I would like to thank you for your commitment to strengthen our inclusive culture at AXA. I am convinced that by working together we will create the most inclusive and equitable experience for diverse talent globally.

Karima Silvent
Chief Human Resources Officer



Making AXA a great place to work - your role

Choosing a new team member is exciting.

It's an opportunity to look at everything with fresh eyes and really challenge yourself to think about how we build the best teams to grow our business.

As someone who is responsible for recruiting people, we rely on you to consider all the different skills, capabilities, perspectives, backgrounds, and mindsets that we need when we are searching for the best candidates to join us. Working in close partnership with our Talent Acquisition Team, we need you to be a brand ambassador for AXA and help us make sure that every person has the best impression of the company.

We already have a strong Inclusion and Diversity agenda, we now have a big opportunity to change the way we find and recruit diverse talents. But we cannot change without you.

It's all about the people.

To create an incredible experience for our customers, we must fully understand their needs. There is no better way to do that than to have our own employee base reflect **our millions of customers globally**. We all have biases. But by looking at job opportunities and candidates openly, challenging our biases and making everyone feel valued during the recruitment process, you'll be able to build a strong team that's set up for success

If we only ever recruit people like us, we'll miss out on the diverse talent and perspectives that we need to be the best business.

Creating a **brilliant team** is one way that you can help us to fulfil our ambition to be the most **inspiring and inclusive** company to work for, where everyone can bring all of themselves to work and feel proud to work for AXA.



Opening new doors to build the strongest teams

Diverse teams are more likely to think differently, solve challenges from a diverse range of thoughts and perspectives and broaden our traditional patterns of thinking. It's everyone's responsibility to build an environment where each team member can bring their whole self to work and be treated equally.

If we are proactively seeking those with diversity of thought – naturally a more diverse environment will be created.

By ensuring a representation of diverse talent at AXA it has been proven that:

- **Gender diverse organisations are 25% more likely to outperform peers.** It has been proven that people contribute unique ideas when in a gender balanced group.
- **Ethnically diverse organisations are 36% more likely to outperform their competitors.** This has been proved year on year and is imperative that we reflect the local communities that we aim to serve.
- **Diverse organisations are 1.8 times more likely to be 'change ready'.** A diverse organisation allows for more ideas and processes, as well as a broader range of talent amongst employees.
- **Diverse organisations are 1.7 times more likely to be an innovative leader in the market.** As diversity of thought is created from diverse backgrounds, an opportunity for increased productivity has been proven.
- **67% of job seekers look at workforce diversity when accepting an offer.** This has been proven specifically for women and young professionals who tend to look at the gender diversity of leadership teams when deciding where to work.
- The Harvard Business Review states that teams are **quicker at solving problems** when cognitively diverse.

Think about your bias and how it might impact your ability to find the best person for the role.

Work with the Talent Acquisition team to help you work out what the best approach is for the role you are filling.

Sources

Six signature traits of inclusive leadership | Deloitte Insights
How diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) matter | McKinsey
Teams Solve Problems Faster When They're More Cognitively Diverse (hbr.org)
What Job Seekers Really Think About Your Diversity and Inclusion Stats / Glassdoor

Behaviours to be aware of

When recruiting, it is important to ensure you follow AXA's approach to inclusive recruitment and your local legal obligations relating to the recruitment process. Below are some of the behaviors to be aware of and your local HR team can support you when you are recruiting.

Disability - It is good practice to ask candidates if they need any adjustments or modifications made at every stage of the recruitment process. You have to consider any adjustments or modifications requested if they are seen as reasonable. After making an offer you can ask the candidate if they require any adjustments or modifications made to enable them to do their job.

Gender - Be aware of unconscious thoughts and assumptions that you may make during the recruitment process concerning a candidate's gender. It may not be obvious at first, but assumptions could result in candidates being treated unfairly.





Pregnancy & maternity - Decisions should not be made based on whether a candidate is pregnant, has a pregnancy-related illness or is on maternity leave.

Marriage & Civil partnership - Decisions should not be made based on whether a candidate is married, in a civil partnership, single, etc.

Sexual orientation - Do not make assumptions about candidate's sexual orientation. Decisions should not be made based on a candidate's sexual orientation.

Trans people - Decisions should not be affected by a candidate who has undergone or is undergoing a sexual reassignment.

Age - Decisions should not be made based on a candidate's age. Think carefully about whether any part of the recruitment process could be excluding or deterring candidates of certain age groups, both younger and older.

Ethnicity - Decisions should not be made based on a candidate's actual or perceived ethnicity.

Religion & beliefs - You should ensure that the process is accessible to people of all religions and beliefs. For example, when planning interviews, consider avoiding religious festivals and holidays.

Candidates' real-life stories

Picture yourself in these situations. How could you broaden your perspective and open new doors for the candidates? How could you build an even stronger team?



Recruiting from different schools.

You have one assignment lasting twelve weeks. Usually, you work with the same business schools every year due to the calibre of students and quality of the courses. You're planning this year's intake and your line manager suggests you go to the same schools again because there is an existing relationship and past experiences have been positive. Despite these factors, you should consider people from a wide range of backgrounds including people who have attended different schools and universities or don't have a degree if a role doesn't require it.

Being flexible in how we work.

Convinced that Catherine is the best person for the role, you offer her the position. During her interview, Catherine shared that she is a caregiver and would need some flexibility. Flexible working increases workplace diversity by making roles accessible to those with caring responsibilities, for example. After making an offer, you can ask the candidate if they require any adjustments or modifications made to enable them to do their job. This could be changes to the number of hours worked, work schedule, or location and the HR team can support you in this situation.

Someone with a gap in their CV.

Toni has a gap on her CV. In her interview, she shares that she was made redundant. As a company, we welcome people who have had career breaks or periods away from the workplace – people take time out for a whole host of different reasons – to care for family, travel or due to redundancy. We want all candidates to showcase their skills no matter where, how, or when they gained them. In the interview, ask about how they spent their time away from work, what skills they learned and what they learned about themselves. Consider how these experiences can add value to your team and business.

Interviewing a wheelchair user.

Deepak is interviewing for a role on your team and says he'll need some adjustments for his interview because he's a wheelchair user. If you've previously interviewed someone who uses a wheelchair, you might think you know exactly what Deepak needs. But making these assumptions could cause difficulties as no one person's needs are the same. It is good practice to ask candidates if they need any adjustments or modifications made at any stage of the recruitment journey and how their specific needs can be met. Then, you can work with your local HR team or others with specialist knowledge to address them.

Attracting and recruiting talented and diverse people

Finding and recruiting the best talents is a journey: there are several steps and touchpoints where you are able to make a difference to a candidate's experience.

Every candidate is a potential customer and supporter of our AXA brand: we want to make sure they get the most inspiring, fair and inclusive experience, whether they ultimately get the job or not.

You have the power make this happen across our business, following a couple of tips and best practices.

In the following pages, we provide recommendations for the seven main stages of recruitment.

7 steps to an inclusive candidate experience:



1. Getting ready to recruit

Handling this initial step properly is the key to a seamless and efficient recruitment experience for you, the candidates and all other parties who will be involved.

Does your team broadly reflect the communities you aim to serve? It's important to remember that employee diversity comes in many different forms. For example, many elements of visibility are not visible and shared with you, but you may wish to consider from the communities below:

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Educational Background
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Disability and Neurodiversity
- Veteran/Military Recruitment
- Career Status or Previous Careers

Ultimately, we want to create teams that benefit from diversity of thought and perspective. Take time to think about what this means in the context of your team before you start the recruitment process.



Tips & best practices

- Aim to proactively diversify your team by understanding what diversity dimensions are either under or over-represented.
- Actively seek people who bring experience from different sectors. If we only recruit people who have an insurance or financial services background, we will miss out on valuable insight from different industries that can help us to evolve our business.
- Being open to remote working and creating part-time, job share and flexible roles on your team to attract new people who are looking for different work patterns.
- Frame the recruitment steps in advance: assessment required, reference checks needed, number of people who will interview the candidate, selection criterion.
- Your Talent Acquisition team will support you to design the most efficient and inclusive recruitment process for you, the candidates and the role you try to fill. This will help you to keep a transparent and clear communication with the candidates throughout the recruitment process.

2. Advertising the role

This step is critical in helping you to reach out and to attract a wide and diverse pool of candidates to maximize your chance of finding the right one to fill the needs you have.

Tips & best practices

- Clearly list the specific behaviours and competencies needed for a role. Remove non-essential criteria from your job description. We recommend having as few requirements as possible and making sure they are necessary for the role.
- Try not to be too specific on what degree or experience candidates should have – for example, coming from a specific school or having experience at specific accountancy firms.
- Advertise jobs with flexible working unless you make a valid case for ‘why not’.
- Remove biased language from job adverts. Biased language refers to words associated with identity-based stereotypes, such as masculine or younger-age stereotypes.
- Add a diversity statement to communicate that we care about equality and diversity, and to encourage applications from marginalised groups.
- Include key benefits in job adverts, particularly benefits or policies that promote inclusivity and exceed legal minimums.

3. Sourcing candidates

The next stage is to source and encourage a diverse group of applicants to apply, considering the channels and ways used to publicise the job advert.

Tips & best practices

- Place job adverts where they are more likely to be seen by underrepresented groups and consider working with external partners that focus on protected characteristics, for example disability.
- Encourage current employees, and employee resource groups if you have them, to share vacancies with others in their networks.
- Focus outreach efforts on underrepresented groups in the longer term. For example, visits to universities and schools may boost applications from diverse groups and eventual recruiting of these candidates as well.

4. Shortlisting applicants

Building a diverse shortlist and conducting engaging interviews requires preparation and means to look for candidates who may be different from you or the rest of your team. Application forms or CVs can sometimes get in the way of inclusive recruitment and it's a good time to check your own bias.

These are some examples where bias could be triggered:

- **Personal details:** We can infer personal characteristics from the name – for instance, ethnicity and gender.
- **Work experience:** Employment gaps can stand out when experience is listed in terms of dates, rather than years or you might experience the halo effect for example, [organisation] is a well-known employer, so they must be good if they worked there.
- **Education:** Stereotype bias could be triggered for example: “they attended [University], so they must be a strong candidate” or “looking at the dates, they might be too young or old for this role”.
- **Professional courses or interest:** We prefer people like ourselves, for example have completed similar qualifications to us or have the same interests. This is known as affinity bias.

Tips & best practices

- To ensure inclusive shortlisting, try to have more than one person short-listing candidates to limit any possible bias.
- Short-listing criteria should be agreed in advance of the shortlisting process and be based on the requirements of the role.
- Applications should be considered against objective criteria though now is a good time to try to include underrepresented candidates in the shortlist, if you do not have a diverse slating policy to follow.
- Push yourself outside of your comfort zone to pull together a varied group of candidates to interview – make sure that they have varied experience and backgrounds.
- Consider a person's whole experience, welcoming different attributes and experiences that they could bring to the team.
- If you are using a recruitment agency or external headhunter, you can require them to provide a diverse shortlist of candidates, and your Talent Acquisition and Procurement partners can support you with this request.
- Speak with your Talent Acquisition team to explore if assessment technologies can help improve your quality of the candidate pipeline and unlock new talent.



5. Interviewing

An interview is the chance for the candidate to find out more about AXA and the job they've applied for. It gives us an opportunity to find out more about the candidate too, to validate their fit for the role.

This is a big moment for you, as HR and Hiring Manager, to ensure that everyone has a great experience of AXA – even if they are not ultimately suitable for the role or decide to decline our offer. The candidate you interview could be an AXA customer and a potential advocate for our brand.

Tips & best practices

- Offer interviewees a range of dates, offer to accommodate them with earlier or later slots than the typical working day if needed, and offer reasonable adjustments as required.
- Proactively ask applicants if they need reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process. Reasonable adjustments are often considered once a candidate has been recruited. However, offering these modifications during the recruitment stage can support a more diverse range of candidates to participate.
- Select a diverse group of interviewers, that will mitigate the presence of bias as much as possible during the interview process.
- Conducting interviews using a panel as it has shown to lead to fairer and more accurate results than multiple interviews with only one interviewer.
- Make sure you carefully plan and structure your interviews to reduce the risk of bias so that you get the best candidate for your role:
 - Prepare a predefined set of questions for all candidates that all interviewers can use so that the answers can be compared and rated. The interview template can be built with you Talent Acquisition Partner.
- Provide candidates with clear expectations, timelines, and communications. Share the timeline of the key recruitment stages so they know how the recruitment process will work.

6. Extending an offer and giving feedback

Offering a role to a new team member is a rewarding and exciting step for both of you. It is also the perfect opportunity to share feedback to the chosen candidate as well as to the other candidates you have met and who have not been finally selected.

Remember that it is important to manage feedback carefully to ensure their experience remains positive no matter your decision. A candidate you have not selected this time may become another candidate for the future or an AXA customer.

Tips & best practices

Closing the loop

- Provide quick, constructive feedback to the people you've interviewed to create a more positive experience for candidates you have been meeting with.
- Consider structuring your feedback for every candidate in the same way to ensure candidates receive homogeneous piece of feedback.
- When a candidate narrowly misses out on being appointed, encourage them to reapply the next time there is a suitable vacancy.
- Collect feedback from candidates on the recruitment process through an anonymous survey.

Offering the role

- Ask whether the candidate requires reasonable adjustments and modifications to ensure their success.





7. Onboarding the new joiner

Welcomed and supported: this is how we would like the new joiner to feel before they start in your team.

This preboarding phase is important to engage with them before they join and to best prepare them, yourself, and the rest of your team for the first day.

Tips & best practices

- Keep in touch with your new joiner during their notice period and inform them of everything they can expect on their first day and beyond. Your goal is to make them feel like they're already a welcome, valued, and important part of your team.
- Look for any pre-boarding and onboarding programs available in your entity / department / team to ensure the new joiner can benefit from it (onboarding e-learning modules, buddy, welcome pack).