

GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF TEMPORARY AGENCY STAFF

1. INTRODUCTION

All vacancies should be filled using standard College recruitment procedures. However, there will be certain situations when using temporary agency staff is the most effective method of providing operational support or facilitating a specific task. Engaging temporary agency staff can be an expensive option. The College has therefore decided to participate in the Buying Solutions consortium to benefit from competitive rates from 3 national agencies (Brook Street, Office Angels and Reed) all with branches locally and all of whom have a keen knowledge of the local labour market. The College is also a member of the London Universities Purchasing Consortium (LUPC) and can benefit from reduced rates for the placement of industrial staff, including catering and manual roles, through Blue Arrow.

2. APPROVAL PROCESS

Requests for temporary agency staff should be submitted to the Resources Sub Group using a REC1 form in line with the usual recruitment approval process. The request should include a business case detailing the reasons for the agency cover.

Positions funded by the Residence and Catering Services (RSC) should be submitted to the FM Directorate for approval using the ESTB form, which should then be forwarded to the Human Resources Department.

All temporary agency staff bookings should be made through the Human Resources' Recruitment Team who will liaise with the agencies on your behalf. A record of all temporary agency staff placements within the College, alongside the corresponding REC1/ESTB number, will be maintained by the Recruitment Team and submitted to the Resources Sub Group for review on a regular basis.

3. FAQs

3.1 When can temporary agency staff be used?

Circumstances in which the use of temporary agency staff may be appropriate include:

- Cover for medium to longer term sickness absence
- Cover during staff shortages due to resignations and to cover a period of recruitment
- Provision of specialist skills on a short term basis
- To ensure customer service levels are maintained during peak periods of demand
- Working on small projects or particular tasks with a limited duration
- Cover for maternity /adoption leave

Requests for temporary agency staff will not normally be agreed where there is a substantive permanent vacancy which has not or is not being advertised.

In addition, temporary agency staff should not be used to cover periods of annual leave.

3.2 Which roles can be filled by temporary agency staff?

The agencies included within the consortium arrangements cover a wide range of roles including Clerical Assistants, Clerical Officers, Executive Assistants/PAs, Secretaries, Receptionists, Audio Typists, Data Processors and industrial positions. Agreements are also in place with agencies for interim management placements and further details are available from the Recruitment Team.

There may be occasions when the College will need to engage temporary agency staff to fill a more specialist role. In this situation, you should contact the Human Resources' Recruitment Team who will liaise with the agencies to determine if they can meet your requirements and, if so, determine the potential cost. Only once all agencies within the consortium have been exhausted will alternative agencies be contacted.

3.3 Who pays for temporary agency staff?

The relevant department is responsible for the cost of temporary agency staff.

3.4 How much will it cost?

By using the consortium agreements the College is taking full advantage of the best possible prices available in this market. Different agencies will be more competitive in some areas than others and in order to determine which agency offers the best value for money option for your particular needs the Recruitment Team will review the discounts offered by each agency for the level of role which needs to be covered. A copy of the Buying Solutions TARDIS (Temporary Agency Rates Discount Indicator System) and the discounted rate for industrial placements through Blue Arrow is available on the Human Resources website at:

http://www.rhul.ac.uk/Personnel/Pages/pols_procs.htm

The total cost of an agency placement should not normally exceed the salary that would be payable for a College employee in the same position unless agreed otherwise through the approval process. It may therefore be necessary to reduce the number of hours worked by a member of temporary agency staff to allow for agency commission.

3.5 How are temporary agency staff paid?

Temporary agency staff have a contract of employment with the agency managing the placement and as such are paid directly by the agency. Temporary agency staff will need to complete a hard copy or on-line timesheet on a weekly basis, which then needs to be verified by the relevant department before payment can be made.

3.6 How do I book temporary agency staff?

Please contact the Recruitment Team who will discuss your particular requirements and will liaise with the account manager at the preferred agency. The Recruitment Team will ensure that an agreed REC1 or Establishment Form has been received prior to making the booking and will ask you the following information:

- Line manager contact details
- Job requirements, including information on types and levels of skills required, specific experience and/or knowledge, language skills and details of any other requirements.
- Start date and estimated duration of placement
- Any specific knowledge, e.g. where the temporary agency staff member should report to on their first day

- Hours of work
- Any security matters (e.g. access/signing in arrangements)
- Any health and safety matters (e.g. required to undertake manual handling, food handling or exposed to loud noise or hazardous materials)

Contact details for the Recruitment Team can be found at:

<http://www.rhul.ac.uk/Personnel/Pages/contacts.htm>

3.7 What does the agency do next?

The agency will evaluate the job criteria against the skills of the temporary agency staff registered on its books. Candidates who meet the criteria will be contacted by the agency to confirm if they are interested in being put forward for the placement and, once this has been agreed, the agency will confirm the arrangement to the Recruitment Team who will then email the appropriate line manager with full details. A CV can also be provided if desirable.

Some roles may have specific requirements that may make it more difficult to fill by any of the agencies included within the consortium agreement. Under these circumstances, the agency may not have suitable candidates already on its books and they will need to attract temporary staff, usually through their website, 'shop window'; or some form of external advertising. In this situation the Recruitment Team will also contact those agencies listed within the Buying Solutions Framework.

3.8 What checks are carried out on temporary agency staff?

The agencies will ensure that all temporary agency staff put forward to the College are eligible to work in the UK. They will also be fully referenced, have been interviewed in person and tested on key administrative skills. A health questionnaire will also be undertaken for temporary agency staff required to undertake food handling and preparation. All these checks will have been carried out by the agency prior to the first day of the assignment.

3.9 Can I see interview potential temporary agency staff?

Excellent candidates are placed very quickly, so you need to be aware that if you take the time to do any sifting and/or interviewing there is a strong possibility your preferred candidate will receive a booking elsewhere. The agencies within the consortium agreement interview all candidates to ensure a good fit with our requirements. However, for some longer term assignments, such as maternity cover, it may be appropriate to consider CVs and interview potential agency staff in advance.

3.10 What do I need to do on the first day of the placement?

You could start by providing a brief introduction to the department and the College, followed by information on:

- Location of facilities
- Housekeeping arrangements
- Health and safety issues such as fire alarm procedures
- Arrangements for breaks
- Security arrangements
- IT facilities
- Job duties
- Training and support

3.11 What are my responsibilities during the placement?

You will be required to assign duties, assess workload and monitor performance (this does not include carrying out assessments such as probation, which will be conducted by the agency) Specific on-the-job training will need to be provided if necessary. Any concerns relating to performance or conduct should be raised with the Recruitment Team who will discuss further with the agency.

It is also responsibility of the line manager/supervisor to ensure authorise timesheets and to ensure that they correctly record the hours worked.

3.12 What about sickness absence?

All temporary agency staff are required to report any sickness absence directly to the agency. The agency will notify the Recruitment Team of any absences due to sickness absence and make arrangements for a replacement if necessary.

3.13 What arrangements will be made for annual leave?

Temporary agency staff are eligible for annual leave, which is paid by the agency. Temporary agency staff will book their leave directly with the agency who will then inform the Recruitment Team and make any arrangements for a replacement if necessary

3.14 What happens if a member of temporary agency staff is unsuitable?

You have the right to request a replacement member of temporary agency staff at anytime and it is advisable to contact the Recruitment Team as soon as concerns are raised. It will be advantageous to all parties if you can provide feedback on your reasons for this decision.

3.15 What happens if a temporary agency staff member is dissatisfied with a placement?

Temporary agency staff are not under any obligation to continue working in the placement, so, following discussions with the agency, they can decide to terminate the assignment.

3.16 What happens if a temporary agency staff member leaves a placement?

The agency will endeavour to replace the temporary agency staff member with a suitable alternative. You will be advised by the Recruitment Team if this is not possible who will then contact one of the other agencies within the consortium agreements.

3.17 Will I be asked to give feedback on temporary agency staff?

Feedback may be requested on both the temporary agency staff and the service provided by the agency at various stages during the process. The majority of agencies will make contact with the Recruitment Team once a placement has finished to measure satisfaction with the candidate and the consortium also reviews agency service levels annually. The Recruitment Team will co-ordinate any requests for feedback and you are welcome to contact them to give your feedback on any aspect of the overall performance of the participating agencies.