



Ambitious Futures: Rising Stars Pathway

Context and Purpose

- 1.1 Ambitious Futures is now in its sixth cohort – and its second as a subsidiary company of the University of Nottingham. The model of recruitment which the scheme uses has remained constant throughout this period, and is comparable to that used by similar graduate trainee schemes (such as the NHS management trainee scheme, and the Civil Service fast track scheme). Through a rigorous process of recruitment and selection the programme seeks to attract talented, ambitious graduates directly on to the scheme. To be eligible candidates must have graduated (from their first or subsequent degree) within the last five years; and must have attained a 2:1 or better at undergraduate level; or a higher degree.
- 1.2 The Ambitious Futures scheme is best seen as one element of talent management and succession planning for an institution, and for the sector as a whole. While attracting high calibre graduates into HEIs will remain an important part of an HEI's talent management, and the main strand of AF's activity, evidence has shown that there is other potential talent already within HEIs which could also be nurtured through the Ambitious Futures model.
- 1.3 There are a number of first- or second stage administrators in HEIs who are potentially eligible for the scheme, and who may wish to pursue it. One current obstacle for them is that Ambitious Futures trainees are employed on fixed term contracts, so continuity of employment after the scheme has ended is not assured. Some of them may also be less mobile than more recent graduates. Nonetheless, in 2017/18, eight trainees left permanent employment in Universities in order to join the scheme.
- 1.4 To address the need to make better use of the untapped talent within HEIs, a new pathway into Ambitious Futures, called Rising Stars, has been developed. The purpose of this Pathway is to enable talented, ambitious early career administrators who are already employed within Universities to benefit from the development opportunities that Ambitious Futures provides. The offer aims to be attractive to candidates who, for a range of reasons, are not able to commit to a stand-alone, 18 month fixed term appointment. By doing so it aims to support institutions that are committed to the career progression of their current employees, and who wish to ensure that exceptional talent is developed and retained, rather than lost to competitor institutions or to other sectors.
- 1.5 The pathway could be attractive to large Universities, who have large numbers of professional services staff with varying professional development needs and personal circumstances. It should also be attractive to smaller institutions that have less scope to provide career development opportunities in-house, and who potentially risk losing talent to larger competitors.
- 1.6 Like the current Ambitious Futures scheme, the Rising Stars model would enable established colleagues to learn from best practice in other institutions, to widen their horizons, and to gain the personal and professional benefits that can

enhance an employee's performance, and act as a springboard to career progression

2 How the pathway would work

- 2.1 The proposal is a more traditional secondment or exchange model, but with the additional value-adding benefits of Ambitious Futures, including the following:
 - a tailor made induction programme
 - taking the e-LAMP professional development MOOC
 - participation in bespoke group coaching
 - peer to peer networking
 - support from the Ambitious Futures team
- 2.2 Under the model, each participating institution would offer an employment exchange. Six month secondments are proposed as they are compatible with the core Ambitious Futures scheme. However it would be possible to consider shorter or longer attachments, if institutions preferred.
- 2.3 These exchanges may differ from the current Ambitious Futures placements, in that there could be greater emphasis on undertaking substantive duties – including possibly those of the employee with whom a partner has exchanged. However these placements should also include some elements of project-based learning, for example through undertaking a short project; and the opportunity to gain a wider understanding of the new organisation – through shadowing, briefings, and attending relevant meetings.
- 2.4 The employees in the participating institutions could make a straight swap; or undertake different roles in the partner institution. Arrangements would be tailored to the needs of the institutions involved.
- 2.5 Selection would be via a competitive process, managed by the parent institution, but using criteria and assessment methods developed by Ambitious Futures in collaboration with partner institutions.
- 2.6 The selection process would be generic, in order to ensure equity and parity between institutions. However the particular skills/ experience sought in a secondee are likely to depend on the specific exchange. Hence the two partner institutions would be closely involved in the selection process, to ensure a skills and cultural fit between the parent institution and the exchange partner. Ambitious Futures would retain responsibility for standard setting and quality assurance.
- 2.7 Employees would be formally seconded by their substantive employer to the second institution. The parent institution would continue to pay the employee's salary as normal during the secondment.
- 2.8 In addition to the exchange, each trainee would:
 - a) Have a one or two-day induction to the programme, either designed specifically for those following the Rising Stars pathway; or alongside the other Ambitious Futures trainees (depending on the numbers involved).
 - b) Follow the four modules of the Emerging Leaders and Managers Program (eLAMP), and take part in the eLAMP discussion groups and four end of module workshops.
 - c) Participate in group coaching/ action learning, via bespoke mid-module workshops during the course of the 18 months; and continuing peer support

- d) Have one year's paid membership of the AUA. Attend a bespoke session at the AUA conference
- e) Subject to further discussion with partners: take part in bespoke activities designed to widen the professional experience of participants, and help them to explore career opportunities.
- f) Participate in the end of cohort celebration event.

3. Costing and pricing

3.1 Ambitious Futures would charge a modest management fee for coordinating and managing the programme. For the 2018 pilot year a fee of £3500 plus VAT per trainee has been agreed.

3.2 For future years costs per participant could reduce, depending on the total number of Rising Stars trainees recruited.

3 2018: pilot year

3.1 For the pilot year, it is suggested that two partner institutions, and multiples of two, in reasonably close geographical proximity, could collaborate on this pathway. This would make the arrangements for the placement swops more straightforward, and would avoid the complications of travel or accommodation for the second placement.

4 Next Steps

4.1 The Ambitious Futures Member Board, partner Universities and AHUA partner organisations are being invited to consider this proposal, and to put forward expressions of interest for the pilot scheme, to start in early September 2018. Anyone who wishes to discuss the Rising Stars pathway (or the "core" Ambitious Futures scheme) is welcome to contact Christine Abbott – contact details are below.

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