

# The oh-so PC BBC ...new staff quotas and 'bias training'

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THE BBC came under fire yesterday as its new diversity strategy was branded a 'politically correct handbook'.

The broadcaster is to remove names and universities from job applications in a bid to boost the diversity of its workforce.

Managers and recruitment staff will also have 'unconscious bias' training to stamp out prejudices, for instance when they interview women or ethnic minorities. And in a bid to monitor the backgrounds of staff, recruits will be asked to disclose their family income, education and postcode.

The diversity strategy is an attempt by the Corporation to tackle its image as a stuffy middle-class organisation dominated by Oxbridge graduates.

However, legal experts and MPs raised concerns that the plans skirt very close to being classed as 'positive discrimination'. They said BBC recruiters should be trusted to hire a diverse workforce without needing to be told.

Tory MP Philip Davies, a former member of the Commons' culture, media and sport select committee, said: 'It is political correctness gone too far, and it is completely unacceptable to have any recruitment process that isn't solely based on merit.'

'It is a politically correct handbook. I don't believe in quotas or positive discrimination, they should commit to giving jobs on merit. They clearly don't have a huge amount of faith in their staff who are doing the recruiting if they are introducing this politically correct recruitment process.'

'They just need a blueprint to pick the

## How Beeb will look by 2020

- Disabled people are to make up 8 per cent of on-screen and on-air roles, including some lead parts
- Some 8 per cent of on-screen roles will go to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, including lead parts
- Fifteen per cent of those with on-air, on-screen and lead roles in programmes will be black, Asian or an ethnic minority

- One in ten entry-level trainee and apprentice jobs will be ring-fenced for the disabled
- Half of those on screen, on air and in lead roles will be women
- A quarter of work experience applicants will be drawn from the ranks of the unemployed
- Independent and in-house producers of shows will be given guidelines to promote diversity

best person for the job and be colour-blind, gender-blind and religion-blind. It is not too difficult a task.'

Documents reveal that by 2020 the Corporation wants 8 per cent of its workforce – on screen and behind the scenes – to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, which is the first time such a target has been introduced. It is aiming for 15 per cent of staff to be from

### 'It should give jobs on merit'

black and minority ethnic backgrounds, 50 per cent to be women and 8 per cent to have some form of disability.

A centre of excellence will be set up in Birmingham to promote the diversity of programmes and programme-makers.

Aaron Hayward, employment specialist at DJM Solicitors, said: 'Practically they must be careful that it doesn't go the other way, and that indi-

viduals who are not selected do not feel discriminated against because of this change of attitude at the BBC.'

The BBC has repeatedly come under attack for pandering to political correctness in its programming and recruitment policies.

In 2014 the Corporation was accused of censorship after cutting the word 'girl' from a documentary about the Commonwealth Games.

There was also speculation that contestants in the last series of The Great British Bake Off were chosen to be as diverse as possible.

On the new strategy, a BBC source said: 'It is about levelling the playing field, and taking the application on its merit and the individual on their merit, rather than potentially being influenced by a particular name and a particular university.'

Director-general Tony Hall said: 'We have made some excellent progress to date on diversity and social mobility but we can, and must, do more.'