

7 August 2020

Dear Mr Robert and Council colleagues,

We would like to thank you for your email of 31 July, formally sharing the news that the upcoming academic year will be Prof Piot's last as Director. His 11 years of leadership at LSHTM have been marked by high standards and academic rigour, and while we do not agree with every aspect of his tenure, we do not question his dedication to advancing public health.

It was also gratifying to see your openness to receiving input from the LSHTM community regarding the process to choose Prof Piot's successor. Black Lives Matter - LSHTM would like to take advantage of this invitation to encourage Council to choose LSHTM's next Director from a diverse group of candidates with a deep, multiperspective understanding of public health.

The recruitment and selection process will have an immense impact on both candidate profiles and the Council's ability to comprehensively evaluate them. Thus, we urge the Council to:

- (a) incorporate specific measures to compensate for existing institutional barriers that restrict the applicant pool during recruitment;
- (b) recognise the added value of lived experience, commitment to inclusion and diversity, and a participatory leadership style when designing your selection criteria; and
- (c) provide the Director with the incentives and resources necessary to catalyse a change in LSHTM culture.

With regard to the recruitment process, we would encourage you to seek and consider a diverse group of candidates, including from outside Eurocentric global health networks. Deliberate efforts are needed to identify qualified scholars from regions where LSHTM is actively involved in public health research and policy, including Africa, South Asia, and elsewhere. Having a single person from an LMIC in a high position could be rightly interpreted as tokenisation, leading to fatigue and adding pressure on them to 'fix' the institutional racism at the school. Therefore, the process should rather be framed as a model for changing recruitment practices school-wide. From the start, LSHTM should ensure that all candidates know that they will be supported in covering the costs and dealing with the bureaucracy associated with moving themselves and their families to London.

While basic values of fairness and equity should be enough to justify any additional costs for LSHTM, candidates with a range of first-hand experiences in different settings and countries also have more to offer as leaders. Indeed, regardless of where they come from, we hope that the Council recognises the value of diverse, intersectional lived experiences, whether these are rooted in race, nationality, socioeconomics, gender and sexuality, and/or disability. Moreover, we would urge you to seek candidates with a

participatory leadership style, characterized by deep listening and meaningful community engagement. It is not a coincidence that the groups who benefit the least from public health policy are also the most excluded from contributing to it, but this does not have to be the case. To fully explore this dimension during the selection process, we would invite you to seek critical feedback from LSHTM students and staff on the questions and criteria used to probe these aspects.

Finally, we strongly encourage you to discuss candidates' experience in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion, and their vision for LSHTM, candidly laying out the problems, proactively putting the School's resources and tools at their disposal to solve them, and creating clear monetary incentives for mobilising the School to meet inclusion targets. The new Director must be personally and passionately committed to equity, but unless the rest of the school's leadership and administrators are equally dedicated to changing the school's culture, assigning the ultimate responsibility to the Director would be setting them up for failure – sending them toward a so-called 'glass cliff'^{1,2}. We hope that Council is receptive to fresh approaches to leadership, including those that include new support staff or even split responsibilities among two co-directors.

New leadership will inevitably take the school in new directions. Our hope is that the incoming Director will be an architect for positive change, laying the groundwork for a more inclusive, safer academic and professional environment – one that is capable of recognising and elevating the contributions of all members of the LSHTM community. The Council has the full support of Black Lives Matter – LSHTM in that pursuit, and we look forward to hearing more about the process design and to having the opportunity to make meaningful contributions to refine and support it.

Sincerely,

Black Lives Matter – LSHTM

¹ Ryan, M., & Haslam, S. (2007). The Glass Cliff: Exploring the Dynamics Surrounding the Appointment of Women to Precarious Leadership Positions. *The Academy of Management Review*, 32(2), 549-572. Retrieved August 6, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/20159315

² Kulich, C., Ryan, M. K., & Haslam, S. A. (2014). The Political Glass Cliff: Understanding How Seat Selection Contributes to the Underperformance of Ethnic Minority Candidates. *Political Research Quarterly*, 67(1), 84–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912913495740>