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INTERVIEWS

➤ Scheduling interviews

Interview guide

- The finalized Interview Guide that you develop will list the interview questions you will ask of each applicant you are considering.
- You may use the Interview Guide format below as an aid in designing your guides.
- You may wish to make copies of your completed interview guide and use a separate copy for each applicant you interview.
- Interview notes and applicant scores can be recorded directly on the guide.

Interview guide sample format

Applicant Name:	
Date of Interview:	
Position Title:	
Interviewer:	
Criterion Title:	
Criterion Description:	

Interview Questions

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

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Interview Notes:

(Adjust the number of questions and/or add additional sections as necessary)

➤ **Develop structured interviews**

- It is a good idea to develop a list of interview questions while the Job Requisition is being processed.
- You will then be ready to begin interviewing as soon as applicants are referred to you.
- You will create a unique structured interview guide using a combination of the selection criteria and questions together with any revisions or additions you need to make.
- The questions are designed as a guide but should be useful for most positions.
- Remember, you are looking for questions that reveal the applicant's skill, knowledge, and ability as they relate to the job duties.

➤ **Pre-interviewing Checklist**

Review the job description and selection criteria. Use those as the basis for your Questions. Familiarize yourself with the duties and requirements of the job you are filling. Make sure you explore the duties and responsibilities of the previous job/s, their achievements, their qualifications, abilities, experience, education, and interests. Make sure you can answer general questions about the department. Any questions about benefits can be referred to the UMD Department of Human Resources.

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Formulate questions that will focus on job-related aspects, such as asking about situations that may have occurred in previous positions. Write down and organize the questions in the order you will be asking them. Review applicants' resume and application so that you can identify specific areas you wish to probe. Develop and write those questions.

The advantages of predetermined interview questions are many, but some of the most important are:

Ensure that you ask all the questions you need to ask of all the applicants.

Increase your confidence in your interviews by eliminating the need to grope for questions and by discouraging common interviewing errors, such as talking too much, making premature decisions, and asking leading or closed-ended questions.

Ask open-ended questions that focus on behavioural descriptions rather than simply "yes" or "no" questions (i.e., have them describe a work situation in which they handled stress well rather than just asking if they can "handle stress well").

Ensure that the interview remains appropriately focused.

Improve the quality of your hiring decisions by focusing on the specific requirements of the job.

Standardize the evaluation, and treat all applicants equally and fairly.

Reduce training costs and turnover by selecting employees qualified for the specific needs of your position.

Provide a basis for future vacancies in that classification.

Provide a record of decision making and a basis for a defence against legal charges.

Stay away from questions that deal with personal lifestyles than job experience phrase the question so that the answer will describe on-the-job qualities instead of personal qualities-if the question is not related to performance on the job, it should not be asked.

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➤ Sample Selection Criteria and Interview Questions

Supervision/leadership

Experience in setting and monitoring objectives

Experience in hiring, firing, rewarding, disciplining, training,

and motivating subordinates Experience in managing human resources for maximum effectiveness Experience establishing and systematizing work priorities

Sample Interview Questions

Explain any training you have had in supervision or leadership.

Describe the authority you have had to: hire, fire, reward, discipline, motivate, and train employees.

How many subordinates have you supervised, and what types of work were involved?

What was one of your most difficult supervisory experiences, and how did you handle it?

Tell me about one of your most important accomplishments as a supervisor.

Give me some examples of how you have succeeded in motivating your subordinates.

Tell me how you deal with poor performers.

How would you introduce unpopular change to your employees?

Tell me about the most recent disciplinary problem you have handled.

Describe the methods you have used for selecting competent subordinates.

Explain how successful your subordinates have been.

What procedures have you used to set objectives, schedules, or deadlines?

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➤ **Problem-solving**

- Able to identify and define problem-causing factors
- Able to collect and analyze pertinent information
- Able to develop and evaluate possible solutions
- Able to determine the impact of proposed solutions
- Able to implement problem-solving decisions and follow up on results

➤ **Sample Interview Questions**

- Explain a difficult work problem you have had to resolve and how you handled it.
- What is your approach to problem-solving? What steps do you follow?
- Of what value are techniques such as quality circles, brainstorming, and suggestion boxes?
- How do you convince others that your proposed solution is the best one?
- Do you consider yourself to be innovative in problem-solving? Why?
- How do you determine the problems that require immediate attention in this kind of work?
- Are you better at solving problems involving people or things?
- Would you rather seek the advice of others or resolve a problem yourself?
- Tell me of any preventive measures you might take to reduce the possibility of problems arising.
- (Give the applicant a hypothetical work problem, and ask how s/he would go about solving it.)

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➤ **Verbal communications**

- Able to understand and follow oral and written instructions
- Able to express opinions or interests tactfully
- Able to respond clearly and directly
- Able to guide people and provide basic directions

➤ **Sample Interview Questions**

- Describe any formal training you have had related to verbal communications or public speaking.
- Explain your experience in making verbal presentations to groups or individuals.
- What are the attributes of good verbal communication?
- How do you approach communicating negative information?
- How do you communicate to others that you disagree with them?
- What are the attributes of a good listener?
- Is his/her grammar and vocabulary appropriate for the work? Are responses clear and direct?
- Is the applicant expressing his/her thoughts clearly and convincingly?

➤ **Written communications**

- Able to transcribe dictation, make appointments, and process mail
- Able to use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Able to express ideas, concerns, and issues effectively
- Able to compose original correspondence; edit documents

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➤ **Sample Interview Questions**

- Explain any formal training you have had in writing.
- What types of business memos or letters have you written?
- What types of written materials do you have the most trouble with?
- How comfortable and efficient are you at putting your thoughts into written form?
- Explain your strengths/weaknesses in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- Describe any policies or procedures you have written.
- Describe any informational or public relations materials you have written.
- Explain your familiarity with the terminology used in this type of work.
- What are the best resources or written materials for this work?
- What experience do you have in report writing?

➤ **Sample Interview Questions**

- Describe your strengths and weaknesses in this job.
- How has your previous experience prepared you for this position?
- Identify the value of knowledge gained in previous jobs.
- Describe your last day of work before this interview.
- Which of your previous jobs did you enjoy most? Why?
- What kinds of references would you expect from previous employers? (Probe for specifics.)
- Which of your previous jobs did you enjoy least? Explain the reasons.
- What problems have you had with co-workers or supervisors? (Review reasons for leaving previous jobs.)

➤ **Interviewing procedures**

Five steps that constitute a good interview:

Personal introduction and welcoming the applicant to the University. Use the first few moments of the interview to get the discussion off the ground and to set the stage.

Establish a good rapport by greeting warmly, perhaps offering the applicant a cup of coffee, etc. Obtain relevant interview information. Structure the interview so that you use a variety of questioning techniques, especially open-ended questions. Three categories need to be explored thoroughly: work experience, educational/training background, and personal factors directly related to the position.

Start with the applicant's present or most recent job and work backwards. This way, you will save yourself time if the candidate's work experience has been unsatisfactory or inappropriate for the position and you wish to terminate the interview. After you have reviewed the applicant's work history and educational background, you will want more in-depth and comprehensive information about the applicant in such vital areas as what they believe to be their outstanding strengths, developmental needs, career goals, and objectives. Finally, giving to offer any information s/he regards as relevant that may not have been covered.

Provide information about the company and the job. When you determine during the interview that the candidate is appropriate to your needs, move into this stage. Give the facts about the department and a factual and accurately explained description of the position. If the position entails overtime, night, or weekend work, or if a degree of travel is required, such essential facts should be given. Do not dwell only on positive aspects; being honest can avoid later turnover problems.

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At this point, the salary may be discussed. Some interviewers prefer delaying all discussions of salary until the final candidate has been selected. There are pros and cons on both sides of this issue, and you should decide how you will handle this question before starting the interview.

Respond to the applicant's questions. Often a degree of giving and take ensues between the interviewer and the applicant in which additional areas are clarified. When both your questions and those of the candidate have been answered satisfactorily, it is time to bring the interview to an end.

Conclude the interview. Close the interview in a reasonable period of time, and close on a positive note. Don't give the impression you will be making an offer or promise something you cannot provide. Let the applicant know when you will make your hiring decision and how they will be notified of that decision. As soon as the interview is over, write down the facts and your impressions of the interview.

Knowing as much as possible about a candidate is extremely important in the evaluation process. The capabilities, experience, background, and previous performance of each prospective employee are critical pieces of information to have to assure a proper fit between your needs and the individual under consideration.

➤ **The Do's and Don'ts of interviewing**

An employment interview is conducted for several reasons; the main reason is to learn more about the applicants under consideration for a particular job. Your responsibilities as an interviewer are to:

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Verify answers that the prospective employee has given on the application form. Ask questions designed to find out if the applicant is an appropriate candidate for the job opening. Acquaint the applicant with the company and your department. Provide the applicant with the opportunity to ask questions about the job and company.

➤ More suggested questions

- Tell us about your (current/past) job. To whom do you report? How many people report to you (include titles)? What do you like most about your job?
- Describe your two most important achievements in your job?
- How do you think members of your department would describe you as their director/manager/supervisor?
- What types of criticisms are levelled at you most often? How do you respond?
- How do you plan and organize your work? Describe a big project and how you planned and organized the work.
- What steps do you generally follow in making a decision?
- Describe the most difficult work situation you ever handled. Why did you decide to handle it that way? If you had to do it over again, what changes would you try and make?
- What skills and abilities do you have that you could bring to this job?
- Describe ways in which you've used teamwork to get a job/project done?
- Describe your approach to dealing with the media, the community, donors

➤ Final interview reminders

The interviewer should stay focused on the job and its requirements, not any preconceived assumptions about what the applicant can or cannot do. Remember: any oral statements that the interviewer makes during the interviewing process can lead to potential liability for the company.

Remember that someone who interviews well may have had a lot of practice in many other job interviews as a result of a frequent job change. An uncomfortable

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interviewee may have experienced long-term employment situations and, as a result, fewer interviews.

Sell the job and the company while keeping your pitch realistic. Unrealistic expectations will generally lead to employee dissatisfaction and higher turnover.

Make sure you elicit questions or provide information which will help clear up any unanswered questions or doubts that are lingering in the applicant's mind.

Verify educational credentials, if required for the position.

End the interview on a friendly note and, if possible, apprise the candidate of the next step and the time frame for a decision.

Complete the candidate evaluation while the interview is still fresh in your mind.

Conduct reference checks consistently for all candidates (preferably using prior supervisors over personal references since they are less biased and more aware of the candidate's work performance). Make a fair and unbiased recommendation or decision on the job-related qualifications of the applicant.