How to carry out interviews

Interview Arrangements

The Chairperson of the panel is responsible for ensuring that the arrangements for interview are made in advance as follows:

- Check for candidates with special requirements, for example, disabled candidates should not be disadvantaged by the interview arrangements. The invitation email must ask the candidate to notify any adjustments required for the interview and for these to be confirmed before the interview. Reasonable adjustments should be made where appropriate, such as physical access to the venue, and any services/equipment that may need to be provided, for example a sign language interpreter.
- It is the individual’s responsibility to request any special requirements; however it is the interview panel’s responsibility to ensure that these are met where possible.
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Interview Preparation

- Ensure that a suitable room is available and that the reception/person meeting the candidates has a list of who will be arriving, the times of the interviews, a contact number and where the interviews will be taking place.
- Panel members should agree standard open questions before the interview ensuring that the assessment of knowledge and skills can be measured against essential and desirable criteria using behavioural interviewing techniques. The panel should agree who will ask which questions and in which order.
- As a guide, six to eight standard questions should be used.
- All interviews must be fair and consistent. All candidates should be asked the same questions, based on the criteria for the post. It may be appropriate to rephrase questions to encourage responses depending on a candidate’s particular experience or ask further probing questions. It may also be necessary for the panel to clarify information submitted in the application form by the candidate.
- The standard of spoken English relevant to the job should be evaluated as part of the interview process. For example if a public facing role would need to talk about technical information or use jargon, the interview questions should check understanding and an ability to speak fluently in English about this.
- Panel members should ensure that the questions they ask candidates are not discriminatory or unnecessarily intrusive. The interview should focus on the needs of the job and skills required to perform it effectively.
- Where a presentation or test is included, candidates must be made aware of this in advance. The chairperson is responsible for ensuring arrangements are in place for any equipment or administration of test or presentations.
- Confirm who will be carrying out the recruitment checks.

Behavioural Interviewing

We use behavioural interviewing which is a type of structured interview where candidates are asked to describe particular past situations and how they have responded to them. This in turn helps to predict future performance and provides a detailed account of actual events from the candidate’s job and life experiences. To develop this type of interview, please follow the key points below:

- Identify the essential and desirable criteria using the job description and personal specification
- Develop appropriate interview questions based on each criteria. Some example interview questions are available at the end of this document
- Remember you are trying to assess the ability to do the job, not the ability to perform at interview
- Avoid using hypothetical and closed questions such as “what would you do if” (always ask what did you do) and avoid over-using closed questions (yes or no answers) without introducing a topic
- Remember to ask for details and clarify anything you are not sure about

Conducting the Interview

- Ensure phones are diverted and a sign is put on the door of the interview room to avoid interruptions.
- The chairperson should introduce those present and outline the format and timescales of the interview, advising the candidate that the panel will be taking
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notes. Panel members should not record subjective or personal data during the interview.

- Provide background information for the job and the relevant Service to the candidate.
- If required, the candidate would normally deliver their presentation at the start of the interview and before questions are asked.
- Tests may be appropriate to determine knowledge or skills such as typing, organisation, IT skills or subject matter but they must be relevant to the requirements of the post. Tests can be carried out before or after the interview depending on resources.
- Ask the candidate the agreed questions and any follow up questions to gather all required information.
- Give the candidate the opportunity to ask any questions.
- Close the interview by thanking the candidate for attending, letting them know when they will be informed of the outcome.
- A written record of every interview must be made and kept for six months along with any notes; see Interview Assessment Record and Interview Scoring Matrix. Audio recordings of interviews must not be made. The chairperson must ensure all panel members sign and date the paperwork.
- There are a number of checks which must be completed as part of the recruitment process using a risk based approach. Some checks need to be carried out at interview however these may be done by an administration assistant or authorised signatory. The Chairperson must check and authorise these before any appointment is made. More details can be found in How to Carry Out Recruitment Checks and checks should be recorded on the Recruitment Checklist (External and SSSC) or Recruitment Checklist (internal excl SSSC).

Under Data Protection legislation, an individual has the right to request access to any personal information held about them in a manual or computer-based file. A candidate, whether successful or unsuccessful, can ask the Council for access to interview notes, references and any other information held about them.

If a candidate requests for their information to be deleted, this cannot be done within 6 months of the interview date.

Interview outcomes

The interview panel has joint responsibility for selecting candidates based on the criteria set for the post. The scoring matrix should be used to score each candidate against the responses to the interview questions and any tests. Normally candidates should be scored after individual interviews by each panel member. At the end of the interviews each panel member must total their own scores. The scores of all panel members should then be added together to give an overall score. The candidate with the highest score should be appointed. An agreed scoring matrix should be kept signed by all panel members and with interview records.

For Chief Officer recruitment HR will hold the record of the panel's decision and reasons for this.
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The chairperson must ensure that they are satisfied with the interview process and address any concerns during the process. All unsuccessful candidates should be notified using Talentlink.

All recruitment checks must be received and satisfactory before a formal offer can be made.

Example Interview Questions

Responsive

- Tell me about a time when you have actively listened to feedback from employees or customers and have acted on that feedback
- Give me an example of when you have supported a colleague or employee when they have been under pressure
- Give me an example of where you recognised a colleague’s contribution

Innovative

- Describe how you keep up to date with the latest thinking in your area of expertise
- Give me an example of a situation when you involved customers in the solution to a problem
- Tell me about a time when you have taken a risk. How did you manage the possible outcomes

Trusted

- Give me an example of a time when you have had to give a message that was hard for the customer or colleague to hear
- How do you keep colleagues and customers updated with information relevant to them
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult customer or colleague. How did you continue to show them respect even though they were difficult

Ambitious

- Describe how you have influenced a colleague to support you in achieving a positive outcome
- Tell me how you set targets and milestones for projects that you are involved in
- Give me an example of a situation where your energy and positivity influenced others