

How to....plan and conduct interviews

All recruitment and selection processes will involve at least an interview and references will be taken up in advance for most academic posts and for some senior professional services' posts. Other methods of assessment should then be used to tailor the selection process to the profile of the post to which you are recruiting. It is usual for there to be more than one method of assessment to enable you to test a full range of competencies and to give candidates the greatest chance of performing to their best ability over a range of assessments.

Tests/Tasks

Things to consider:

- The test/task should be relevant to the post to which you are recruiting, and should be designed to help you assess some of the key skills required
- You should be prepared to make reasonable adjustments for candidates with disabilities who might find this kind of task difficult
- If it is a work based task e.g. in Word or Excel, do you have access to a quiet area with a computer?
- Will the task/test be clear to an external person? Is there any University terminology that may not be understood?
- Who will be dealing with the logistics of the task/test e.g. providing the candidates with instructions, timing the test, collecting them at the end?
- It should be made clear to the candidates in their interview invitation what the selection process and any assessments will involve

Presentations

Presentations are widely used across the University, where oral presentation and effective communication skills are required for particular roles. For academic roles, this might take the form of a presentation to the recruiting department on the candidate's research specialism or on their teaching and learning support experience and ethos, or candidates might be asked to deliver a mock-teaching session to a group of students from the recruiting department. For professional services roles, candidates are often asked to give a short presentation on a work-based scenario immediately before their formal interview. As with all stages of the process, it is essential to be clear about what type of presentation is required, who the audience will be, etc.

Things to consider:

- You should make sure that the audience for the presentation knows what the assessment criteria are. This is especially important if you request feedback from the audience which then gets fed back to the panel.
- Where possible, ask the members of the interview panel to attend all the presentations
- You will need to have a suitable location for the presentation, and any equipment set up
- Make clear to candidates and those involved in participating in presentations etc. whether views gathered will affect selection (and only allow this where the comments received are specifically related to selection criteria)

Social occasions

Some departments may wish to invite candidates to socialise with members of the department either in the department itself or over dinner. This is not recommended practice and if it occurs it needs to be carefully managed in accordance with University guidance on social occasions.

Please note that social occasions cannot form part of the selection process.

Interviews

What is an interview?

An interview is an opportunity for an in-depth, interactive dialogue with each of your shortlisted candidates about their experience and competencies and about the role they have applied to undertake. As such an interview should be two-sided, with opportunities for the candidates to ask you questions and gain more information about the role, department/section and University. This information, and the way it is conveyed, will inform their decision about whether or not to accept a position if offered, and influence the way they regard you as an employer. The interview is a very good way for you to find out more about the candidate's knowledge, professional experience, future plans and values and how these align with the job description and, in particular, with the person specification. Interviews test things like: the ability of candidates to think on their feet and answer unseen questions; their ability to utilise examples from experience to support positions taken.

Planning the interview

It is vital that you give yourself enough time to plan your interview process and that you fully involve all members of the panel in this planning. You will need to design, discuss and approve a framework of interview questions between you. These questions should be agreed by the panel as a whole. They should be linked explicitly to the criteria advertised in the job pack, and they should be used for all of the candidates whom you interview. Appropriate probing questions should also be used to understand the gain more information and clarity. You should make sure that the slots allocated for each candidate are long enough to accommodate the core questions, any follow-up discussion as well as questions from the candidate.

Things to consider:

- Let candidates know exactly what will happen on their interview day. For example, Will there be informal opportunities to meet the department/section in which they might work?
- Are you prepared to be flexible if candidates cannot make the day/time allotted for their interview or could they be interviewed by Skype?
- Have you allowed time for a selection panel meeting prior to the interviews and at the conclusion?
- Have you booked an appropriate room, free from distractions?

For Professional Services posts the hiring manager will be able to view the time slots that the candidates have booked through their recruiting manager access in iTrent. With all posts, a final schedule will be emailed to the panel two days prior to the interviews, along with the interview decision grid and any references/external assessors reports (where appropriate). For academic posts, salary reports will also be provided to the Executive Dean (or VC/DVC if Chair).

Prior to the interviews, the panel should convene to review matters such as the structure of the interviews, timings, questions, the job description and person specification plus, any

references/external assessor reports (where appropriate) and any candidate specific matters. This meeting should take no more than 15 minutes.

Candidates will be asked to report to the main reception (unless otherwise specified) 10 minutes prior to their interview time and reception staff will have been asked by the Resourcing Team to contact a member of your department/section to collect the candidate. This person should ideally not be a member of the selection panel. Ideally, **this person should verify and copy the candidates 'right to work' documentation at this point.**

Conducting the interview

Responsibilities

The Chair is responsible for initiating, controlling and closing the interview. The Chair should pick up on any points which need probing and provide links between panel members. After the interviews, the Chair should lead the discussion and complete the interview decision grid and upload this along with the handwritten interview notes (where required).

Panel members are responsible for preparing prior to the interviews, participating fully with interview questioning and feed into the decision making afterwards.

Department members may be asked to collect candidates from reception, initiate tests or tasks or attend presentations.

Format of the interview

Beginning

- Welcome and introductions
- Have water available for each candidate
- Outline the structure of the interview, that there will be the opportunity to ask questions at the end etc.
- Let the candidates know that you will be taking notes to help you remember what has been said
- Let the candidate know that they should ask for clarification if any of the questions are unclear
- Ask the candidate if they have any questions before you begin

Middle

- Start the questioning with an ice breaker type question, e.g. 'Tell me about your current role'
- Check any facts from application form that the panel have decided need verifying
- Ask the agreed interview questions for all candidates
- Check if panel members have any follow up questions

Close

- Ask the candidate if they have anything else they would like to add
- Ask the candidate if they have any questions
- Explain what happens next (decision, feedback, timings)
- Thank the candidate, confirm immediate arrangements (member of the department to escort them back to reception, time for test/task etc)

Interview questions

Funnelling

Is a process of asking more restrictive or less restrictive questions at each stage of the subject you are exploring, starting with closed questions and ending with open questions, or vice versa.. This can allow you to approach questions that may initially be quite obscure or technical without jumping straight to them, it allows the interview to feel more conversational and natural and can provide more context to why the candidate answered the way they do.

For example:

- Which type of data analytic tools have you used in the past? (open)
- How successful did you find XXXX analytic tool in meeting your end goals? (open)
- How successful was your overall project? (open)
- Do you think you would use a different analytic tool next time? (closed)
- Have you ever used XXX analytic tool? (closed)

Avoid these types of questions

- Leading – e.g. “you do have a lot of administrative experience, don’t you”?
- Hypothetical e.g. “what would happen if you could have all the resources you wanted for a project”?
- Multiple e.g. “can you tell me about a time you led a large team and they were not performing well and you found it difficult to successfully complete a project”?
- Ambiguous – e.g. “how do you like run a project”?
- Answering the question yourself, in the addressing of the question e.g. “why are badly planned projects usually unsuccessful”?

Following the interviews

Once all of the interviews have concluded a final panel meeting should take place. The decision should be based on how the candidates met the essential and desirable criteria for the role.

Once a decision has been made, the Chair should consult with their Resourcing Adviser prior to making any offer (for professional services posts).

For academic offers of employment, recommendations of salary offers should be emailed to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor or the Vice-Chancellor (if Chair) for approval prior to making an offer.

Interview Scoring and Decision Grids

- There are three grids contained within the spreadsheet. Grid one provides a summary grid and you should complete this if you are not using the scoring grids. Grid 2 provides a scoring sheet that you can use for each applicant. You will need to print one sheet per candidate to be used in the interviews. Grid 3 provides a summary of the scoring grids used and should be completed by the Chair.
- Use of the scoring grids is optional, however you are encouraged to use these because they help to keep the interview structured, provide a reminder of the essential criteria for the role and make the decision making process fairer and more consistent.

- These grids would also be used as evidence in the event that there were challenges around the process and they will need demonstrate that a structured and measured approach to the process was undertaken.
- The information recorded by the Chair on the summary grid may be used as feedback for candidates and the comments should relate to the essential/desirable criteria and not contain any subjective statements.

Right to Work Document Checking

Candidates are requested to bring suitable proof of their right to work in the UK in their interview invitation. It is the Department's responsibility to verify (confirm that you are satisfied that the documents you are presented with appear genuine and are a good likeness to the candidate), sign and date copies of these. The successful candidate's documentation should be uploaded to the [e-Recruitment system \(iTrent\)](#), at the same time as the [HRAP1 appointment form](#) (.doc). Documentation for unsuccessful candidates should be confidentially shredded by the Department. If a candidate fails to bring the right to work documentation to the interview, the interview can still proceed but if they are successful, they will need to bring the original documentation to HR to be verified **before** they can start work.

All right to work checks must be carried prior to the start date, using the original and physical copy of the documentation. Copies are not acceptable. If you are unsure about the documentation you are checking, or have any doubts, please contact the Resourcing Team for advice.

Full details of carrying out checks and accepted documentation may be read in the [Right to Work in the UK guidance](#).