

## Steps for Creating a Hiring Interview

These five steps assist departmental staff in creating legal, comprehensive hiring interviews.

### 1. What will the interview assess?

A job analysis involves identifying the essential tasks of a job, as well as the KSAPCs that are required to perform those tasks. A job analysis also indicates which KSAPCs are required upon entry to a job. These are the KSAPCs that should be assessed.

While the essential tasks of some positions (e.g., clerical positions) rarely change, the essential tasks of other positions (e.g., information technology positions) continually change.

To ensure that selection decisions are based upon current and accurate job requirements, any existing job analysis should be reviewed and, if necessary, updated before testing and interviewing are conducted. Interview content must be based on an up-to-date job analysis of the position. Information about a job can be gathered from many sources:

- Interviews with incumbents and their supervisors
- Questionnaires completed by incumbents and their supervisors
- Documents such as class specifications, job descriptions, job announcements, and/or previous job analysis
- Direct observations of incumbents

NOTE: The job analysis information used to determine the content of the hiring interview may be collected by the hiring agency or it may be obtained from another agency that uses the same classification.

### 2. Select a Structured Interview Format

A structured interview provides little or no opportunity for the interview panel members to diverge from the format. Three such types of structured interviews are the situational interview, the behavior description interview, and the comprehensive structured interview.

- **Situational Interview** - The situational interview consists of a series of work-related scenarios that require the candidate to describe how he or she would handle the situation if confronted with it on the job. Because situational questions focus on what the candidate would do in a particular situation rather than on what the candidate has done in a past similar situation, they are useful for entry-level positions in which a candidate is not expected to possess previous experience. The scenarios which comprise the situational interview questions are developed on the basis of a job analysis or from input from subject matter experts. Example:

"Assume you are a supervisor and one of your subordinate employees consistently arrives late to work. What action would you take?"

- Behavior Description Interview - The behavior description interview is intended to measure typical, rather than maximal, performance. It is based on the belief that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. Questions should only deal with KSAPCs that are expected upon entry to the job. Example: "Tell us about a time when you were asked to complete multiple projects with conflicting deadlines. How did you resolve this situation?"
- Comprehensive Structured Interview - The comprehensive structured interview may contain four types of questions:
  - Situational - these questions are identical to those used in the situational interview.
  - Job knowledge - these questions assess a knowledge or skill required by the job. For example, "Explain the concept of present value and provide an example of a business application."
  - Job simulation - these questions attempt to simulate the type of behavior required on the job. For example, "Human resources technicians are required to administer pre-employment written exams and read exam instructions to the candidates. Please read these exam proctor instructions to us as if you were reading them to a large candidate group."
  - Worker requirements - these questions assess work experience, education, licenses, or certificates that are required on the job. For example, "Please describe your previous work experience preparing detailed financial reports."

Once you have drafted your questions, review them, as the best questions are carefully constructed. That means questions are open-ended, rather than "yes-no" questions. Open-ended questions provide a framework for the candidate to respond, yet leaves the responsibility with the candidate to determine the level of detail to provide in the response. For example, "Describe your experience validating selection procedures using content validity." In developing interview questions, it is important to ensure that questions:

- are realistic given the requirements of the job
- are complex enough to allow adequate demonstration of the KSAPCs being assessed
- are stated in a straightforward unambiguous manner
- are formulated at the language level appropriate for the candidate group
- are not assessing KSAPCs that the candidate can acquire on the job
- would be clear to an individual whose primary language is not English

Be aware of illegal interview questions. The Department of Fair Employment and Housing has produced a fact sheet regarding illegal questions that should never be asked during a hiring interview.

### 3. Establish Scoring Criteria

The first step to establishing scoring criteria is to determine which rating scale your department will use for the interview. The most common are 5-point, 7-point, and 9-point rating scales. Note that rating scales with more than ten points become difficult for raters to use, and result in inconsistent ratings.

The second step is to label the points on the rating scale. Provide a "Level of Performance" label for each point (or group of points) on the scale. The rating scales differentiate between a "Well Qualified," "Qualified," and "Not Qualified" answer by the number of points given for the candidate's answer. Following are examples of 5-point, 7-point, and 9-point rating scales and corresponding levels of performance:

<b>Level of Performance</b>	<b>Rating Range</b>
Well Qualified	5 points
Qualified	3 - 4 points
Not Qualified	1 - 2 points
5 - Point Rating Scale	
<b>Level of Performance</b>	<b>Rating Range</b>
Well Qualified	6 - 7 points
Qualified	3 - 5 points
Not Qualified	1 - 2 points
7 - Point Rating Scale	
<b>Level of Performance</b>	<b>Rating Range</b>
Well Qualified	7 - 9 points
Qualified	4 - 6 points
Not Qualified	1 - 3 points
9 - Point Rating Scale	

The third step is to develop benchmark answers. For each question, describe the responses that reflect each level of performance on the rating scale. These responses can then be used as guidelines, or benchmarks, for scoring. Please see the example below which includes benchmarks and rating scales for a 7-point answer.

Interview Question:

What are the main reasons for evaluating employee performance?

Possible Answers:

1. To measure employee performance against job standards.
2. To let the employee know where he/she stands with respect to work performed and performance standards.
3. To help prepare the employee for promotion, job change, job enrichment, or transfer.
4. To assist the supervisor in determining how well he/she does the job.
5. To provide the employee with the opportunity for current improvement in job performance (if necessary) and future development in the job.
6. To help the employee and the supervisor accomplish the job more effectively and with a higher level of satisfaction.

Sample Benchmarking:

	<b>Score</b>	<b>Description of Candidate's Answer</b>
Well Qualified	7	Candidate's answer is complete and thorough. Candidate addresses at least 5 of the possible answers outlined above (or makes comparable points). Candidate may not elaborate on all of the items listed above, but he/she demonstrates an excellent understanding of both the employee's role and the supervisor's role in the area of performance evaluation. Candidate's response is well formulated and requires no probing.
	6	
Qualified	5	Candidate addresses at least 4 of the possible answers listed above (or makes comparable points). Candidate demonstrates a sufficient understanding of the employee's role and the supervisor's role in the evaluation process. Candidate's response may not be as well formulated or as complete as that provided by the well-qualified candidate; however, candidate demonstrates the level of knowledge and understanding required in this position.
	4	
	3	
Not Qualified	2	Candidate addresses fewer than 4 of the possible answers outlined above (or comparable points), OR candidate's response may be vague, incomplete, or incorrect. Candidate's response may not address the question or does not adequately address the intent/reasoning behind evaluating employee performance. Candidate fails to demonstrate the level of knowledge and/or understanding required in this position.
	1	

#### 4. Selecting and Training Panel Members

Most hiring interviews are panel interviews. This allows for a variety of raters to evaluate the candidate which results in an interview with minimal bias. Choose panel members who are knowledgeable about the position for which the interview is being held and thoroughly familiar with the job requirements.

Prepare for the Interview by preparing relevant materials and providing training to the raters.

- Provide Supplemental Information Regarding the Position. Documents such as a job announcement, job description, and class specification provide helpful information for panel members to become well-acquainted with the position for which the interview is being held.
- Provide the candidates' application forms, resumes, and transcripts which helps panel members determine and evaluate candidates' job-related education and experience.
- Review the questions and rating scales. Assign each panel member specific interview questions to ask. Review the rating scale and how it works in conjunction with the benchmark answers and suggested responses provided for each question. Standardization means that all candidates are asked the same questions, in the same order, by the same panel members. Any deviation from this threatens the reliability of the scoring of the interview.
- Review standardized note taking. Panel members should provide clear statements which summarize the candidates' responses. Panel members should, when possible, note what a candidate fails to include in a response. Value judgments should NOT be included in interview notes (e.g., "bad answers," "shows good understanding of concepts").
- Discuss common rating errors. It is important that panel members be cognizant of biases that can affect their ratings. Following are a few common rating errors which can be discussed with panel members prior to conducting the interviews:
  - Halo effect is the tendency to form an overall impression of a candidate based upon his/her responses to only one or two questions.
  - Leniency effect is the tendency to give all candidates high ratings. Its counterpart, stringency effect, is the tendency to give all candidates low ratings.
  - Central tendency effect is the tendency to use only the middle portion of the rating scale.
  - Personal bias is the tendency to allow non job-related prejudices and attitudes about cultural stereotypes, lifestyles, personalities, appearances, or other idiosyncratic perceptions to affect the rating of candidate responses.

## 5. Conduct and Score the Interview

When the department conducts the interview, there are several items to bear in mind:

- Provide reasonable accommodation
- Establish a positive atmosphere for the candidate
- Ensure the interview is standardized
- Take objective notes
- Evaluate the candidate immediately after the interview

### Provide Reasonable Accommodation

To ensure that all candidates can compete on an equal basis, those candidates with impairments may require reasonable accommodations. Therefore, candidates should be asked about any need for reasonable accommodations at the time that they are notified of the time and place of their interview. Each request for reasonable accommodation must be addressed individually, and on its own merit. The candidate himself/herself (or his/her representative) can provide the best information regarding the required accommodation. The ADA coordinator for each agency should be involved in all decisions concerning what constitutes reasonable accommodation. There are four common types of impairment:

- **Visual Impairment** - Typically, candidates with visual impairments do not require accommodations during a structured interview. However, if the applicant is required to read information during the interview, some form of accommodation will be required. Accommodations vary according to the candidate's degree of visual impairment, from providing the information in special large print to providing a reader.
- **Hearing Impairment** - Candidates with hearing impairments normally require accommodations. Once again, the specified accommodation depends on the degree of impairment. Sometimes all that is needed for accommodation is for the interviewer to sit facing the candidate, speak directly to the candidate, and enunciate. Other candidates with hearing impairments can communicate more effectively by passing written messages back and forth with the interview panel. These candidates should be rated on the content of their answer, however, not on their writing ability. Other candidates with hearing impairments, however, may require the use of a licensed sign language interpreter to be able to communicate with the panel. It is, therefore, helpful to be aware of available licensed sign language interpreters, and employ their services whenever necessary.
- **Learning Disability** - Candidates with learning disabilities may have problems understanding complex language or organizing visual, auditory, and/or other sensory information. If such disabilities are irrelevant to the position to be filled, but present difficulties regarding the interview, then the disability is considered an impairment, and reasonable accommodations must be made to permit candidates with impairments to

- compete for the job. Language difficulties may be addressed by reducing the complexity level of the interview language.
- Motor Impairment - Most candidates with motor impairments will not need accommodations for the oral part of any structured interview as long as the interview's location is accessible. Many persons who are unable to speak use one of several methods of electronically assisted communication.

### Establish a Positive Atmosphere for the Candidate

When the candidate enters the interview room, the interview chairperson should greet the candidate and introduce the other panel members. Additionally, the candidate should be given an explanation of the interview process. This involves informing the candidate of the following:

- All candidates will be asked the same set of questions, in the same order, and will be assessed using the same scoring criteria; and
- The panel will be taking notes throughout the interview. Therefore, while the panel may not maintain eye contact throughout the interview, the panel members will be listening intently, and the candidate should continue answering questions even while the panel members are taking notes.

### Standardize Interview Format

The panel chairperson is responsible for ensuring that the candidates are asked the same set of questions, in the same order, by the same panel member. The chairperson is also responsible for ensuring that all candidates are afforded the same opportunities to demonstrate their qualifications. For example:

- If a candidate provides an excessively lengthy response, the chairperson should tactfully interrupt the candidate and bring him/her back to the intent of the question.
- If the candidate fails to address portions of a question, it is the responsibility of the chairperson to address this situation. In this case, the chairperson may query the candidate as to whether he/she has any additional comments to make, or the chairperson could specifically inquire about that portion of the question which the candidate failed to address.
- Panel members should avoid revealing either positive or negative reactions to either the candidates or their responses. Candidates should not be able to determine the suitability of their responses from the reaction of panel members, since the reactions of panel members could affect the candidates' subsequent performance.
- It is always permissible to repeat any of the interview questions.
- Each interview should be completed by thanking the candidate and answering any general questions.

### Take Objective Notes

While the notes that are taken do not need to be verbatim transcripts of what the candidate said, they should accurately reflect how the candidate answered each of the questions. Notes can be taken using abbreviations, incomplete sentences, bulleted items, or paraphrasing. However, it is important that only the content of responses is recorded, NOT personal opinions of the candidate. It is also important to note what a candidate fails to include in a response as it is to note the answer provided.

### Evaluate the Candidate Immediately After the Interview

After each panel member has completed his/her notes and ratings, a discussion of the candidate should occur. Panel members should compare ratings to ensure that there are no major discrepancies between their ratings. It is desirable that the ratings of the panel members be within the same benchmark (e.g., well qualified, qualified, not qualified) for each question.