

BEST PRACTICES: INTERVIEWING

The University of Arizona is both a state agency and a federal contractor. It therefore must adhere to a high standard of providing equal employment opportunity without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or genetic information.

The University strives to create fair and equitable recruitment processes that help hiring teams select the best talent for their positions. Here are important recommendations for creating an interview process that is equitable, fair, and supports finding the best talent.

Plan a Structured Interview

Evidence shows that structured interviews increase objectivity.

Beforehand, determine what attributes you require in the position. What knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) do successful incumbents in the position need to have?

1. Review the duties of the position. You should use the interview process to determine whether the candidate has the right KSAs to successfully complete the duties.
2. Ensure you have a “business necessity” for each question you ask.
3. Keep questions short and simple. If you have multi-tiered questions, consider asking them one at a time. You can also give your candidates a copy of the questions so that they can follow along. Always ask for the copy of the questions back at the end of the interview.
4. Determine what type of interview questions you will be using.
 - **Behavioral questions:** How has the candidate responded in the past to situations that are likely to arise in the position (e.g., “Tell me about a time when you were unable to meet a major deadline. How did you handle the situation?”)
Behavioral questions are the best indicator of future job performance. Bias is reduced because candidates are evaluated on job-related questions.
 - **Situational questions:** How would the candidate respond to a hypothetical situation (e.g., “Three different people all ask you to work on assignments at the same time. How would you prioritize? How would you communicate with these people about time frames?”)
 - **Role-plays:** Act out a scenario with the candidate (e.g., “You are my supervisor and my job performance is inadequate. You have called me into your office to address the issues and provide coaching. Please demonstrate how you would coach me.”)
5. Predetermine the rating scales that will be used to evaluate answers to interview questions, reducing subjectivity. Make sure the entire committee understands the rating scale and the rules for application. Score the interview process as soon as possible so that the candidate’s performance is fresh in your mind.

6. Involve all search committee members (e.g., by rotating questions or having each person ask questions about a specific topic) to see how the candidate interacts with all of you.
7. Conduct the interview in the same way, with the same questions, for all candidates.
8. Any formal tests or structured activities that measure a candidate's skills (e.g., creating a spreadsheet in Excel) are considered employment tests. Make sure each test/activity accurately reflect what the candidate will do on the job, and that each candidate is given the resources (e.g. instructions, access to a computer, and access to software) and adequate time to complete the assignment.
9. Establish ground rules so that search committee members don't seek out information on their own prior to the interview (e.g., by searching social media, questioning mutual acquaintances). This will support a more objective candidate review. If there are concerns about a candidate who makes it to the interview stage, a search committee member should address it directly with the committee.
10. If the candidate volunteers personal information (e.g., about children, religious affiliation, political activism) ignore everything unrelated to ability to do the job when making a hiring decision.

Don't Go There!

Don't ask personal questions unless you have a business reason for doing so. Here are common examples:

Current or future marital/family/pregnancy status: You may have the best intentions, but a candidate may believe your intent is to screen out people with family commitments.

Better: "This position requires weekend travel once a month. Are you willing to meet this schedule?"

Current salary or salary history: Many states ban such questions because they perpetuate pay inequities among women and people of color.

Better: "The pay range for this position is. . . . How does that align with your salary expectations?"

Criminal history, drug use, illegal activity: Decisions not to hire someone for these reasons could be problematic if unrelated to the position.

Better: "This position is security- and safety-sensitive due to . . . so a fingerprint-based background check is required."

Race/ethnicity, accent, national origin: Again, a question that appears innocuous to you may appear discriminatory to the candidate.

Better: "Because this position involves interacting with international students, a preferred qualification is multilingualism. What languages other than English do you speak?"