INTERVIEWING-SUPERVISOR GUIDELINES

Remember that when you interview candidates, you represent the University. A good interview can leave a candidate with positive feelings about the University even if no job offer results, while a bad interview may result in a bad reputation for the University.

The purpose of an interview is to gather information about the applicants’ knowledge, skills, abilities, and work experience so that you can select the best qualified candidate. The key to an effective interview is having clearly defined selection criteria with related interview questions, developed before the interview.

Guiding Principles

Your goal is to have a fair and effective process for conducting interviews. Statutes governing fair employment cover the interview process as well as the selection of the candidate. To ensure fairness, you should:

- Conduct structured interviews in which each candidate is asked a predetermined set of questions and all candidates are measured against the same criteria.
- Have more than one person conducting the interview to provide another viewpoint.
- Treat all candidates in a fair, equal, and consistent manner.
- Eliminate cultural or other forms of bias in the interview process.
- Evaluate candidates effectively by developing and asking a variety of question types/explanations including direct (ex. How did you learn of this opening?), open-ended (ex. Describe for me the qualities you want in a supervisor.), and behavioral/situational (ex. Think of the biggest decision you’ve made this past year. What was it and how did you arrive at it?).
- Maintain notes from interviews in consistent format for each applicant for two years.
- Keep your top candidates interested by completing the interview process quickly.
- Choose the best candidate for the job.

Types of Interviews

- **Panel Interviews.** These are conducted by a small group of managers and/or campus representatives (faculty, staff, students) and are the type many use at UNO. Panel interviews allow for various perspectives on the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the position and on each candidate’s qualifications. They provide a more objective measurement of the candidate’s ability to do the job. If the position requires technical expertise that the hiring authority doesn’t have, it is best to include someone who has such expertise.
- **Individual interviews.** These are one-on-one interviews. In some instances, the supervisor may conduct the first round of interviews and select one to three finalists for final interviews by the manager.
- **Sequential interviews.** Sequential interviews consist of a series of panel or individual interviews; the purpose is to give various individuals or groups a chance to interview and assess a candidate.

Preparing for the Interview

*Careful preparation is the key to a successful interview process.*

For assistance, contact the Employment Manager, 4-3668, and/or the Assistant to the Chancellor for Equity, Access and Diversity, 4-3490.

- Assemble a diverse panel: include supervisors, faculty, and/or staff members and students who are knowledgeable about the job and who have some relationship to the job (e.g., those to whom the job will provide service or support). Also consider panel members from the external community when relevant to the position. Include people of different genders, ethnic groups, and physical abilities whenever possible.
• Confirm that all panel members’ schedules will allow for full participation. Even with that commitment, all may not be able to attend every session. Conference calls are one means to help address the issue. A majority of the committee members needs to participate.

• Ensure the committee’s charge is clear and members know their roles and responsibilities: e.g., EEO/Affirmative Action compliance, confidentiality.

• Determine type of interview, e.g., face-to-face, phone, video conferencing or a combination.

• Determine what selection criteria you will use to choose candidates for interview. Examples include
  o educational level
  o years and types of experience
  o decision making skills
  o communication/interpersonal skills
  o technical knowledge/skills
  o licenses, certifications.

• Members of the screening committee will need Hiring Manager accounts to allow them to log into the applicant tracking system. Provide Human Resources with their names, email addresses, and phone numbers so those accounts may be created. The members will receive emails directing them to create their own passwords. For questions, contact Human Resources.

• Select those who best match your job/candidate criteria for interview.

• Prepare job-related interview questions to be asked of each candidate.

• Inform candidates for sensitive, high-profile positions that finalists’ names may be made public in compliance with Sections 84-712., 84-712.01, and 84-712.05 of Nebraska public records legislation. Public entities in Nebraska are required to have minimally four finalists.

• Inform the finalist that a criminal background check is required and provide the relevant link.

• Provide a copy of the job description with the essential functions highlighted and an updated organization chart to each candidate before the interview.

• Review the candidate’s resume and supporting materials shortly before the interview to refresh your memory.

• After explaining the essential functions of the position, ask each candidate “Can you perform the essential functions of the position?”
  o If yes, continue with the interview.
  o If no, tell the candidate that we cannot continue to consider him or her for the position.

• Conduct interviews in a quiet and private place, free of distractions and interruptions.

• Ensure that appropriate accommodations are made for people with disabilities and do not ask questions about medical conditions. Please note that questions about a candidate’s disability or potential need for accommodation are prohibited before a job offer has been made.

• Remove barriers between the candidates and the panel members—get out from behind a desk.

• Whenever possible, let each candidate see the actual work location.

• After the interview each interview panelist should record his or her evaluation and recommendation.

Developing Interview Questions

*Ask questions that elicit the applicant’s competencies relative to the competencies necessary to effectively perform the job. If you maintain a correlation between questions and requirements, you’ll get pertinent information about the candidate’s suitability.*

Types of Questions—Use a combination of these types of questions.

• **Open-ended questions/requests** are basic to any effective interview because they call for candidates to relate information and ideas that they feel are important. Examples: “Tell me about your supervisory experience.” and
“Tell me about your most recent important accomplishment in your job. What did you do and what was the outcome?”

- **Behavioral/situational questions/requests** ask candidates how they handled or would handle job-related situations, to evaluate their ability to recognize important aspects of situations, analyze them and provide reasonable options. Example: “Describe a situation where you had two assignments with conflicting priorities and how/why you handled it the way you did.” Integrating behavioral interviewing, supervisors and managers move beyond exploring what and when a candidate did something to **how and why** she or he did it. The methods and reasons the candidate used can be more important than the duties she or he was assigned in a previous job and for how long. Confirming transferable skill sets, defining behavioral indicators, and asking self-appraisal or third-party appraisal questions are important interviewing techniques.

- **Legal questions/requests** are those that specifically pertain to the candidate’s skills, knowledge, abilities, and interests related to the position, as described on the requisition and job description, based on the predetermined selection criteria. **Questions related to gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, color, race, religion, national origin, medical condition, pregnancy, or disabilities** are inappropriate and against the law.

**Conducting the Interview**

- Set the interview climate. Choose a location free from interruptions and hold all calls. Arrange a casual seating arrangement that doesn’t put the candidate in the “hot seat.” If it is a panel interview, arrange the panel in a U-shape or circle.

- Establish rapport. Put the candidate at ease; refer to something you noted on the candidate’s application to show you have carefully studied it.

- Set the agenda. Describe the interview structure; this will help you (the panel) and the candidate achieve a concise, focused interview.

- Rotate asking questions among the panel members.

- Take notes. This will help you ask follow-up questions and recall specifics about each candidate. Tell the candidate that you (and the panel) will be taking notes. Note key words/phrases—your notes need not be verbatim.

- Ensure your notes comply with job related, non-discriminatory regulations.

- Listen carefully. Don’t anticipate the candidate’s answers; don’t answer for the candidate. Reserve judgment until the person has finished.

- Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal skills.

- Maintain control. If the candidate gets off track, ask a specific question that will bring the interview back on the subject.

- Allow silence and be patient. The candidate may need some time to put his thoughts together to provide specific answers to your questions.

- If part of the selection process includes a campus visit, lunch, dinner, etc., remember that the interview process continues.
  - Do not solicit inappropriate or illegal questions identified previously.
  - Should others outside of the selection committee ask inappropriate or illegal questions, do not enter into the conversation or discuss the information with the panel.

- Be aware that cultural differences may explain behavior.

**Closing the Interview**

- Ask whether the candidate has anything more to tell you about his or her candidacy or any questions about the job/campus.
- Explain job details/expectations/requirements in detail.
• Explain the next step in the process, including whether there will be further interviews, when you will make your decision, and how the candidate will be informed of your decision.
• Refer candidate to HR website for benefits questions.
• Ask for and clarify references.
  o Candidate may request that you not contact current employer. Honor that request.
  o If later that candidate becomes the top candidate, you should request permission to speak with the current supervisor.
• Provide office or campus tour.
• Thank the candidate for interviewing for the position.
• Complete your notes and/or rating sheets immediately; don’t rely on your memory.
• Decide whether the candidate meets, exceeds, or does not meet the requirements.
• Prepare for your next interview.

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