

Chapter 4 Interviewing and Reviewing Applicants

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Chapter 4 Interviewing and Reviewing Applicants

4.01 Interviewing Applicant's for Classified Service

- **Policy**

The employment interview is one of the most important steps in selecting a new employee. It is typically the only time before the selection decision is made that the supervisor has direct personal contact with job applicants. Therefore, it is important the interview is conducted in a focused and responsible manner.

When a position is ready to be filled and it has cleared all necessary requirements, the employing unit Human Resource representative will request a certified list of eligible names from the Classified Personnel Office. This certified list is composed of individuals who have passed a Civil Service examination and are deemed qualified to perform the duties of the vacant position. **All individuals certified through this process must be equally considered.** This usually involves inviting the certified candidates to a job interview.

Also, current and former employees (e.g., reinstatement, permissive transfer, demotion, etc.) may be considered during this process. If they are considered, they are treated the same as the certified individuals described above.

In the rare circumstance in which it is not feasible to interview all interested candidates because of large numbers, a follow up review can be done based on the candidates' skills and experiences. This review will involve objective criteria developed jointly with the Human Resource Representative and supervisor of the position. After the review, the top group of candidates (ten or more) will then be called in for an interview.

- **Procedures**

Interviewing is a subjective process and the criteria used to evaluate candidates, unless carefully considered, can be irrelevant and invalid in relation to job requirements. The information obtained in the interview should provide insights into the candidates' prior training and experience and its relationship to the duties of the vacant position. It is easy for an interviewer to make some subjective judgments concerning candidates, however, a successful interviewer can and must recognize the subjective processes involved in making those judgments and must compensate for judgments that may indicate faulty or prejudicial assumptions.

A. **Prepare**

Prior to the interview, interviewers should thoroughly familiarize themselves with the job to be filled; review the available information including the Position Description (PD), job announcement, and the task and knowledge ratings on the PD. Make a list of the training and experience necessary or desirable for successful job performance. Determine and note the essential functions of the position.

B. **Schedule**

Supervisors may contact candidates by phone, e-mail or in writing to set up an interview. If a candidate does not respond via electronic means (e.g., phone, email), the supervisor must send, by first class mail, written notice that the candidate has been certified for an interview. The letter should include the name, address and phone number of the supervisor and an explanation that the candidate must phone within five working days to make an appointment for an interview. If the candidate does not respond within the time specified, there is no further obligation to consider the candidate. When there are a large number of candidates, it is usually preferable to immediately contact the candidates by mail to schedule interviews instead of spending time attempting phone contact.

The following paragraph must be included in any correspondence arranging the interview:

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"It is the policy of UW-Madison to provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with disabilities who are employees or applicants for employment. If you need assistance or accommodation to interview because of a disability, please contact [indicate the name, address and/or telephone number of the appropriate person; this may be the personnel representative, department administrator, or supervisor, whoever is appropriate]. Employment opportunities will not be denied to anyone because of the need to make reasonable accommodation for an individual's disability."

C. Provide Materials to Interviewees

Prior to interview, candidates may be provided with a copy of the job description, an organization chart and any other information that might help them assess their own qualifications, in relation to the job. By providing some written information to candidates, interviewers spend less time describing the job and the candidate is better prepared to identify and describe qualifications that are most pertinent during the interview.

D. The Interview

1. Developing Interview Questions

To develop an interview format, consider the most important aspects of the vacant position. Develop a set of dimensions indicating important job areas. These will vary for each position or classification, but must represent the crucial aspects of the job. For example, a nursing supervisor vacancy may have important dimensions pertaining to knowledge of surgical nursing, infection control techniques, and supervisory skills. Develop a list of questions regarding each of these areas; follow-up questions will vary depending upon the responses to the questions. Leading questions or questions which can be answered with a "yes" or "no" are not usually valuable or recommended. [Refer to [Appendix 4-A](#) for guidelines.] **The questions asked will determine the information received.**

The questions should elicit information about the applicant's ability to perform the duties and about past work or educational background related to the knowledge required for successful performance. Therefore, do not ask a question like "Tell us about yourself" if you are hiring a chemist; instead, say "What tests and analytical procedures have you used?"

A semi-structured interview format with a pre-established list of interview questions will work best. Most experts agree that by adding structure to the interview process, greater reliability is obtained. By asking each applicant the same questions, a basis for comparing responses is established. Follow-up questions can be varied, of course, depending on the applicant's response to the interview question.

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2. Getting Started

Ensure that the interview setting is comfortable and private. Immediately before each interview, review the candidate's application. Allow sufficient time for the interview and for time afterward to record your observations of the candidate.

Most people are nervous before a job interview. Try to establish a friendly atmosphere at the beginning. This may be accomplished through a smile, handshake, and friendly greeting. The person should feel he/she is coming to an interview, not an interrogation.

Everyone is apprehensive of the unknown. Therefore, summarize what will happen during the interview and approximately how long the meeting will last. If you take notes during the interview, ease the applicant's fears about it. Simply indicate that the notes will serve as a memory aid.

As the interviewer, you are responsible for establishing and maintaining control. You decide which questions will be asked, how much time is spent on each subject, and when the interview will end. Taking control permits you to obtain all needed information in the time allowed.

Remember – The interview process is typically the first point of contact your candidates will have with your organization. If an interview process is poorly conducted, candidates may believe the management of your organization functions in the same fashion.

NOTE: Please refer to the [UW-Madison Search Handbook](#) for guidelines stating appropriate and inappropriate questions and tips on interviewing applicants with disabilities. Questions concerning these guidelines should be directed to the [Equity and Diversity Resource Center](#), Room 179A Bascom Hall, 263-2378.

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4.02 Reimbursement for Applicant's Travel Expense

- **Policy**

- Approval at the dean level or above must be obtained to permit payment of all expenses in connection with interviewing applicants for positions. The employing unit's human resources representative should be contacted to obtain advice concerning reimbursement of interview expenses for candidates interviewing for classified positions.
- Consider the following when determining whether reimbursement is in the best interest of UW-Madison.
 - Job market supply and demand for skills of the prospective employee
 - Incentive for prospective candidates to interview for the position with or without reimbursement
 - Other reasons unique to the department or school/college.
- Consideration may be given to partial reimbursement, but all candidates must be given the same reimbursement consideration.

- **Procedure**

Travel Expense Reports--A travel expense report should be prepared for each applicant by the employing department in order to obtain reimbursement through the Office of Business Services.

- Conditions--The reports must comply with UW System Travel Regulations including transportation, meal and lodging maximums. The candidate's portion of expenses must be charged to Class Code 2151.
- Procedures--See Office of Business Services publication [*UW System Policy and Procedures Paper #36*](#).

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4.03 Reference Checks

Individuals who are making hiring decisions should include reference checks as part of the selection process. Obtaining multiple references (at least two) allows the supervisor to look for consistency among comments and to demonstrate reasonable care was used in the hiring process. Information provided by references, whether through telephone calls or letters of recommendation, are likely to prove very useful in evaluating candidate's skills, training, and experience, and his/her ability to perform the duties of the position being filled.

Some candidates will ask their references to submit letters on their behalf; some will simply list the names and addresses of references willing to be contacted. Telephone references are the most effective means of obtaining information about a candidate because specific areas can be covered and follow-up questions can be asked. The best references generally come from former supervisors.

Specific job-related questions should be developed for the telephone reference check. You may not ask questions of a reference that you are not permitted to ask of the candidate at an interview. The interviewer/s may request general personal and work references not relating to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or age. All questions asked and issues raised must be job-related and similar for all candidates. Avoid questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no". Be sure that all questions relate directly to job performance and are open-ended in nature. A good question to ask the reference at the end of the discussion is, "Would you re-employ the applicant if given the opportunity? Why or why not".

Notes should be taken during the reference check may be placed in the candidate's folder.

The following are some typical questions that should be asked when doing reference checks:

- What were the beginning and ending employment dates for this individual?
- What position(s) did the individual hold? Salary history?
- How long have you worked with or supervised this individual?
- What were the individual's most recent job duties?
- What can you tell me about the quality and quantity of this individual's work?
- How would you describe this person's ability to meet deadlines?
- What kind of supervision did this person require?
- Did this individual get along well with management and peers?
- How is this individual a team player?
- How would you describe this individual's attitude toward work?
- How would you describe the individual's overall performance?
- How was this person's attendance? Was he/she punctual?
- Why did this individual leave your company?
- Would you reemploy this person if you had the opportunity?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Additional questions that might be asked for professionals, managers, or executives:

- How would you describe this individual's leadership, managerial, or supervisory skills?
- Describe the quality of this individual's written and verbal communications skills.
- How do you rate this individual's ability to plan short-term? Long-term?
- Provide examples in which this individual had to make sound and timely decisions. What were the results?
- Did this person plan and administer a budget? If so, what was the size, and how did this person manage it?
- How would you describe this individual's technical skills?
- How well did this person manage crisis, pressure, or stress?
- How many people did this person directly supervise, for how long, and what were their levels (professional, blue collar, technical)?

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4.04 Nepotism

- **Policy**

The UW-Madison acts in accord with the "public policy of the state to encourage and foster, to the fullest extent practicable, the employment of . . . properly qualified persons regardless of their age, race, creed, color, handicap, marital status, sex, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, arrest record, conviction record, membership in the national guard, state defense force or any other reserve component of the military forces of the United States or this state or use or nonuse of lawful products off the employer's premises during nonworking hours . . ." [§ 111.31 Stats.]

In selecting employees, the applicant best qualified and available to perform in the position should, without exception, receive the employment offer. There is no restriction on hiring persons related through affinity or consanguinity. In circumstances where a supervisor will have a close personal relationship with an employee which can reasonably be viewed as affecting the supervisor's and/or the employee's ability to perform his/her job without a conflict between personal interest and the employer's interest, the relationship is considered equivalent to a family relationship and the parties will be subject to the provisions of the nepotism policy. Therefore, to avoid conflict of interest, any University appointing authority or supervisor related by blood, marriage, or adoption to a job applicant, or having close relationship with emotional ties to an applicant, must not participate either formally or informally in the decision to hire or determine the salary of that other person.

- **Procedure**

- **Obtain Prior Written Approval**

Classified: Although the state rules [DER-MRS. 24.04(2)(e)] permit a classified employee effectively to recommend or decide to hire or promote an immediate family member if that person's name has been certified from an open or competitive register, UW-Madison policy requires that another person with hiring authority make that hiring decision. In such cases, obtain written prior approval from the Dean's/Director's office and the Classified Personnel Office (CPO).

- **Other Required Procedures to Avoid Conflict of Interest**

- **Department**

When two related persons are members of the same department, and one of them is chairperson of the department, the Executive Committee designates another appropriate person or a committee to perform the functions of the chairperson in decisions to hire or set the salary of the individual related to the department chairperson.

- **Above the Department Level**

Whenever an administrator has jurisdiction over a related person, the responsibility for making decisions or approving decisions about the hire or salary of the related person must be assigned (in writing) (1) to the next highest University officer or (2) laterally to another appropriate officer after approval of the next highest officer.

For further information on nepotism, see Chapter 15 of the Classified Personnel [Policies and Procedures](#).

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4.05 Arrest and Conviction Information

- **Policy Statement**

Pursuant to Wisconsin's Fair Employment Act (§ 111, Stats.), it is unlawful to discriminate based on arrest records or conviction records of applicants for employment.

- **Arrests**

Applicants cannot be excluded from consideration based on arrest record unless there are pending charges that are substantially related to the circumstances of the job.

- **Convictions**

Applicants cannot be excluded from consideration based on convictions unless the conviction is substantially related to the circumstances of the job.

Refer to [Appendix 4-B](#) for appropriate and inappropriate interview questions.

Note: For some positions, a criminal history record check may be required prior to making a hiring decision. If a criminal history check reveals a conviction or pending charge, the hiring authority must make a determination whether it is sufficiently related to the essential functions of the position to disqualify the candidate. Decision-makers must be very careful to be objective in the evaluation of this information and to separate actual essential functions of the position from any personal feelings regarding the criminal activity.

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4.06 Spousal Hire Program

There is no spousal hire program in the Classified Service. However, all classified Civil Service vacancies for which the University recruits are announced in the [Current Employment Opportunities Bulletin](#) (COB).

The COB lists a wide variety of jobs at all levels. Information about location, salary range, expected educational and/or work background, and application procedures is included for each position. This bulletin may be viewed on-line at: <http://wiscjobs.state.wi.us/public/>, at the Classified Personnel Office, 21 N Park Street, Suite 5101; any State Employment Job Service or State Agency Personnel Office.