

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:

"It is the policy of UW-Madison to provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with disabilities who are employees or applicants for

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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.