

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The purpose of an interview is to elicit information from an applicant to determine his or her ability to perform the job. Successful interviewers learn how to ask the right kind questions, how to keep the applicant talking about relevant information, and how to listen.

Much of what is learned about applicants in an interview is based on their past experience. Past performance is the best indicator of future performance. This does not mean that someone who had performed poorly in the past cannot improve in skills and attitude. Generally, however, you can see a trend in performance through several jobs or assignments.

Your ability to make a good assessment of an applicant during an interview depends on the quality of the questions asked. Before interviews begin, the Search Committee should develop a list of questions to ask each candidate (See below: #3 The Interview). The following provides guidance on conducting the interview:

Follow the same format and ask the same questions of all candidates interviewed to enable you to:

- Assess each candidate's qualifications more accurately in relation to the position and the other candidates' qualifications.
- Act consistently with all candidates.
- Avoid giving the appearance of favoritism.

Opening the Interview

- Welcome the candidate.
- Make introductions.
- Explain what will happen during the interview session. If necessary, provide information about the position and SOU

The Interview

Develop questions based on the skills and qualifications that are necessary for an employee to perform successfully in carrying out the duties of the position. To test the relevancy of a question, ask yourself why you need to know the answer and how it relates to the position.

Assess the candidate's interest in the position

Examples: Why did you apply for this position? How does this position suit your career objectives?

Structure questions to assess how the candidate views her/his experience, skills, and qualifications

Examples: What did you like best/least about your previous job? What is your greatest strength/weakness?

Ask open-ended questions designed to elicit the candidate's views, philosophies, behavior in solving problems, or handling issues in previous employment situations.

Open-ended questions and statements to elicit information often begin with *how, what, why, describe, describe..., explain..., tell me more about...*

Examples: *What* do you consider to be the most important attributes of a position title? *How* has your prior experience and/or education prepared you for this position? *Explain* how you would respond to an angry and dissatisfied client. *Describe* your experience serving on a committee.

Ask directive questions to draw out a specific answer.

Examples: Have you testified before a legislative committee? Are you familiar with federal employment law? What membership(s) do you hold in professional organizations?

Don't hesitate to ask the candidate to clarify an answer or provide additional information.

Avoid questions which may elicit information which could be perceived as being discriminatory or could be used in a discriminatory manner such as requests for:

- direct information about an individual's race, national origin, sex, marital status, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, past work injuries, religion, national origin, or health.
- information usually associated with gender such as number of children, childcare arrangements.
- information that may be perceived as being associated with members of a protected class such as home ownership, height/weight, arrest record, etc.

Closing the Interview

Thank the candidate for participating in the interview. Tell the candidate what to expect:

- If reference checks are to be conducted, make sure the candidate knows and has given authorization to contact references.
- Check accuracy of reference names, numbers and addresses.
- Time frame for completing the recruitment/selection process.
- Advise the candidate whom to contact if the candidate has any questions.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission The ADA: Employment Questions and Answers

Q. What practices and activities are covered by the employment nondiscrimination requirements?

The ADA prohibits discrimination in all employment practices, including job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment. It applies to recruitment, advertising, tenure, layoff, leave, fringe benefits, and all other employment-related activities.

Q. Who is protected against employment discrimination?

Employment discrimination is prohibited against “qualified individuals with disabilities.” Persons discriminated against because they have a known association or relationship with a disabled individual also are protected. The ADA defines an “individual with a disability” as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment.

Q. Who is a “qualified individual with a disability?”

A qualified individual with a disability is a person who meets legitimate skill, experience, education, or other requirements of an employment position that he or she holds or seeks, and who can perform the “essential functions” of the position with or without reasonable accommodation. Requiring the ability to perform “essential” functions assures that an individual will not be considered unqualified simply because of inability to perform marginal or incidental job functions. If the individual is qualified to perform essential job functions except for limitations caused by a disability, the employer must consider whether the individual could perform these functions with a reasonable accommodation. If a written job description has been prepared in advance of advertising or interviewing applicants for a job, this will be considered as evidence, although not necessarily conclusive evidence, of the essential functions of the job.

Q. Does an employer have to give preference to a qualified applicant with a disability over other applicants?

No. An employer is free to select the most qualified applicant available and to make decisions based on reasons unrelated to the existence or consequence of a disability. For example, if two persons apply for a job opening as a typist, one a person with a disability who accurately types 50 words per minute, the other a person without a disability who accurately types 75 words per minute, the employer may hire the applicant with the higher typing speed, if typing speed is needed for successful performance of the job.

Q. What is “reasonable accommodation?”

Reasonable accommodation is a modification or an adjustment to a job or the work environment that will enable a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions. Reasonable accommodation also includes adjustments to assure that a qualified individual with a disability has rights and privileges in employment equal to those of nondisabled employees.

Q. What kinds of actions are required to reasonably accommodate applicants and employees?

Examples of reasonable accommodation include making existing facilities used by employees readily accessible to and usable by an individual with a disability; restructuring a job; modifying work schedules; acquiring or modifying equipment; providing qualified readers or interpreters; or appropriately modifying examinations, training, or other programs. Reasonable accommodation also may include reassigning a current employee to a vacant position for which the individual is qualified, if the person becomes disabled and is unable to do the original job. However, there is no obligation to find a position for an applicant who is not qualified for the position sought. Employers are not required to lower quality or quantity standards in order to make an accommodation, nor are they obligated to provide personal use items such as glasses or hearing aids.

The decision as to the appropriate accommodation must be based on the particular facts of each case. In selecting the particular type of reasonable accommodation to provide, the principal test is that of effectiveness, i.e., whether the accommodation will enable the person with a disability to do the job in question.

Q. May an employer inquire as to whether a prospective employee is disabled?

An employer may not make a pre-employment inquiry on an application form or in an interview as to whether, or to what extent, an individual is disabled. The employer may ask a job applicant whether he or she can perform particular job functions. If the applicant has a disability known to the employer, the employer may ask how he or she can perform job functions that the employer considers difficult or impossible to perform because of the disability, and whether an accommodation would be needed. A job offer may be conditioned on the results of a medical examination, provided that the examination is required for all entering employees in the same job category regardless of disability, and that information obtained is handled according to confidentiality requirements specified in the Act. After an employee enters on duty, all medical examinations and inquiries must be job related and necessary for the conduct of the employer’s business. These provisions of the law are intended to prevent the employer from basing hiring and employment decisions on unfounded assumptions about the effects of a disability.

Interview Questions - Legal Parameters

The following inquiries about certain subjects might violate non-discrimination laws, and therefore, should not be asked during an interview. Regardless of intended use, an applicant may perceive discriminatory intent just by mere discussion of the subject, as described below.

Please remember that this list is concerned only with the potential unlawful use of information in pre-employment inquiries. Southern Oregon University may legally collect some information because of our affirmative action plan. In addition, some of the information may be collected for post-employment purposes and may be lawfully collected as such after a candidate has been selected.

Subject	Potentially Unlawful Inquiries
Address	Specific inquiry into foreign addresses, which would indicate national origin.
Age	Age, date of birth, or any other inquiries which would require candidates to disclose their age.
Ancestry or National Origin	Candidate's nationality, lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, or parentage; length of residency in the United States; ancestry of immediate family or spouse's family; and questions regarding how the candidate acquired the ability to read, write, or speak a foreign language.
Birth Place	Birthplace of candidate, candidate's parents, spouse, or other relatives, or any other inquiry into national origin.
Children or Dependents	Any inquiries regarding the number, age, or child care arrangement for the candidate's children or other dependents. Such questions could be regarded as discriminatory against single parents.
Citizenship	Inquiries regarding country or citizenship other than the United States; inquiries to naturalized citizens regarding citizenship status of parents or spouse; or date of acquisition of U.S. citizenship.
Convictions, Arrests and Court Records	Any inquiries regarding arrests are prohibited. Questions regarding conviction and court records which are not substantially related to the function of the position.
Disability	No direct inquiry should be made into whether an applicant is disabled, or what their disability may be. If a candidate volunteers this information during the course of the interview, it can be considered in relation to the candidate's ability to perform the essential functions of the position. If a candidate has an obvious disability that causes the supervisor concern about whether that person could perform the essential functions of the job, the supervisor should point out the essential functions listed on the Position Description and ask, "Is there any reason you don't believe you could perform all the essential functions of this position?" However, if this question is asked of one candidate, it must be asked of all candidates, not just those with obvious disabilities.
Education	Any inquiry asking specifically the nationality, racial or religious affiliation of a school.
Financial Status, Credit Record, or Car Ownership	These questions are unrelated to the applicant's ability to perform the requirements of the position and tend to discriminate against certain groups. Financial status inquiries include topics such as past ownership, bankruptcy, or garnishment of wages.
Graduation Dates	Any inquiries concerning the dates that an applicant graduated from high school or college, which might indicate an applicant's age.
Health Issues	Any inquiries related to a candidate's health, especially in regard to whether a candidate has AIDS or is HIV positive.

<i>Marital Status</i>	Any inquiry regarding whether the applicant is married, single, widowed, separated, or engaged to be married may imply discrimination against women because of common societal assumptions that women often leave jobs when they get married or have children. In addition, societal assumptions regarding married, single, divorced, widowed, or separated people may contribute to an atmosphere of perceived discrimination. Discrimination on the basis of marital status is illegal under Oregon Law and Board Rule.
<i>Military Discharge Military Service</i>	Any inquiry regarding the nature of a person's discharge. Inquiries into the dates that a candidate either joined or left military service, which could be used to determine an applicant's age. Questions should not be asked about the nature of the person's military discharge or whether they ever served in another country's armed services.
<i>Name</i>	Inquiries about name, which would indicate the candidate's lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, or marital status.
<i>Opposite Sex</i>	Any inquiries regarding how an applicant would feel about working or traveling with members of the opposite sex may be considered discriminatory because answers are not always considered equally from men and women.
<i>Organization</i>	Inquiries regarding organizations which would indicate by their character or name the race, religion, color, or ancestry of the applicant.
<i>Photographs</i>	No photographs may be requested or required prior to selection.
<i>Political Issues</i>	Any questions regarding political party affiliation or opinions on political issues.
<i>Pregnancy</i>	Any inquiries regarding pregnancy or potential pregnancy of an applicant.
<i>Race or Color</i>	Any inquiries regarding the candidate's race, the racial group with which the applicant may identify, or regarding other physical features which may be directly or indirectly indicative of race or color.
<i>Relatives</i>	To the extent that inquiry regarding spouse's name indicates marital status, inquiry might be considered illegal. Inquiries regarding a spouse's marital status may indicate to some applicants a reluctance to hire a woman if her husband already has a substantial income or if there is concern that her employment would disrupt her husband's career. Names or addresses of any relatives certainly should not be requested.
<i>Religion</i>	A candidate's religious denomination or affiliation, church, parish, pastor, or religious holidays observed should not be discussed during an interview. The relationship of a person's religious beliefs to their professional employment is an improper area of inquiry until after the selection is completed. At that time, any potential need for accommodation to a person's religious beliefs or practices may be discussed. Though candidates may not be told that employees are required to work on religious holidays, they may be asked if they are available to work on specific days (for example, Saturdays or Sundays), but it must be asked of every candidate and should not be phrased in the context of religious observances. However, a candidate's religious beliefs must be accommodated unless such accommodation creates undue hardship to the university or department.
<i>Union Membership</i>	Any questions regarding current or past union membership or activities should be avoided.
<i>Workers Compensation</i>	Inquiries into an applicant's workers compensation history are inappropriate. An employer may not discriminate against an applicant because that applicant has utilized the workers' compensation system, nor may an employer base a hiring decision on the likelihood that an applicant may cause increased workers' compensation costs in the future.

CUPA INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORS, 5TH EDITION

COMMON INTERVIEW MISTAKES AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

Mistake	Consequence
Failing to establish rapport with the applicant.	The interview never gets off the ground.
Not knowing what information is needed.	The interviewer does not know what questions to ask the applicant.
Concentrating exclusively on the applicant as a person.	The interviewer does not compare an applicant's demonstrated abilities and experience with the actual job requirements.
Not remaining silent or listening long enough.	The interviewer talks too much and fails to obtain meaningful information from the applicant.
Not allowing sufficient time to observe the applicant's responses and behavior.	The interview is too short and superficial. (An interview of about an hour increases the chances that the applicant will impart meaningful information.)
Incorrectly interpreting information obtained from the applicant.	The interviewer draws the wrong conclusion about the applicant's ability to perform.
Unawareness of or inability to deal directly with biases for or against certain types of applicants (stereotyping).	Hiring decisions are made for reasons that may be indefensible.
Allowing one characteristic or trait of an applicant to be overly influential (either favorably or unfavorably).	Hiring decisions are made for reasons that may be indefensible.
Making a decision on the basis of intuition or first impression instead of on analytical judgment.	Candidates who perform well during the interview might be overlooked.
Using stress techniques designed to trap or fluster the applicant.	The interviewer might not collect relevant information.
Conducting a poorly structured or an unstructured interview.	The interviewer fails to collect relevant or necessary information.
Comparing an applicant's life with one's own life.	Time that should be spent on obtaining information relevant to the job is wasted.
Failing to control or direct the interview.	The interviewer fails to collect all the job-related information.
Asking questions answerable by a simple "yes" or "no."	The interviewer fails to draw the applicant out.
Making judgmental or leading statements.	The interviewer telegraphs desired responses to the applicant.

Name of Error	Description
Halo effect	The tendency to rate a person high on all factors even though the person was outstanding on only one factor
Horns effect	The opposite of the halo effect
Central tendency	The inability to rate all or most applicants anywhere but in the middle
Similar to me	The tendency to rate higher those people who look, act, or have a background most like the interviewer
First impression	Making the hiring decision within the first few minutes of the interview, instead of evaluating all the information from the full interview

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND INAPPROPRIATE TOPICS

Past Work Experience in General

Please describe your present responsibilities and duties.

How do you spend an average day?

How has your current position changed from the day you started until now?

Describe the most complex problem you had to solve in your last/current position.

Discuss some of the problems you have encountered in past positions.

What do you consider to be your most important accomplishments in the last three positions you have held?

What were some of the setbacks or disappointments you experienced in the last three positions you have held?

Why did you leave your last employer/why would you consider leaving your current employer?

What would you want in your next job that you are not getting now?

Describe your involvement with committees, your role on the committees, and what you learned from each experience.

In previous positions, how much of your work was accomplished alone and how much as part of a team effort?

What was the most radical idea you ever introduced to an employer, and what was the result?

Give me an example of a time when you questioned a policy or procedure when it might have been better or easier to go along with it.

What kinds of policies and procedures have you created and to whom did you take them for approval?

Describe the most difficult interpersonal challenge you have been faced with and what you did about it.

Have you had public speaking experience? If so, who was the audience, and what was the purpose: selling, informing?

Give an example of a potentially volatile situation or individual that you successfully calmed down and how you went about it

Describe a time when you went "beyond the call of duty" to accomplish a task.

Describe the most difficult person you have ever worked with and how you handled him or her.

Describe a situation in which it was necessary for you to mediate or negotiate a solution or compromise.

What kinds of work pressures do you find the most difficult to deal with?

Describe what you mean by "on-the-job stress."

Describe a time when you felt you "lost your cool" on the job and the result.

Describe the best boss you ever had.

Describe the worst boss you ever had.

Tell me about a failure in your working life and why it occurred.

What could your last employer have done to keep you?

Relevant Education and Training

Why did you choose the particular college you attended?

What determined your choice of major?

How do you think college contributed to your overall development?

In what way do you believe your education and training has prepared you for this position?

What special training do you have that is relevant to this position?

What licenses or certifications do you have that are relevant to this position?

What professional affiliations do you have that are relevant to this position?

The Vacant Position

In what way does this position meet your career goals and objectives?

If you were hired for this job, in what areas could you contribute immediately, and in what areas would you need additional training?

What changes and developments do you anticipate in your particular field that might be relevant to this position?

What are your salary expectations if offered this position?

Can you perform all the essential functions of this job with or without reasonable accommodation?

Are you able to travel as required by this position?

Are you able to relocate, if necessary?

Attendance and Punctuality

How many days of work did you miss, other than for medical reasons, in the last year you worked?

How many times were you tardy for work in the last year you worked?

What do you consider to be good attendance?

What do you consider a legitimate reason for missing work?

Do you know of any reason why you would not be able to get to work on time on a regular basis?

Are you able to work overtime?

Supervision

Describe the positions in which you have had supervisory responsibility. How many people have you supervised and in what kinds of positions? Did you have hiring/authority?

Give an example of a time when you were disappointed by an employee's lack of accomplishment and what you did about it.

What are the generally accepted steps in progressive discipline?

In your experience, what kinds of things motivate an employee?

Describe what is meant by "problem employee."

Describe a sticky situation with an employee and what you did about it.

Describe an innovative way you handled a conflict involving two or more of your subordinates.

What kinds of things can a supervisor do to create a positive working environment?

What training and experience do you have in listening skills?

Approximately how many people have you personally hired in your career?

Describe an effective performance planning and review process.

What methods of communicating with subordinates have you found most successful?

What recognition and reward systems for subordinates have you found most effective?

What is the role of a supervisor, in your opinion?

What are the major responsibilities of a supervisor, in your opinion?

What is an effective training and orientation program for a new employee?

Describe the most serious complaint an employee brought to your attention and what you did about it.

Give an example of the most novel idea an employee presented to you and what you did about it.

What is meant by the term "protected class" under civil rights laws?

Under federal wage and hour laws, describe "exempt" and "nonexempt" employees.

Management

What was the level of your decision-making authority in past positions?

Describe a decision you made that had an unhappy result.

Give me an example of a decision you made that backfired and what you did about it.

Give an example of a decision you made that turned out better than you believed possible.

Describe a time when you made a decision in the absence of a clear policy regarding the issue.

Have you experienced political pressure that interfered with your getting the job done?

Describe your experience with setting goals and objectives.

Describe your experience in developing and monitoring budgets.

What fiscal authority have you had in past positions?

Give an example of a situation in which a budget overrun was necessary to accomplish a goal.

What is the most effective method for setting priorities, in your opinion?

What would your current/past employer tell us about your ability to organize your work?

Describe a time when your goals conflicted with the goals of the organization and what you did about it.

What is your most innovative accomplishment?

What is your most creative idea that was turned down?

What experience do you have with writing?

What have you done in the past five years to improve your writing skills?

What have others said about your writing ability?

What experience have you had with public presentations? What was their purpose, and what visual aids and kinds of notes did you use?

Problem Solving

Briefly describe a difficult situation pertinent to the vacant position, doing so in a way that protects the privacy of individuals involved. Ask an open-ended question—one that does not require knowledge of institutional or departmental policies and procedures—about how the applicant would deal with this situation. Encourage the applicant to think out loud and explain the kinds of solutions he or she might try.

Examples

- You are working at the front desk of a very busy office. You are answering a 10-line phone bank and have on average 15 walk-ins per hour to direct to appropriate offices and people. At 4 P.M. on a particularly busy day, an outside salesperson approaches your desk at the same time one of the clerks, who is a friend of yours, comes around the corner crying and headed toward

your desk. Two outside lines light up at the same time, and the display on your phone tells you the third call coming in is the president's office. What are you going to do?

- The supervisor of a small work unit that provides service to students is on vacation and, as a result, you are temporarily in charge of the department. One afternoon you overhear two unit members talking about an incident that occurred one week earlier. They are discussing a new employee in the department, someone you hired, and describe this employee's losing his temper with a student. You suspected that the employee in question had a nasty temper but had nothing concrete on which to base the suspicion. This is the first occasion on which you have heard of this incident. What would you do about it?

DO NOT ASK THESE QUESTIONS

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| What kind of child-care arrangements do you have? | Is your spouse likely to be transferred? |
| Does your spouse expect you to be home to cook dinner? | Is your spouse from this area? |
| What will you do if your children get sick? | Would a white (or black) supervisor create any difficulties for you? |
| How do you get to work? | How do you feel about having to work with members of a different race? |
| How many children do you have? | Are you a militant? |
| Does your spouse live with you or contribute to your support? | Do you get along well with other women (or men)? |
| Do you own a home? | Will it bother you if me others swear? |
| Do you own a car? | What language does your mother/father speak? |
| Do you have any debts? | Were you born in this country? |
| Do you have any loans? | Do you have people in the "old country?" |
| Do you plan to get married? | That's an unusual name—what nationality are you? |
| Do you plan to have children? | Can you provide a photograph of yourself? |
| What sort of birth control do you use? | How old are you? |
| Are you likely to quit if you get married or have children? | |

TOPICS TO AVOID DURING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

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| • arrest records | • ownership of home or rental status | • proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing English (unless job-related) |
| • less-than-honorable military discharges | • length of residence | • disabilities |
| • gender and marital status | • ownership of car | • handicap |
| • maiden name | • form of transportation to work | • prior illnesses or accidents |
| • number of children | • loans | • hospitalizations |
| • ages of children | • wage assignments or garnishments | • current or prior medication or treatment |
| • number of preschool children | • bankruptcy | • workers' compensation claims |
| • spouse's name | • credit cards | • weight |
| • spouse's education | • insurance claims | • age |
| • spouse's income | • judgments | • date of high school graduation |
| • form of birth control | • citizenship or national origin | • religion |
| • family plans | • mother's maiden name | • church affiliation |
| • child care arrangements | • citizenship | • social organizations |
| • conviction record | • place of birth | |
| • car accidents | • other languages spoken | |
| • lawsuits or legal complaints | | |