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SHORTLISTING

The first step is for Selection Committee members to assess the applications to determine who will be invited to interview. Applicants qualifications, skills and experience are compared against the selection criteria and the most suitable candidates will be shortlisted.

There is no minimum or maximum number of applicants that must be shortlisted, this is at the discretion of the Selection Committee, though it is usually recommended that no more than 5 or 6 candidates are invited to interview.

PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

PREPARING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
The Selection Committee should prepare a set of questions that assess the applicants against the selection criteria specified in the position description. These questions:

• Should evaluate the skills, experience and knowledge required of the applicant
• be relevant to the position
• Should NOT address inappropriate issues such as age, disability, marital status, political/religious affiliations etc
• Should avoid a line of questioning which places undue emphasis on local knowledge or experience
• Probing is allowed
WRITING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The selection committee writes the interview questions as a team. The questions you prepare should:

- be based on the selection criteria – those specific capabilities (knowledge, skills and abilities) needed to do the job
- test applicant's capabilities (knowledge, skills and abilities) and how these could be used in the job. There is strong evidence that the best indication of a person’s ability to perform is provided through examples of their previous job performance. Choose behavioural based questions where you ask about situations or the type of work involved in the job. Ask applicants to give examples of similar work or situations from their own experience, for example how they approached them, how they solved problems
- be carefully planned and structured. To test how well each person meets the selection criteria, your panel should prepare questions in advance, with one or more questions for each criteria
- be consistent. As much as possible, the main questions should be asked in the same way for each applicant. This gives you a fair basis for comparing responses of different applicants. It’s ok to repeat or rephrase a question if necessary, or to ask follow up questions to help the panel clarify the applicant’s response. The main point to remember is that you give all applicants a fair chance to demonstrate their capabilities to the panel.

Interview questions can include:
- open questions, designed to encourage an expansive answer
- closed questions, designed for a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer
- hypothetical questions, which set up a possible situation or problem and ask the applicant for a possible course of action
- probing questions, designed to bring out more detail. These will be different for each applicant, and may be asked by any member of the selection panel.

Questions you should avoid asking:

- leading questions — these questions suggest the expected answer
- multiple questions — these questions have two or more distinct parts requiring an answer, and they should be asked separately
- long questions — some questions have so much background and scene-setting that it is hard for the applicant to work out what the question is
- trick questions and using stress tactics — these questions are designed to mislead the applicant. They create a poor impression of the university
- questions which ask for knowledge that only internal applicants would have
- questions about applicants’ private lives or personal responsibilities.
CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

When you are setting up the interview room, make sure that:

- there will be no distractions — for example noise, glare or incoming calls
- the room can be easily found
- there is an informal, relaxed atmosphere
- there is water and a fresh glass for applicants and panel members
- Selection Committee members have their mobile phones/emails etc switched off or on mute.
- there is an area where applicants can wait for the interview, preferably without having to meet other applicants.

You could consider giving applicants a copy of the questions or instructions before the interview/assessment. If you do this, give each applicant the same amount of time to look at these and prepare.

The Selection Committee should:

- Allow time beforehand to discuss and decide the order in which the questions will be asked and allocate specific questions to each committee member
- Identify any committee member with prior knowledge of any of the applicants
- Review the Confidentiality of Proceedings & Privacy guidelines and UNSW Equity and Diversity Policy with Selection Committee.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

During the interview, make sure that:

- The Presiding Member introduces the applicant to the panel. You could consider having a name tag for each member
- Display an open, welcoming attitude
- The Presiding Member explains the purpose and structure of the interview
- The Presiding Member may summarise the main points from the application
- Every panel member should take notes. It may be better if the person asking a question does not take notes, so that they can maintain eye contact with the applicant
- Keep to the agreed schedule
- At the end of the interview, the Presiding Member will ask the applicant if they would like to add anything or have any questions
- Ask for referees if the applicant hasn't already provided them and/or confirm that it is ok to contact them
• If the applicant has not listed a current supervisor ask them to provide this to you. They may not be comfortable in doing so. Do NOT contact their current supervisor without their explicit permission (See GUIDE to Reference Checking)

• The Presiding Member should explain what will happen next and when the applicant can expect to hear from the panel

• The applicant should be thanked and shown the way out.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

You can significantly increase the effectiveness of your interviews by using behavioural and competency based techniques. Research suggests that it increases the predicative validity of your interview to 50-55%, up from 10% when you rely on a CV and a general interview.

This interview format involves assessing skills, attributes and behaviour through behaviour based questions. These types of questions ask for specific examples of a candidate's behaviour in situations similar to those they will face in the new position.

These questions are usually worded in a way that will elicit specific examples of what the person has done in the past. For example, they often start with a statement like: 'Tell me about a time when...' or 'Can you describe a situation where...'

Behaviour based questions allow you to assess candidates more objectively, based on specifics rather than 'gut' feelings or personal impressions.

Remember to probe using open question techniques that make it hard for the candidate to simply answer yes or no. This will provide you with more detailed information. For example:

• Tell me why you choose that method of communication?

• Talk me through the decision making process.

• What strategies did you use to get the project back on track?