

The Interview Process

Once applicants submit their application forms and curriculum vitae, it is possible to short-list those who appear to best meet the specification so far, and invite them to a selection interview. The purpose of the interview is to assess candidates' suitability for the job, give candidates the opportunity to find out more about the job, the business, the terms and conditions and to present a positive image of the business. The selection interview is not an exact science. It is possible to increase the level of objectivity by adopting a structured approach.

Selection interviewing is a skill. It is possible to argue that interviewing is an unreliable tool because the interviewers' prejudices, beliefs and subconscious bias leads to poor decisions. However, with careful preparation and practice, the interview can be effective. The interview is only one tool, and is often supplemented with tests of ability and aptitude and personality profiles.

Starting the interview process

An effective way to approach the interview is to prepare. Scrutinise application forms or CV's carefully, look for gaps or inconsistencies. Compare the evidence you have to the criteria on the personnel specification.

Prepare some questions in advance. These can be designed from the personnel specification, which states what attributes you want in an employee. Ask questions to test these attributes out.

Book a room and arrange the room in a way that appears organized yet friendly. Inform reception that people are coming for interview!

Welcome the applicant; ask a few simple general questions about their journey in or how easily they found the building etc. This is to build rapport and settle everyone down.

Explain the structure of the interview and what you will be doing; indicate when you might be making a decision. Give a brief description of the job and why the post has arisen.

Begin your questioning, ask open questions and probe where you feel you need to know more. Check details on the application form and clarify any ambiguities or where further information required. Ask questions to get evidence of the candidate's abilities and qualities.

Ask the applicant if they have any questions and answer them honestly. Conclude the interview by explaining the terms and conditions. Ask appropriate “standard” questions, such as possible start date, any holidays booked, and whether the candidate is still interested in the vacancy. Thank the candidate and explain what will happen next.

Discrimination during the selection process

To avoid discrimination when interviewing, avoid making generalised assumptions about candidates for example, judging a candidate’s personal qualities by reference to leisure interests. Some candidates may not have had the opportunity to pursue those leisure interests that are traditionally seen to be “character building”. Avoid questions relating to domestic circumstances e.g. childcare arrangements.

Where you need to assess whether personal circumstances may impact in a job (e.g. in relation to shift work or extensive travel), discuss the matter objectively with all candidates, pointing out that travel is part of the job, and would they be able to make that commitment is a question for both men and women. Avoid questions indicating a sex bias e.g. “What problems have you experienced at work as a woman?” “How would you feel being the only woman in a department full of men?” “Do you agree that women tend to be more emotional than men?”

Avoid questions indicating a race bias e.g. “Do you feel you would have a problem gaining access to people’s homes because you aren't white” “How long have you been in the country?” Acknowledge an “obvious disability” Be prepared to discuss an individual’s disability openly with them – concentrating on how, if at all, it may impact on them in the job and what adjustments you could make to overcome this. Discuss any adjustments to working practices or facilities that may need to be arranged, you are obliged to meet these adjustments where reasonable.