Interview Guidelines
Introduction

This interview guide was created to address the absence of a standardized protocol for the interview process at University of Waterloo. This manual will provide guidance to hiring managers and committee members to ensure an objective candidate evaluation is conducted in order to decrease the inaccuracy, unfairness, and subjective assessment of candidates.

Commitment to diversity hiring

The University of Waterloo is a unique diverse community. We are committed to equitable practices in recruitment and selection. The University embraces diversity and endeavors to foster equality for all.

Diversity: Human differences such as race, ancestry, colour, age, sex, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and disability are respected and valued in the workplace.

Equality: Policies, processes and procedures created to ensure all groups and individuals are included, treated fairly, no less favorably and have equal opportunity to reach their full potential regardless of their differences.

The utilization of the talents of diverse people can propel the University’s growth and development towards its strategic goals. The engagement of diverse people can contribute to:

- Greater sense of belonging among the campus community
- Eliminates group think and offers differing and deeper perspectives to generate innovative ideas and solutions
- Understanding the unique needs and perspectives of others to foster better communications and positive relationships
- Provide better service to our external clients or internal clients whether its faculty, staff or students
- Enhance the University’s image and reputation that accepts, respects and values the individual differences

Source: [http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity/about/equality-diversity](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity/about/equality-diversity)

Policy 18—Staff Employment

This section will only highlight general information pertaining to the interview process from Policy 18 – Staff Employment. If you wish to view more details, please refer to Policy 18 on the Secretariat website.

1. Internal candidates are always given first priority. We encourage the career growth of our UW staff by giving them the opportunity for development and to explore other departments within the University to expand their knowledge, skills and abilities.
2. External candidates will only be available for viewing after the hiring manager has reviewed all internal applicants and no qualified internal is found. Exception is when Appendix G is exercised or if the position is USG 16 or higher.

3. Any internal candidates who meet the core qualifications must be interviewed.

4. It is the responsibility of the hiring manager to contact unqualified internal candidates and/or those who are unsuccessful in the interview to let them know they will not be moving forward in the process. Hiring managers must provide guidance to internal candidates about areas they should improve in or training/development they should consider. Human Resources is available for consultation if needed.

5. Hiring Managers do not have access to the performance appraisals about prospective candidates. They may request Human Resources to give a general overview of the candidate’s performance evaluation within the last 2 years including if any warning letters are present.

Before the interview

This is an opportunity to critically evaluate the candidate’s suitability for the position by digging further into their qualifications to uncover the hidden layers beyond what is shown in the resume. It is the responsibility of the hiring committee to ensure the candidate makes an informed decision whether this is the right role for them.

1. Understand what you’re looking for

- Review job description and be familiar with the accountabilities, working conditions, and specific tasks performed in the role
- Recognize the essential knowledge, skills and assets for a person to be successful in this role and within the department they will be working in. What assets are preferred that would set the candidate apart? Does the candidate meet the current and future needs of your department?
- Think about people who had been in this position in the past—what made them successful or unsuccessful?

2. Preview your candidates

- Always review candidates’ application and be familiar with the information they provided in their cover letter and resume
- Take notes on the resume in areas you would like clarification on
- Both parties save time; candidates feel respected and appreciated when you show that you are familiar with their application
- Prepare candidate’s application package and your interview questions to bring to the interview
3. **Know the job and your department well**
   - A realistic job preview will resolve the discrepancies candidates may have had entering into the interview
   - Ask yourself, what is special about your department? What motivates you to come to work each day? Is the department hitting some rough patches?
   - Be honest with the candidate when informing them about job role, the culture of the department, and the average day on the job.

4. **Discuss with committee members**
   - Meet with the hiring committee prior to the interview to cover the expectations
   - Plan which member will ask the questions; coordinate with each other to ensure interview runs smoothly
   - Establish clear objectives regarding the qualifications, experience and/or personality the committee is looking for
   - Address any final concerns or questions members may have

Common interviewing mistakes

1. **Incomplete and inconsistent coverage of specific competencies needed for success in the job**
   - Hiring committee should share a mutual understanding and definition of the specific competencies required by the position
   - All candidates should be evaluated against the same agreed upon criteria

2. **Inaccurately interpreting the ability of the candidate because assumptions were made or beliefs, motives and feelings were reflected onto the candidate**
   - Never make assumptions because subjective factors are discriminatory and they can put you at a legal risk
   - Probe or follow-up with the candidate’s response for more details to get a clearer picture about the depth of their knowledge, skills and experience

3. **Ignoring the job motivation and organization fit of the candidate**
   - A highly qualified individual may not be motivated to do the job if the position does not meet his or her expectations or if they feel incompatible with the University culture and values
   - Give the candidate a realistic job preview—talk to them about what it’s like to work at the University and department

4. **Selection criteria that are not clearly defined put the University at risk of legal challenges**
   - Create a consistent process with well-defined decision points to ensure all applicants who reach the same stage are all treated equally and fairly
   - Committee members and interview questions should remain consistent throughout all interviews to avoid skewed results
5. **Insufficient interview notes causes interviewers to use their own impression of the applicant instead of concrete facts**

- Ensure your notes are objective and thorough to ensure you are able to justify the suitability of the applicant to make an accurate hiring decision.
- Ensure you have solid behavioral examples to justify the candidate’s skills and knowledge. If not, clarify these areas before ending the interview. More information on page 9.

### Interview biases

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Halo Effect</th>
<th>Horns effect</th>
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<tr>
<td>The interviewer allows one strong point that s/he values highly to overshadow all other information</td>
<td>Interviewer judges the potential employee unfavorably in all areas on the basis of one trait</td>
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<tr>
<th>First Impression Error</th>
<th>Negative Emphasis</th>
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<td>The interviewer makes snap judgments and lets the first impression cloud the entire interview</td>
<td>The interviewer is likely to give unfavorable info roughly twice the weight of favorable information</td>
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<tr>
<th>Contrast Effect</th>
<th>Rescuing</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strong candidates who interview after weak ones may appear more qualified than they actually are</td>
<td>Interviewer fills silence with conversation when candidate may be using silence to gather their thoughts and frame their answer</td>
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<tr>
<th>Unfairness to the first</th>
<th>The 20/80 Rule</th>
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<tr>
<td>First person interviewed is least likely to get the job. Use same objective criteria for all candidates</td>
<td>Goal is to solicit info about the candidate. Interviewer should talk 20% of the time; candidate should talk at 80% of the time</td>
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<th>Personal Bias</th>
<th>Similar to Me Bias</th>
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<tr>
<td>When prejudices and attitudes such as stereotypes, lifestyles, and personalities affect the rating of candidate responses</td>
<td>Inflating the evaluation of candidate whose interests, background or experience is similar to the interviewer</td>
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Source: [http://hr.csi.edu/PMS/Rating%20Biases.docx](http://hr.csi.edu/PMS/Rating%20Biases.docx)
The Canadian Human Rights Act bases its laws on the concept of discrimination. The law prohibits discrimination where a person is acting in an unfair or prejudiced manner. Regardless whether the act was intentional or unintentional, discrimination is prohibited. The following grounds are illegal to ask in an interview as it is subject to discrimination.

- Age
- Ancestry, colour, race
- Citizenship
- Ethnic origin
- Place of origin
- Creed
- Disability
- Family status
- Marital status (including single status)
- Gender identity, gender expression
- Record of offences (in employment only)
- Sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding)
- Sexual orientation

In some cases, employers are permitted to discriminate only if the job requirement passes the test of bona fide occupational requirement. The job requirement must be 1) rationally connected to the job, 2) adopted in good faith, in the belief that it is necessary to fulfill a legitimate work-related purpose, and 3) is reasonably necessary to accomplish the work-related purpose.


**During interview**

Professionalism and logistics

- **Inform** candidate of their interview time, location and directions, and other interview requirements (i.e. presentation)

- **Provide Directions** - send parking pass, campus map and provide directions to the entrance where you will be meeting the candidate. Can a candidate with disability access the building?

- **Book Rooms** - spacious, temperature, comfortable chairs, lighting, and supports equipment required for interview. Is or will there construction nearby that will cause disturbance?
✓ **Hiring Committee** - prepare interview questions and candidate’s application package, and plan with other members to ensure the interview runs smoothly (e.g. who will greet the candidate, who will be asking the questions)

✓ **Travel & Accommodations** - is the candidate travelling from out of town? There are many [local accommodations](#) available including our residences on campus. Frederick Travel is UW’s preferred travel agency and they can help you plan. [More info on Procurement page](#).

✓ **Refreshments** - make the candidate feel comfortable. Provide water to help the candidate to feel relaxed

✓ **Accommodations** - all individuals’ needs are unique and must be addressed individually. The Human Rights Commission recommends employers to accept all accommodations requests to the point of undue hardship so all candidates feel comfortable and can fully participate in the interview. Failure to do so may put the employer at risk of legal actions.

### Behavioral interviewing and importance

This interview technique asks candidates to give specific examples of how they have performed in the past situations. A person’s behavior does not significantly change over the course of their life. The manner in which they have performed in the past in specific situations is a strong accurate predictor of how they will probably perform in similar circumstances in the future.

✓ Obtain specific detailed examples of a behavior to confirm the competency really exist

✓ Asking hypothetical questions of what the candidate would do in the future leaves room for an open response. The candidate may be just good enough to convince the interviewer how good he/she is at a particular skill without having to provide any evidence.

✓ Therefore, you want to find out how people will actually behave instead of how they promise to behave.

### Opening the interview

✓ **Take time** to make the candidate feel comfortable. It is important to put the candidate at ease (especially those who are naturally nervous in interviews) by making small talk with them or by offering them refreshments

✓ **Create** a comfortable and informal but business-like environment. This encourages them to reveal more and promotes a positive image of the University

✓ **Introduce** the members on the interview committee and explain each member’s role in the department and how their roles relate to the position the candidate is being considered for
Go through the overview of the interview format such as the length of the interview, and assuring the candidate if they need extra time to think about a question, they can take it.

During the interview

Use the 20/80 rule as a guideline to allow candidates to do most of the talking.

Silences may occur while the candidate tries to come up with an answer but encourage them to take time to think of a response. It may feel uncomfortable but avoid the temptation to jump in.

Listen attentively and take clear, thorough notes to help you with the selection process later. Do not be afraid to ask the candidate to repeat himself or herself. Never assume and write down what you think you heard, write only factual information. Note taking tips can be found on page 10.

Vague responses—probe the candidate to understand the details and the depth of their knowledge, skills and experience. Probing tips can be found on page 9.

Body language such as arms crossing, narrowing your eyes or checking the time may project the wrong message to the candidate and set a negative tone during the interview. Instead, it is encouraged that you make eye contact with the candidate, smile and maintain a natural body posture to show you are listening and genuinely interested in their experience.

Closing the interview

Give a realistic job preview. Let the candidate know the responsibilities in this role and a realistic summary of the department they will be working in. Challenges? Environment? This increases employee retention because they’re given honest information at the beginning of the process.

Leave some time to give an opportunity to the candidate to ask questions.

Thank the candidate for their interest in this position and attending this interview. Let them know what the next steps are and when they will hear from you.

Escort the candidate to the exit. To maintain privacy and confidentiality of the interviewees, candidates should not meet each other before and after the interview such as when they’re in the waiting room.

Remember, candidates are your customers. If you make the promise of contacting them regardless of whether they are successful in the interview or not, make sure you contact them! It is a professional courtesy and candidates will appreciate your effort of keeping them informed. This gives them a good reflection of the people and the overall reputation of our University.
**STAR method**

The STAR method is a popular technique for interviewees to answer interview questions thoroughly in a brief and narrative structure. As a hiring manager, you can also use this method as a guide to help you gather the relevant information you need. When a candidate’s response is vague or unclear, they may not cover all the STAR areas sufficiently. In this case, you will have an idea of where you need to probe to get the details.

**Situation**

A brief description of a specific situation and context the candidate was involved in (who, what, when, where and why)

**Task**

The goal or challenges that needed to be completed or the expectations that needed to be met

**Action**

The action taken to address the situation, pay particular attention to the steps the candidate took and their own contributions. Pay attention to their reasoning and listen carefully to the pronouns used such as ‘I’ or ‘we’. Drill down to the specific details by asking probing questions: Why did they do it? How did they do it? What skills or tools did they use?

**Result**

The outcome or the impact of the action; how did it end? Was the goal met? What was accomplished? What was learned? What would they do differently to improve?

**Probing tips**

Probing is an important technique to retrieve more information from the candidate so you have accurate and detailed information to make an informed decision. This comes back to knowing the position well and the skills, knowledge and experience you are looking for. Here are some questions you can probe with:

- What steps did you take?
- What action did you take?
- What happened after that?
- What did you say?
- How did he/she react?
- How did you handle that?
- What was your reaction?
- How did you feel about the outcome/result?
- What was the outcome/result?
- What do you wish you had done differently?
- What did you learn from that?
- How did you resolve that?
- How did x affect your relationship with...?
- Why did you decide to do that?
- What was your reasoning?
- Who else was involved?
- Tell me more about your interaction with that person.
- What was your role?
- What were the circumstances surrounding...?
- What obstacles did you face?
- What were you thinking at that point?

**Note taking**

- Interview notes serve as a formal record of the interview process
- Each committee member should take notes on the candidates’ responses so all candidates are consistently and fairly evaluated
- Aim to be objective and specific with your notes. This will help you evaluate the candidates carefully in the selection process
- Do not record subjective and generalized notes as this can be used as an inaccurate evaluation tool

**Stop:** Even if the candidate volunteered the information himself or herself, it is important that your notes do not contain any discriminatory or inappropriate information. Your notes are permanent records used for future reference or request for feedback. In a case where a lawsuit is filed against you and the University, the notes will serve as evidence that could help or be used against you.

**Red flags**

- **Lacking motivation**—motivation is a huge determinant of how successful the candidate will be on the job and potentially how long they will stay with the University. People with intrinsic motivation are usually more driven than people with extrinsic motivation

  **Intrinsic Motivation:** the desire to do something because it is enjoyable and there is a sense of personal

  **Extrinsic Motivation:** the desire to do something because of external rewards or outcomes
• **Job Hopping**—the period and number of roles a person has held in the past could be an indicator of their commitment level or they have been terminated in their previous positions.

• **Weak Examples**—candidates who seem unwilling to share info may have not demonstrated the degree of the required skill or experience; or is trying to mask the details of the situation that may put them in an unfavorable position.

### Addressing family status, gender, disability, creed, accommodations during interview

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<th>Prohibited Questions</th>
<th>Preferred Questions</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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| **Family Status** | • number of children or dependents  
• child care arrangements              | • if candidate would be able to work the required hours and possibly overtime     | • contacts for emergencies or details on dependents can be determined after selection |
| **Gender**   | • specify Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms. on an application or anything that asks the candidate to identify their gender |                                                                                     |                                                                                             |
| **Disability** | • whether candidate has received workers’ compensation  
• whether applicant has ever received psychiatric care or been hospitalized for emotional problems  
• whether candidate drinks or uses drugs  
• a list of all disabilities, limitations and health problems |                                                                                     | • employer should disclose any information on medically related requirements or standards early in the application process  
• ask whether the applicant has any conditions that could affect his or her ability to do the job  
• a disability is only relevant to the job ability if it threatens the safety or property of others or prevents the applicant from safe and adequate job performance even when reasonable efforts are made to accommodate the disability |
| ** Creed**   | • if candidate will work on a specific religious holiday  
• about religious affiliation  
• references from a clergy or religious leader | • explain the required work shifts, asking whether such a schedule poses a problem for the applicant | • employer’s responsibility to provide accommodation for employee’s religious belief |
| **Accommodations** | • It is illegal to ask questions or discriminate a candidate/employee based on these grounds unless it is a bone fide occupational requirement  
• Employers are expected to accommodate the employee and candidate to the point of undue hardship |                                                                                     |                                                                                             |
After the interview

- Use this time to expand on your notes while the information is still fresh on your mind; talk with other committee members to fill in the areas you or they may have missed
- Evaluate and compare candidates only after all have been interviewed; avoid comparing candidates between interviews to maintain the objectiveness of the process

Next steps

After a successful candidate is found

- Speak with Talent Acquisition about your preferred candidate. Due diligence checks must be conducted first before extending the offer
- The Talent Acquisition team will conduct the confidential reference and credential check. Vulnerable sector, criminal record, and drivers abstract validation checks may be required for some positions
  - For temporary hires, hiring managers are responsible for the reference checks
- Notify interviewed internal/external candidates who are not selected for hire

What happens when no successful candidate is found?

- No suitable internals: If no ideal candidates are found in the internal pool, your Talent Acquisition Specialist will release the external applicants for you to view on iCIMS
- Talent Acquisition will send applicants to you every Friday through iCIMS

Document retention for hiring managers and hiring committee members

**Hiring Managers:** Please retain documents for 1 year after the appointment process is completed. After 1 year, please securely dispose of these documents.

**Hiring Committee Members:** Please securely dispose of the documents immediately after the appointment process is completed.

*Documents are defined as advertisements, candidates’ application materials, hiring committee records, interview questions and notes, rankings, references, and related correspondence.*