

BAINBRIDGE
COLLEGE

INTERVIEW
HANDBOOK



I. Introduction

As a manager or supervisor one of the most important functions you perform is the selection of new employees. The cost of selecting someone who is not productive or suitable for the job can be devastating to your organization. The job interview employment process is key to the success of selecting the right person for the position. The employment process begins with an analysis of your job description and job requirements. A good understanding of the job duties and the requirements for successful performance is essential if you are to select the most suitable person to fill the job. Please be sure to review the job description before you request HR to advertise the position to ensure that the job description accurately reflects the current nature of the job and that you carefully develop key behavioral type questions to ask the applicant that are related to the job opening.

As hiring manager it is your responsibility to ensure that your interviews do not result in discriminatory practices. The interview is classified as a test by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and must meet the validity requirements of any other type of selection procedure. By asking only job-related questions, you minimize personal biases and subjectivity, and eliminate unlawful questions. You must also conduct interviews in a consistent manner so the same job-related information is obtained from each applicant thereby allowing for fair comparison. In addition to being a legal requirement, it makes good business sense to base your hiring decisions on qualifications rather than non-job-related factors.

The information provided in this handbook will assist you in structuring an interview that is systematic, consistent, and job-related. The objective of this handbook is to leave you with an informed, positive attitude about the interview and what it can accomplish for you. Topics include how future workforce trends that will influence the type of applicants you will interview, establishing qualifications, evaluating applications, developing interview questions, lawful and unlawful interviewing, planning the interview format and environment, committee interviewing, and reference checking.

II. Setting the Stage for an Effective Interview

A. Information to Provide the Applicant During the Interview

Remember that the applicant may be evaluating you, your vacant position, and your department at the same time that you are evaluating him/her. It is important to give an adequate picture of the work conditions and job duties to the applicant.

The following topics may be covered in the interview:

1. Job Description



Include the importance of the job to the department. Provide sufficient information to ensure that the applicant is able to make an intelligent decision about the position.

2. Conditions of Employment

Explain conditions of employment and ask each applicant if he/she can meet these requirements.

- Hours of work. Provide information about work hours, breaks, and lunch hours.
- Leave policies. Provide information regarding leave benefits and any restrictions as to when vacation may be taken (i.e.: critical work periods).
- Other policies. Be sure to explain any other policies and procedures that are relevant to the job.
- Training period and critical work periods. If the position will involve on-the-job training before the incumbent can become proficient in performing primary job responsibilities, explain the training requirements and ask if there are any conditions or situations that would interfere with attendance during the training period or during critical work cycles.

3. Salary

Explain the normal starting salary and increases in pay. You may discuss the applicant's salary requirements during the interview, but be sure that you do not imply any offer of employment or make any promises. Approval for any above entry-level salary must be obtained from Human Resources before an offer can be made. No offer of employment should be extended until the request for employment has gone through the approval process by the Vice President and President.

4. Benefits

A brief description of benefits (insurance coverage, retirement, etc) is available as a handout from the HR Department. This information may be provided to the applicant.

5. Work Area Location

If possible, the applicant should generally be shown the work site.

Let the applicant know when a hiring decision will be made and how he/she will be notified.

Plan the order/structure of the interview to include greetings and introductions, interview questions and topics, tours of the office, and the roles of the other staff in the interview. Your objective in the interview is to assist the applicant in providing you with the best



information possible and to leave the applicant with a favorable impression of your department and the College.

Fostering a Good Interview Atmosphere

In preparing for the interview, remember that the hiring process is not a one-sided decision. The applicant will also be making observations, forming impressions, and making choices. The care taken in planning the interview may affect the applicant's perception of your competence and interest, and the quality of the information you obtain.

- When calling to schedule appointment, introduce yourself and identify your department and the vacant position. Provide directions to your office and information regarding parking.
- Prepare the committee and department (where applicable) for the interview. Provide an interview schedule to the necessary people.
- Keep the appointment time. If you are unavoidably detained, have someone else greet the applicant and explain the delay.
- During the interview, plan to allow no calls or interruptions. If a necessary interruption occurs, make it as brief as possible and apologize to the applicant.
- Put the applicant at ease and attempt to establish a rapport. If possible, spend a few minutes on "small talk". Begin the interview with a brief description of the interview format and a relevant but non-threatening question, such as "Why did you apply for this position?" or "What do you enjoy most about your last (current) job?"
- Explain that you will be taking notes but do not let your record keeping dominate the interview. Refrain from writing negative comments in the presence of the applicant.
- Give the applicant your undivided attention. This includes maintaining eye contact, attentive listening, and being responsive to questions, key thoughts, or comments. Inform the applicant that it is acceptable to take some time to think about the questions before answering them.
- Avoid being overly positive or negative with the applicant during the interview. You do not want to leave the impression that the applicant is going to be hired or that he/she is not being seriously considered.
- Avoid making public comments about the candidates and the interview. Avoid saying or doing anything that could be misinterpreted as pre-selection or may be perceived as denying any applicant a fair and objective consideration for the position.
- Maintain control of the interview. If an applicant begins to wander from the question, tactfully lead him/her back to the subject by re-phrasing the question or asking a follow-up question.
- Conduct all interviews in the same order and manner.
- Internal candidates should be informed of the selection decision before making it public knowledge.



Preparation of the Physical Setting

Develop a pleasant physical setting for the interview.

- Select a quiet and private location where visual and auditory distractions can be minimized.
- Avoid interviewing from behind a desk if possible. A desk may act as a barrier and materials on the desk may distract you or the candidate.
- The physical setting should be the same for all applicants when possible.

Tips on Interviewing

1. Prepare for the interview.
2. Familiarize yourself with the job description and qualifications.
3. Familiarize yourself with the applications.
4. Use the job descriptions and applications when developing interview questions.
5. Establish rapport.
6. Be conscientious about creating a good interview environment.
7. Ask open-ended questions to encourage the candidate to talk.
8. Be a good listener. Allow silence.
9. Allow time to make meaningful observations; do not rely on first impressions or intuitions.
10. Concentrate on the applicant's abilities and experience as they relate to the vacancy.
11. Be objective. Do not concentrate on one characteristic or personality trait.
12. Be open-minded. Avoid discriminatory questions and stereotyping the applicant because of background, manner of dress, etc.
13. Maintain control of the interview.

III. Interviewers' Most Common Errors

Avoid Interviewer Errors

Lynn Nemser of Partners in Performance, and HR consultant firm, points out other pitfalls that supervisors need to know:

- Violating the Pareto Principle: attempt to listen 80% of the time and talk 20% of the time. This is an indication of the lack of preparation.
- Giving away the answer to the question.
- Not neutralizing the leading question.
- Not using follow-up probing questions – **SMART** – Specific, Measurable, Action, Result, and Timeframes.
- Halo or horns effect.



- First impressions.
- Hiring in your own image.

Additional Interview Tips

- Listen for hypothetical works like “if” or “would”.
- Listen for opinion phrases – “if you ask me...”
- Listen for general words – never, always, generally, nothing, everything.
- Ask for examples or details – the four W’s (What, When, Where, Why) and How.
- Use tools like the interview check sheet to evaluate candidates.

IV. Preparing the Interview Questions

When a vacancy occurs, your first responsibility as a supervisor is to review the job description and make sure that it is accurate, complete, and up-to-date. Any update or changes in the position should be described in the job description form and approved by Human Resources.

After determining that the job description is accurate, evaluate the duties to determine what qualifications (knowledge, interpersonal and technical skills, and abilities) are needed for a successful job performance.

The HR Coordinator will work with you to ensure that the qualifications are job-related and realistic, and that the most important qualifications have been specified and appropriately emphasized.

Establish Priorities

It is essential to identify the most important qualifications since there are often many qualified applicants for a vacant position. In order for you to determine the most suitably qualified applicants for interviews, you must understand your job requirements.

- Be specific. You are encouraged to describe education/training, experience, specific skills, and familiarity with particular equipment or processes necessary for successful job performance. These requirements should be listed in the formal job description.
- Be realistic. Care should be taken not to overstate qualifications. As you interview the prospective employee, keep in mind that some proficiency will be acquired through employment. The responses to the following questions will be helpful in deciding which qualifications are required and which can be learned on the job:
 - Are there duties for which Bainbridge College training can be provided?



- Is immediate productivity required in some duties?
- How long will it take to train the new employees to perform each of the critical tasks?
- What is the basic level of proficiency needed to benefit from training or to successfully complete training?
- Are there social attributes that a new employee will need in order to be successful at Bainbridge College?

Identify Selection Criteria

Before the interview, identify selection criteria by which interviewed candidates will be evaluated. Qualifications and selection criteria should be applied consistently through each stage of the employment process once it has begun.

Key factors that may be critical to your selection of the applicant best suited for the position should be investigated during the interviews and reference checks.

The interview check sheet form is the rating instrument Bainbridge College has devised that is based on the qualifications/selection criteria and will be helpful.

- It facilitates a comparison of interviewed applicants.
- It is particularly useful for committee interviews so that committee members know what is important and can have consistent criteria to use for ratings.
- IT ensures that the evaluation is limited to job-related issues.

Developing Behavioral Interview Question with Probing Questions

Prior to the interview, develop your interview questions. Questions should be based on the position, description/qualifications, the candidates' applications/resumes, and your direct knowledge of the level of performance needed to maintain and improve on employment. Check the selection criteria and the rating sheet to ensure that you have covered all the critical areas.

Make a list of the questions to be asked of each applicant. You may take notes to allow for an accurate recall of the answers and to be part of your records documenting the employment decision.

Do not write or code on an application or other application documents (resumes, interview check sheets, etc). An example of coding is writing on the application words like "fat", "short", "shoe-in", "no-chance". Writing and coding on an application could lead to a lawsuit.

Questions based on the job description, knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's).
Questions should:



- Assess the more important job requirements.
- Not duplicate information already available.
- Provide useful information that will aid in the selection decision.

Questions based on the job description are asked of each interviewed applicant.

An applicant's responses to interview questions should provide examples of specific work experience or education demonstrating skills, knowledge, attitudes, etc. Also explore qualifications that may have been developed in non-traditional ways. Often applicants have acquired transferable skills through military, community, volunteer activities, and other life experiences.

Ask open-ended questions. Questions that begin with "What", "How", "Why", "Describe" or "Tell me" are more likely to draw out the applicant and provide more useful information. For example, if the job requires the ability to work under pressure, you might ask the applicant to describe a situation when he/she has demonstrated the ability to work under pressure in the past.

Avoid asking leading question that may inadvertently result in the applicant trying to provide the answer he/she thinks you want to hear. An example of a leading question is, "Would you agree that communication is the most important skill of management?" Asking clear and concise questions will help the interview to progress smoothly.

Develop questions that direct the applicant to describe examples of previous behavior that would be similar to the tasks and duties the employee would be performing in your vacant position. As an interviewer you will be trying to determine how the applicant has handled similar situations that required the use of the same KSA's needed for your vacant position. It is important to ask follow-up or probing questions in order to obtain a detailed understanding of the situation. Three examples of behavioral-type questions are provided below:

Example #1: We frequently must explain policies and procedures to employees or customers who sometimes do not understand or agree with what we are telling them. Tell me about the most difficult or frustrating time you experienced in explaining something to someone (an employee, applicant, customer).

- When did this happen?
- What were the circumstances leading up to it?
- What were you trying to explain?
- Were you finally successful?
- What do you think you did that contributed to your success (or failure)?
- How did the person respond?

Example #2: A piece of equipment you are using may break down. Tell me about the last time that you had this happen to you.

- What type of equipment was it?



- What did you do when you noticed it?
- Was there anything you could have done to prevent it?
- What were your responsibilities for routine maintenance?
- What procedures/instructions did your supervisor have for dealing with these kinds of problems?
- What did you do to prevent this from occurring again?

Example #3: Tell me about the last time that you had an unanticipated absence from work. (Be sure to talk to your HR Coordinator before asking this question. The timing of this question is critical and can be helpful if asked at the right time in the right context).

- When did this occur?
- What caused you to miss work?
- How did you approach your supervisor?
- What effect did this have on your work unit?
- What effect did this have on your ability to meet your deadlines?
- What steps did you take to make up for your absence?
- How often did this occur in the last year?

Application/Resume Questions

You may also develop questions based on the candidate's application or resume. Evaluate the applications of all interview candidates before the interview to determine if additional questions are appropriate.

Items on the application/resume possibly needed clarification include:

- Relevant education/training
- Permission to check references with present employer

If the answer is "no" regarding the present employer, ask why. Also ask for the names of another person who can provide information regarding present performance and qualifications.

- Reasons for leaving, i.e.: "Personal", "Terminated", "Quit", "Laid Off". Look for patterns. Are reasons logical in light of other job information? Ask for clarification. Ask if there were additional reasons.
- Relevant job duties – consider similarity of responsibilities and job setting.
- Recently – for some jobs it is appropriate to consider technological advancements or deterioration of skills over extended periods of time.
- Time gaps and job chronology. Ask about career changes or "backward" moves.



- Additional information regarding qualifications, including transferable skills developed through non-traditional work experiences (i.e.: volunteer experience).
- Convictions – only to determine job-relatedness.
- Availability to start work.

So not make assumptions from the application without further exploration during the interview and reference checks. Try to verify your “hunches”.

Questions based on the application are not necessarily asked of each applicant.

Questions should extend into areas not job-related. Any volunteered information that is not job-related must be disregarded. If the applicant brings up information about non-job related information, please inform him/her that such information is not used in the employment decision.

Factors to Consider in Observing Candidate Behavior

Quickknowledge, a course vendor for higher education, recommends that you consider the following candidate behaviors:

- How does he/she present himself/herself?
 - Does his/her appearance reflect preparation for the interview?
 - Does he/she look at you when you are speaking to him/her and when he/she is speaking to you?
 - What is your first impression?
- Is he/She responsive to your questions?
 - Are his/her answers clear?
 - Do his/her answers make sense or reflect a lack of understanding of the questions or the subject?
 - Does he/she ask clarifying questions?
- Does he/she have questions to ask? (Remember, you may have to do a little subtle prompting here).
 - Are his/her questions meaningful?
 - Do the questions reflect an understanding of the position, company, industry, etc.?
- Does he/she appear to have spend time preparing for the interview?
 - Does he/she have some knowledge of the company or industry?



- Has he/she given thought to how he/she could contribute to the organization?
- What is his/her apparent attitude?
 - Does he/she appear interested in the position *you* have open, in working for *your* company, or just finding a job?
 - Is he/she friendly?

Observing candidates behavior, in addition to listening to the actual answers to your questions, provide a key piece to the overall picture you are developing about this candidate and how effectively he/she would function in the position and the organization.

V. Interview Question You Should Avoid

Lawful and Unlawful Questions

The College is required by law, federal and state regulations to ensure that it does not discriminate against applicants for employment. This policy of non-discrimination applies to all phases of the employment process and prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, age, religion, national origin, disability and veteran status.

Summary of Federal Rules and Regulations (This is a list of the major federal anti-discrimination laws but is not comprehensive).

- Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion and national origin regarding civil rights.
- Title VII prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.
- Pregnancy Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical condition.
- Age Discrimination in Employment Act, as amended 1967 prohibits discrimination on the basis of age (age 40 and above) in employment.
- Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibits discrimination in salaries on the basis of sex.
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibits discrimination in employment against a qualified individual with a disability.
- Civil Rights Act of 1991 provides additional remedies to protect against and deter unlawful discrimination and harassment in employment and to restore the strength of federal anti-discrimination laws.



You must observe the College's non-discrimination policies when developing interview questions and conducting the interview. Should you ask discriminatory questions during interviews, intentionally or unintentionally (ignorance is not excuse), you are providing the opportunity for a lawsuit against the College regardless of the effect of the responses on the hiring decision.

Discriminatory questions fall in two basic categories: those questions that are discriminatory on their face and questions whose responses lead to discriminatory trends.

Examples of question that are discriminatory on their face are:

1. Race Discrimination
 - What is your racial background?
 - What is your ancestry?
2. Sex Discrimination
 - What are your daycare arrangements?
 - Are you married?
 - As a woman, do you feel you can do the job?
3. Age Discrimination
 - How old are you?
 - When do you plan to retire?
4. Religious Discrimination
 - To what church do you belong?
 - Is that a Star of David you are wearing?
 - On what days do you observe religious meetings or holidays?
 - Do you belong to any religious organizations?
 - Was your schooling in public schools or in church schools?
5. National Origin Discrimination
 - Where did you get that accent?
 - In what country were you born?
 - How did you learn so many languages?
6. Disabilities Discrimination
 - What is the nature of your disability?
 - Do you have any disabilities or physical problems that cause you to visit physicians regularly?
7. Veteran Status Discrimination
 - Have you had any after-effects from serving in war?
 - What is your military discipline history?



- How do you alleviate anxieties and pressures associated with your military experience?

Question with responses that lead to discriminatory trends are those questions that have an unfair effect on women, veterans, minorities and some other protected group.

Examples of question that commonly result in responses leading to discriminatory trends are:

- Do you own an automobile? (race discrimination)
- Have you ever been arrested? (race discrimination)
- What is your credit rating? (race, sex discrimination)
- Do you own or rent a home or live in an apartment? (race, sex discrimination)
- To what nonprofessional organizations do you belong? (race, sex, age, religion, national origin, veteran status discrimination)
- What type of military discharge did you receive? (veteran status discrimination)
- What is your opinion of people who get psychological counseling? (veteran status, disabilities discrimination)
- What is your height? (sex, national origin discrimination)
- What is your weight? (sex, national origin discrimination)
- What do you think about the Middle East situation? (national origin discrimination)
- Can you provide medical records? (disabilities discrimination)
- What type of medication are you currently taking? (disabilities discrimination)
- Do you need any special accommodations? (disabilities discrimination)

After excluding discriminatory questions from your list, remember to ask the same questions of all candidates. If a response to a question suggests the need for further questioning, you may pursue the line of questions as long as they are not discriminatory and are job related.

NOTE: There are some instances where information that is job related involves questions that may be discriminatory. Such questions must be cleared by the Human Resource Office.

Examples of Lawful and Unlawful Interview Questions

Marital Status:

- Lawful
 - Whether applicant can meet specified work schedules.
 - Whether applicant has any additional responsibilities that would interfere with proper attendance.
- Unlawful
 - Whether applicant is married, single, divorced, separated, engaged, etc.
 - Number and ages of dependent children.



- All questions relating to pregnancy or methods of family planning.
- Questions regarding child care arrangements.

Race:

- Unlawful
 - Questions regarding race.
 - Inquiry into color of eyes, hair.
 - Other questions which would indicate race.

Religion:

- Lawful
 - Questions regarding religious denomination or beliefs, if based on BFOQ as in the case of ministers, teachers, or other employees of specific religious organizations.
 - Questions regarding availability for work during specific time periods. Reasonable accommodations must be made for employees whose religious practices interfere with work schedules.
- Unlawful
 - Questions regarding religious beliefs if not based on BFOQ.
 - Questions such as “What religious holidays do you observe?”, if asked before employment.

National Origin:

- Lawful
 - Language the applicant speaks, reads, or writes.
- Unlawful
 - How foreign language was learned.
 - Ancestry or birthplace of parents or spouse.
 - Associates or other relatives from foreign countries.
 - Birthplace of applicant.

Citizenship:

- Lawful
 - “If not a citizen, are you legally eligible to accept work and remain in this country?”
 - Statement that, if hired, applicant must furnish proof of citizenship or appropriate visa.
- Unlawful
 - Whether other members of applicant’s family are U.S. citizens.
 - “Of what country are you a citizen?”
 - Require proof of citizenship prior to employment.
 - “Are you a citizen of this country?”

Sex:

- Unlawful



- All questions regarding sex of the applicant unless based on BFOQ, which could occur in cases such as men's locker room attendant, etc.

Disabilities:

- Lawful
 - Questions regarding disability voluntarily disclosed by applicant if information is used solely for affirmative action.
- Unlawful
 - “Do you have any disabilities or physical defect?”

Age:

- Lawful
 - Questions as to whether or not the applicant meets minimum/maximum age.
- Unlawful
 - “How old are you?”
 - Birth date

Adapted from *Interviewing Job Candidates* (2ns Edition) Quickknowledge online course.

About the candidate as a person:

- What is your long-term career objective?
- How would you describe yourself as a person?
- What do you consider your greatest achievement to be? Why?
- What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
- What do you look for in an organization or college?
- What is your current salary?
- What are your salary expectations?
- What kind of reference would your current (previous) employer give you?
- How would others describe you as a person?
- Describe your leadership abilities.
- What is your greatest failure? Why?
- What character traits do you value most in others?



About the candidate's background:

- What functions or tasks in your last job didn't you like? Why?
- Which functions and tasks do you enjoy most? Why?
- How do you feel about your career progress to date?
- What are some areas in which your current (or most recent) supervisor things you could improve?
- What have you accomplished in your present (or most recent) position?
- Why are you changing jobs?

About the candidate and your college:

- What interests you about this job/this college/this department?
- What are your concerns about this job/this college/this department?
- What contributions can you make to our college/department?
- Why should I hire you?

About the candidate's supervisory or management skills (if applicable):

- What are your budget responsibilities?
- How would your staff describe you as a supervisor?
- Have you discharged anyone? How did you handle the situation?
- What is your supervisory style?
- What is your most difficult supervisory responsibility? Why?



Glossary

- BFOQ - **Bona Fide Occupational Qualification**
- KSA - **Knowledge, Skills, Abilities**
- SMART - **Specific, Measurable, Action, Result, and Timeframes.**