Interviews - how to set them up and prepare

Once you have shortlisted the most suitable applicants, you will need to consider your arrangements for the next stage of the recruitment process. This is normally an interview which allows you the chance to meet the candidates face to face, and could also include an exercise or other selection process.

The interview date should have been included in the advert, as this is helpful to candidates and helps to speed up the recruitment process. Ideally you will be able to see all the candidates on one day but if this is not possible, try to see any remaining candidates as near as possible to the main interview date. If a candidate cannot attend on the date of the interview, you can agree to see them on another date, if mutually convenient but you do not need to delay the process unduly if the candidate is not available in a reasonable timespan. All panel members must be available for all interviews.

You must ensure that applicants are given at least one week's notice of the date when they are invited to attend. You need to update Recruit with those candidates that you have shortlisted and select a date and time for their interview. The Shared Services Centre will process this and sent out the interview notification. This will be by email if an email address is provided. Where no email address is given a letter will be sent.

Although interviews are the most widely used method of assessing candidates, there are other ways of determining whether candidates may be suitable. This could include a presentation or exercise in which the candidate undertakes some duties of the role. More information about this is available in the guidance on Other Selection Methods. The invitation which is sent to the candidate inviting them to attend for interview should contain details of what the selection process will consist of, so that the candidate is fully prepared for what to expect on the day. You will need to add these details to the notes field for the first candidate to be interviewed and the Shared Services Centre will then add this information to the interview email or letter.

Both/all members of the recruitment panel should attend all the interviews and have full sets of the candidates' application. These should be shared using Recruit.

Make sure the room you choose for the interviews is a suitable size and that it is available for the duration of the process. It should be free from noise and disturbances. Before the day starts, check that the room has been set up in an appropriate way and that water and enough clean glasses for panel members and candidates are available. Ensure that lighting and access are suitable. Put a notice on the door and elsewhere to indicate that interviews are taking place.

Ideally there will be somewhere for candidates who are early to wait and someone to greet them on arrival and direct them to wherever they need to go.

If you are aware that you have any disabled candidates who will be attending the interview, make sure you have taken into account any reasonable adjustments which they might need – e.g. consider access and parking, the size of text in any written material, need for interpreters/scribes, acoustics in the room used, extra time for a test etc. The invitation to interview which all interviewees received asks them to make us aware of any specific requirements they may have. If you need any help, contact your departmental HR team.

As part of the interview process you will need to verify the identity of all candidates, including internal ones, in order to verify their dates of birth and establish their right to work in the United Kingdom. Please refer to the guidance section on Right to Work checks. Candidates will have been asked to bring the relevant documentation to their interview. You will need to take photocopies of all the documents provided, verify and state that it is a true copy of the original and sign and date the photocopy. The documents for the successful candidate need to be scanned and saved into Recruit for the Shared Services Centre to check and keep on file. Those for any unsuccessful candidates should be securely destroyed as confidential waste.

Please be aware that candidates may use and be known by a different name to the name they are legal registered with. An example of this may be where a married women choses to be known by her maiden name, but is legally registered in her married name or where a candidate is transitioning gender. It is essential when checking application forms against formal documentation that the names match, and that the name shown on the formal documentation is the name the applicant has applied in. This is important because a series of checks will need to be carried out on the successful candidate and if the name used does not match the legal documentation it will cause a delay. It is also crucial for cases where a DBS check is required to allow the relevant police forces to carry out the necessary checks.

You will also need to check the essential qualifications certificates and professional registration (where applicable). The photocopies of the documents for the successful candidate should be verified and annotated to state that they are true copies of the originals, signed and dated. The annotated copies should then be scanned and saved in Recruit; those for the unsuccessful candidates must be destroyed as confidential waste.

If the post is subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service check you will also be required to undertake the ID verification for this purpose as well. It’s important to ask the candidate if they have already signed up to the DBS Update service, as, if so, this saves us considerable time and expense. Guidance on all this can be found in the

Criminal Background Check Guidance for Managers which can be found on our website under Working for Us, Employment Policies, Recruitment and contractual arrangements, Criminal background checks.