



Selection Committee Members' Tool Kit

The Tool Kit contains information and forms for selection committee members.

A thorough reading of the information will assist members to successfully carry out the standard recruitment practice and appoint the best possible candidate for the position.

For further assistance or advice contact:

Your Human Resource Officer
Human Resource Services
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WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

Thank you for your contribution in the staff selection process. This kit has been developed as a guide to assist new and existing selection committee members.

Our goals for selection and recruitment:

- 1 Target and recruit people with identified strengths and attributes;
- 2 Engage staff to achieve the University's strategic objectives
- 3 Adopt innovative practices to attract and retain the best staff;
- 4 Our staff reflect the diversity of the communities we serve
- 5 Policies and practices across the University support diversity of the workforce through implementation of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action principles.

Committee members should commit to merit-based selection techniques that conform to the principles of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and value diversity. State and Federal legislation underpins and promotes equitable processes.

Your Human Resource Officer (HRO) is responsible for the coordination of the recruitment and selection processes for this vacancy. Human Resource Officers support committees with the provision of expert advice and oversee all activities leading to the selection and subsequent appointment of the preferred candidate. As such, you should rely upon your HRO in the first instance for any queries or concerns you may have [Human Resource Services Contacts](#).

SELECTION COMMITTEE

The formation of the selection committee should occur before the position is advertised. Committees should comprise members from diverse backgrounds and have appropriate gender representation to ensure fair assessment of applicant's social, cultural, educational and employment experiences. Selection committees should be consistent with the Staff Selection Committee Guideline.

As a convener or a committee member, you must observe strict confidentiality with regard to all aspects of the recruitment and selection processes. Unless expressly authorised by the convener of the selection committee and/or Human Resource Services, you may not contact applicants or referees, or seek information on applicants from current or former employers, or work colleagues. Selection committee members are prohibited from discussing aspects of the selection process, including the shortlisting of applicants, with any person other than a fellow selection committee member at any time, before, during and after the process is completed.

Where a committee member believes that their knowledge of an individual (by virtue of professional, social or private association, or any other factor) may influence their decision, they must declare to the convener of the committee that they have a conflict of interest. This will mean a declaration of any financial, family or other close personal relationship with any applicant for the position. The convener, in association with Human Resource Services, will decide on the appropriate action, which may require the committee member to withdraw from the committee.

SHORTLISTING

Shortlisting must be conducted independently by all members of the selection committee to ensure applications are assessed objectively and fairly. Your HRO will provide support and advice if required.

The skills, experience and qualifications of each applicant are compared with the job requirements. The purpose of this process is to exclude those applicants who do not satisfy the selection criteria and job requirements in the advertisement.

Applications for the position will be available for review via [HRonline](#).

To view the position information and applications, click the **My Administration** tab, then the **Recruitment** tab, then **Monitor Vacancies** tab, then the position number. The advertisement, including the position description and selection criteria, is available on the [University Vacancies](#) web page.

A Selection Data Matrix is available via the **Info for Selection Panel** option, and can be a useful tool for committee members. Alternatively, committee members may make notes, summaries, etc - whichever method is used it is important to note:

- shortlisted applicants should be able to demonstrate their ability to meet the selection criteria in their application
- where a large number meet the criteria a further shortlisting can be undertaken based on desirable criteria and/or criteria that have been prioritised.
- care must be taken not to inadvertently discriminate against applicants – be consistent and fair.

Further information regarding 'Hazards in Selection' and Equity considerations are available from Appendix 3 and Appendix 4.

Committee members should be careful not to exclude applicants:

- with work experience gained overseas, or with overseas qualifications before the qualifications have been checked for acceptability (this applies equally to academic, professional, trade and school qualifications).
- with a disability on the basis of assumptions regarding their ability to perform the full range of duties of the position.
- based on assumptions regarding child-bearing or rearing plans, and willingness/capacity to work non-standard hours.
- with job-related experience obtained in unpaid activities such as voluntary or community-based work.
- who may appear to be over-qualified on the assumption that they will soon move on or will get bored with the job.

Procedure

All committee members must:

1. complete the *Confidentiality Undertaking and Shortlisting Form*. (Appendix 1 and via [HRonline](#))
2. forward the form to Human Resource Services via email, fax or in person prior to the shortlisting meeting or agreed shortlisting date.
3. attend the shortlisting meeting (*Where attendance is not possible, committee members must submit comments to the convenor of the committee or Human Resource Services to convey at the meeting.*)

Following the meeting, Human Resource Services will contact candidates to arrange and facilitate interviews.

Meeting

Where possible, the committee should meet in person to compare each shortlist and reach a consensus on who is to be interviewed. The meeting will be facilitated by your HRO and/or the convenor. If it is not possible to meet in person, your HRO will facilitate an alternative method, such as an email committee

Any disagreement should be restricted to the selection criteria and duties outlined in the Position Description. Information that is irrelevant or pertaining to private matters (regardless the source) must not be introduced into discussions by committee members.

The shortlisting meeting should establish:

- the candidates to be interviewed;
- the tasks, seminars or presentations that are required;
- the core questions for the Interview;
- suitability of phone or video conferencing for applicants who would otherwise require travel to interview in person;
- if psychometric testing is required;
- whether verbal or written referees reports are required.

INTERVIEWS

Preparing Interview Questions

The advertisement/job description contains the selection criteria and therefore forms the basis for interview questions.

The committee should endeavor to use behavioural type questions. Behavioural interviewing is based on the theory that past behaviour predicts future behaviour. A selection committee needs to know what a candidate has done rather than what they would or might do. Further information about this questioning style is available from Appendix 2.

The committee should prepare a set of questions that ask about a candidate's:

- skills,
- knowledge,
- competencies,
- previous job and life experiences,
- qualifications, and
- understanding of the position requirements.

In preparing questions, the committee should openly discuss the knowledge, skills, competencies and experience they expect candidates to address in their responses. This ensures that committee members who may not have expertise in the particular area will know what to expect in the answer. The strategy also ensures that each interviewee is evaluated against the same criteria.

The purpose of questioning is to determine:

- how well the applicant meets the selection criteria;
- how well he or she could perform the duties of the job;
- the person who best demonstrates their ability to meet the advertised selection criteria;
- 'Team Fit';
- which candidates do not meet certain criteria; and to
- clarify issues or ambiguities in the application document.

Preparing the Venue

Arrange the venue appropriately

- Choose a comfortable and private room with adequate lighting.
- Remove any visible or audible distractions, eg telephone inc. mobiles / paging systems / notice boards, etc.
- Ensure good seating arrangements.
- Consider the location of seating for candidates with known hearing, sight or physical disability.

Successful interviews allow information flow between the candidate and selection committee members. Establish an open and friendly rapport with the candidate as soon as possible to help them overcome any anxiety or nervousness they may be experiencing.

The Convener Role

It is the role of the Convener to manage the interview by:

- ensuring a consistent and equitable approach to the process (See Appendix 4);
- encouraging the interviewee to reply fully to questions;
- managing a candidate who continues to talk when the question has been answered adequately;
- calling for copies of publications and/or journal articles (where these have been requested);
- setting the pace to ensure all questions are covered;
- managing the interview schedule;
- bringing the interview to conclusion;
- providing post-interview counselling to internal staff members;
- providing post-interview counselling to other candidates upon request.

Techniques

Greeting the Candidate & Establishing Rapport

The Convener should:

- greet the candidate before they enter the interview room.
- inform the candidate who is on the selection committee and where they will be seated.
- introduce the members of the selection committee to the candidate.
- open the interview with an informal question, eg weather, journey, finding the venue, etc, in order to put the applicant at ease.

Setting the Scene

The Convener should advise the candidate:

- that the interview process is formal.
- that the committee will ask questions relating to experience, skills, etc.
- that they may ask questions and offer further information at the conclusion of the interview.
- that committee members may take notes throughout the interview for later recollection.
- the expected duration of the interview.

The Convener should also provide a brief overview of the job and the workplace, including the following:

- Explaining where the position fits into the School/Unit;
- Advising how many people in the team;
- Advising any Resources / Constraints / Challenges that may apply to the job.

Asking Questions

Committee members should ask the agreed primary questions consistently for all candidates, however are not constrained to 'follow up' or 'probing' questions if they wish to seek further information in a particular area.

Invite Questions from the Candidate

As well as specific questions relating to the School/Unit, be prepared for more general questions on:

- strategic directions;
- policy on staff training and development;
- annual and sick leave entitlements;
- flexible work arrangements;
- relocation assistance.

Do not enter salary negotiations during the interview. These discussions can lead candidates to believe that their salary expectations are part of the selection decision.

Close the Interview

The Convener should:

- advise the candidate what will happen next and when they can expect to hear the outcome.
- advise the candidate that the University may contact their nominated referees.
- thank the candidate for his/her interest in applying for employment at the University.

DELIBERATIONS

After the last candidate is interviewed, evaluate all relevant information (application, interview, exercise/task/seminar, referee reports) to select the most suitable candidate on merit.

Your HRO may facilitate the deliberations and provide advice on policy or procedure.

All candidates should be ranked individually against the selection criteria by each committee member. Committee members should each discuss the rationale behind their ranking. External committee members should offer their ranking and rationale first, followed by other committee members with the convener providing their ranking last.

Private information, hearsay, or information from outside or personal sources must not be introduced into discussion or consideration of suitability (other than nominated referee reports).

Differences of opinion should be seen as both natural and helpful rather than as a hindrance in decision making. Generally, difference in opinion will result in more thorough consideration of all information.

Committee members should not feel compelled to change their minds simply to avoid conflict or reach agreement. The Convener must not exert pressure or try to influence committee members.

Further information regarding 'Hazards in Selection and Equity' considerations is available from Appendix 3 and Appendix 4.

Committee members should agree on the ranking of applicants. However, if an impasse occurs, the committee should consider alternative courses of action:

- second interviews.
- additional referee information.
- submission of a minority report.
- re-framing the selection criteria to better reflect the skills needed to perform the job and re-advertise.

The committee needs to consider:

- acceptance or rejection of the first offer.
- suitability of second and third ranked candidates.
- creation of an eligibility list to be accessed within a six-month timeframe, ie for similar positions that may become available.

Outcomes are confidential and **must not be discussed** by committee members outside of the selection proceedings.

Using a **Selection Committee Report proforma**, provided by HRS, the committee is to fully complete the various sections including:

- Selection criteria/General Staff
- Agreed core questions/General Staff
- Agreed ranking
- Probationary period - discuss probationary requirements with your HRO
- Recommended commencement salary with justification
- List of candidates not suitable for appointment, with reasons
- All committee members' signatures on the report
- A minority report as an attachment if there is dissent regarding the final recommendation

Notes from verbal referee reports are to be provided as an attachment to the recommendation.

REFEREE CHECKS

All applicants are required to provide the names and contact details of three referees who are familiar with their skills and abilities.

For **Academic Positions**, it will be decided at the shortlisting if written or verbal referee reports are required. If written, confidential written referee reports will be sought for all shortlisted candidates by Human Resource Services. If verbal, the convener should follow up verbally with referees of the preferred candidate/s (or, at a minimum, the first ranked candidate) before a final recommendations is made. A written record detailing the nature of verbal reference checks must be made and attached to the selection committee report.

For **General Positions**, the convener should follow up verbally with referees of the preferred candidate/s (or, at a minimum, the first ranked candidate) before a final recommendations is made. A written record detailing the nature of verbal reference checks must be made and attached to the selection committee report.

APPROVAL

Following completion of the selection committee report, your HRO will:

- submit the recommendation to the to the appropriate officer, depending on level of position, for approval: ([see Delegations](#) contained in the *Delegation of Authority Policy*);
- advise the convener when approval is gained.

MAKING AN OFFER

Upon notification of approval from your HRO, the convener (or nominee) will contact the preferred candidate to offer the position.

Human Resource Services will send the preferred candidate the written offer. The written offer sets out the terms and conditions of employment of the appointment. The successful candidate is required to formally accept the offer in writing within a specified period of time.

NOTIFY UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES

The convener (or nominee) should notify any internal applicants that they have been unsuccessful. Letters to unsuccessful candidates (interviewed) are sent by Human Resource Services after the above acceptance is received.

Providing Post-Selection Feedback

If requested, the convener (or nominee) will provide unsuccessful candidates with feedback.

Plan to:

- Explain the aims of the meeting
- Refer to the selection criteria and notes from the interview
- Relate discussion solely to the criteria
- Provide positive feedback first
- Indicate areas for improvement, suggesting training and career development options, and providing hints on ways to improve in future interviews

Avoid:

- Personal criticisms or reflection
- Discussion regarding other applicants
- Comparative comments or statements
- Debate on the outcome

Appendix 1 – Shortlisting and Confidentiality Form

Appendix 2 – Targeted Selection Interviewing Techniques

Appendix 3 – Hazards in Selection

Appendix 4 – Equity Considerations

SELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS' TOOLKIT

SHORTLISTING AND CONFIDENTIALITY FORM

Introduction

The University of Newcastle expects that members of selection committees will observe confidentiality in regard to all aspects of recruitment. Unless expressly authorised by the convenor of the selection committee, a member of a committee may not contact applicants, referees or seek information on applicants from other sources.

Where a committee member believes that their knowledge of an individual (by virtue of professional, social or private association, or any other factor) may influence their decision, they must withdraw from the committee.

Procedure

Committee members

- Independently complete and forward the *Shortlisting Form*, marked "Confidential", to Human Resource Services via email, fax or in person prior to the shortlisting meeting.
- Attend shortlisting meeting (if scheduled).

Convenor

- Liaise with your HRO to finalise the Interview shortlist and other details.

Committee Member Confidentiality Undertaking

I undertake to observe strict confidentiality with regard to information relating to recruitment and appointment to this position, which I will have access to by reason of my membership of the selection committee. I declare that I have no personal or pecuniary interest or involvement with any applicant for this position nor do I have any such interest in the outcome of this selection process. I acknowledge that I may not make contact with an applicant or any other person in connection with an applicant, unless explicitly directed to do so by the convener of the selection committee. I acknowledge and accept that a breach of this undertaking may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Name: _____

Organisational Unit: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Shortlist (Recommended for Interview)

Position		
Reference Number		
For International applicants, please indicate the desired Interview method. (V ideoconference; I eleconference; A ttendance; or C onsideration in absentia).		
NAME	REASON	Aboriginal or Torres Straight Islander ¹
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:		

¹ If, during the shortlisting process, the application documentation reveals Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island association (regardless that the applicant has not already disclosed this information), then the selection committee must be reconfigured to incorporate an ATSI member.

SELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS' TOOLKIT

TARGETED SELECTION INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

Targeted selection is a method for the screening of job applicants based on their:

- Qualifications (technical fit) – the “must haves”
- Experience (behavioural fit) – the “can dos”
- What they are prepared / not prepared to do (motivational fit) – the “will dos”

Questions are based around “Targets” (competencies) as detailed in the job description / selection criteria, eg “Initiative”. Targeted selection provides a sound alternative to theoretical-based questioning in interviews which often results in theoretical or text-book style answers.

Behavioural Questions

Behavioural interviewing is based on the theory that past behaviour predicts future behaviour. A selection committee needs to know what a candidate has done rather than what they would or might do.

For example, if one of your Targets for an Administrative position was “Planning & Organising”, instead of asking an interviewee “Tell us how you would manage a busy day” instead ask “Tell me about a time when you faced conflicting priorities and how you determined the top priority”.

Responses to behavioural questions must meet the STAR principle by including the following:

- **Situation/Task** (What was the background/context?)
- **Action** (What the candidate said or did in response to a situation/task)
- **Result** (The effect of the candidate’s actions)

Follow Up Questions

As many candidates provide partial STARS (missing information) or false STARS (vague, theoretical/future-based or opinions) you may need to ask several follow-up questions to evaluate the candidate for that Target. All follow up questions should be phrased in the behavioural style to ensure you receive the information you need.

Motivational Fit Questions

In addition to Behavioural interviewing, questions around Motivational Fit provide a behavioural approach to evaluate personal attributes which may otherwise prove elusive. Motivational Fit is based on facets (low or extreme) which describe the characteristics of the job/organisation that results in personal satisfaction. Candidates who are hired who enjoy their work are more likely to remain with the organisation over time.

For example, if one of your extreme facets (many opportunities) was “Travel”. In this instance, where the role required the incumbent to travel on a weekly basis and you asked them a question “Can you give me an example of something from your last job that dissatisfied you?” and the response was the many hours of travelling they had to do, you would need to consider whether this was the right job fit.

If one of the low facets (few opportunities) was “Promotion” and you asked them a question “Can you give me an example of something from your last job that satisfied you?” and they mentioned they were very happy with the opportunities to move quickly through their last job, then this may not be the right job fit as they may get frustrated with the lack of promotion opportunities.

SELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS' TOOLKIT

HAZARDS IN SELECTION

First impressions	Initial impressions of a candidate bias the interviewer either for or against them.
"Halo" effect	Where a committee member is so impressed by one attribute of a candidate that they will attribute positive qualities for all other criteria regardless of the evidence.
Leniency or strictness	Where candidates are appraised either too leniently, or too strictly.
Primacy and Recency	A tendency to recall the first few or last few candidates only, (hence the importance of written interview notes).
"Outsiders"	A tendency to give a lower estimate to a candidate because they are not from "within" the organisation or, because their current workplace or role is looked upon in less favourable terms.

Over-emphasis on the interview

Some selection committees try to glean information on the full range of selection criteria during interviews. It has been shown, however, that few interpersonal skills are reliably and validly assessable at interview. Some information, such as applicant's efficiency and standard of work, can be assessed by other means, for example, interpersonal abilities stated in the criteria are best checked verbally with nominated referees; other skills are evident from tests, set tasks, presentations and work samples.

Rushed final decision

Selection committees sometimes fail to consider all the available information and instead make hasty decisions based on impressions. In other cases, the majority vote prevails, with some members changing their minds or having to accept a decision about which they still have serious doubts.

It is important to ensure that undue weight is not given to lack of skills which may be overcome by a short period of on-the-job training. An applicant may lack some ability in written work, but in all aspects is the best candidate. Where a deficiency is not serious enough to prevent the applicant from performing the main duties of the job, the committee should consider whether a period of training would be sufficient to develop the applicant's writing skills in an acceptable period of time.

SELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS' TOOLKIT

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

- Committee members should be aware that there are cultural differences in behaviour: for example, in some cultures it is polite to speak quietly, or rude to make direct eye contact.
- Committee members should be aware that a strong accent does not necessarily indicate poor understanding of English, it merely indicates the divergence between English and the speaker's own language.
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 makes it illegal to ask questions directly about a candidate's disability. The selection panel should ask the same questions that they would of a person without disability and ensure that the questions are focused on the inherent requirements of the job or job essentials. The only questions a selection panel can ask about a disability or injury relate to any adjustments required to ensure a fair and equitable interview and selection process, or how, the disability may impact on some aspects of the inherent requirements of a job and any adjustments that may be required to complete the inherent requirements of the job

Any other questions about a candidate's disability are inappropriate, including questions about how they acquired their disability and specific details of the disability that are not related to the physical or mental requirements of the job.

Equity Considerations in Interview Arrangements

Some people with a disability may require reasonable adjustments at the interview. If a candidate chooses to disclose their disability to the selection panel prior to the interview, ask the candidate what adjustments they may need for the interview. They may or may not be aware of their requirements. For example:

- a candidate with vision impairment may need detailed instructions and extra time to find the interview location.
- a candidate who is deaf may require an Auslan (Australian Sign Language) interpreter to be present at the interview.

For any candidate who chooses to disclose a disability prior to interview, they may wish to support the process to achieve the best responses for each question. For example, for someone who has difficulty with literacy, they may request all aspects of the interview and selection process to be verbal.

Some Australian Government employment service providers may also offer to be present at the interview to support both the person with the disability and the University through the process. This will involve a clear discussion with the candidate about the parameters of the service provider's involvement.

Support people may take a passive role at the interview, and simply be there for the candidate or they may take a more active role in the interview process. For example, the candidate may choose to discuss the difficulties that arise from their disability while the support person may take on the role of discussing the arrangement of workplace modifications that may be required to allow the candidate to perform the job to the standard required.

Another example is when assistance is provided to an employer to modify interview questions to keep the language simple. When present at the interview, if the selection panel asks a question which the support person believes would be difficult for the candidate to answer due to its complexity, the support person could, with permission, rephrase the question into clearer language or split the question into a series of shorter questions to gain a better response.

Hearing Impairment

When interviewing applicants who lip-read, arrange the room so that applicants are seated with any bright light sources (e.g. a window) behind them. When speaking, ensure that you are facing the applicant. Speak a little more slowly and distinctly than usual, but avoid exaggeration of lip movement. Avoid gesturing around your face because it can be distracting and can block the view of your lips.

Some applicants may require the services of a signing interpreter to facilitate communication at the interview. This can be arranged in advance by Human Resource Services. When an applicant is assisted by a signing interpreter, the interpreter should stand or sit next to the particular committee member asking the questions, so that the applicant can easily shift her/his gaze from the interpreter to questioner and back again. Maintain eye contact with the interview candidate, and not the signing interpreter. Ask questions directly to the candidate, not the interpreter.

Visual Impairment & Blindness

Visual impairment is the partial loss of sight to varying degrees. Blindness is full loss of sight. Upon meeting with a visually impaired or blind candidate, ask if and how they wish you to assist them. Escort applicants with a visual disability into the room by offering your arm and guiding the individual to their seat. Place the applicant's hand on the back of the seat. Introduce the committee members by name and title in order of seating arrangement. A common mistake that many sighted people make is to speak more loudly when they address a sight-impaired person on the assumption the person cannot hear normally. Rooms with low light levels or with bright/dull light contrasts should be avoided if either a committee member or an applicant has a partial sight loss.

Physical Disability

Access may present difficulties to any candidate, regardless of the nature of their disability. Where possible, interviews should be scheduled in a venue that is readily accessible to suitable parking or set-down and pick-up. The venue should also have ready access to disabled toilet facilities. These facilities should also be checked prior to the interviews to ensure that they are serviceable.