



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

RECRUITMENT TOOLKIT

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INTERVIEW AND
ASSESSMENT

A Guide to Interviewing Candidates

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Welcome

Welcome to the LSE's **Guide to Interviewing Candidates**. This document builds on the School's *Recruitment and Selection Policy (Professional Services Salaried Staff)* and provides further practical guidance to help managers across the School recruit and select staff.

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1. Introduction

This section of the recruitment toolkit has been created to support recruiting managers with interviewing.

It provides you with an overview of what good practice interviewing looks like and what legal obligations you should be aware of, particularly with regards to avoiding discrimination.

1.1 Good practice when conducting interviews

The purpose of conducting interviews is to collect information on each candidate’s job-related knowledge, skills and experience in order to decide which candidate is the most suitable person for a particular role.

Interview questions should therefore be structured to enable the candidate to share and evidence their experience, and interviewers should be mindful not to make decisions based on assumptions about candidates that are linked to the interviewer’s own views and opinions.

As a recruiting manager, you should establish a set of **core questions** to ask all candidates. These will typically be competency (also known as behavioural) based questions, which provide candidates with the opportunity to provide example based responses in order to evidence how they meet the person specification. A set of core questions will ensure consistency and fairness, as all candidates will be given an equal opportunity to share their skills and abilities.

Whilst a core set of questions is important, you should not restrict the interview process to these questions only. At times there will be a need to ask candidates to expand on their answers and clarify points, for example where a candidate has provided a vague response, or you need them to explain a gap in their employment history.

Using job-related exercises as part of the selection process can also be helpful to assess elements of

the person specification that are difficult to test at interview or evaluate through references.



1.2 The Law

Employers are liable for any discriminatory actions carried out by their staff in the course of their employment.

This means that if a recruiting manager who is conducting interviews does or says anything that could be construed as discriminatory, the School will potentially be liable to pay compensation to the victim if a successful claim is later made at an employment tribunal.

All candidates are protected against discrimination because of:

- Sex
- Transgender status (i.e. where a job applicant has had a sex change or is in the process of changing sex)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race

- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Disability

It is also unlawful to regret a candidate on the grounds of their past or present trade union membership or, with some exceptions, on the basis of a 'spent' criminal conviction.

The general principle contained in anti-discrimination legislation is that all candidates must be treated equally, irrespective of the protected characteristics outlined above.

For more information on the School's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) you can read the School's EDI statement [here](#).

"... all candidates must be treated equally, irrespective of the protected characteristics"

1.2 Direct and indirect discrimination

Direct discrimination: Direct discrimination happens when a person, or a group of people, is treated less favourably than another person or group because of their background or certain personal characteristics.

Indirect discrimination: Indirect discrimination occurs where a policy or action applies to everybody but results in individuals with certain protected characteristics (e.g., race or gender) being put at a disadvantage.

It is irrelevant whether or not discriminatory treatment is intentional.

2. Tips of Questioning Style

- Help the candidate to show themselves in their best light. Do not let a robust questioning technique make the candidate feel interrogated and unwelcome.
- Listen carefully to what the candidate says and allow them thinking time to respond to questions.
- Try to ensure that your **tone is consistent for all candidates**, i.e. that you are not more familiar or more formal with some candidates.
- **Avoid leading questions** or ones which call for simply 'yes' or 'no' answers.
- Use open questions to encourage the candidate to talk, e.g. "Tell me about a time when ...", "Can you give an example of where you have had to ..."
- **Avoid asking multiple questions in one go**, as candidates can forget parts of the question being asked. Instead use **probing questions** to gain detail, especially if the candidate is being evasive e.g. "Can you explain exactly what your role in the project was ..."
- Close the discussion down or move on if the candidate is not providing useful information, e.g. "Thank you. I would like to move on now to ask you about ..."
- Use language carefully, especially when dealing with candidates who form a minority with respect to the department e.g. in terms of gender or ethnicity.
- Unless you are very sure of your ground, take care with humour, as much humour is based on stereotypes.

3. Reasonable adjustments

What to do if a candidate requires additional support at interview

Candidates may make requests with regards to the location of an interview, or for additional time to complete an assessment, or for interviews to take place a particular time(s) of the day. You should consider all requests, and, where reasonable, take action to accommodate requests such as these.

If a candidate has declared a disability or requested adjustments to the interview / assessment, your HR Adviser will be able to provide you with further advice.

Be aware that some candidates may not have English as their first language, so try to keep your language simple, avoid colloquialisms, local cultural references or LSE / School specific language.

4. Note taking during the interview

It is important that each member of the interview panel records notes about each candidate during the interview. If a candidate challenges a decision which results in an Employment Tribunal, interview notes can be required as evidence in court.

Notes should be kept by the Department / Division for 6 months after the post has been filled. After this time they must be destroyed using confidential waste bins.

Notes can aid comparisons between candidates; however, you must not take notes which are irrelevant to the job or the criteria, e.g. notes about physical appearance.



BE CAREFUL

While you are encouraged to take notes during the interview, **do not** make any notes about how a candidate looks, even if it is just to remember who is who.

Do not make any notes about gender, race, religion, age or any other personal characteristics or attributes.

4.1 Confidentiality

Please remember that details of an individual's performance at interview, test results and the contents of references should all be considered as confidential.

Details should not be disclosed to or discussed with anyone other than panel members and HR.

4.2 Reaching a decision

When all candidates have been interviewed, the chair of the panel will encourage you to discuss each candidate in turn, assessing them against the agreed criteria.

Please ensure that:

- You always compare the candidate to the criteria drawn from the person specification and job description. It is not helpful to compare candidates directly with each other.
- It is advisable to use a grid or scoring matrix to mark candidates against the agreed criteria. For example each candidate can be scored 1-3 for each criteria.

- The panel should decide which, if any, candidates are not appointable where they don't meet the minimum criteria and then rank the appointable candidate(s).

You may discover that none of the candidates meet the required criteria. In this case it is usually better in the long term to interview other potentially appointable candidates or re-advertise, rather than appoint someone who is not capable of doing the job.

Remember, if the successful candidate requires Tier 2 sponsorship, you will need to have this approved by the School in advance, and you will need to demonstrate how your successful candidate meets all of the criteria you asked for in your advert. This means that you will need to complete the shortlisting matrix for all applicants, as well as return a summary for each interviewed candidate to explain why they were (or were not) offered the job

4.3 Feedback

The panel should decide who will provide verbal feedback to interviewed candidates if requested, or if there are internal candidates. Feedback should only be provided verbally, and is normally given by the chair of the panel.

Internal candidates should be informed in person by the chair, whether they have been successful or not.

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