



ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES MANUAL

SUBJECT: INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

A. INTRODUCTION TO INTERVIEWING

An Appointing Authority/Designee/Hiring Manager/Supervisor should know Dane County's policies on interviewing and employee selection. At a minimum, the following steps should be followed for all selections:

1. Review the policy on Hiring to Fill Civil Service Positions in this Administrative Practices Manual (APM).
2. Review current policies on selection that pertain to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), socio-economically disadvantaged individuals and individuals from marginalized groups.
3. When using interview panels, make every reasonable effort to have a panel that is reflective of citizens of Dane County. Panels should not be comprised entirely of members from one gender, race, ethnic, disability or age group.
4. If you need help securing members who are representative of people with disabilities, a different gender, race, ethnic, or age group, contact the Tamara D. Grigsby Dane County Civil Rights Department (DCCRD) at phone number (608) 266-4795.
5. Employees represented by Employee Groups whether dues paying or not, shall neither participate on interview panels nor grade applicant exams/supplemental question responses. It is Management's right to hire and address staffing needs, and it is a conflict of interest having an Employee Group member selecting a peer.
6. Interview questions can periodically be reviewed by the Employee Relations (ER) Division. Any doubts regarding the phrasing of a particular interview question should be directed to ER.
7. Interview questions must be job related and free of bias. (Refer to Appendix A at the end of this document – "*Notes for Dane County Interviewers and Exam Reviewers/Graders: Overcoming Interviewer/Grader/Reviewer Bias*".
8. Review the following suggested guidelines on how to conduct interviews and select employees. If you have additional questions or concerns please contact Employee Relations.

B. PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

1. Hiring capable staff is one of a supervisor's most important tasks. Staff set the tone for the work environment and affect the ability of a supervisor to carry out their department's mission.
2. An oral interview (in-person, virtually through video conference or via telephone call) is the most frequent method used to determine applicant selection. In addition, it is usually a supervisor's first chance to meet an applicant, and in some cases the only chance, before making a selection decision. Interviews should serve two (2) purposes: (1) The supervisor provides the applicant with the position's information; and (2) The supervisor uses the interview to gather information about an applicant's qualifications.

Note: In some cases for the **initial interview**, you may offer the option of virtual video-conference or phone interviews to applicants for whom travel distance is prohibitive or are out of town (e.g., vacation, but want to interview). For **final** interviews, in-person interviews are recommended.

3. Take care to ensure that information presented to applicants is not done in a manner that discourages any applicant. It is crucial that they provide a fair and objective evaluation of every applicant's qualifications.



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C. PRE-INTERVIEW CONTACTS

1. The purpose of pre-interview contacts is to schedule interviews, and supply applicants with enough basic information about a position to allow them to decide if an interview will be mutually beneficial.
2. If a written notice is used to inform applicants of interview times, the following basic information should be included in the notice:
 - a) Job classification titles and working titles (if they are different).
 - b) Beginning pay rate and pay range.
 - c) Work shift hours and schedule.
 - d) Department name and work site location.
 - e) Special requirements.
 - f) Short description of duties.
 - g) The name of a person to contact for interview arrangements.
3. Eligible applicants are usually referred from certification/eligibility lists to the hiring department. In order for an applicant to be on a certification list, an exam or evaluation of an applicant's responses to supplemental questions process is used to determine whether an applicant meets the minimum requirements of the position. Interviews can be used to verify the possession of these qualifications, such as current valid licenses or completion of degrees (where appropriate to classification specifications).
4. The hiring department's designated contact person for interviewees should have enough information about the position to answer basic questions. Applicants may lose interest if it appears during initial contacts that a department is disorganized.
5. Pressure to fill positions promptly is not an acceptable reason to ignore an applicant's need to arrange their schedule.
6. When a written notice is used to schedule interviews, allow a reply time of seven (7) days, and put the actual deadline date in the notice.
7. Hiring Managers/Supervisors should use written email notices to inform applicants of interviews. When it is necessary to use a phone to arrange interviews and two (2) attempts to reach an applicant are unsuccessful, the hiring manager should then use a written email notice providing a one (1) day deadline for a response from the applicant. If the applicant does not respond by the deadline, the hiring manager/supervisor should contact the Human Resources Analyst who can then send the name of the next applicant on the certification list.

D. PLANNING THE INTERVIEW

1. The person who will conduct the interviews should be sufficiently familiar with a position to list the essential knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) and other position-related factors needed for successful performance. It might be helpful to separate these into the following categories:
 - a) Qualifications that are desirable, but may not be absolutely essential. (You may use responses to desirable qualifications to help you decide who to select between your top finalists.)
 - b) Qualifications which are essential for satisfactory job performance but could be restructured.
 - c) Qualifications which are not only essential, but are critical to perform the core responsibilities of the position and cannot be restructured out of the position.

NOTE: Ask questions that focus on qualifications/knowledge/skills/abilities that a person **must have on the first day of hire**. Do not disqualify applicants by asking questions regarding qualifications that they can easily learn on the job.

2. In compiling such a list of the position's essential characteristics, the class specifications, position's essential duties and the supervisor's knowledge of the position should be used.
3. The minimum requirements used in the job posting, should be the same criteria used to select an employee. However, when trying to determine the best candidate between two or more individuals, as a tie-breaker, you can consider if they also have preferred requirements.



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4. After identifying the essential knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) for each of the major position duties, develop a list of questions that are designed to learn about an applicant's possession of related KSAs and other related factors. All questions should be job-related. (Refer to Appendix B – *Sample Interview Questions and Grading Criteria Template* at the end of this document.
5. The purpose of having a list of questions is to ensure that each applicant has an opportunity to describe their knowledge, skills and abilities as they relate to a position. An applicant's answers should provide a basis for making an informed selection decision.
6. The interview questions may focus on the following:
 - a) Applicant's previous education and work experience, interest in the position duties and willingness to accept the working conditions.
 - b) Behavioral interview questions which ask for specific examples of past experiences to predict future performance, covering topics like teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, adaptability, etc.
 - c) Some questions on hypothetical situations where the applicant describes how they might handle a particular issue. (Limit asking hypothetical questions because applicants can always guess at the best answer to provide.)
7. The same questions should be asked of all applicants and in a consistent manner.
8. Interviewers can repeat and also ask clarifying questions if an applicant's answer is not clear. Do not provide them examples of the type(s) of answer you are looking for. E.g., If an applicant provides an answer, you can say: "Tell us more..." "Please clarify what you mean...", etc.

E. QUESTIONS THAT ARE CONSIDERED INAPPROPRIATE AND/OR ILLEGAL

NOTE: The key to lawful employment inquiries is to ask only about those areas that will provide information as to the person's ability to do the job, with reasonable accommodation.

Remember that the following list is concerned only with the potential *unlawful* use of information. If some of the information discussed here is needed for post-employment purposes, it can be obtained after the applicant has been selected for employment. The Employee Relations Division may answer departments', employees' and applicants' questions, even if posed anonymously by telephone, about interpretations of discrimination laws and the complaint process itself.

Following is a list in alphabetical order for ease of reference:

1. **AGE / DATE OF BIRTH?** The Wisconsin Fair Employment Law and the Federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act prohibit discrimination on the basis of age. Wisconsin prohibits discrimination on the basis of age against individuals who are age 40 and over, while federal law covers ages 40 through 70. Answers to these questions could be used unlawfully.
2. **ARRESTS / CONVICTIONS?**
 - a) **ARRESTS:** Wisconsin law prohibits inquiries about **arrest** records. The only arrest record that may be considered is one involving a pending charge. A past arrest that did not lead to a conviction should not be considered since the person was not proven guilty.
 - i. If an applicant has a pending arrest that is related to the job to be performed, an employer can either suspend judgment until the court decision, if possible, or advise the applicant to reapply when the pending charge has been resolved. An employer should never reject an applicant outright, or discharge an employee, because of a pending arrest.
 - ii. Federal law does not specifically address arrest records, but covers this area when inquiries about arrests tend to exclude members of particular minority groups.



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- b) **CONVICTIONS:** The Wisconsin Fair Employment Law prohibits an employer from refusing to employ a person with a conviction record unless the circumstances of the conviction substantially relate to circumstances of the particular job. If the application form makes any inquiry about convictions, it should indicate that a criminal record does not automatically bar an applicant from employment and will be considered only as it relates to the job in question. Further, any person who evaluates information concerning criminal records should be given careful instructions regarding the limited ways in which it may be used.
3. **AVAILABLE FOR SATURDAY OR SUNDAY WORK?** This question may discourage applications from persons of certain religions which prohibit their adherents from working on Saturday or Sunday. On the other hand, employers may need to know whether an applicant can work on these days. The Wisconsin Fair Employment Law and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 both prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion and require accommodation of a person's religious beliefs and practices. Both laws exempt employers from compliance who can demonstrate that they are unable to reasonably accommodate an employee's (or prospective employee's) religious observance or practice without undue hardship on the conduct of the business.
- NOTE:** If a question about Saturday and Sunday work is asked, it could be framed as follows: "This position requires work on Saturday and/or Sunday. Are you able to perform this essential job duty with or without accommodation?"
4. **CHILDREN UNDER 18 / NUMBER OF CHILDREN / AGE OF CHILDREN / CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENTS FOR MINOR CHILDREN?** The purpose of these questions is to indirectly explore what the employer believes to be a common source of absenteeism and tardiness, often stereotyped towards women as primary caregivers. Common causes of absenteeism and tardiness affect employees regardless of their gender. Instead, one can ask an applicant if they have any responsibilities that would interfere with their ability to attend work regularly.
- NOTE: "Business Necessity":** An employer may only ask questions about certain characteristics if they are clearly essential to the job. For example, an employer can ask if a candidate can work on weekends, but they must ask this question to all applicants.
5. **CITIZEN OF WHICH COUNTRY?** There are Federal guidelines on discrimination because of national origin which contain the following statement: "Because discrimination on the basis of citizenship has the effect of discriminating on the basis of national origin, a lawfully immigrated alien who is domiciled or residing in this country may not be discriminated against on the basis of citizenship," unless national security requirements mandated by a federal statute or executive order authorize otherwise. State and federal courts have recently declared invalid laws in several states which exclude non-citizens from public employment. Both Wisconsin and federal laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of national origin. In addition, because this question asks of **which** country the applicant is a citizen, it makes it possible to discriminate on the basis of a **particular** national origin.
6. **CREDIT RECORD? (CHARGE ACCOUNTS? OWN YOUR OWN HOME / CAR/ FURNITURE? OWN A CAR? etc.)** Unless clearly required by business necessity and related to essential functions of the job under consideration, such questions are usually irrelevant and unlawful.
7. **DISABILITIES?** The Wisconsin Fair Employment Law and the federal Americans with Disabilities Act define a person with a disability as someone who has a record of, or is perceived as having, a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a person from achieving in major life activities or limits their capacity to work. Under these laws an employer may not make any inquiries regarding a person's health status.
- NOTE:** An employer may ask applicants if they can **perform the essential functions of the job**, provided **all** applicants are treated the same and asked the same question. Also, employers should **notify applicants of their willingness to reasonably accommodate a person with a disability**.
8. **EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND?** Care should be taken to only ask about or consider **clearly job-related education** when a hiring decision is made. Consideration of degrees or formal education in making hiring decisions may be unlawful when there is a disparate impact on some protected groups, and the employer is unable to show how the degree or education is necessary for the performance of the job. Rather than asking about a degree or diploma, consider how the applicants can actually demonstrate that they have the skills necessary to function in the job.
9. **EYES? HAIR?** Eye color and hair color and styles are not related to the performance of jobs and may serve to indicate an employee's race, religion or national origin.



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10. **FIDELITY BOND EVER REFUSED TO YOU?** [DEFINITION: A fidelity bond is an insurance policy that protects employers from financial losses due to employee dishonesty, theft, or embezzlement. There are two main categories: first-party bonds cover an employer against their own employees, while third-party bonds cover a business from the actions of contracted workers.] This question should only be asked when applicants are applying for a position requiring bonding. Even then the information should be used with care, taking into consideration factors such as the length of time since the refusal and the prospective applicant's current bondability.
11. **FRIENDS OR RELATIVES WORKING FOR US?** This question may reflect a preference for friends or relatives of present employees. Such a preference would be unlawful if it has the effect of reducing employment opportunities for women or individuals from marginalized groups. It would have this unlawful effect if an employer's present workforce differs significantly in its proportion of women or minorities from the population of the area from which workers are recruited

Under the current interpretations of discrimination on the basis of marital status, it is illegal to refuse to hire someone because that person's spouse works for the same employer. However, it would **not** be illegal to refuse to hire if one spouse would directly supervise the other.
12. **GARNISHMENT RECORD?** This question could have a tendency to exclude members of some groups. Wage garnishments do not affect a worker's ability to effectively perform assigned work.
13. **HEIGHT? WEIGHT?** Some employers impose minimum height or weight requirements for employees that are not related to the job to be performed and which exclude above-average percentages of women and certain nationality groups. Weight and height may be a protected disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Wisconsin law if the height and weight are caused by an underlying medical condition.
14. **HONESTY TESTING? ARE HONESTY TESTS REQUIRED AS PART OF THE EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION PROCESS?** Hiring decisions may not be based on the results of a polygraph test, without the employer considering additional relevant information obtained independently. Wisconsin law further requires the employer to use only one permitted type of mechanical device that visually, permanently and simultaneously records the person's cardiovascular and respiratory patterns and changes. The applicant must voluntarily submit and be informed in writing and orally, about the testing requirement in advance. Questions must be related to the person's performance or conduct in past or present employment.
15. **LOWEST SALARY WILL ACCEPT?** Dane County offers competitive pay – starting minimum wages are provided on the job posting. Interviewers should not ask salary related questions during the interview. It is unlawful to pay individuals who are performing the same or similar work different wages based on their gender.
16. **MAIDEN NAME?** This is not relevant to a person's ability to perform a job and could be used for a discriminatory purpose. E.g., a woman's maiden name might be used as an indication of her religion or national origin. This item also constitutes an inquiry into marital status (refer to next section).
17. **MARITAL STATUS?** The Wisconsin Fair Employment Law specifically prohibits discrimination based on marital status. Marital status is defined as the state of being married, single, divorced, separated or widowed. It would violate both Wisconsin and federal law, for example, for an employer to refuse to hire a married woman or pay a married woman less than a married man for the same work because of the belief that the woman's pay represents a second family income while men's pay does not. Finally, an employer should not refuse to hire a person for any job/job-type because of the employer's beliefs concerning morality, parental or family responsibility, or because that person's spouse already works for the employer.
18. **MR. / MS. / MISS / MRS.?** This is another way of asking the applicant's sex and (for women only) marital status, which are all irrelevant.
19. **PREGNANT / PLANNING ON HAVING CHILDREN?** An employer may not refuse to hire someone under both Wisconsin and federal employment laws, because they are, or might become pregnant. An employer may be charged with discrimination for asking this question, even if a decision not to hire was made on some other basis.
20. **PRIOR NAME?** An employer might ask if a person has used a different name in previous employment so that the employer can check references. Although traditionally only women have changed their names upon marriage, the employer should not make any assumptions about the reasons for an applicant's name change.



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21. **SEX?** Wisconsin Fair Employment Law and Title VII prohibit discrimination in employment on the basis of sex except in the very few instances in which sex may be a "bona fide occupational qualification reasonably necessary to the normal operation" of the employer's business. E.g., Dane County's Juvenile Detention may require sex-based hiring depending on the detention population the individual will be serving.
22. **SPOUSE'S NAME?** To the extent that this question asks for marital status, the comments on marital status apply. A spouse's name may also be used as an indication of religion or national origin.
23. **SPOUSE'S WORK?** To the extent that this question also asks for marital status, the comments on marital status apply. In addition, some employers have been reluctant to hire a woman if that would make her the second breadwinner in the family, while there is seldom any objection to hiring a man if that would make him the second family breadwinner. Such a policy is unlawful under Wisconsin law and Title VII.
24. **WIDOWED, DIVORCED OR SEPARATED?** Again, marital status is an illegal basis for a hiring decision. In addition, recent statistics show that many more black than white persons are either widowed, divorced or separated and that a much larger proportion of women than men **in the labor force** is either widowed, divorced or separated. So this question has a potential for adversely affecting these two groups.

F. THE INTERVIEW

1. **Do not make assumptions about a person's career plans:** The common assumption is that an individual's career plan indicates something about initiative or ambition – there might not be a correlation, so the question should not be asked. Since career planning has no proven relationship to a person's ability to perform most positions, it should not be discussed.
2. **Interviewer Etiquette:** How you begin an interview sets the tone for what is to follow – (i.e., interviewee's comfort while responding freely to questions).
 - a) Create a welcoming environment with a friendly greeting, a comfortable physical space, and offering a beverage e.g., water (if available).
 - b) Warmly welcome and greet the interviewee verbally as you direct them to their seat. A handshake is not required – some individuals do not like to be touched (e.g., if neurodivergent, health reasons, etc.).
 - c) If someone is masked, ask them if they mind the panel not being masked and explain that policy is flexible on mask usage.
 - d) Set the stage by explaining the interview process and outlining the agenda to manage expectations.
 - e) Foster an open dialogue through active listening and encouraging authenticity so the candidate feels more comfortable and can perform at their best. (Keep in mind the amount of time you have set for the interviews).
3. **Maintain professional style when asking questions:** Only ask questions driven by the essential requirements of a position. There are two general approaches to asking questions: directive questions and open-ended ones. Directive questions should be used to obtain factual information such as, "What college did you attend?" or "How long have you been working as a driver?"
 - a) Directive Questioning can result in yes/no answers which may not enable you to assess an interviewee's qualifications for the job.
 - b) Open-Ended Behavioral Interview Questions focus on past experiences to predict future performance, and common examples include, "Tell me about a time you had a conflict with a team member and how you resolved it. In your answer explain what the situation was, how you resolved it. What, if anything you would do differently." The response to this type of question shows you one's problem-solving skills; one's willingness to own up to what did or didn't work out; ease of self-reflection; etc."



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4. **Construct a good question format.** Interviewers, to the extent possible, should construct questions designed to elicit applicant responses that are potentially verifiable or factual, specific and sample actual behavior.

Preferred Question Type	Rather than	Poor Question Type
a) Verifiable – Factual: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many full-time employees did you supervise on your last job? 		Unverifiable – Interpretive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What aspect of supervision did you find most interesting?
b) Specific: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were your grades in quantum physics? 		General: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well did you do in school?
c) Actual Behavior: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe two strategies that you have used in your previous research in test validation. 		Hypothetical Behavior: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of strategy do you think you might use to research test validation?.

5. **Gather as much information as possible from the interview.** In addition to questions, there are other sources of information available during the interview. Sometimes an interviewee may digress in response to a question which may lead into areas of discussion which may not have been thought of before and which may be helpful in assessing the interviewee's ability to perform successfully. Don't always cut them off immediately, first see where the discussion is going.
6. **Probe into negative or more factual position-related information if necessary:** Almost everyone wants to impress others, and may embellish their experience and abilities almost unconsciously. There may be situations where it is necessary to probe into negative or more factual information even though the interviewee may seem nervous or reluctant to discuss a topic. If the topic is position-related the interviewer may ask in order to help make an informed hiring decision. If the interviewee seems upset by this, explain that a fair evaluation depends on your being sure of everyone's abilities and knowledge, and that some clarification is needed.
7. **Procedures and steps to ensure structured error-limited interviews:**
- a) Interviews should be conducted in facilities which are reasonably comfortable and free from distractions.
 - b) Provide standardized training for all interviewers in the objectives of the interviewing process and the procedures to follow for interviewing and evaluating applicants.
 - c) Provide position applicants with a brief orientation to describe and answer questions on the interviewing procedure.
 - d) Standard lists of questions must be used for all applicants, with only limited follow-up questions permitted; ask questions in same sequence each time. Concerns related to follow-up questions can be directed to the Employee Relations Division.
 - e) Limit the evaluation of applicants to no more than ten (10) well-defined factors.
 - f) Record all evaluations on standard rating forms which you can create/customize for yourself.
 - g) Assign someone to coordinate the interviewing process and to make sure that standard procedures are followed.
8. **Prepare the interview panel.** When selecting and instructing individuals who will be conducting interviews, the following steps should be followed to reduce subjectivity and increase the job relatedness of the interviewing process.
- a. To the extent possible, select interviewers who are knowledgeable about the type of work to be performed (i.e., technical skills) as well as required soft-skills.
 - b) Sensitize interviewers to common sources of rating bias (e.g., stereotypes, over-reaction to negative information, pre-judgements, halo effects, etc.). (Refer to Appendix A at the end of this document – *“Notes for Dane County Interviewers and Exam Reviewers/Graders: Overcoming Interviewer/Grader/Reviewer Bias”.*)
 - c) Develop all factors to be rated and questions to ask from an up-to-date position description; select only those factors which can be reasonably evaluated by the interview method.
 - d) Provide each interviewer with an up-to-date position description, instructions and grading criteria for each question. If necessary, indicate what types of information they should/should not use in rating applicants.



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- e) Inform interviewers (if more than one) not to discuss their ratings with other interviewers – this results in an objective, unbiased, fair process for applicants.
 - f) Encourage interviewers to take notes during the course of the interview but to withhold making any ratings until the interview is completed.
 - g) Remind interviewers not to write down subjective comments in their interview notes as these may become open records. E.g., interviewee's attractiveness, etc.
 - h) Interviewers may make preliminary ratings of applicants after each interview and final ratings of applicants at the conclusion of all interviews.
 - i) Interviewers should remain attentive throughout the interview process. If need be, explain to interviewees that while taking notes they may not be able to make eye contact.
 - j) Answer candidates' questions.
 - k) Interviews need to be a fair and objective part of the selection process. If interviewers do not listen carefully, the interview is a waste of everyone's time and the interviewers are not carrying out their part of the selection process.
9. **Avoid improper practices which discourage candidates:** This will eliminate applicant complaints, including discrimination charges.
- a) Interviewers should give a balanced, accurate picture of the nature of the work and not emphasize the unpleasant aspects of the position to the exclusion of the positive.
 - b) Interviewer should not say travel or overtime is required unless they are prepared to accurately state how much, where, when and under what types of circumstances.
 - c) Interviewers should not hint about existing or possible budget limitations to an interviewee; but should confine themselves to facts so each applicant can make informed decisions about their next steps.
 - d) It is inappropriate for interviewers who do not have decision-making authority to make promises of position reallocations, promotions, or salary increases in an attempt to attract desirable applicants. Interviewers may realistically discuss the potential for improvement of an applicant's pay, and accurately explain that necessary approvals must be obtained to complete such actions.

G. FOLLOW UP AFTER INTERVIEWS

- 1. As good personnel practice and common courtesy, hiring managers should timely inform interviewees about their interview results and whether or not their candidacy is still under consideration. If still under consideration, let them know the next steps in the screening process. This communication can be via letter, email or telephone.
- 2. A reasonable amount of time to notify applicants after the last interview and a selection has been made is seven (7) to ten (10) days. If there is going to be a significant time delay between interviews and selection, you should notify the applicants and explain the need for the delay.
- 3. Hiring managers should honor the time they told the interviewee they would be hearing from them regarding their candidacy. This will help avoid complaints and Dane County receiving bad reviews from interviewees, leading to a poor image as an employer.

**** **INTERVIEW GUIDES ARE FOUND ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES** ****



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APPENDIX A

NOTES FOR DANE COUNTY INTERVIEWERS AND EXAM REVIEWERS/GRADERS Overcoming Interviewer/Grader/Reviewer Bias

This information is to help Dane County Interviewers and Exam Reviewers/Graders overcome biases while interviewing, reviewing or grading job applicants/candidates. Biases lead to unequal, inequitable and unjust treatment of candidates, and compromise the integrity of the interviewing, grading and ranking of candidates. The goal is to select the most suitable candidate based on objective relevant criteria which focuses on their qualifications and experience.

(The following information has been customized and summarized from an article by Joss Search, 12/21/2023, [Strategies & Tips to Avoid Interviewer Bias](#), (you may refer to the article for more detailed information). (NOTE: While the notes below mention "interview" or "interviewer" the information also relates to exam graders/reviewers.)

INTERVIEWER/GRADER/REVIEWER BIAS

What is Interviewer Bias?

The presence of unfair and often unintended preferences or prejudices that can influence the outcome of a job interview. The interviewer's own viewpoints, preconceived notions or personal judgements inadvertently impact their evaluation of a candidate, ignoring the candidate's qualifications, skills and professional experience.

Several Common Biases When Interviewing:

- Confirmation Bias** occurs when the interviewer or grader unintentionally and selectively seeks information that aligns with their initial impression of a candidate, instead of being impartial and open-minded, fully considering all available evidence. They may give more weight to information that supports their preconceived notion about the candidate and downplay or overlook evidence that contradicts it.
 - Example of Confirmation Bias:** An interviewer reads a candidate's résumé and notices they attended the same college. The interviewer may subconsciously form a positive impression based on this shared alma mater. During the interview, they may focus on the candidate's responses that align with this initial positive impression and unconsciously disregard or downplay any negative aspects, like a lack of relevant experience.
- Stereotyping** in job interviews, is when interviewers may unconsciously lean on preconceived ideas, generalizations or assumptions about specific groups of people not having the required abilities or skills, based on stereotypes associated with their gender, age, ethnicity or other characteristics, rather than objectively assessing candidates based on their valuable unique skills, experiences and qualifications. This hinders fair and equitable assessment of candidates.
 - Example of Stereotyping:** Interviewer assumption that older workers are less adaptable to change, so an older candidate lacks the ability to learn new technology. This bias can lead to the rejection of a highly qualified older candidate for a tech-related role based on age-related assumptions.
- Halo Effect** occurs when an interviewer forms a favorable impression of a candidate based on one specific aspect of their background or appearance. This leads to the unconscious assumption that the candidate excels in all areas, even if there is no evidence to support this belief. This bias is not based on a comprehensive assessment and may overlook weaknesses or shortcomings in the candidate's qualifications and experience, resulting in the selection of the wrong candidate.
 - Example of Halo Effect:** A well-dressed, exceptionally confident candidate walks into the interview room, and the impressed interviewer assumes they must excel in all aspects of the job, including technical skills. As a result, they may overlook the candidate's weaknesses.
- Similarity Bias** occurs when interviewers show preferential treatment to candidates who share similarities with themselves, in terms of background, interests or personality traits. They unconsciously favor candidates whom they perceive as more relatable or similar to themselves, and may cause interviewers to overlook or undervalue the qualifications and potential of candidates who do not share these similarities. This may result in an unfair evaluation of candidates and the selection of individuals who are not necessarily the best fit for the job, but who resonate more personally with the interviewer.
 - Example of Similarity Bias:** An interviewer discovers that a candidate shares their love for a particular hobby. They might unconsciously favor the candidate, assuming that shared interests make for a better working relationship, thus clouding their judgement of the candidate's qualifications and fit for the job.



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5. **Contrast Effect** occurs when interviewers assess a candidate's performance by comparing them to others who were interviewed either before or after them, rather than evaluating the candidate independently. This bias can significantly impact the interviewer's perception of a candidate, leading them to evaluate them higher or lower than the previous or later candidate, rather than on their own qualifications and abilities. Hence candidates could be unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged due to circumstances beyond their control.
 - **Example of Contrast Effect:** In a series of interviews, the first candidate is exceptionally strong and experienced. The interviewer then compares the second interviewee to the first, deeming them seem less impressive by contrast, even if they are well-qualified for the position.
6. **Availability Bias** occurs when interviewers give disproportionate weight to information that is readily available or easily recalled in their memory when assessing a candidate. So instead of considering the complete spectrum of a candidate's qualifications and skills, they focus on specific pieces of information that come to mind more readily. This bias manifests when interviewers rely heavily on recent or memorable information received from the candidate, potentially overlooking other pertinent factors that may not be as easily accessible in their memory. Resulting in a skewed or incomplete judgement about a candidate's suitability for a role.
 - **Example of Availability Bias:** An interviewer recently had a negative experience with a candidate who lacked a specific certification. When reviewing resumes, they place undue importance on that certification, assuming it is a crucial requirement for all candidates, even though it may not be relevant to the current position.
7. **Groupthink** in panel interviews or reviews, is when collective decision-making prioritizes conformity over objective and independent evaluation. It occurs when decision makers are influenced in their assessments or judgements by the perspectives or opinions of their peers (even if biased or not entirely rational), often due to a desire to avoid conflict, maintain harmony or conform to the perceived consensus within the group. This can result in a biased evaluation where decisions are not necessarily based on the candidate's actual qualifications and skills.
 - **Example of Groupthink:** In a panel interview, one member of the panel expresses a strong negative opinion about a candidate early in the process. Other panel members, not wanting to disagree or create conflict, may conform to this opinion, leading to a biased evaluation of the candidate based on the first panelist's perspective.

IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNIZING AND ADDRESSING INTERVIEW/GRADER/REVIEWER BIAS:

- **Fairness:** Bias can lead to unfair, unequal and inequitable treatment of candidates, decisions influenced by factors unrelated to skills and qualifications, inconsistent assessments and selection of less-qualified candidates.
- **Inclusion:** Bias hinders efforts to create diverse and inclusive workplaces, and results in underrepresentation of certain groups of candidates in the workforce, hence impacting an organization's innovation and creativity.
- **Quality of Hires:** Poor quality hires negatively impact an organization's performance and productivity.
- **Legal and Ethical Considerations:** Non-compliance with anti-discrimination laws due to discrimination based on protected characteristics such as race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, etc.
- **Missed Talent:** Overlook highly qualified candidates with valuable talents that could contribute significantly to an organization's success.
- **Inaccurate Hiring Decisions:** Hiring decisions may not align with the best interests of the organization, resulting in poor performers, or poor fit within the company culture.
- **Decreased Morale:** When candidates perceive bias in the interview process, it can damage the organization's reputation and decrease employee morale. Candidates who feel unfairly treated may share their negative experiences, affecting the company's brand and ability to attract top talent.

REFERENCE/SOURCE: [Strategies & Tips to Avoid Interviewer Bias \(josssearch.com\)](https://www.josssearch.com/blog/strategies-tips-to-avoid-interviewer-bias)



ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES MANUAL

APPENDIX B SAMPLE TEMPLATE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH GRADING CRITERIA

[POSITION TITLE] INTERVIEWS – (Date)

1. Assuming that you have read the position description, why are you interested in this job and why do you think you are a good fit for this position?

Q1. Grading Criteria (15 points max):

More than Acceptable (11 - 15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outstanding. Explanation indicates Candidate read position description and successfully relays their related-experience to it. Answer illustrates well rounded relevant experience, and direct responsibility for work being done. Exceeds the criteria for acceptable performance on this work activity. Would expect this candidate to consistently produce high quality results and surpass reasonable performance standards.
Acceptable (6 - 10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well qualified. Answer illustrates experience in the function, and direct responsibility for work being done. Fully meets but does not exceed the criteria for this work activity. Would expect this candidate to consistently produce good quality results and fully meet reasonable performance standards.
Less than Acceptable (0 - 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not qualified. Clearly weak in terms of the criteria for this work activity. Weakness would be a significant handicap. No Answer (0)

2. Describe the process you would use to analyze _____.

Q2. Grading Criteria (15 points max):

More than Acceptable (11 - 15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outstanding. Exceeds the criteria for acceptable performance on this work activity. Explanation indicates Candidate is well versed in _____. Answer includes relevant steps required to complete the task. Would expect this candidate to consistently produce high quality results and surpass reasonable performance standards.
Acceptable (6 - 10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualified. Answer illustrates some experience in _____. May perform some of the activities related to _____. Describes process to complete the task but has not actually done it. Meets but does not exceed the criteria for this work activity.
Less than Acceptable (0 - 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not qualified. Clearly weak in terms of the criteria for this work activity. Weakness would be a significant handicap. No Answer (0)

3. Tell us about a time at work when you were experiencing conflict with a client, another team member, employee or leadership. What was the situation, how did you resolve it? What was the outcome? What if anything would you do differently?

Q3. Grading Criteria (15 points max):

More than Acceptable (11 - 15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides excellent example of their conflict resolution skills. Describes the Situation / How they resolved it / Outcome / What they would/wouldn't do differently. Answer shows they took responsibility/ownership of their role in causing the conflict (if any).
Acceptable (6 - 10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides good example of their conflict resolution skills. Describes the Situation / How they resolved it / Outcome / What they would/wouldn't do differently. Answer may/may not show that they took responsibility/ownership of their role in causing the conflict (if any).
Less than Acceptable (0 - 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides generalized/rote/pat response – not their actual experience Doesn't provide the Situation / How they resolved it / Outcome / What they would/wouldn't do differently. No Answer (0)

SAMPLE

Feel free to customize, this form and content to meet your needs. (ER has sample points' tallying worksheets with formulas)