

## INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDELINES

All questions should be job related according to the job description. Use the job description as a reference guide. Decide ahead of time what you are looking for in a successful candidate. If you're not certain if a particular question is legally permissible, don't ask it! Word questions carefully and in a way that allows the applicant to offer an appropriate response (open-ended). Avoid any inquiry that is designed to elicit information as to race, color, national origin, age, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or arrest record.

### **Key principles to keep in mind during an interview:**

- 1) All questions should be job related. Stick to the topics that are important for the specific position. Focus on the applicant's qualifications, abilities, and experience.
- 2) Use the position description and advertisement as guidelines for your interview questions.
- 3) Items to particularly screen for include the work history, length of previous employment, reasons for leaving past positions, gaps in work history, and multiple and rapid job changes. Particularly focus on apparent contradictions in information provided.
- 4) Listen more than you talk. Give the candidate ample time to respond.
- 5) Questions should be as similar as possible for all candidates being interviewed for a specific job. The intent is to be sure that the same kinds of information are used to evaluate each candidate. Thus, if supervisory experience is a requirement, questions about supervisory experience should be asked of *all* candidates.
- 6) Take notes focusing on the candidate's reported behavior: what he or she said, thought, felt, wanted to do and actually did. Do not document theories, assumptions, conclusions or identifying information that could be interpreted as discriminatory.
- 7) In closing the interview, summarize what has been covered, emphasize the candidate's most important qualifications for the position, ask the candidate if he/she would like to offer anything else concerning qualifications or has any further questions, and state the next steps in the process and when a decision will be made.

During the employee selection process, the interviewers' responsibilities are significant. The following guidelines are intended to aid the interviewer in the interview process, and to avoid any legal issues that can, without intent, occur during the interview process.

**In almost all instances, the following topics should be avoided in an interview:**

**Address or duration of residence** - Any inquiry into foreign address that would indicate national origin is not appropriate. Inquires into names or relationships of persons with whom the applicant resides or whether the applicant owns or rents a home should be avoided.

**Age** – Avoid any inquiry regarding age or date of birth. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 prohibits discrimination against persons ages 40 and above. If the applicant is a minor (under age 18 and attending high school) you can require proof of age in the form of a work permit.

**Arrest record** – Avoid inquires relating to arrests. An arrest is not a conviction.

**Birthplace**- Avoid inquires about place of birth or birthplace of applicant’s parents, spouse or other relatives.

**Citizenship** - Applicants should not be asked if they are United States citizens, since it is considered discriminatory under the Immigration Reform and Control Act. You can inform the applicant, if employed; that he/she will be required to provide evidence that he/she can be lawfully employed in the United States.

**Disability** - The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 make it illegal to ask questions about an applicant's disability or perceived disability - it is crucial to focus on the job, not on the disability. Referencing the job description, you can ask if an applicant is able to carry out all necessary essential job duties with or without reasonable accommodations.

**Education** – Questions regarding education are appropriate, if education is pertinent job requirement. Be careful not to inquire about the nationality, racial affiliations, or religious affiliation of the school they attended.

**English language skills** - Only ask if it is a requirement of the job (i.e. an English teacher) - otherwise it could be construed as national origin discrimination.

**Height and weight** – It is important to focus on what the job requires, not the person's physical characteristics. Avoid questions concerning an applicant’s height and/or weight unless they are a necessary job requirement in order to perform the essential job duties.

**Language** – It is permissible to inquire about a candidate’s skills in communicating in languages other than English if the skills are relevant to the job. However, it is not appropriate to ask about native language or how the candidate acquired the language skills

**Marital status and family status** – You can ask if an applicant can meet specified work schedules, or has activities, commitments, or responsibilities that hinder the meeting of work attendance requirements. However, avoid any inquiry that could determine an individual’s marital status, number and age of children, information on child care

arrangements, questions concerning pregnancy, any similar questions that directly or indirectly result in limitation of job opportunity.

**Organizations** – It is appropriate to ask questions about membership in professional organizations or other organizations relevant to the job. It is not appropriate to ask about membership in clubs, societies, lodges or other organizations in general, particularly of a social, religious or political nature.

**Race, color, religion, gender, or national origin** - EEOC guidelines prohibit asking questions that may reveal this information. Avoid any inquiry or discussion about race or color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ancestry or national origin.

**Religion**- Avoid inquiries about an applicant's religious denomination or affiliation, church, parish, pastor or religious holidays observed. Avoid inquiries that would indicate or identify religious denomination or customs. Applicants may be advised concerning normal hours and days of work required by the job to avoid possible conflicts with religious or other personal convictions.

**Relatives** – Any questions regarding the candidate's relatives should be restricted to questions about relatives who are already employed by the university.

**Veteran status/military records** - General questions about a person's background in the military should only be asked in the interview process if they are based on business necessity or job-related reasons.