

Interviews

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A recruitment interview is a conversation where an assessor(s) asks a set of questions to evaluate a candidate's suitability to perform a particular role.

Legal requirements

An interview is one of the capability-based assessments required for a **comparative assessment** and a **suitability assessment**.

About interviews

An interview is needed for all employment decisions in the NSW Public Service.

A range of approaches and formats are available for recruitment interviews. The PSC recommends using structured behavioural interviews over unstructured interviews. The following content describes some of the available formats, which may suit different circumstances.

Sometimes you may need to make adjustments to your interview practices for people with disability who need a workplace adjustment. See: **Australian Network on Disability - Interviewing people with disability**.

Structured behavioural interviews

In a structured interview all candidates are asked the same set of questions and are assessed against the same standards with a common rating scale. Structured interviews have higher validity in predicting how someone will perform on the job than unstructured interviews. See **Google - re:Work** for a useful resource on structured interviews.

Behavioural questions invite candidates to share examples of specific situations from their own experience, how they approached each situation, what they did, and what the results were. This interviewing style is based on the idea that past behaviour is an indicator of future behaviour.

Probing questions can be used in structured interviews to clarify candidate's responses or to obtain further information relevant to the capability being assessed or role. Probing questions may vary from candidate to candidate depending on how the interview progresses. It is a good idea to include possible probing questions for each interview question to support assessors to get the best information from the interview without advantaging some candidates.

Unstructured interviews

Unstructured interviews have no fixed format or set of questions to be answered often resulting in different questions being asked of each candidate and potentially leading to interviewer bias. A common outcome is confirmation bias which is described as follows:

*When interviewers use an unstructured format and ask questions that come to mind during the interview, they are likely to fall victim to confirmation bias – only asking questions that seek to confirm the interviewer's initial impressions about the candidate. (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2016, **Behavioural approaches to increasing workforce diversity**)*

Unstructured interviews have a lower validity than structured interviews for predicting how someone will perform on the job and are not recommended in recruitment.

Interview format

Some common interview formats include: the panel interview, the multi-mini (or consecutive) interview, and interviews using technology (this can be used with other options).

Panel interviews

A common interview format is to have a panel of two or three assessors asking a full set of questions.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Assessors bring different perspectives	Can be daunting for candidates
Different assessors observe different things	Time to organise and challenges coordinating diaries of all assessors

Personality biases are reduced

Multi-mini interviews

The multi-mini (or consecutive) interview is an alternative to the panel interview format. It is particularly useful for large volume recruitment to maximise assessors' time.

In multi-mini interviews, interview questions are allocated to individual interviewers or panels of two interviewers. Candidates rotate through the interview stations (usually four to six), each with its own interviewer and interview question. The interview rotations combined should not take any longer than a traditional interview.

This format can reduce any bias that might occur if a candidate provides one poor (or excellent) response at one interview station. However, the rotations make it hard to build rapport with candidates.

Interviews using technology

Interviews using video link (e.g. Skype) or phone provide an alternative to in-person interviews. They are particularly useful for interviewing candidates who are not located close by.

A range of video interviewing platforms now allow the interviewer to pre-record him or herself asking the interview questions, and candidates to record themselves responding to the questions. Video interviewing can be used at the pre-screening stage in place of written responses to target questions, or in place of a first interview.

Video interviewing can improve the efficiency of the recruitment process and reduces time and effort for candidates in travelling to your office. These benefits need to be weighed up against potential negatives such as not being able to ask probing questions in your interview.

Second interviews

A second interview is a good opportunity to invite strong candidates back to:

- build on the information gathered already
- assess for fit for a particular role
- meet with next level manager(s) or team members
- differentiate between leading candidates.

Second interviews are useful when you are looking to hire a candidate from a talent pool. These candidates have already met the **pre-established standards** for the role, so an informal interview can be used to determine if a candidate is a good fit for your role.

A second interview should still use a structured approach but you may want to develop a new, tailored set of questions.

Assessors for interviews

See **Choosing assessors** for more information about ensuring the diversity of assessors involved in assessments.

Writing interview questions

For information about how to write interview questions see **Writing interview questions**.