

## **Interview Guidelines for Committee Members** (Handout for Committee Members) Updated July 2015

This information will provide you with a basic understanding of the interview process including your role as committee member, your role in the interview and your role after the interview. Your willingness to give your time and energy to serve as an interview committee member is greatly appreciated. You were chosen for your ability to evaluate the candidates as their knowledge and skills relate to the position being filled.

### **Your Role and Responsibilities as a Committee Member**

As an interview committee member, it is your responsibility to represent the University and your department professionally and to help create an atmosphere in which the applicants can present their qualifications to the fullest extent. Evaluate each candidate's capacity and suitability to perform the duties. Evaluate candidates according to job-related selection criteria and observed factors relevant to job elements.

#### **When on an search committee, be sure to:**

- Understand the duties of the job and the selection criteria.
- Help candidates feel at ease. Welcome candidates to the process as if they are guests in your home.
- Treat all candidates fairly and equally. Stay focused and attentive to each candidate.
- When appropriate, help build on candidates' responses by asking follow-up questions.
- Take thorough, objective notes that help you evaluate strengths and challenges. You do not need to write every word the applicant says. Do not write on the application.
- Remain objective throughout the process.
- Work at understanding other committee member's views.
- Use the determined forms or format to evaluate applicants.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Watch for and avoid rater errors.

### **Rater Errors**

Raters can make errors, that is, they may be influenced by systematic factors other than those intended for the rating process. It is important to be aware of some common rater errors so that you can watch for them in yourself and work to avoid using them while on the interview committee.

- **Halo Effect:** The tendency to rate a person high on all factors even though the person was outstanding on only one factor.
- **Horns Effect:** The opposite of Halo Effect.

- **Positive Leniency:** Tendency to overrate all people.
- **Negative Leniency:** Tendency to underrate all people.
- **Central Tendency:** Tendency to rate all in the center.
- **First Impressions:** strong favorable/unfavorable judgments in beginning of interview that influence the rest of the interview and final judgments. Keep an open mind.
- **Recent Impressions:** Strong favorable/unfavorable judgments at the end of an interview that causes other information during the interview to be ignored. Consider the entire interview and application materials.
- **Contrast Effects:** Exclusively evaluating a person compared to others being evaluated instead of comparing the person to the job requirements. Keep the selection criteria and the needs of the position in mind.
- **Stereotyping:** Attributing characteristics or traits to an individual or group of individuals because of specific or commonly held beliefs.
- **Similar to Me:** When people rate individuals similar to themselves high and people dissimilar, low.

## **The Interview**

The goals of an interview process are to (1) gather information, (2) create a positive image of the University and your department, (3) present a realistic description of the position, (4) ensure that all applicants feel they have been treated fairly, and (5) establish adequate records in the event the hiring decision must be justified at some future date. The steps in conducting an interview are described below.

### **Tips for the Best Interviews**

**Establish rapport** - .A warm greeting and a suitable introduction using both names and titles will help establish rapport and help create a pleasant atmosphere. Small talk can help relax both the interviewers and the applicant.

**Keep control of the interview** - Whoever is leading the committee should make sure the applicant speaks at least 75% of the time. If the applicant digresses too far or becomes long-winded, bring him or her back on course by rephrasing the original question or asking a new question.

**Use your best listening skills** - Give nonverbal signals of listening, such as head nodding, making eye contact, and leaning forward. Avoid facial expressions, gestures, or words that are unduly sympathetic or disapproving. Avoid giving personal opinions. Listen between the lines. Watch and listen for tone, gestures and facial expressions.

**Types of questions** - Questions should be short and concise and require an answer of some length. Avoid questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no.” Avoid multiple questions within one question. Don’t ask leading questions that bias a candidate’s answer or seem to show your preference for an answer.

**Probe a little** - Don't leave an unanswered question unanswered. Ask it a different way or ask the applicant to expand on the answer. If you sense hesitancy or nervousness, Ask follow-up questions. Ask for a specific example from the applicant's past to elaborate on an answer.

**Embrace the power of the pause** - People dislike pauses and usually will fill in the silence. Use silence to encourage an applicant to keep talking. That is when the best answers tend to emerge as they are from the heart and not rehearsed.

**Ask the tough questions** - If a "red flag" comes up in the interview or you notice a prior termination or a gap in employment on the application, you must follow up. It is part of our due diligence responsibility. Be prepared to probe into these areas as long as they may draw factual information relevant to the job or your institution.

**Take notes** - Take notes that provide enough detail to spark your memory. You do not have to write every word and should attempt to maintain as much eye contact as possible. Remember that everything you write is discoverable so make sure it remains job-related.

**Words of caution** - Applicants may volunteer some of this personal information. This does not give you permission to consider it or ask follow up questions. Disregard the information through the entire job selection process.

The University of Idaho is an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action employer. We do not discriminate against any person because of age, race, sex, national origin, religious affiliation, disability, or any other non-merit factors. During the interview, questions and statements should be avoided that refer to those areas. All questions and statements should always be directly job related.

## **Evaluating the Candidates**

Follow the procedure established by your hiring manager or search chair to rate or recommend the applicants. Different formats are used to evaluate applicants. We ask that you use the same format for each applicant for that particular round of interviews.

Participate fully. Speak your mind. Your opinion and thoughts are important. Listen to and acknowledge the comments and opinions of other committee members.

You may make comments on the rating form. Comments should be concise and indicate specific strong points or shortcomings of the candidate. Comments of a personal, non-job related nature should not be made on the rating sheet. Do not write on the application materials.

The rating forms or your notes are interview records and are available for review by applicants if requested. Each form should be signed and dated. Don't write anything down that would embarrass you if it were reproduced in a legal proceeding or the media.

Thank you for your service during this interview process.