#### Appendix 6: Guidelines on Note Taking at Interviews

###### Guidelines on Note Taking at Interviews

It is recommended that each member of the Selection Board take notes when they themselves are not asking the questions. Where more than one person takes notes, it is easier to cross-check for evidence than if only one interviewer takes notes.

Schools may consider appointing a Recording Secretary for notetaking purposes.

Generally speaking, it is in order to take notes during an interview but it is important to inform the candidate of your intention to do so. Note taking is proof to the interviewee that the information they are giving is being taken seriously. However, it is important not to overdo it by taking down everything that he/she says.

Good notes are factual, not based on impressions, use key phrases, record evidence given.

The primary purpose of taking notes during the interview is to assist in the assessment of the candidate at the end of the interview. The notes taken should reflect the areas covered during the interview, the evidence provided by the candidate in relation to the competencies, the key points of the candidate’s responses and a note of the questions asked.

Good notes provide a valuable reminder of what the candidate said in response to different questions in the course of the interview. Without notes the interviewer may tend to selectively recall the candidate's strengths or weaknesses or even be unable to recall the candidate's responses at all. Notes are particularly helpful when there are different interpretations of what a candidate put forward. They can be a valuable reminder when a Selection Board is reviewing a large number of candidates and needs to ensure that a consistent standard is applied.

Interviewers should adhere to the following guidelines in relation to note taking at interviews:

1. Explain to the interviewee that you wish to take notes so as not to forget important details.
2. Questioning and subsequent note taking should relate to the criteria/competencies of the job.
3. Record *evidence* not opinion.
4. Note the questions that the candidate was asked [at a minimum key words]
5. Judgements made should be on foot of evidence as applied to the competencies.
6. Include the good and the less good.
7. Show clearly the identifiable evidence against the identified competencies.
8. Record important points in the interviewees’ words and put quotation marks around them.
9. Comments for all candidates should reflect the responses to the questions asked.
10. Keep note taking as unobtrusive as possible.
11. Write up the full notes of interviews immediately following interviews as memory deteriorates very quickly.
12. Under no circumstances should the notes contain any reference to any issues that may have a discriminatory impact under the 9 grounds specified in equality legislation.
13. All interview records including candidates Application Forms and any notes taken must be retained for 18 months.

Following assessment and evaluation of the candidate, it is also good practice for the Selection Board to compose a summary comment representing the consensus view of the Board and explaining the overall mark awarded (in the evidence section on the Interview Mark Sheet). This will clearly indicate how the candidate performed at the interview, and reflect strengths, limitations and areas for improvement. This comment is especially important for candidates who are not successful at interview.

It is vital that interviewers be aware of the impact the Employment Equality Acts 1998 - 2008 and Data Protection Legislation on note taking in the interview context. Inferior note taking can leave employers just as open to criticism as the absence of any notes. Inability to produce notes is no protection against cases taken. Where notes are unavailable, an employer may not be in a position to defend the decision on the appointment of a candidate.

Interviewers should also bear in mind the following common pitfalls in note taking at interviews:

* + Where what is written cannot be deciphered.
  + Details are based on opinion and not fact.
  + Irrelevant/colourful or unnecessary comments are included.