

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR INTERVIEW BOARDS

A brief guidance note for interview boards in ANYWHERE SCHOOL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. OBJECTIVES OF THE SELECTION INTERVIEW	3
3. ROLES OF THE INTERVIEW SELECTION COMMITTEE	4
4. STRUCTURED INTERVIEWING	5
5. QUESTIONING	7
6. EQUALITY LEGISLATION	8
7. NOTE TAKING	8
8. SUMMARY	10
9. INTERVIEWER CHECK LIST	11

1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to sit on an interview Selection Committee for Anywhere School.

This booklet is issued to all persons who agree to act on our interview Selection Committees to:-

1. promote a uniform approach to interviewing
2. ensure that the best possible candidate is chosen for the position or panel.
3. ensure that all interviews are free from discriminatory questioning and bias.

These notes are not intended to be an exhaustive guide to selection interviewing but rather to reinforce good practice in the interview process.

If you have any questions on any of the issues addressed in this booklet or indeed on any matters concerning the Anywhere Schools recruitment and selection procedures please do not hesitate to contact the Secretary of the Board of Management or the Anywhere School contact person looking after the selection process.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE SELECTION INTERVIEW

GENERAL

Anywhere School utilises the selection interview as its primary mechanism for the recruitment and selection of staff.

The selection interview is a conversation with a purpose. It is a structured conversation which builds up information so that we can make an effective selection decision. An effective selection decision is one where the successful candidate has provided evidence to suggest that they will perform the job well and to the required standard.

OBJECTIVES OF SELECTION INTERVIEW

The main objectives of our selection interviews are as follows:

1. To establish competence i.e. can the applicant do the job?
2. To establish compatibility i.e. will the applicant “fit” into Anywhere School?
3. To choose the most suitable applicant for employment.
4. To create a favourable impression of the Anywhere School to all applicants.
5. To describe the job, if asked.
6. To enable candidates assess whether they want the job.
7. To ensure that all candidates are treated fairly.

PRIMARY RULES OF SELECTION INTERVIEWING.

Because selection interviewing is concerned with building up information so that we can make a selection decision on somebody’s application for a job, it is helpful to adhere to the following rules of interviewing:

1. Nothing is really valid unless there is evidence of behaviour.
2. The best predictor of future success is past performance.
3. Suspend judgement until all information is obtained from the candidate.

Most interview Selection Committees appointed by the Anywhere School comprise of 3-5 interviewers. One of the interviewers is always assigned the additional role of Chairperson.

Composition of Interview Boards

Community Schools

- 2 Religious nominees, 1 VEC, CEO, Educationalist

“Catholic” Comprehensive Schools

- 2 Religious nominees, 1 VEC, CEO, Educationalist

“Protestant” Comprehensive Schools

- 3 Religious nominees, CEO, Educationalist (recommended)

For Posts of Responsibility, the composition of the Selection Board will be:
School Principal (who will not act as Chairperson)
Trustee nominee
Independent member to be drawn from a panel to be agreed with the union(s).

For other positions, the membership of the Selection Committee may be as determined by the Board of Management.

3. ROLES OF THE INTERVIEW SELECTION COMMITTEE

3.1 ROLE OF INTERVIEWER

1. To interview candidates in the designated area of coverage or the designated area of specialism.
2. To evaluate candidates' responses in the designated area of coverage.
3. To evaluate candidates' responses in the areas of coverage assigned to other members of the Selection Committee.
4. To contribute to the overall selection decision.

3.2 ROLE OF CHAIRPERSON

1. Ensuring that each member of the Selection Committee is clear as to his/her role in the interview process.
2. Ensuring that questioning and assessment is approached with an open mind and that impartiality prevails in accordance with Anywhere School's equality policy.
3. Agreeing in advance the areas of questioning which will be dealt with by individual Selection Committee members.
4. Ensuring that the interviews adhere as far as is practicable, to the set timetable so that candidates are not delayed or adversely affected.
5. Ensuring that the candidate is received courteously, put at ease and treated fairly.
6. Ensuring the Selection Committee members are introduced to the candidate.

7. Outlining the format of the interview to the candidate and giving him/her an overview of the Anywhere School and of the Selection Committee.
8. Ensuring that any gaps in the candidate's Application Form/CV are fully explored, and that all competencies are covered by the interview.
Note: Chairpersons should refrain from reading the candidates' application forms/C.Vs back to them. This is a waste of precious time.
9. Bringing the interview to a conclusion by –
 - a. confirming with the other members of the Selection Committee that all relevant areas have been covered;
 - b. inviting the candidate to provide any relevant information not already furnished
 - c. clarifying any remaining issues by additional questioning;
 - d. acknowledge candidate's interest in applying for the post;
 - e. asking the candidate if they have any questions.
10. Having initially set out the marking procedure, ensuring that the marking scheme is correctly and fairly applied.
11. Ensuring that each member of the Selection Committee is given adequate opportunity to contribute fully to the assessment, through the completion of indicative individual evaluation sheets by each Selection Committee member on each interviewee.
12. Endeavouring to ensure that consensus is achieved as regards the assessment.

4. STRUCTURED INTERVIEWING

Interview Selection Committees appointed by Anywhere School employ the structured interviewing technique to ensure the fair treatment of all applicants and to ensure that the competencies specified in the job/person specification are comprehensively explored with each candidate to enable a selection decision to be made.

The structured selection interview can be broken down into 3 stages i.e. a) preparation, b) conduct and c) assessment and Selection Committee members are reminded of their principal tasks in each of these stages hereunder.

4.1. WHAT SHOULD THE INTERVIEWERS DO BEFORE THE INTERVIEW?

1. Study all of the available information: the application forms, the job description, the marking scheme and result sheet.
2. Agree the coverage plan, that is, who will cover what areas and when. Write down the main questions to elicit competency behavioural indicators.
3. Appoint a chairperson unless one has been designated by the Anywhere School.
4. Allocate time intervals to each Selection Committee member for questioning and allow time for evaluation of candidate at end.
5. Ensure that the climate and physical setting is right.
6. Prepare for note taking.

4.2 WHAT SHOULD THE INTERVIEWERS DO DURING THE INTERVIEW?

1. Establish rapport. This entails nothing more complex than "breaking the ice", as you try to relax the interviewee.
2. Outline the purpose and structure of the interview to each candidate. This allows everybody to know what the game plan is, and the candidate can relax knowing the areas that will be covered.

3. Clear the fact that there will be discreet note-taking.
4. Follow the agreed coverage plan. Don't engage in criss-cross questioning which can have a disconcerting effect on the interviewer who is pursuing a particular line of questioning as well as on the candidate. Interview, don't interrogate.
5. Listen as much as possible in an effort to accumulate evidence of competency possession.
6. Clarifying and reflecting are useful techniques for getting the interviewee to elaborate.
7. Maintain eye contact and give appropriate positive feedback.
8. Take your time, and don't be afraid to use silence when appropriate.
9. Treat all candidates equally.
10. Invite questions/comment. Having checked that his/her colleagues have no further questions, the chairperson should invite the candidate to ask questions and volunteer any additional information they wish.
11. Be prepared to summarise.
12. Advise the candidate of the next stage and timescale.
13. Always ensure that dignity and self-esteem remain intact.

4.3. WHAT SHOULD THE INTERVIEWERS DO AT THE ASSESSMENT STAGE

Anywhere School utilise the competency structured interview in its selection procedures. Competencies are identified for each position and the Selection Committees have the task of establishing whether applicants can demonstrate possession of the competencies identified for the job.

Competencies are typically presented in 3 parts:

- a title – such as drive/commitment.
- a definition – the energy and determination to complete work based tasks successfully.
- a set of behavioural indicators – that would be observed of someone demonstrating the competency e.g. keeping to tight deadlines.

Candidates displaying at interview that they possess the competency of drive/ commitment are then marked or ranked on the basis of a level of proficiency.

The Anywhere School utilises 4 levels of proficiency when marking competencies at interviews. These are:

- | | | |
|---------|---|---|
| Level D | - | demonstrates knowledge |
| Level C | - | demonstrates knowledge and some experience |
| Level B | - | demonstrates knowledge and experience pointing to understanding and thus potential.(To check understanding of scenarios/hypothetical cases?). |
| Level A | - | demonstrates knowledge, understanding and <i>experience</i> pointing to expertise. (To check experience/expertise / examples/evidence?). |

Applicants demonstrating level A proficiency are awarded greater marks than those at levels D,C or B.

This method of marking is applied to all of the competencies identified for the job specification and a grand total of marks is arrived at for each candidate. The candidate with the highest grand total is placed first with the lower scoring candidates following in order of merit. Candidates not scoring at least 50% of the available marks in all the specified competencies are deemed unsuccessful in their application.

5. QUESTIONING

Questioning is one of the primary skills of effective interviewing. There are many different types of questioning techniques. One technique which is particularly effective in the context of competency based interviewing is the “funnelling technique”. This questioning approach commences with a broad open-ended question (e.g. describe leadership style) and depending on the candidates replies is followed by successively more detailed and specific questions designed to identify the candidate competence in terms of knowledge, understanding and experience in the area of leadership. In essence, the questioning proceeds from the general to the particular and is visually represented by a funnel hence the name funnelling technique. The technique is also referred to as the “drill-down” technique.

In conducting competency based selection interviewing it is also useful to employ some of the following questioning strategies to elicit whether a candidate possesses a particular competency:

1. Ask for a demonstration.
2. Ask for a description of past experience with job barriers. This can be done by describing a specific situation the applicant would face on the job and asking how the candidate would overcome the barriers.
3. Ask for a description of behaviour in comparable situations.
4. Ask how past behaviour relates to performance expectation.
5. Ask for descriptions of accomplishments.

These questioning strategies fit comfortably with the funnelling approach to interviewing suggested above.

Another way to keep structured interviews on track can be to use the EPOLA structure;

E	Experience	– give the range of experience
P	Probe	– give specific examples of competence
O	Outcomes	– give specific and measurable outcomes
L	Learning	– what the experience has taught the candidate
A	Application	- give examples of where the learning was applied

6. EQUALITY LEGISLATION

Anywhere School is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity in its employment practices. All job selection methods in relation to recruitment or promotion will ensure that no job applicant or staff member receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the travelling community. Individuals will be selected, promoted and treated solely on the basis of their abilities and merits and according to the requirements of the job, and will be given equal opportunity to demonstrate and develop their abilities and to progress within the Anywhere School.

In order to ensure that the above policy is implemented the following points are relevant to interviewers:-

- there will be no express or implied discrimination against any candidate during any stage of the selection process;
- interviewers will not make assumptions about the suitability of individuals for certain types of work on grounds of sex, marital or family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the travelling community;
- all questions asked at interview will be directed solely towards assessing the suitability of candidates for the job and should be asked equally of all candidates. No questions of a personal nature should be asked;
- if a job potentially involves attendance at unsocial hours, or extensive travel this should be included in the advertisement or in the job description. Accordingly, questions at interview to assess whether personal circumstances are likely to affect performance of the job should be avoided. However, if it is important to clarify the matter, questions should be asked of all candidates.

The interview stage of the recruitment process is where most claims alleging discrimination are made, i.e. that discriminatory questions were asked at the interview or a decision on who to appoint was based on any of the discriminatory grounds covered by legislation.

To date, claimants have found it very difficult to prove that they would have got the job if they had not been discriminated against, but they have got compensation in several cases for the stress suffered as a result of discriminatory questions asked/statements made by members of the interview panel.

7. NOTETAKING

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 schools 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, Anywhere School may not be in a position to defend the decision on the appointment or promotion of a candidate

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.

The notes taken are very important particularly if a case is referred to an Equality Officer. In most cases where there is a conflict of evidence, claimants have the advantage over employers because Equality Officers tend to accept that the interviewees have a better recall of the interview than the interviewers.

The interview is likely to have taken place six months prior to the Equality Officer hearing. Interviewees have only done one interview. Interviewers have done many interviews. In many cases interviewers will not even remember interviewing the claimant, not to mention what was actually said at the interview. As a result, where there is a conflict in the evidence of both sides and claimant's evidence is reasonably detailed and consistent, and then the claimant tends to be believed.

For the foregoing reasons 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 job criteria.
6. Include the good and the less good.
7. Show clearly the identifiable evidence against the job criteria.
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 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 CV's and any notes taken must be retained for 12 months.

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

- What is written cannot be deciphered.
- Details are not factual.
- Reasons given are not sufficient, or have not been documented sufficiently.
- Irrelevant or unnecessary comments included.
- Colourful or unnecessary comments about candidates.

8. SUMMARY

Introduction and Welcome (allow approximately 3 – 5 minutes)

Settling down and small talk. The candidate should be put at ease. The Chairperson or lead interviewer normally does this. Explain the purpose of the interview and the structure of the interview.

Review of Background (allow approximately 5 minutes)

The interviewer should collect general information about the candidate's work background and experience. You may choose to ask the candidate to "walk" you through their CV/application form and to "bring it to life" as it were. Or you may select the most recent and relevant areas of work experience. Use the opportunity to clarify and elaborate information, rather than ask questions the answers to which are already available on the CV/application form.

Planned Questions against Criteria/Competencies/Behavioural Indicators (allow approximately 5-10 minutes for each criterion)

Using the criteria/competencies/behavioural indicators you have identified in the person specification, prepare a series of questions relating to each one. Ask the candidate for examples of past action which demonstrate the criterion.

Supplementing (allow approximately 5 minutes)

Here you provide the candidate with an opportunity to ask questions relating to the job or the school and perhaps to make a final submission or pitch regarding their suitability for the post.

Close (allow approximately 3 minutes)

This is an opportunity to "sell" the benefits of the Anywhere School and the job, in a balanced way, if appropriate. End on a positive note, thanking the candidate, and indicating the next steps in the selection process.

INTERVIEWERS CHECKLIST:

1. Define the objective and write it.
2. Prepare well.
3. Prepare the main questions.
4. Avoid interruptions.
5. Meet and Greet – Be Friendly.
6. Control the interview from start to finish.
7. Give the interviewee an overview of what you hope to cover – ask open questions – stick to the facts.
8. Interview, don't interrogate.
9. Your voice should be clear, reassuring and friendly.
10. Use good body language and voice to show interest.
11. Be a good listener and let the interviewee see this.
12. Keep good eye contact.
13. Use silences positively between questions.
14. Ask the hard questions, but stick to the facts and remain detached.
15. Keep notes.
16. Be punctual and keep control of time.
17. Avoid references to appearances, age, sex, religion, race, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, disability and membership of the travelling community.
18. Always ensure that dignity and self-esteem remain intact.