

Shortlisting & interviewing for new staff

The selection panel

It is rarely appropriate for one person to undertake the selection process by themselves - it leaves the process open to criticism (even if untrue) of unfair practices. On the other hand it would be daunting to be faced with a selection panel of five or more people. Between 2-4 people would be normal depending on the seniority of the job. The panel may include:

- The person who will be supervising the job.
- Someone who has previous experience of recruitment procedures.
- Someone who represents the users of the project.
- Someone who represents the lay/voluntary management of the project.
- Occasionally someone from a similar project elsewhere (this can be helpful if this is your first employee).

The panel will need to be sure that they are all available for the entire process - both shortlisting & interviewing - although it is possible that the short-listing will be done by just one or two members of the panel. Normally you will need to identify one person to be the chair of the panel and someone, possibly the same person, to ensure that all documentation is retained.

Interview

Interviews do have limitations but are still the most common and best way of deciding who will be offered the job. The panel should meet before-hand (possibly at the short-listing session) to decide on the questions to be asked and who will ask them. You should:

- Avoid questions which require only a 'yes' or 'no' answer.
- Focus the questions on the person specification and job description.
- Focus on what the candidate can demonstrate clearly (e.g. Describe a time when you have ...)
- Stick to the structure you have decided but feel free to ask supplementary questions particularly if you think the candidate may have misunderstood the question.
- Listen to the candidate and make notes.
- Give an opportunity for the candidate to ask questions and to add anything they would like.

In order to assess the candidates suitability it is normal for the selection panel to mark each question using a score grid. If one candidate clearly outshines the others at this stage then a decision can be reached. Otherwise it is normal for the panel to compare scores for each candidate to see if there is a consensus and to determine which candidate most closely meets the organisation's requirements. If one criterion is more important to you than others you can weight the marking so the scores on this criterion are counted more than the others. Hopefully by the end of this process you will find a candidate that you are happy to employ.

But remember that if none of the candidates sufficiently meet your criteria you can decide not to make an appointment.

Short-listing

This should be an objective process matching the application forms against the person specification. The first stage should be to reject applicants who do not meet the person specification. Normally you should interview all those who appear to meet the person specification. But if you have a large number of good applicants you may need to invite only a selection.

A simple marking system can be used e.g.:

Quality of Evidence Score

Attribute met in full	3
Attribute met in part	2
Attribute met by inference	1
No evidence offered	0

The number of people on the shortlist will depend on the nature and seniority of the job but it would be rare to interview more than 5 or 6 people for a job.

Those short-listed should be invited to interview and informed of the procedure.

It is not always necessary to write to people who have not been short-listed -especially if you made this clear in your application pack.

References

If you have the candidate's permission and if the references will provide specific information which will help you make your decision, it can be helpful to take up references before the interview.

A reference should be focused on the person specification and ask the referee for specific information that they are able to give.

Referees will rarely disclose damaging personal information about any candidate.