

Interview Guidance – Do’s and Don’ts of Interviewing

Audience: Recruiters, Hiring Managers, Department Recruiting Assistants, Interview Committee

Overview

The purpose of this document is to provide more information regarding the interview process and legal considerations. This document provides more information on what questions can and cannot be asked during the interview process. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with your HR recruiter.

Eliminating Bias and Legal Considerations

Hiring managers, search committee members and anyone involved in the hiring process should not make assumptions regarding an applicant’s gender, age, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or other protected characteristics based on the applicant’s name, years of experience, address or affiliations listed on their resume or application. Only bona fide qualifications should be reviewed and considered when deciding on whether the applicant/candidate should proceed in the recruitment process.

What Not to Ask in an Interview /Topics to Avoid

Asking appropriate questions during an interview is crucial to maintaining Carnegie Mellon University’s reputation and ensuring a hiring process void of discrimination and compliant with all applicable laws and regulations.

All interview questions must be job-related. Questions related to race, ethnicity, nationality, gender or sex, religion, disability status, military status, marital status and criminal records during a job interview should NOT be asked.

The following topics **should be avoided at all costs** as there are no acceptable or appropriate questions to ask, nor do they relate to the candidate’s ability to perform the job’s essential functions.

Topics to be avoided:

1. Race
2. Ethnicity
3. Nationality/origin/birthplace
4. Gender/sex (including pregnancy)
5. Religion or religious affiliations
6. Health, medical or disability history/status
7. Military status / veteran status
8. Family or marital status
9. Height and weight/physical appearance
10. Personal finances
11. Sexual orientation
12. Gender identity
13. Political views or affiliations
14. Criminal history/convictions

If the candidate discloses information related to any of the topics listed above in your interview or conversation, you ignore the comment and you must not consider the information in your evaluation of the candidate.

Appropriate vs. Inappropriate Questions

Below is a list of example questions that are appropriate vs. inappropriate to ask in an interview and/or when evaluating a candidate. If you have any questions, please contact your [HR recruiter or HR business partner](#).

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Subject Matter/Topic	Appropriate Question <i>These questions should ONLY be asked if related to a bona fide job requirement and/or position.</i>	Inappropriate Question <i>These questions should NOT be asked at any time.</i>
Name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you ever worked for CMU under a different name? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you had any other names in the past? (e.g., maiden name, legal name change) You have a unique last name, where are you from?
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you over 18 years of age? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How old are you? What year were you born? What year did you graduate high school?
National Origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you eligible to work in the U.S.? Do you now or in the future will you require any sort of sponsorship? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you a U.S. citizen?
Physical Disability, Health or Medical History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you perform the essential functions of the job, with or without reasonable accommodations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you on any medication? Do you have any pre-existing conditions?
Religion or Religious affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you able to work with our required schedule? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your religious affiliation? What religious holidays do you celebrate?
Family or Marital Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Appropriate Question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will your family obligations or kids impact your ability to work our required schedule? Are you married? / Do you plan to get married? Do you plan to have any children? / Do you have any children? Who will take care of your children while you are working?
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have reliable means of transportation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will you travel to and from work? Do you take public transportation? Do you have a car? How long is your commute to CMU's campus?
Compensation/Pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are your compensation expectations/desires? What compensation are you ideally seeking to consider a new opportunity? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your current salary or hourly wage? What do you currently make? What did you previously make?

Other Considerations to Avoid

Compensation Inquiries/Discussions: Hiring managers, search committee members and anyone involved in the hiring process should not inquire about a candidate’s current or previous compensation. In many jurisdictions, this question is illegal. It is recommended all conversations related to compensation be managed by your recruiter. To

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assist in this process, it is recommended that the hiring manager provide their recruiter with a realistic budget/range which can be shared with the candidate in the initial stages of the recruitment process to ensure alignment in expectations.

Viewing Social Media: Hiring managers, search committee members and anyone involved in the hiring process should avoid searching or viewing the applicant and/or candidate’s personal social media accounts. This can open the door for biases and discrimination.

Informal Reference Checks: Hiring managers, search committee members and anyone involved in the hiring process should avoid performing informal reference checks. All reference checks should be managed through your recruiter via the standardized reference check process to ensure all candidates are managed consistently. It is recommended formal references be conducted on finalist candidates before a verbal offer is extended, regardless of whether the candidate is an external applicant or internal university employee. For more information, please refer to the [Conducting Reference Checks guidance](#).

Resources

- [Staff Hiring Process Documents](#)
- [Supervisors and Hiring Managers Webpage](#)
- [Talent Strategy Webpage](#)
- [Conducting Reference Checks](#)