

Interview Guidance – Best Practices

Audience: Recruiters, Recruiting Coordinators, Hiring Managers, Department Recruiting Assistants, Interview Coordinator, Interview/Search Committee Participants

Overview

The following guidance has been developed to promote a fair and effective hiring process with a strong emphasis on creating a positive candidate experience. By prioritizing positive interactions with every candidate, we can enhance Carnegie Mellon University's reputation and brand. This, in turn, fosters greater productivity, collaboration, and engagement across the workforce.

Table of Contents

Overview 1

Compliance Obligations and Community Values 1

Determining your Interview Process..... 2

 Format and duration of interviews..... 2

Collaborative Interviewing – Interview Panel/Search Committees 3

Candidate Outreach and Communication..... 3

Preparing for the Candidate Interview 3

 On-Campus Interviews 4

 Virtual Interviews 4

Conducting the Interview..... 5

 Introductions and Realistic Job Preview..... 5

 During the Interview..... 5

Concluding the Interview 5

 Candidate Assessment and Evaluation 5

Compliance Obligations and Community Values

Carnegie Mellon University is held to compliance standards during our hiring process. Maintaining a compliant recruitment and interview process ensures that our hiring process is fair and follows all relevant laws and regulations.

Equal Employment Opportunity

Equal Employment Opportunity is the law. Carnegie Mellon University is an Equal Employment/Disability/Veteran employer.

Determining your Interview Process

When you have a job opening in your department, you need to determine your interview process. This can be discussed and determined with the recruiter during the initial intake and/or recruitment strategy meeting. This is an effective way for recruiters and hiring managers to identify which candidate is best for the job.

A streamlined interview process can help us to compete in a competitive employment market and provide a positive candidate experience. A lengthy and unstructured interview process increases the risk of candidates losing interest or withdrawing from consideration resulting in us losing top talent and lengthening the time a role is vacant.

Generally, it is recommended that the interview process consists of no more than four rounds of interviews in total, including the initial phone screen

- **Phone screen** – Typically conducted by the recruiter or the hiring manager, phone screens are an initial screening to further ensure the candidate's background, experience and interests align with the opportunity. This conversation helps identify a short list of qualified candidates to be invited for first-round interviews. Generally, phone screens range from 15 to 30 minutes in duration.
- **First-Round or Second-Round interview(s)** – Typically conducted by the hiring manager and/or search committee members, these interviews can be an in-person or virtual meeting. The goal of these rounds of interviews is to provide a deeper understanding of the opportunity and assess the candidate's specific skills and experience. Generally, these interviews range from 30 minutes to one hour in duration
- **Final interview(s)** – Typically conducted by department leadership, senior staff and/or various campus partners and stakeholders, the final round of interviews are typically in person but can also be conducted virtually. This round includes deeper, more specific questions to follow up on certain topics from the previous interviews and an opportunity to better understand how the top candidate(s) would acclimate to the position and work environment based on key competencies, skills or experience identified. Generally, final-round interviews range from 30 minutes to one hour in duration.

While we recommend no more than four rounds of interviews for most roles, some positions, typically senior level, may require additional rounds of interviews

Consult with your recruiter on how best to approach your interview process to ensure optimal results.

Format and duration of interviews

The format and duration of interviews should be determined by the hiring manager before the interviews are scheduled.

Format of Interviews

- Determine whether your interviews will be conducted virtually or in person.
 - Once the interview format is determined, interviews should be conducted in the same manner for all candidates. However, this can waver in exceptional circumstances. (e.g., the candidate is out of state).
- Determine if your interviews will be panel-style) or multiple one-on-one interview sessions.
 - If hosting a panel interview, identify an interview facilitator. This individual will take the lead in greeting the candidate, opening and closing the interview.

Collaborative Interviewing – Interview Panel/Search Committees

To allow for a fair and effective hiring process, the Office of Human Resources recommends using an interview panel/search committee during the hiring process.

Being on the search committee requires a time commitment, so it's important to be thoughtful about who is on this committee and make sure all participants can attend all scheduled interviews.

The hiring manager should meet with the search committee before the interview(s) to discuss critical success factors for the role (qualities, skills, experiences, and characteristics that a successful candidate would possess). During recruitment, interview committees need to have a consistent approach when interviewing and evaluating each candidate.

Individuals participating in the search committee must keep candidate information confidential. Additional recommendations for search committees can be found in our [Search Committee Guidance \[pdf\]](#).

Candidate Outreach and Communication

Hiring managers should strive to provide a positive and consistent candidate experience. To help ensure this, the Office of Human Resources has created resources for hiring managers to consider using in their outreach to candidates to invite, schedule and confirm interviews. These can be found on the [Talent Strategy page](#).

Whether you are conducting your interviews virtually or in person, it is important to provide information regarding the interview details and format to the candidate in advance.

Upon determining the interview date and availability, the hiring manager or the designated contact facilitating and/or scheduling the interview is encouraged to send the candidate a confirmation email and/or calendar invite containing the following information:

- Date and time of the interview
- Format of the interview (phone, Zoom, in person, etc.)
 - If virtual, provide a video conferencing link
- Position for which they are interviewing
- Names and titles of those they will be meeting with

It is also recommended the following attachments are included in the correspondence:

- The day's agenda (if multiple interview sessions are scheduled)
- The job advertisement / job description

Preparing for the Candidate Interview

When preparing for the interview, hiring managers should consider developing a structured interview process, which includes developing a standard set of interview questions for the interviewer(s) to ask. By incorporating a standard set of interview questions, this will ensure the interviewer(s) evaluate each of the candidate's responses, skills and experience objectively.

Interview Questions and Guide: Interview questions should be prepared in advance and shared with those involved in the interview process.

To aid managers during the process, the Office of Human Resources (OHR) has developed a [customizable interview guide template \[docx\]](#) and [behavioral competency-based question bank \[pdf\]](#). This guide is designed to be flexible, allowing managers to customize it according to the specific critical competencies required for the position.

By identifying key competencies and/or skills and incorporating relevant behavioral interview questions, the guide enables you to enhance the interview process. OHR encourages the hiring manager to identify core competencies or skills associated with the position and prepare an interview guide for each round of interviews.

To alleviate any confusion during a panel-style interview, it is suggested to assign each interview question to a member of the search committee and/or interview panel.

The same interview guide, with set questions, should be used for each candidate participating in that round of interviews. If hosting multiple rounds of interviews, a separate guide should be developed with different questions. The guide developed for subsequent rounds of interviews should be used for each candidate participating in that round of interviews.

Interview Facilitator: It is a best practice to assign an interview facilitator for panel-style interviews. This individual will be responsible for greeting the candidate, opening and closing the interview sessions

Additional Context and Information: In addition to identifying and preparing interview questions, those involved in the interview process should be prepared to provide the candidate with information regarding the role, including job responsibilities, expectations, the team and/or CMU. It is suggested the hiring manager share the following with those involved in the search process in advance of the interview.

- Format of the interview (virtual or onsite)
- Location/address of the interview
- Schedule/agenda
- Candidate's resume
- The job advertisement
- Interview guide and candidate evaluation form
- General overview of the process/number of interview rounds, and anticipated timeline for feedback

Communication templates can be found on the [Talent Strategy page](#).

On-Campus Interviews

If hosting an onsite interview, it is recommended that you designate a point of contact who will greet the candidate upon their arrival and ensure the candidate has their contact information before the interview.

When selecting a location to conduct the interview, you should ensure the environment is conducive to a productive meeting by limiting distractions.

Virtual Interviews

If conducting the interview virtually, you should ensure the environment is conducive to a productive meeting by limiting distractions (close all open tabs, no food and no cell phone). Ensure technology is in working condition (strong Wi-Fi connection, select a professional virtual background on Zoom, make sure the camera and microphone are functioning, etc.) and remain muted while the candidate speaks. The interviewer should be provided with additional host access to manage the interview session and manage the virtual waiting room (if applicable). See [Virtual Interviewing Guidance \[pdf\]](#) for more information.

Conducting the Interview

A candidate's interview is one of the most important tools to evaluate a candidate thoroughly. There are numerous ways to conduct an interview, and they can take place through different methods, including phone, video or in person. The format of the interview may also differ from one-on-one to a panel to an open forum

Introductions and Realistic Job Preview

At the beginning of each interview, it is recommended that the interviewer(s) provide brief introductions (name, department, brief overview of how the role may interact with their team, etc.).

It is also recommended that the interviewer to provide an overview of the team composition, division, and provide a brief overview of the role's day-to-day tasks and responsibilities, hours, work posture and other requirements.

During the Interview

From time to time, the interviewer may need to ask follow-up questions to get a better understanding of an applicant's experience, clarify unclear answers or to obtain more specific information. It is beneficial to use questions such as "Could you please tell me more about ...?" and "Can you give me an example of ...?" to get more details from the candidate in effort to better assess their experience and skills

Concluding the Interview

When concluding the interview, the interviewer(s) should offer the candidate the opportunity to ask questions. In addition, it is encouraged that the interviewer describes the timeframe for the next steps which includes remaining interviews, when they can expect an update, and when a decision will likely be made. Be sure to thank the candidate for their time and provide contact information for any follow-up questions.

Candidate Assessment and Evaluation

Upon completion of the interview, all interviewers should assess and evaluate each candidate. All assessments and evaluations should be completed independently within 1–2 days after the interview is conducted and sent to the hiring manager and [recruiter](#). The overall assessment and evaluation should focus on the candidates' responses to the questions asked and how successfully they demonstrated or failed to demonstrate their related experience based on the responsibilities and qualifications of the position

The Office of Human Resources has developed a standardized [candidate evaluation template \[docx\]](#) for use by hiring managers to ensure all candidates are being assessed fairly and consistently. OHR encourages the hiring manager to prepare the evaluation form in advance, listing the core competencies and skills associated with the position for that round of interview and share with the interviewer(s) in advance of the interview, or shortly after the interview concludes so they can evaluate the candidates timely.