

# Handbook for Members of the UHK Selection Committees<sup>1</sup>

This manual is elaborated as a methodological material based on the OTM-R policy of the University of Hradec Králové. The aim of this document is to provide members of selection committees with methodological support in selecting the most suitable candidates for advertised positions.

This material is primarily aimed at shortlisting candidates, typically by conducting interviews. The aim of the selection interviews is to assess the candidate's suitability for the job, knowledge and skills, motivation and personality.

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<sup>1</sup> Gender-sensitive language is used in this material, with occasional use of generic masculinities to make the text clear and easy to understand. Terms used in the generic masculine are used as placeholders referring to women and men.

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## Selection procedure

The requirements for the candidates for the post to be filled are defined according to each given selection procedure. The requirements are crucial to the evaluation by the selection committee and can be divided into 3 groups according to their importance:

1. **Essential:** Requirements that are mentioned in the advertisement as being required (e.g., minimum requirements in terms of education, level of foreign language skills, field of education, experience, management skills);
2. **Desirable:** Requirements that are needed but can be acquired over time or compensated for by other skills and abilities (e.g., mobility experience, knowledge of specific systems);
3. **Welcome:** Requirements that are not essential for the job but may give the candidate an advantage in the evaluation (e.g., knowledge of the university environment, possibility of immediate start of the job).

## Interview

Only candidates who meet the essential requirements of the selection procedure will be shortlisted.

### Preparation before the interview

Members of the selection committee are provided with comprehensive materials in advance, providing basic information on the individual candidates and the context of the selection procedure. These materials should include:

- A published advertisement for the position;
- The level of pay and its possible progression;
- Description of the position and the duties;
- Specification of requirements and competences;
- A list of all applicants;
- Materials sent/submitted by individual candidates;
- A declaration of confidentiality and training;
- A form for recording the results of the selection procedure.

Before the interview, the selection committee will carefully study the CVs of each candidate, in particular with regard to the required knowledge, skills and competences. The selection committee should meet at least 30 minutes before the

first interview to agree on the details of the organisation of the interviews (scenario, roles of the committee members, etc.), their structure (questions corresponding to the requirements, appropriate candidate responses, etc.), the decision-making process (scoring, calibration, etc.) and other key areas leading to a successful interview. The committee members should also prepare for possible questions from candidates (on the position, on the selection criteria, on information, on the process of communicating the results of the selection procedure and providing feedback, etc.). It is advisable to take factual notes during the interview to help in the final assessment. If notes are taken on electronic devices, it is advisable to inform the candidate about it so that he/she does not get the impression that the members of the panel are dealing with other matters during the interview.

### **Interview structure**

**Structured interview:** The interview is conducted according to questions, the wording and order of which is determined and prepared in advance.

**Semi-structured interview:** The interview has a list of questions or topics prepared in advance but the manner and form of questioning remains free. The list of questions is supplemented during the interview with questions that respond to the candidates' answers.

**Unstructured interview:** No questions are prepared in advance but stick to the topic. The form and content of the questions depend on the interviewers, based on the current situation and the candidates' answers.

In the selection procedure, it is advisable to use a semi-structured interview format. The duration of the interview should be the same for all candidates, approximately 1 hour is recommended (the duration can be adjusted depending on the complexity of the position and the requirement to verify knowledge and skills). If the interview would take longer, it is recommended to include breaks in the schedule or to schedule the interview for more rounds.

### **Organisation of the interview**

In order to ensure a professional but also pleasant interview, it is recommended to follow the following scenario:

1. Welcoming the candidate;
2. Presentation of the selection committee;

3. Creating a friendly atmosphere (e.g., offering coffee/water, relaxed questions: *"Did you have a nice trip?"*);
4. Explanation of the interview process (e.g., whether part of the interview will be conducted in a foreign language, the candidate will be given a task to demonstrate the required knowledge);
5. Interview;
6. Candidate's questions and other information about the job;
7. Conclusion, closing (farewell to the candidate, thanking him/her for his/her interest and telling him/her when and how he/she will know the results of the selection procedure).

### What questions to ask

1. **Simple** questions (complicated and multiple questions may lead to only partial answers);
2. **Open-ended** questions (closed-ended questions generate yes/no answers and the committee doesn't learn much about the candidate);
3. **Behavioural** types of questions (these types of questions provide a description of the reactions and personality characteristics of the candidates; these are questions about model situations and how the person would deal with them, e.g.:
  - *"Give an example of a situation when you had to communicate assertively to complete your project."* (communication)
  - *"What is the most complicated problem you have had to solve in your work? How did you solve it? What alternatives did you consider?"* (decision making)
  - *"Describe a situation where you had to give constructive criticism to someone."* (interpersonal skills)
  - *"Can you give an example of a task or project that you have initiated yourself?"* (initiative, innovation)
  - *"Can you describe a situation where you had to adapt quickly to changes beyond your control? How did you handle it?"* (adaptation, flexibility)
4. **Verification** questions (questions to verify the information provided by the candidate, e.g., in the CV, motivation letter or during the interview, questions such as *"Do I understand correctly that..."*)

## What is appropriate to ask

- The reason for interest (in the position, in the UHK, in the field);
- Knowledge of the unit the candidate is applying for (R&D focus, activities, projects...);
- Experience from previous work;
- Significant work achievements or failures;
- How he/she works on his/her professional and personal development;
- What are his/her strengths for which he/she has been praised;
- How he/she works with criticism;
- reference for independent or team work;
- What types of people he/she doesn't want/wants to work with;
- Whether foreign mobility would be an obstacle;
- What are the ideas and expectations of the position he/she is applying for;
- What motivates or demotivates the candidate;
- What experience he/she has in managing people (if relevant);
- Whether he/she can take up the position on the advertised date;
- What is his/her idea of the pay (if the amount is not already known);
- Whether the candidate wants to ask any question.

## Inappropriate questions

During the job interview, the employer may only ask questions that are directly related to the employment contract, education, professional qualifications, experience, acquired skills or the job itself. There are some questions that are not appropriate or even prohibited (discriminatory questions) to ask, e.g.<sup>2</sup>:

- Age;
- Children;
- Pregnancy;
- Origin;
- Family and property circumstances;

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<sup>2</sup> Questions on pregnancy, family and property circumstances and criminal record may be asked only if there is a factual reason based on the nature of the work to be performed and if the requirement is reasonable, or where provided for by law or special legislation.

- Health condition;
- Religious beliefs;
- Political preferences;
- Sexual orientation;
- Whether the candidate is a smoker;
- Church affiliation;
- Membership in a trade union;
- Criminal record.

## Mistakes in conducting interviews and assessing candidates

- **Halo effect** – the impact of the first/ strongest impression made by the candidate;
- **Unconscious (implicit) bias** – unconscious biases such as social stereotypes about certain groups of people (based on age, gender, ethnicity, religion, etc.) may enter into the assessment;
- **Personal sympathies/antipathies** – based on personal sympathies or antipathies, candidates may be evaluated more or less strictly;
- **Unpreparedness** – members of the committee have not prepared the interview scenario, they have not agreed on the key questions to be asked, they jump from topic to topic, the evaluation system is not agreed in advance, etc.;
- **Central tendency** – when evaluating a higher number of people, discriminatory ability may be reduced and evaluators may then tend to use mean or average values (avoiding extreme positive or negative ratings);
- **Projection** – attributing properties and values that the candidate may not have;
- **Monologue** – during the interview, it is important to listen to the candidates;
- **Suggestive questions** – the committee members should prefer open-ended questions without wording that would influence the answers of the candidates;
- **Stereotyping** – the inclusion of a candidate into a "box" on the basis of which we perceive and evaluate him/her;
- **Primacy effect** – the evaluation is influenced by the order of the information we learn about the candidate; it is advisable to take factual notes during the interview to help with the final evaluation;
- **Lack of concentration** – the committee member studies the candidate's materials no earlier than during the interview and does not concentrate on the candidate's answers, or carries out other activities during the interview (making phone calls, writing messages, e-mails, etc.);

- **Unprofessional approach** – a member of the committee treats candidates with disrespect, expresses a personal opinion, comments inappropriately on candidates' answers, uses inappropriate gestures, jumps into the speech of candidates or committee members, the interview is more like an interrogation, etc.;
- **Misinterpretation** – a member of the committee misinterprets the candidates' answers without checking whether he/she understands the answer correctly;
- **Premature conclusions** – premature formation of judgment and resistance to change mind;
- **Failure to provide space for candidates** – it is advisable to let the candidate ask questions not only at the end of the interview but also during the interview, or to state at the beginning that the candidate can ask questions at the end of the interview;
- **Schedule** – the committee members should be punctual; it is not appropriate to keep the candidate waiting in unfamiliar surroundings; the candidates should be given approximately comparable time for the interview; however, it is not appropriate to keep track of time noticeably; it may embarrass the candidate.

In order to avoid some of these mistakes, it is important to make sure that the assessment is based on a consideration of the available evidence and that people are judged on their abilities, skills and achievements.

## Candidate evaluation

When evaluating candidates, it is also advisable to focus, in addition to professional expertise and experience, on the personality of the candidates and other factors that can, for example, influence teamwork in the workplace.

What to look for during the evaluation:

- **Eligibility** (qualification, competence, skills and abilities that match the requirements of the job);
- **Motivation** (what is the candidate's motivation, what is his/her interest in the position);
- **Development** (what are the assumptions for further development of the candidate);
- **Innovation** (what will the candidate bring to the team/workplace/field of work, what is his/her potential to bring something new);
- **Requirements** (what are the candidate's requirements);

- **"Cultural fitness"** (whether the candidate is likely to *"fit in"* well with the team or workplace, whether there could be a fit with the cultural and value aspects and goals of the team/workplace).

The evaluation of candidates also takes into account the fulfilment of the so-called third role of the university and experience in non-research activities. Mobility experience (including virtual) is evaluated positively. Career changes (interdisciplinary, intersectoral) are seen as career developments that have provided candidates with potentially valuable experience in developing their careers, skills and abilities. Career breaks are not evaluated negatively a priori.

### **After the interview**

After the interview with the candidate, it is advisable to make notes that were not taken during the interview as this information and impressions may be forgotten with the passage of time.

The committee members should set aside time after the interview(s) to share notes and impressions with each other. In particular, it is useful to focus on points or questions that have been identified in advance as key, and also to address information and points that were considered by the committee as contradictory or not answered specifically.

If the candidate has been given information during the interview about the future course of action, it should be fulfilled according to the information given (e.g., when he/she will receive the result of the selection procedure, that he/she will be sent a task to prepare, sent the promised materials etc.).

Finally, the members of the selection committee will fill in a record of the results of the selection procedure. This record must contain information on all the candidates involved. The record shall include objective reasons for success/failure to succeed in the selection procedure. The reasons given must relate to the areas covered by the predefined qualifications and competences required for the post. The resulting record should contain information on the reasons why the candidate was not selected (e.g., which qualifications and competences are not met or are met partially/insufficiently by the individual candidates, in which area preference was given to more experienced candidates). This material will also be used to provide requested feedback to unsuccessful candidates.

The candidates should be informed of the results of the selection procedure as soon as possible after the end of the selection procedure, but usually no later than 30 calendar days from the date of the selection procedure.



The results of the selection procedure are communicated to the candidates by e-mail or, where appropriate, through the contact channels they have indicated (telephone contact, means of distance communication, etc.).