The Selection Process

Reviewing Resumes

The resume (and cover letter, if provided) is your introduction to each potential candidate. Here are some things to consider that will help you decide which candidates merit a closer look.

Initial Review of Resumes

Review each resume you receive, paying attention to the outlined details below.

Key skills/ and experience

- **Basic Qualifications**: Does the candidate meet the basic qualifications, such as level of educational attainment or job experience? A candidate who lacks these basic qualifications *cannot be considered* for the position and should be immediately declined in ASPIRE.
- **Additional Qualifications**: Make a note of "useful to have" qualifications and skills, including those you may have described as "Preferred" on the job posting.
- **Behavioral Competencies and Capabilities**: Look for "soft" competencies and capabilities that the candidate will need to be successful in this role. For example, depending on the role in question, you might look for indications that the candidate is able to lead and manage change, is detail oriented, or has the capacity to listen to a variety of perspectives and to reach an aligned solution.

Employment history and experience

- How do the candidate's previous positions and employers (including workplace cultures) compare with the posted job and your department?
- How long did the candidate stay in each position and with each employer? Did he or she change jobs frequently? Was there logical career progression? Are the candidate's skills and experiences broad or deep, or both?
- Are there any unexplained gaps between jobs? Don't assume they reflect negatively on the candidate, but do make a note to raise this question during the interview.
- Determine whether the resume reflects particular achievements and results, or simply lists tasks and duties.

Note the presentation of written materials, if appropriate to the job

Neatness, spelling, grammar, and attention to detail may give an indication of the care that would be applied to job responsibilities.

Narrow your candidate pool

- Separate resumes into three groups:
  - Those who do not meet the requirements at all. These should be declined in ASPIRE at initial review.
  - Internal qualified Harvard candidates and those who closely match job requirements.
  - Those who meet basic requirements and may be considered secondarily.
- Aim for about three to seven candidates for the top group. If necessary, screen this group again to further narrow down the candidates. As you screen candidates, work with FAS Recruitment Services to create a diverse candidate slate for consideration.

Update ASPIRE as you move through the Recruiting/Hiring Process

Be sure to keep ASPIRE up-to-date as you move through the Recruiting/Hiring process. If a candidate is declined at any stage before contact is made with them (for instance, if he or she doesn't meet the job requirements at all and will not be considered), then ASPIRE will automatically send a decline notification via email. It is important to update ASPIRE:

- To ensure timely responses to candidates;
- To save yourself from having to update candidate statuses at the conclusion of the search; and
- To maintain accurate search status data in the system, which is what the law requires.

Updating and dispositioning should be done simultaneously, as decisions are made. It is essential that you avoid "batch dispositioning" which may result in the recording of incorrect rejection reasons.

Consider our commitment to internal Harvard employees

- Qualified internal candidates are a source for hiring for open positions, provided there is a match. Among other reasons to consider internal candidates first, are that they understand Harvard's structure and systems, and have an established network of contacts; and this consideration is in keeping with our commitment to encourage the career growth of our staff - including a contractual commitment to career mobility for HUCTW staff.
- Internal candidates should be kept updated regarding the status of their candidacy.

Please note these requirements relating to laid-off Harvard staff

- As provided in the HUCTW Personnel Manual, based on their history of proven contributions, laid-off HUCTW staff members (on Work Security) will be given hiring preference over outside candidates for any vacant job for which they are qualified. (http://harvie.harvard.edu/docroot/doc-lib/500_Labor_Employee_Relations/300_HUCTW/huctw-manual.pdf)

- The HR office of any hiring unit to which a qualified laid-off HUCTW employee has applied will interview that employee and will provide feedback to their assigned Case Manager for the purpose of advising the employee.
- An FAS department or unit laying-off any HUCTW employee continues to have an obligation to that person for the two-year period following the layoff. During this time, the department or unit must: (a) make an offer of employment to such an individual should the same job again become available, or (b) give strong preference to such an individual in filling any new job having similar duties and responsibilities, provided that the laid-off employee is qualified to perform the duties of the open position.

Consider our commitment to diversity

To the extent that candidates' race and/or gender or other diversity attributes are known or apparent, consider the diversity of your internal applicant pool, and consult with your HR Consultant or FAS Recruitment Services on whether you should strive to increase the diversity of the pool by recruiting externally. A key factor in determining recruitment strategy is the Affirmative Action Goal for the job. If there is a goal, good faith efforts should be undertaken to recruit a diverse pool (internally and/or externally). It is usually better for searches to be conducted externally to have an adequate and diverse pool. For guidance in meeting Harvard's commitment to diversity, please see the Toolkit section, *Recruiting for Diversity* (page 12).

Set Up Telephone Screens With Top Candidates

For each resume you have set aside for telephone screening, write down any relevant questions that arise when reviewing the resume/application, such as questions about gaps in employment. Plan to ask these questions during a telephone screen. The Toolkit section on *Telephone Screens* (page 32) discusses this process in depth, and lists some general questions to ask during telephone screens.

Telephone Screens

The telephone screen consists of a few basic qualifying questions that will help you determine whether a candidate's qualifications, experience, and salary needs match the position. The purpose of a telephone screen is to save managerial time by eliminating unlikely candidates. It is important to ask every candidate the same screening questions, to avoid the appearance of discrimination (although you can, of course, ask follow-up questions if appropriate based on the candidate's responses). Before you begin telephone screening, please read our *Guide to Legally Permissible Interview Questions and Discussions* (Appendix E). Please also note that hearing-impaired candidates may require accommodations in order to take part in a telephone interview. The University Disability Services office can advise and help you with such accommodations. See also the Toolkit section, *Recruiting People with Disabilities* (page 23).

Once you have completed and reflected upon the candidates' answers to your screening questions, you should be able to decide which candidates should be invited for an in-person interview.

When conducting a telephone screen you should:

- Introduce yourself and give the reason for the phone call.
- Make sure that you are calling at a convenient time for the candidate to talk. If not, schedule a mutually convenient time.
- Briefly explain the position and its place in the department and organization.
- Ask your screening questions. All candidates should be asked the same basic questions. In addition, you may ask about questions that came up in your review of his or her resume, such as activities during employment gaps.

  Here are some recommended screening questions:

  › What interests you in working at Harvard/FAS? This position in particular?

  › Can you walk me through your work history? Why are you leaving your current position?

  › What do you enjoy most about your current (or last) position? What do/did you enjoy least?

  › What type of work environment are you used to working in? What is your ideal?

  › What do you feel you need to be successful in your job?

  › What is your current / most recent salary?

- Answer any questions the candidate may have.
- Be sure to obtain the candidate's salary requirements and/or explain the standard hiring salary range for the open position. Typically, candidates are hired between the minimum and the midpoint of the job grade range. Check with your HR Consultant if you have any questions regarding salary.
- Briefly explain the next steps and timeline of the application process.

The Team Interviewing Process (TIP): Selecting an Interview Team

At the FAS, each candidate is interviewed by a team because (1) several people will be affected by a decision (for example, co-workers who will rely on the person filling the position), and (2) different people will likely be able to gather different types of information from the candidates (for example, one person may understand technical qualifications, while another may be a better judge of the interpersonal dynamics called for by the position and/or the department).

FAS' Team Interviewing Process (TIP) is an HR best practice aimed at helping you to evaluate job candidates, strengthen cross-departmental relationships, and ultimately create greater efficiencies in hiring. Through TIP, hiring departments make their decisions in collaboration with one or both of the following critical stakeholders:

- ***Subject-matter experts* who can best judge a candidate's proficiency in the technical skills and knowledge required by the position.** When hiring for a position with a functional component such as finance, grants administration, information technology or human resources, a subject-matter expert from each relevant functional department will provide input by interviewing and advising relative to candidates.

- ***The FAS customers* that the new hire will support.** When hiring for a position that supports a particular FAS customer group, a representative from the customer group should participate in the interviewing and selection process. This will help assure that the candidate hired understands the needs of their customers and is likely to be successful in supporting them.

Who should generally be part of your interview team?

When selecting your interview team, consider how many interviewers to include, and their qualifications and diversity. If different individuals or groups have a stake in the hiring decision, it's a good idea to see that all stakeholders are represented in the interview team. Try to limit your team to no more than four members.

You should consider including some of the following individuals:

- Direct manager (if possible, should participate in *all* interviews)
- Co-worker(s)
- Department Administrator

Be clear about the scope of each team member's role and identify one person (or possibly two) who will be the ultimate decision maker. Interview teams often develop a brief vision statement related to teamwork and inclusion. Such a statement can help teams effectively communicate their agreed upon vision for diversity and inclusion in their department. For example: "We are committed to conducting a fair and equitable process.

We have a responsibility to foster an environment of mutual respect and inclusion for our team members and participants in the interviewing process. We believe that a diverse workforce will contribute to our department's success."

Preparing for an Interview

Checklist in Planning for Interviews

- ☐ Review application materials, including resume, cover letter and any application forms.
- ☐ Prepare a list of basic and behavioral interview questions to ask every candidate.
  - › Review the sample questions in *Behavioral Interview Questions* (Appendix D) to develop behavior-based interview questions according to the competencies and capabilities required for the position. Familiarize yourself with the guidelines in the *Guide to Legally Permissible Interview Questions and Discussions* (Appendix E). We strongly recommend using behavioral questions, as described in the Toolkit section on *Behavioral Interviewing* (page 36), because past behavior is the best predictor of future performance.
  - › Your questions should also address areas relating to compatability with the hiring department or with those with whom the candidate would interact, if hired. For example, a position in a department comprised of fast-paced, high intensity individuals might call for a staff member with a work style that could manage multiple conflicting demands.
- ☐ Prepare answers to questions that diverse candidates (including people with disabilities) are likely to ask.
- ☐ Arrange for any accommodations that may be needed when interviewing a person with disabilities.

Use the same core set of behavioral questions for every candidate's interview.

- ☐ In addition to the basic and behavioral questions that should be asked of all candidates, prepare individual questions for each candidate, based on particular experiences included in each candidate's resume or other communications.
- ☐ Note any jobs, experiences, and gaps in employment about which you are unclear or would like more information.
- ☐ Compare the needed job competencies and capabilities to the candidate's experience and make a note of areas to explore during the interview.
- ☐ Provide candidates with interview information such as directions to your office, names and titles of those who will be at the interview, the job description, a point of contact at your office if they have questions and/or are running late for their interview, and an employment application to be sent via ASPIRE.
  - › Using ASPIRE, e-link the Harvard employment application and EEO Self ID form to all interviewed candidates for them to complete online via ASPIRE.
  - › Inform the candidate that the employment application is separate from the process of applying to a position through ASPIRE.

Behavioral Interviewing

Behavioral interviewing is a technique by which the interviewee is asked how he or she acts or acted in particular situations. Because one's past behavior generally predicts future behavior, the answers to behavior-based questions can give you an excellent idea about how the candidate would deal with actual work situations, and can help you assess a person's ability to achieve or demonstrate the competencies and capabilities required to be successful in the position.

What Are Behavioral Questions?

In behavioral interviews, interviewees are asked to give specific examples of when they have demonstrated particular behaviors or skills. Candidates should be asked to describe in detail a particular event, project, or experience, how they dealt with the situation, and what the outcome was. Appendix D, *Behavioral Interview Questions*, gives many sample behavioral interview questions that relate to the most commonly-needed competencies and capabilities for FAS positions.

In preparing the questions you will ask, take time to identify the competencies that are vital to the position. This will help you target your questioning to reveal the information that matters most.

These are the most commonly-needed competencies and capabilities for FAS positions:

- *Adaptability*
- *Commitment*
- *Communication Skills*
- *Dealing with Pressure*
- *Planning and Organization Skills*
- *Positive Relationship Building*
- *Producing Results (deliverables)*
- *Management and Leadership (if appropriate)*

The word "**STAR**" is a helpful tool to keep you on track in asking behavioral questions. Each question and answer should address:

- a **Situation** or **Task** facing the candidate;
- an **Action** the candidate took; and
- the **Results** of changes caused by these actions.

It is not unusual to receive vague, theoretical, or generic responses to behavioral questions. In such cases, follow-up questions are the best way to drill down to the specific, action-oriented detail you need to get a full understanding of the candidate.

Follow-up questions might begin with:

- Exactly what did you do…
- What were the circumstances surrounding…
- What was the most memorable example of this…
- Why did you…
- Walk me through the steps you took…
- Describe your specific role in…
- How were you able to…
- What happened when you…
- Tell me about a time…

When you ask behavioral questions, you should allow candidates time to think about their past experiences. Encourage them to take their time to think before responding. Sometimes there will be a moment or two of silence while the candidate attempts to come up with an answer. While this silence can often feel uncomfortable, avoid the temptation to jump in and break the pause. Give the candidate time and wait for their response. Candidate responses to behavior-based questions are very illuminating and are worth the time and effort.

Conducting the Interview

Interviews yield the best results when all interview team members understand the job competencies and capabilities needed, arrive with prepared questions, and stick to the agenda. By the end of a well-executed interview, the interview team will have assessed the candidate's level of knowledge and skills, interest in the position, and likelihood of success in the position. Also, bear in mind that while you are assessing the candidate, he or she is assessing the position, you, and Harvard. Ideally, the candidate will walk away feeling fairly treated, adequately informed about the job, clear about the next steps in the hiring process, and holding a positive impression of Harvard.

Set the Tone of the Interview

- The interview should be free from interruptions and distractions. Forward your phone calls, turn off your cell phone, and close the door.
- Establish rapport by welcoming the candidate, introducing yourself, and describing your position and what you do. Introduce the other members of the interview team in the same way, or have them introduce themselves. If available, offer the interviewee a drink of water, or a cup of coffee or tea.
- Explain the purpose of the interview:
    - To acquaint the interviewers and candidate with each other;
    - To learn more about the candidate's background and experience; and
    - To help the candidate understand the position and organization.
- Give a brief overview of your department, the FAS, and Harvard.
- Provide a *brief* description of the job responsibilities. (If you speak too much about the job at the start of the interview, before you have gathered the information you are looking for, the candidate might slant his or her information to match your description.)

Exchange Information During the Interview

- Stick to the questions you've planned in advance, that are related to the candidate's ability to perform the job successfully.

Important note

Sometimes interviewees volunteer information about themselves that by law should not be considered in making an employment decision. For example, a candidate might mention dropping a child off at day care. Don't acknowledge or make a note of this "don't ask" information. Don't ask, "How many children do you have?"

- Paraphrase what the speaker said to make sure you understand correctly what you are hearing.
- Take notes *on a sheet of paper separate from the candidate's resume*. Write down the key points. That is, record the candidate's statements that reflect qualifications for the job, and those that evidence past accomplishments and experiences.
- Observe and listen to the candidate's responses.
- Pay attention to the candidate's body language and facial expressions. Body language can be an important indicator of what may be behind the words you are hearing. We're not asking you to play armchair psychologist, but if the candidate tells you that building relationships is important, while their arms are tightly folded and eyes cast downward, these are signals you should consider as you evaluate what you hear.
- Ask probing questions if the answer is vague or seems questionable. To probe more, you may want to ask:
  - "Can you tell me what you mean by that?"
  - "Please give me another example."
  - "Please tell me more."
- Provide candid information about the job, your department and its constituents, and the environment in which the staff member would work.
- Invite the candidate to ask you any questions he or she may have.

Close the Interview

- Explain the next steps in the hiring process, including when and how the candidate will hear from you. (Later on, when the hiring decision has been made, be sure that you follow the communication process you described during the interview.)
- Thank the candidate for taking the time to meet with you.

Note-Taking and Discussion Before, During, and After the Interview

The notes you make on resumes, during interviews, and at other times relating to job applicants are legal records, and should reflect the same lawful considerations that go into developing interview questions (Please see Appendix E, *Guide to Legally Permissible Interview Questions and Discussions*). For example, notes like "Older than others in department, might not be comfortable," should be avoided. Also, while it's fine to note that a candidate is able to work only between 9 and 3, do not add, "because of children." The factors you should consider in making your hiring decisions—and any documentation of your considerations—should be objective, specific, and job-related only.

The same considerations apply to your conversations with and about candidates: if a topic is on the "don't ask" list in the *Guide to Legally Permissible Interview Questions and Discussions* (for instance, a candidate's religion), don't mention it in conversation either. For example, don't comment—even admiringly—on an interviewee's head scarf or religious jewelry.

In the case of unsuccessful applicants you have interviewed, your interview and related notes must be retained for three years after the end of your search. See the Toolkit section on *Search Files—What You Must Keep* (page 44).

Why take notes during the hiring process?

Notes help you remember important information provided by candidates and they help you to distinguish between multiple candidates. In addition, note-taking serves two other equally important purposes:

- Ensuring that those in a position to hire staff follow consistent procedures and consider the relevant and lawful facts, and only those facts; and
- Providing documentation of a fair and lawful decision-making process.

Notes from telephone screens, in-person interviews, reference checks, interview team meetings, and other evaluations of candidates are often the best protection against claims that decisions were made based on illegal reasons.

Post-Interview Analysis and Making the Hiring Decision

Organize and complete your notes immediately after the interview, while things are fresh in your mind. Add details and thoughts that you weren't able to jot down during the interview. When the time comes to make a hiring decision, the interview notes for each candidate will be a critical tool for your decision-making.

As you make these notes:

- **Remember that your notes are legal records.** Keep in mind the considerations discussed in the Toolkit section, *Note-Taking and Discussion Before, During, and After the Interview* (page 40).
- Identify additional questions or concerns that were not noted previously or followed up on during the interview.
- Compare your notes with the basic qualifications that the candidate must have to be considered for the position.

Making the decision

- Compare your notes with the additional qualifications you would like the candidate to possess.
- Avoid prematurely labeling any candidate as the "most promising" until all candidates have been considered. This will help ensure that all qualified candidates receive equal consideration.
- Decide which "next step" you recommend regarding the candidate:
  - Job offer;
  - Future consideration; or
  - No offer.
- Consider the feedback provided by the subject-matter experts and/or customers on your search team.
- Once you've had the time to arrive at your own decision, meet with the rest of the interview team to debrief and discuss their recommendations. The bulk of the team's discussion should focus on each candidate's track record of achievements and qualifications to meet the requirements of the position.

Communicating with External and Harvard Internal Candidates Not Selected

Unlike the case of candidates who were declined at the earliest stage of their job applications, once contact has been made with a candidate, ASPIRE will **not** automatically send out a decline notification. For those candidates who have been telephone screened and/or interviewed, inform the candidate by a personal email or a phone call, or you may choose to send a release letter that uses communication templates that reside in ASPIRE.

In communicating a decline notification to a Harvard internal candidate or any finalist, it is best to do so personally, either through a phone call or a personal email inviting the candidate to call you if he or she wishes to discuss the decision further. If possible, your communication to Harvard internal candidates should give a reason for the rejection, such as your choice of a candidate with more experience in the relevant field or with the competencies and capabilities required for the position.

Be sure to contact your **HR Consultant** if you choose not to use the decline letter template provided to you in ASPIRE.

Checking References

Always check references before extending a job offer, and only do so for those finalists you are seriously considering. Make sure that the references have been provided by the applicant and that he or she understands when and how they will be used. We recommend checking at least three professional references, at least one of whom should be a current or recent manager. **No job offer should be made to an internal or external candidate until the candidate's references have been checked.**

This is your opportunity to test your impressions, ask for clarification of job experience, and obtain additional information about the candidates before making a hiring decision. Harvard has developed templates that you may use in checking references. Please use the *Reference Check Forms* available in ASPIRE or in Appendix A-9. A-10.

In addition to asking the questions on the *Reference Check Forms*, when speaking with a candidate's references, bear in mind that your goal is to hire not only the person with the best experience and ability, but someone whose personality and work style will be compatible with your department and potential colleagues and constituents. Thus, you might describe for the reference the working environment into which you are considering hiring the candidate, and ask whether he or she believes the candidate would be an appropriate choice, asking for reasons why or why not.

References for internal candidates are usually easy to track down; it is often more difficult to obtain references for external candidates. Many companies have policies limiting the information they will give out about present or former employees, in some cases providing dates of employment only. However, the candidate should be able to provide you with references that are willing to discuss job performance. If you are not getting beyond the confirmation of dates, job title and salary, ask the candidate to help you get the information you need by asking his or her references to give you more information or suggesting others you should contact.

When checking references, respect the confidentiality of the job candidate. Often candidates do not want to risk job security by having you talk with their current manager. In such cases, you may start by checking references with a previous manager, and then contact the current manager only when you are reasonably certain that you wish to make a job offer. Also, remember that your conversations while checking references should be treated as confidential and should never be discussed with the job candidate (even after hiring).

Harvard Internal Finalists/Transfers

You should always check references for internal candidates, including the current manager if the person is a final candidate. In addition, Department Administrators should contact **FAS Recruitment Services** or their **HR Consultant** to verify salary information and confirm that an internal candidate is in good standing.

Search Files—
What You Must Keep

Files must be kept for all candidates with whom contact is made. Access to records should be limited to designated personnel.

Harvard is required to maintain the following applicant records:

- Job advertisements and postings;
- Applications, resumes, and other expressions of interest (such as cover letters, resumes or CV's, and supporting materials);
- any test and test results;
- all screening and interview notes and reference checks;
- all records indicating job seekers contacted about their interest in a particular position;
- records of job offers; and
- records pertaining to searches of internal and external resume databases.

Retain records for three years after the end of the search.

For candidates who were not hired:

- ASPIRE is our system of record for applicants, so **hard copy resumes do not need to be maintained separately**.

For candidates who are hired:

- Place copies of successful candidates' applications, resumes, and other application-related documents and correspondence in their staff personnel files.
- References forms should be maintained separately for reasons of confidentiality.