

Section 5: Interviewing and hiring

The search and recruitment process for hiring new faculty plays a critical role in shaping not only departments, but also the profession as a whole. This process is central to increasing diversity in philosophy, both in its teachers and in its students.⁵

It is beyond the scope of the current document to develop guidelines for the search and recruitment process as a whole, though we should mention that there is a wealth of information about good practices for fairness and effectiveness in advertising a position, creating a candidate pool, drawing up a shortlist, interviewing and deliberating about candidates, and making and negotiating offers. The following resources address these issues:

- APA guidance documents on the academic job market:
 - [Guidance for Philosophy Job Seekers](#)
 - [Guidance for Placing Departments](#)
 - [Best Practices for Hiring Departments](#)
 - [Best Practices for Interviewing](#)
- [Best Practices for Conducting Faculty Searches](#), prepared by Harvard University Office for Faculty Development and Diversity
- The [ADVANCE project](#), a website hosted by the University of Michigan, which contains research and guidelines for recommended practices for enhancing fairness and diversity

Many universities now require members of search and hiring committees to take a diversity and inclusiveness training course that offers an overview of good practices for conducting an inclusive hiring search. Such trainings usually (i) identify good practices for an inclusive search process; (ii) identify good practices for diversifying the candidate pool; (iii) review federal regulations and university requirements concerning affirmative action, Equal Employment Opportunity, and confidentiality; and (iv) offer strategies for mitigating various forms of bias throughout the search process.

The following discussion of recommended practices in interviewing is intended to outline documented techniques or practices that tend to result in fairer outcomes in recruitment. These recommendations may reasonably be modified to fit particular institutional situations and structures, and many institutions may have developed their own set of recommended practices. Departments should ensure that all participants in any stage of the search and recruitment process are aware from the outset of the APA's [Statement on Non-Discrimination](#) and of any applicable college or university policies or reporting requirements.

⁵ This section was primarily drafted by the Subcommittee on Interviewing Best Practices, chaired by Julia Driver, with additional information, including the entirety of Appendices A, C, and D, provided by the APA Task Force on a Good Practices Guide.

Preliminaries

This guide focuses on interviewing practices rather than overall hiring practices. However, it should be noted that prior to the first-stage interviews, the hiring department has a responsibility to properly advertise a position and should work to recruit as large and diverse a pool of candidates as possible. One resource to aid in doing so is the APA's Underrepresented Philosophers Directory (*UPDirectory*). Those involved in the search should develop a list of job-related criteria, and read application files applying these criteria consistently. Some departments have tried to eliminate bias by anonymizing the initial screening (to prevent search committee members from making assumptions about a candidate with respect to sex, gender, race, ethnicity, etc.), and by not reading recommendation letters until a later stage of the search. These same considerations of fairness and consistency carry through to the interview process itself.

Some departments, in order to lessen the burden on candidates and letter-writers, do not request letters until after a shortlist has been formed by the hiring department; other departments find that letters are valuable even in the early stages of reviewing applications. Departments are encouraged to avoid application requirements that must be customized to the position in question, except when such customization is a matter of qualifying to apply for the position. If needed, more specialized material can be requested when the review process has focused on a smaller group of candidates.

SEE ALSO: SECTION 5, APPENDIX B: RESEARCH ON INTERVIEWING

Departments should also follow the [APA Statement on the Job Market Calendar](#), which recommends for tenure-track or continuing positions advertised in the second half of the calendar year an application deadline of November 1 or later. It is further recommended that positions be advertised at least 30 days prior to the application deadline to ensure that candidates have ample time to apply. In normal circumstances, a prospective employee should have at least two weeks for consideration of a written offer from the hiring institution, and responses to offers of a position whose duties begin in the succeeding fall normally should not be required before February 1. When advertising in [PhilJobs: Jobs for Philosophers](#), advertisers are asked to confirm that the hiring institution will follow the above guidelines. If an advertiser does not do so, the advertisement will include a notice to that effect.

The first-round screening interview

Departments standardly select from the application files received a short list for a first round of screening interviews. In the past, the first-round interviews usually took place at a professional meeting, generally the APA Eastern Division meeting. However, most departments now opt to use video conference software or conference calls to conduct first-round interviews. Though a few may still conduct their screening interviews at the APA Eastern Division meeting in early January, the APA no longer provides placement services or support for these interviews. Video or phone interviews typically pose less of a financial burden to the candidate; they also eliminate some of the risks of inappropriate treatment of candidates—especially women—that were present in the setting of the convention interview process. For a variety of reasons, then, applicants can no longer routinely be expected to attend the APA Eastern Division meeting for interviewing purposes, and departments who hold first-round interviews there thus may find that they still must do a significant portion of first-round interviewing by teleconference or videoconference, and this could introduce unwanted differential treatment into the interviewing and evaluating process.

SEE ALSO: SECTION 5, APPENDIX A: SOME RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR PHONE AND INTERNET INTERVIEWS

If a hiring department has decided that it will be conducting interviews at a professional meeting, that department should make sure in scheduling interviews with candidates that enough time is provided for candidates to arrange for transportation and accommodation. Interviews must be accessible for candidates with disabilities, e.g., departments must make efforts to ensure that the interview location is accessible. Such interviews must conform to APA policies on interviews, including the restriction that interviews must not be conducted in a hotel room used for sleeping. See the [APA Statement on Hotel Room Interviews](#) for further discussion.

Departments that plan to conduct electronic screening interviews should be mindful of various associated challenges and should prepare for them in advance. Interviewing departments and individual interviewers should keep in mind the following issues:

- Technical glitches and poor audio or video connections can detract from an interview in a way that can be disadvantageous to the candidate. It is of particular importance for interviewers to ensure that the interviewee is able to hear and see all of them well throughout the interview.
- Relatedly, electronic interviews can favor candidates who have access to superior technical facilities. To achieve greater equality among candidates or institutions that may lack such resources, some hiring departments provide funding for candidates to use a commercial electronic conferencing facility during the interview.

Whether a department chooses to conduct an in-person or electronic interview, it is a good practice to keep in mind that judgments about a candidate should be made on the basis of agreed-upon criteria, and be aware that impressions of candidates such as “fit,” “collegiality,” and “friendliness” are especially subject to bias. Psychological research has cast doubt on the predictive value of unstructured interviews in hiring, and emphasized the dual liability of such interviews: their unstructured character tends to invite various forms of bias even as their first-person salience tends to produce excessive confidence in one’s impressions. In consequence, some departments have decided to eliminate first-stage interviews, focusing instead upon the content of the dossier, and inviting a smaller group of candidates to campus directly.

SEE ALSO: SECTION 2: CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF BIAS AND DISCRIMINATION

SEE ALSO: SECTION 5, APPENDIX B: RESEARCH ON INTERVIEWING

To reduce the risks of unstructured interviews, departments and search committees should develop a rubric of evaluation criteria that align with the job description, pose questions that could elicit reasonable information concerning these criteria and give candidates a chance to explain their qualifications, and keep written notes rather than relying upon memory. It is a good practice to discuss in advance what questions will be asked of interviewees and in what order, and, insofar as possible, to use the same set of questions for all candidates. Not all questions need be identical, of course, since questions will naturally need to reflect specifics of the candidate’s research, teaching experience, and so on. However, interviewing committees should attempt to ensure that questions from the same *categories* are asked, and that every candidate has been given a chance to answer questions corresponding to the full set of criteria being used. This helps provide the committee with a uniform range of information about candidates, and helps preclude the possibility that candidates may be disadvantaged because some questions were overlooked. Structure also helps reduce the chance that inappropriate questions will be asked, and members of interviewing and hiring committees should discuss among themselves in advance guidelines concerning acceptable questions to candidates. Some questions that may be appropriate *after* an offer has been made (e.g., inquiring about

possible family responsibilities that may affect the potential hire's ability to accept an offer) are *not* appropriate beforehand.

SEE ALSO: SECTION 5, APPENDIX C: GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Members of the hiring committee should be well prepared for the interviews, and each should have access to the same information for each candidate. This information may include, among other things, the candidate's CV, writing sample, and perhaps a sheet listing highlights from the candidate's dossier. Moreover, when possible, interviewees should be given the names of those who will be conducting the interview in advance, and be given an idea of how many candidates are being interviewed. In fairness to the candidates being interviewed, departments should limit the number of interviews to a reasonable number.

Most departments schedule 60 to 90 minutes per interview, which allows the interviewers to talk to the candidate for at least 45 minutes, some of which time can be reserved for the candidate to ask questions as well. This also leaves time for the committee to have a brief discussion of the interview in light of search criteria once the interview is over, and to prepare for the next candidate.

Those who will be conducting interviews should discuss interviewing practices in advance, keeping in mind relevant guidelines, including the [APA Statement on Non-Discrimination](#):

The American Philosophical Association rejects as unethical all forms of discrimination based on race, color, religion, political convictions, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identification or age, whether in graduate admissions, appointments, retention, promotion and tenure, manuscript evaluation, salary determination, or other professional activities in which APA members characteristically participate.

Throughout the initial interview process, members of the hiring committee are expected to maintain the highest standards of professionalism and refrain from behavior that may distract or intimidate the candidate. Interviewers and other members of the department are strongly discouraged from conducting pre- or post-interview "interviews" on their own before or after a screening interview.

The campus visit

After the first round of interviews, the search committee or department generally decides to invite a short list of candidates to campus for visits to continue the interviewing process. It is a good practice to inform candidates who do not make it onto the shortlist as soon as possible, consistent with the progress of the search. Each candidate on the short list should receive information on arranging for transportation and accommodation. To avoid disadvantaging candidates with access to fewer resources, hiring departments should pay the travel expenses for candidates' campus visit, and should attempt to arrange the purchase of tickets and accommodation in such a way that the candidates will not have to bear the cost of travel while awaiting reimbursement. When a hiring department does not have funds to pay for candidate travel for campus visits, they should make this clear in advance and assist candidates in whatever other ways they can with travel and lodging. It is a good practice for hiring departments to inform invitees in advance of how many candidates they expect to invite, and what the likely timetable is for interviews and decision-making.

The hiring committee should provide candidates with a detailed itinerary and contact information in advance of campus visits, and the itinerary should incorporate breaks to allow the candidate ample time to meet personal needs and prepare for each stage of the interview. At all stages of the process, the

interviewing department should make reasonable accommodation for candidates with disabilities. Accommodation for disabilities may include making sure that all interview-related activities take place in accessible locations for candidates with mobility impairments, or providing large print materials or recordings of printed materials for candidates with vision impairments.

SEE ALSO: ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATION CHECKLIST

The campus visit is also a good time to provide candidates with—and make sure they have a chance to review and discuss—written information about the department and the college or university, especially information about tenure or rehiring timelines and review processes, leave for research or for family or medical needs, healthcare and retirement benefits, housing, and dual-career hiring policies and resources. Candidates may be, or feel they are, at a disadvantage if they must request such information themselves. Candidates unable to travel to campus should be provided with a similar packet of materials, as well as a chance to discuss its content.

Many departments include in the campus visit a teaching demonstration as well as a “job talk.” If a teaching demonstration is required, candidates should be informed of this as early as possible, and given a description of the nature of the class—e.g., the level and format of the course (introduction, intermediate, or advanced; lecture, seminar, or discussion), a syllabus (if the demonstration is part of an ongoing course), and information about the likely audience for the demonstration. Departments should ensure in advance that accessibility standards are met uniformly for all candidates, and all candidates should be asked in advance about any technical support they might need for their teaching demonstration.

A “job talk” may take various forms depending on the institution and its practices, and, since practices vary, candidates should be informed as early as possible about the department’s practices and expectations (e.g., whether a copy of the talk is expected in advance, what the audience for the talk is likely to be, how time is typically divided between presentation and discussion, what norms there may be about handling questions and answers). And again, departments should ensure uniform accessibility in advance, as consult with individual candidates about what technical support they might need for their talks.

While other components of the invitation process and campus visit may vary according to the nature of the position or the interests of the candidates, candidates should be treated uniformly insofar as possible. This applies to the initial communications with candidates and also to the opportunities afforded candidates while they are on campus, e.g., meeting with faculty, students, or administrators. Prior to the candidates’ campus visits, departments should remind faculty, students, and staff of the importance of treating all candidates for a given position in comparable ways. As in the initial interviews, thinking through questions of structure in advance and providing a similar structure for all candidates is important, both for consistent and relevant information-gathering about candidates and to reduce the chance of various forms of bias.

Dual-career families are becoming increasingly common in academia, and questions about dual careers sometimes arise during a campus visit. Norms regarding dual careers are evolving; however, it is clear at present that any initiative in providing information to departments about potential dual-careers issues lies with the candidate—departments may not ask candidates any questions about dual careers or other forms of family responsibility or needs for accessibility until *after* an official offer has been made. Departments can and should provide candidates with information about campus resources for accommodating dual careers, family responsibilities, or accessibility, but must provide all candidates with the same information. Chairs

typically have primary responsibility for providing such information, and should be sure that they are in a position to answer questions with up-to-date information. A candidate who anticipates finding it difficult to accept an offer without some arrangement for a spouse or partner may consider making this information known early enough in the recruitment process to provide the department with time to seek to make relevant arrangements, but this is a delicate issue and candidates should seek advice before doing so.

- For further discussion of dual careers, along with model guidelines for institutions, see the Clayman Institute's [*Dual-Career Research Report*](#).

Before a campus visit is over, the candidate should be informed as fully as possible concerning how the departmental search and deliberation will proceed from that point forward, and whom to contact in the event of further questions or developments. Candidates should also have a clear idea of who will be contacting them with information about the status of the search. Ideally, a single person—normally, the department chair—should be responsible for all official communication with the candidate.

After the campus visit

Contact with candidates after the campus visit and prior to an offer of employment should be as consistent as possible for all candidates. Candidates may wish to contact individual members of the department in order to follow up on research suggestions, or to ask questions that that given faculty member may be best suited to answer. Faculty who might wish to initiate post-interview contact with a candidate should normally discuss the advisability of initiating such contact with the official contact person for the search, and inform that person whether contact has taken place. Since informal contact with faculty might occur at any point in the recruitment process, it is a good practice to remind all faculty at the start of the recruitment process of the “ground rules” for conversations with candidates. Regardless of who initiates post-interview contact, information gained during these post-interview conversations should be considered private, and not introduced into the hiring process without the express consent of the candidate and clearance with the official contact person for the search.

Departments should keep candidates apprised of the progress of a search, and should inform candidates promptly if they have been eliminated from the search. Once the department has made an offer and the offer has been accepted, all candidates should be informed that the search is over.

SEE ALSO: SECTION 5, APPENDIX C: GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Offers of employment⁶

Deadlines for responses to offers

The circumstances under which offers are made are so various that no rule will cover all cases, but norms of professional courtesy suggest the following practices, intended to enable employers and prospective employees to be cognizant of one another's legitimate concerns. Employers are properly concerned about their ability to plan for the contingency of making another offer in a timely fashion should an existing offer be turned down. Prospective employees are properly concerned to have reasonably clear information about which offers they are actually going to receive as they make an important career decision.

⁶ Adapted from the [*APA Statement on Offers of Employment*](#)

Such legitimate concerns, however, have the potential to set a hiring department and the candidate to whom they have made an offer at cross-purposes, and so it is important for hiring departments and prospective employees to be able to discuss frankly and with mutual regard their concerns in order to arrive at a mutually agreeable deadline for a response from the candidate. In normal circumstances a prospective employee should have at least two weeks for consideration of a written offer from a properly authorized administrative officer. In accordance with the [APA Statement on the Job Market Calendar](#), we recommend that “responses to offers of a position whose duties begin in the succeeding fall should not be required before February 1.” When an employer is unable to honor these conditions, the prospective employee should be given an explanation of the special circumstances that warrant insistence on an earlier decision. By the same token, a prospective employee should not delay unnecessarily in responding to an offer once it has been made. When a prospective employee requests more time to consider an offer than the employer is inclined to give, a candid statement of the reasons for the request is appropriate.

Oral offers and acceptances

It is important to note that *there are circumstances in which oral contracts are legally binding*—the absence of a written offer letter or written acceptance need not mean that a contract is not enforceable. Two types of situations involving oral offers or acceptances have in the past proven especially problematic.

In the first type of situation, a prospective employee who has received what appears to be a firm oral job offer forgoes other opportunities only to learn subsequently that the prospective employer has no job to offer—for example, because the position does not receive final administrative approval. In order to prevent misunderstandings on this score, the prospective employer should make very clear to the prospective employee whatever contingencies might be involved in a position and whether a formal offer is in fact being extended by the oral communication. If a prospective employer is only in a position to say that a formal offer will be forthcoming provided that a departmental recommendation receives administrative approval, and can only predict such approval but not guarantee it, the prospective employee should be informed explicitly of this. In the second type of situation, a formal offer has been orally made and accepted and the prospective employee subsequently receives another offer and wants to accept it. In such a case, the candidate is under a strong *prima facie* obligation to respect the initial oral acceptance, and only very weighty reasons can offset this.

Cases of both types can present legal and moral problems that require specific solutions, but awareness of the seriousness of oral agreements and observance of norms of professionalism, transparency, and trust by all parties can reduce the chance of either type of situation arising.

Section 5, Appendix A: Some recommended practices for phone and internet interviews

It has now become the predominant practice to conduct first-round interviews using video conferencing software or conference calls. Here are some recommended practices for conducting such interviews.

In general, electronic interviews should adhere to the guidelines for in-person interviews whenever this is practicable, including the uniform treatment of candidates. Use of electronic interviews can introduce some inequalities in treatment, for example, if special circumstances result in hiring departments using a mixture of in-person and electronic interviews. In such cases, search committees and hiring departments need to be aware of the potential advantages or disadvantages individual candidates may receive from the differences between in-person and electronic interviews. Similarly, both placing and hiring departments should be aware of advantages or disadvantages that can arise in electronic interviews when candidates have differential access to technical resources. Placing departments should seek to make available to candidates appropriate facilities for electronic interviewing, and inform candidates about special facilities their institution may have for this purpose. Some departments or institutions may lack such resources, however, and candidates may be traveling or living away from their home institution. In such cases, placing or hiring departments may wish to consider providing candidates with funds to use appropriate commercial teleconferencing or video conferencing facilities so that candidates with limited personal resources are not disadvantaged. Special measures may need to be taken to ensure equal accessibility for candidates with disabilities, and the availability of such accommodations should be indicated to all candidates as a matter of routine so that the burden of initiating discussion of accommodation is not placed on the candidate.

Interviewing institutions and individual interviewers

- Arrange video and phone interviews using the same procedures one would use in arranging an in-person interview.
 - Inform the candidate about what to expect in the interview, e.g., the approximate length and structure of the interview, and who is likely to be present. Allow enough time between your invitation and the actual interview for the candidate to prepare and to make whatever technical arrangements might be needed.
 - Ensure that technological assistance at your institution is available during interviews. Interviews should be conducted in a professional manner with as few difficulties as possible. Inadequate connectivity or lack of technological assistance in an interview can distract a committee or the candidate and increase whatever anxiety is associated with the interview. Similarly, both the candidate and the search committee should have one another's contact information in case a problem with connectivity or audio or video quality arises.
 - Departments are encouraged to inquire with their institution's technical staff concerning the forms of teleconferencing or videoconferencing with which they have had the best experience, and to consult in advance with candidates concerning the electronic resources

available resources available to them and make appropriate arrangements. Departments may want to encourage candidates to use a headset or external microphone to avoid feedback loops.

- It is a good practice to ask candidates to have a preliminary 5-minute trial run before the actual interview to make sure that the candidate understands the operation of the interviewing software and that communication is working smoothly in both directions. Preferably this will be done by a department administrator rather than a member of the interviewing committee. Whoever does the trial run should be aware that the same restrictions on appropriate questions or mode of address apply during the test period as during the interview itself.
- Arrange an appropriate location for the interview.
 - Universities often have a room designated for internet video conferencing. The location should be free of distractions and have a secure, wired internet connection.
 - Test the space and the connection in advance.
 - Make sure a telephone is available in case there is a problem with the video conference connection.
 - Make sure all interviewers are adequately informed about the limitations of the technology. If use of the equipment is not clear, tell them how they ought to speak and direct their voices, where they ought to look, etc. Also, let the interviewers know what the candidate can see and hear, and any other information that may be appropriate.
 - If the interview space is a classroom, consider whether additional microphones are needed.
- Allow ample time immediately before and after the scheduled interview.
 - In addition to providing an opportunity for other recommended preparation for an interview, time before the interview allows you to check that the technology is working appropriately. Leaving some “buffer” time between interviews will help ensure that, in case of technical difficulty, each candidate is still able to receive their full allotted time.
 - Arrive at the interview location at least thirty minutes before the scheduled interview.
 - At the end of the interview, ensure that all connections to the candidate have been disconnected before beginning discussing of the interview or candidate.
- Ask questions with the same animation as an in-person interview, but keep in mind that there may be a time-lag in the connection, depending upon the technology being used.
 - Speak clearly, audibly, and at a reasonable pace. Be aware that if multiple individuals are using the same connection, they will need to project their voices and avoid talking at the same time.
 - In telephone interviews with multiple interviewers, speakers should identify themselves whenever speaking. This may also be helpful during video interviews, where the image may not contain enough information to enable the candidate to keep track of who is speaking.
 - Allow for pauses.

Placement advice for candidates

- Placement directors at the candidate's institution should consider giving candidates advice about how best to arrange interviews, and should make them aware of whatever technical support may be available. Here are some suggested guidelines to give candidates:
- Plan well in advance for a suitable location for your interview. Inform your placement director that the interview will take place, and inquire with the placement director or department about available facilities for teleconferencing or video conferencing, or provisions for such services if you are away from your home institution.
 - Ask the interviewers how long you should expect the conversation to last so that you are able to schedule the appropriate facilities.
 - If no spaces are designated for interviews at your department or institution, ask if your department can make available a suitable, quiet office for the duration of the interview. If you do not have access to an appropriate space on campus, arrange such a space at your home or the home of a colleague, or consider using commercial facilities that offer such services.
 - The space should be free of distraction. Think especially about the material that forms the backdrop of your interview, and avoid objects that would convey personal information.
 - For video interviews, a wired, high-speed connection is best. Check your webcam and microphone well in advance of the interview and be sure you are familiar with their operation.
 - For telephone interviews, try to use a landline, which normally has better sound quality and more reliable connectivity than a cell phone. If you must use a cell phone, make sure it has ample battery life and the reception is excellent.
- Prepare for a video or phone interview in the same manner you would prepare for an in-person interview.
 - Know the college or university as well as the department that will be interviewing you.
 - Ask the department for the names of those who will interview you.
 - Anticipate what sorts of questions they might ask.
 - Compile a list of possible questions that you could ask them if time permits. Have these questions in mind or on hand for the actual interview.
 - Be able to describe your current and future research in a succinct manner for a generalist audience.
 - Have your application materials and supplementary materials ready at hand in a non-distracting form. Avoid clutter surrounding the computer.
 - Dress as you would for an in-person interview. Video tends to skew bright colors, stripes, etc., so avoid creating visual distraction by wearing solid, muted colors. Even in telephone interviews, keep in mind that you will want to be in the frame of mind made possible by a professional setting.

- It can be disconcerting for interviewers if the candidate appears to not be looking at them during the interview. Experiment with lighting and camera angles to find a way to create an image in which you will look most natural and be able to see the interviewers most clearly without looking down. Practice looking into the camera.
- Check the internet connection, webcam, and microphone at the location and with the equipment you will be using during your actual interview.
- Note that a headset or external microphone may be useful for avoiding feedback loops that frequently occur when internal microphones are used.
- Make sure that the interviewing committee has an alternate phone number for reaching you in case of technical difficulties and that you have a number for reaching them.
- Speak with your placement director about the possibility of arranging a mock interview of the kind you will be having. This is also an opportunity to check to see if you have found a satisfactory setting, lighting, camera angle, etc. for the interview.
- Request that the interviewing institution arrange for a 5-minute trial run to be sure that the audioconferencing or videoconferencing software is understood, and communication is smooth in both directions.
- During the interview, avoid distractions.
 - Make sure any phone present in the room that is not being used in the interview is turned off. If a cellphone is being used as a backup, turn down the ringer.
 - For video interviews, close all other programs on your computer.
 - Be aware that video and telephone interviews, even more than in-person interviews, invite distraction for all parties. You can help alleviate this if you answer the questions clearly and succinctly.

Placement officers and graduate programs

- Begin preparation for electronic interviewing well before the job market season, looking into possible facilities and assessing available technology, making improvements if needed. Provide potential job seekers with information about electronic interviewing, including these guidelines from the APA.
- Advocate for the students on the market with your university. If there is currently no designated space or support service for video and telephone interviews, lobby for this.
- Work with faculty and candidates to set up mock electronic interviews.
- For further discussion, see also the [APA Guidance for Placing Departments](#) and [Best Practices for Interviewing](#).

Section 5, Appendix B: Research on interviewing

Most departments feel that there is value in first-round or screening interviews. They believe that they are better able to ascertain the research potential or teaching effectiveness of a candidate through a face-to-face interaction with the candidate, whether in person or electronically. Some also view the in-person first-round interview as an opportunity to “sell” their department more effectively to prospective colleagues.

Other departments do not conduct first-round interviews, preferring instead to invest more time studying the dossiers, and choosing a shortlist of candidates to bring to campus on that basis. Work in social psychology has cast doubt on the usefulness of first-round interviews. The “interview illusion” refers to the view that one can glean a great deal of useful information about a job candidate from a brief, unstructured interview:

...the one-hour personal interview has virtually no validity for predicting job performance, yet people often feel convinced after such interviews that they have a good idea of the candidate's attributes and how well the candidate would perform on the job. Indeed, such an inflated belief in the certainty of knowledge obtained in the interview may cause people to overturn completely (and wrongly) preconceptions of the candidate based on job recommendations that probably do have some validity. (Nisbett and Ross 1980, 72)

Their diagnosis is that the vividness of interview data swamps the dull, but more reliable data provided in the candidate's dossier (Nisbett and Ross 1980, 290). One source of error is the tendency to place great weight on the behavior of others while discounting one's own similar behavior:

Interviewers often feel confident relying on interviewee's behavior in order to infer more stable internal states—such as passion, mental stability, or drive. In making such inferences, interviewers pay attention not only to interviewee's carefully composed replies but also to their implicit or uncontrolled responses, such as nonverbal gestures, off-the-cuff remarks, or unintended slips of the tongue. The very unintentional and unmonitored responses that people view as meaningless in their own case, people often view as meaningful in the case of others. (Pronin 2009, 17-18)

There is compelling evidence that impressions from *unstructured* interviews are poor predictors of eventual job performance, and that such interviews may actually undermine the quality and fairness of interviewers' judgments (Dana et al. 2013). A caveat: much of this evidence is gathered from interview settings not specific to academia.

Though research consistently shows that unstructured interviews tend to provide less reliable predictions of job performance than more structured interviews, there remain open questions concerning the types of structure that are most appropriate for a given interview type (Macan 2009; Hartwell et al. 2019). What is meant by “structured” is not always clear, but the most common understanding involves making the

interview procedure as uniform across candidates as possible.⁷ For example, candidates can be asked the same questions and, insofar as possible, in the same order.⁸ Since it is possible the wording of the questions plays a biasing role, care should be taken to make sure that the questions are presented in essentially the same way for all the candidates. Structure also can include settling upon relevant criteria in advance, making sure the interview covers all of these criteria, and using a consistent rating scale to evaluate interviewees' performance or promise (see Macan 2009, 206). For example, skills-based interview questions can be evidentially relevant, especially with respect to teaching. While there is evidence that highly structured interviews "can minimize or eliminate potential bias with respect to demographic similarity between applicants and interviewers" (McCarthy et al. 2010, 351), one should be cautious in translating this evidence into actual interviewing practice, especially since academic interviews typically need to range over many dimensions, and research projects and teaching experience may vary considerably, calling for different lines of questioning and follow-up. Interview formats that fall between the two extremes, e.g., *semi-structured interviews*, in which the interview experience is kept as consistent as possible between candidates, but allowance is made for questions that permit "probing" or following up on a given response, may be appropriate.

However, it should also be recognized that reliance upon dossiers alone might not diminish certain forms of bias. In a well-known study involving 238 psychologists, the psychologists—118 were male, 120 were female—were asked to evaluate curricula vitae that had been randomly given either a stereotypically male name or a stereotypically female name. CVs bearing a male name received higher evaluations than those bearing a female name, though the CVs were otherwise identical (Steinpreis et al. 1999). In another study, applicants with "White-sounding" names received 50 percent more callbacks after a resume review than applicants with "African-American-sounding" names (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004). To minimize the role implicit bias plays in reviewing dossiers, some recommend that files be anonymized prior to review. This may involve using a multi-step screening process. For example, first, personnel not involved in the evaluation process can anonymize CVs, writing samples, teaching, and research statements, and a preliminary assessment of these documents can be used to narrow the pool; letters of recommendation, which tend to contain identifying information it would be difficult to remove, are read only after this narrowing has occurred.

One worry about first-round face-to-face interviews is that such forms of anonymizing are usually impossible. Of course, anonymity is impossible at the point of campus visits, but there is value in reducing bias in the selection of those who come to campus. Some evidence suggests that biases can be partially mitigated by the passage of time. Kunda and Spencer report that initially activated stereotypes can fade in as little as 15 minutes of exposure: "As time unfolds, one's attention shifts from the person's category membership to individuating information or to the demands of the task at hand" (Kunda and Spencer 2003, 528). This suggests that retaining the 45-minute norm for face-to-face interviews may be helpful, even when the interviews are electronic; this likewise permits the coverage of job-related criteria to be more thorough and detailed, which may also help counter certain kinds of bias. However, Kunda and Spencer also report that stereotypes can reassert themselves at any point throughout an interaction, especially if the purpose of the interaction is to determine "attributes or likely behavior" of the other, as interviews typically do. They

⁷ See Macan (2009) and Levishina et al. (2014) for reviews of some of the different ways "structured" is understood in the research literature.

⁸ See, for example, *Structured Interviews: A Practical Guide*, US Office of Personnel Management, September 2008.

cite a set of studies in which the study participants engaged in structured interviews with a White or an Asian confederate. The interview consisted in “stereotype-irrelevant” questions:

Following 10–15 [minutes] of such interaction, half of the participants were given the goal of forming an impression of their interaction partner’s personality and likely career choice. Controls were given, instead, the goal of elaborating on the contents of their discussion. As may be expected from the finding that stereotype activation can dissipate by the end of such a lengthy encounter (Kunda et al. 2002), controls interacting with an Asian confederate showed no activation of the Asian stereotype. In contrast, participants given the task of forming an impression of their Asian partner did activate the Asian stereotype. Most likely, they recruited the stereotype so as to inform their impressions of this person. (Kunda and Spencer 2003, 529)

This evidence indicates that attention to the problem of counteracting stereotypes is required even in longer interviews and campus visits (see Kunda and Spencer 2003 for further discussion).

SEE ALSO: SECTION 2: CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF BIAS AND DISCRIMINATION

There are several concerns about eliminating first-round interviews. They may enable the search committee to fill gaps in information left by the dossiers, and that would help identify an evident lack of fit between the candidate and the job criteria. This may be especially important for departments with very limited resources for bringing candidates to campus. Another concern is that such interviews can afford job candidates valuable information about the hiring department and worthwhile feedback on their work and on how they are faring on the job market. For example, candidates may use the number of first-round interviews they receive as a source of information about how well their dossiers are being perceived, whether or not they finally obtain a job in a given job cycle. One way departments could address this problem is by having a policy of informing candidates when they have made a long-list, or of requesting additional material from candidates who are still in contention at a certain point in the hiring process.

Other resources

The Implicit Bias & Philosophy Project website has several useful reading lists.

<http://www.biasproject.org/>

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Section 5, Appendix C: Guidelines for interview questions

Many universities have formulated guidelines for interviewing candidates that are in accordance with university and federal regulations concerning Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination. It is essential for all members of a search committee to be aware of these guidelines and follow them in both spirit and letter—for example, information that should not be requested explicitly should not be asked about indirectly, either. Note that if one candidate is asked a question about potentially conflicting responsibilities, needs for accessibility, criminal record, etc., the same question must be asked of all candidates. The following list of acceptable questions is generic, and addressed to public institutions and institutions receiving government grants (it is drawn, with modifications, from the [Harvard Faculty Development and Diversity guidelines](#)). Exceptions exist in special cases—e.g., regarding whether religious institutions may ask questions about religious affiliation—though guidelines related to race, ethnicity, gender, disability, national origin, and age still apply (see the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission statement](#)). Recently institutions have begun promulgating guidelines with respect to pronouns; be sure that you understand and follow relevant guidelines in your interviewing practices. Once again, it is important that all candidates be treated equally.

While some questions are unacceptable, it is permissible for departments to ask candidates to submit a statement describing how the candidate could contribute to departmental or institutional initiatives to promote diversity. Candidates should have full discretion in determining how to respond to such requests.

Subject	What may be asked	What may NOT be asked
Name	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What is your name? Are there nicknames or initials that we would need to know to check your work and educational record?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Birth name if name has legally changed, e.g., at marriage.Inquiries about the name that would seek to elicit information about the candidate's ancestry or descent.
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">If hired, can you offer proof that you are at least 18 years of age?Questions about the applicant's career stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How old are you?What is your birthdate?
Sex or Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Are you male, female, transitioning, transgendered?
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What is your sexual orientation?Are you gay?

Subject	What may be asked	What may NOT be asked
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No questions. (You may inquire about availability for weekend work.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your religion? Which church do you attend? What are your religious holidays?
Birthplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where are you (or is your family) originally from?
National Origin / Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you consider yourself Latinx?
Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If hired, can you show proof of your eligibility to work in the US? Are you fluent in any languages other than English? (You may ask this question only as it relates to the job being sought.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you a US citizen? Where were you born?
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What languages do you read fluently? Write fluently? Speak fluently? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquiries into how the applicant acquired the ability to read, write, or speak a foreign language.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquiries into the academic, vocational, or professional education of the candidate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions about education designed to determine how old the applicant is.
Disability or medical history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If appropriate accommodations are available—regardless of the extent to which you might use them—are you able to perform the essential functions of this job? Provide the position description so that the applicant can give an informed answer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you disabled? What is the nature or severity of your disability? Have you ever received workers' compensation? Do you have HIV/AIDS? Have you ever been treated for drug abuse or alcoholism?

Subject	What may be asked	What may NOT be asked
Marital / Family Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have any responsibilities that conflict with job attendance or travel requirements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you married? What is your spouse's name? What is your maiden name? Do you have any children? Are you pregnant? What are your childcare arrangements? Are you related to the philosopher _____?
Residence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your address? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you own or rent your home? Who resides with you?
Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidate's work experience, including names and addresses of previous employers, dates of employment, reasons for leaving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquiry into an applicant's type of military discharge.
Criminal record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you ever been convicted of a crime? (You must state that a conviction will be considered only as it relates to fitness to perform the job being sought.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you ever been arrested?
Memberships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you a member of any professional societies or organizations? (Exclude inquiries into organizations the name or character of which indicates the race, creed, color, or national origin of its members.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquiry into applicant's membership in unions or nonprofessional organizations (e.g., clubs, lodges, etc.).

Section 5, Appendix D: Sample candidate evaluation sheet

This evaluation sheet is a general template; search committees should feel free to modify this for their own purposes. These questions are designed for assistant/associate professor faculty searches; committees may want to modify some of the language used for non-tenure-track and senior tenured faculty searches.

Candidate's Name: _____

Please indicate which of the following are true for you (check all that apply):

- ☐ Read candidate's CV
- ☐ Read candidate's scholarship
- ☐ Attended meal with candidate
- ☐ Read candidate's letters of recommendation
- ☐ Attended candidate's job talk
- ☐ Met with candidate
- ☐ Other (please explain): _____

Please comment on the candidate's scholarship (noting the basis of your assessment):

Please comment on the candidate's teaching ability (noting the basis of your assessment):

Please rate the candidate on each of the following:

	Excellent	Good	Neutral	Fair	Poor	Unable to judge
Potential for (evidence of) scholarly impact						
Potential for (evidence of) research productivity						
Potential for (evidence of) research funding						
Potential for (evidence of) collaboration						
Relationship to the department's priorities						
Ability to positively contribute to department climate						
Potential (demonstrated ability) to attract and supervise graduate students						
Potential (demonstrated ability) to teach and supervise undergraduates						
Potential (demonstrated ability) to attract, work with, and teach diverse students						
Potential (demonstrated ability) to be a conscientious department/school community member						