

Planning and Conducting the Interview

These instructions are intended specifically for an interview that search committee members have with candidates although the principles are relevant to the entire interview process.

Preparing for the interview*

1. Review the advertised minimum and preferred qualifications for the position and identify those about which committee members need additional information.
2. Develop a set of interview questions based on the qualifications identified in #1 and use them with all interviewees; identify who will ask each question and in what order (see structure section below). Follow-up questions to explore a candidate's response or probe for additional information about a response are appropriate.
3. Review as a search committee the types of questions to avoid (see the following):
 - a. Interviewing – what to ask and what to avoid
http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/equal_opportunity/resources/preemplo.pdf
 - b. Interviewing Guidelines for ADA Compliance
http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/equal_opportunity/resources/adacomp.pdf
 - c. Employment Q&A (with permission of The Office of General Counsel at The Catholic University of America)
<http://counsel.cua.edu/employment/questions/>

Conducting the interview

The search committee chair opens the interview and, after an appropriate welcome, should indicate the time period planned for the interview with the committee. If a candidate rambles or is longwinded, the search chair should look for opportunities to tactfully and firmly move the interview along so that all questions are covered.

- Structure the interview with these components:
 - Introduction - very brief; welcome and introduction of search committee members, if needed.
 - Rapport building– a friendly question or two to put the candidate at ease; conversational and nonthreatening.
 - Main portion of the interview; use the following types of questions:
 - ✓ *information-seeking questions* – use sparingly and only when necessary to clarify information in the CV, for example.
 - ✓ *behaviorally-oriented questions* – these are open-ended questions; the responses generally reveal the most about the candidates' skills and abilities. Past experience is the best predictor of future performance so asking candidates questions about their past experience as it relates to this position is key to getting useful and appropriate information (see examples below).
 - ✓ *situational questions* – these questions set up hypothetical situations or problems that the candidates might face in the position; this type of question can provide a

*The Interview Report form also provides some instructions regarding preparation for the interview.

sample of problem-solving skills and determine if those skills are appropriate but should not be a substitute for the behaviorally-oriented questions.

Caution: avoid questions that can be answered with yes or no; the objective of the interview is to draw out candidates and get them to talk.

- Questions from the candidate; be sure not to overlook this component of the interview. **Remember:** the purpose of the interview is not only to assess candidates' suitability for the position available but to sell the position, department/college, NDSU and Fargo-Moorhead to candidates as well.
- Closing – express appreciation and provide some information about the timetable for decision making.

Each search committee member should take notes during the interview and then develop a brief summary of his/her perspectives BEFORE there is a discussion about the candidate among the committee members.

Only one Interview Report form needs to be submitted with the Request to Offer; it should reflect a compilation of the committee members' views/reactions.

■ **Examples of behavioral-based questions:**

Please note that these are *only examples* of questions; the most useful questions are ones designed specifically to elicit information about candidates' skills and abilities to do the work involved in the position you have advertised; that is, questions that address the advertised qualifications. Generic questions generally produce less useful and less relevant information.

- Describe a recent teaching experience that was especially satisfying for you and identify what made this a satisfying experience for you.
[Answers to this question would give you some idea about candidates' pedagogical approaches and their ability to analyze and reflect on what they do and why. Might also ask about problems/issues they've encountered in the classroom and how they handled them.]
- Tell us about your current research. What challenges have you encountered and how have you addressed them? What outcomes seem to be evolving? Where do you plan to submit the results for publication?
[This series of questions is intended to solicit information about not only the candidates' research agendas but to identify how they deal with problems as they arise, to get some idea about the direction of the research and a sense of their ability to identify appropriate outlets for the publication of their results.]
- Describe a conflict you have had with a colleague (or with another graduate student if this is a "fresh" Ph.D. applicant) and the steps you took to try to resolve the conflict. What was the final outcome? What, if anything, might you have done differently?
[This question is an example of a question that would provide some information about candidates' ability to resolve conflicts with colleagues and what their style for doing that might be.]