

# Fair Hiring Guide

## UCSC Local Procedures

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### Overview

This guide is intended to share best practices, which ensure fairness and excellence in all stages of the recruitment process.

#### *Topics covered in this guide include:*

- Developing effective recruitment plans
- Search committee's role and responsibilities
- Effective and fair evaluation of application materials
- Developing interview questions and conducting interviews
- Conducting reference checks on internal and external candidates

The Fair Hiring guide is a reference tool for hiring managers, committee chairs and others involved in the conduction of a staff recruitment. Hiring Managers and Search Committee Chairs must complete the [Fair Hiring Workshop](#) before conducting a recruitment and must renew their training every three years.

## Recruitment Planning

### 1. Preparing Job Descriptions

The Job Description serves as the foundation for the evaluation of candidates. Your [HR Service Team Representative](#) (HRSTR) can provide you with assistance in and resources for developing or updating a job description.

#### *Writing Qualifications (Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Abilities)*

- All qualifications should be directly job related and are identified by an analysis of the functions and tasks of a position.
- The terms “skill” and “ability” may be used interchangeably - do not get bogged down in trying to decide whether something is a “skill” or an “ability”.
- Physical requirements, special work schedules, required background investigations, environmental work conditions, etc., should be noted as Special Conditions of Employment on the job description, rather than written as a qualification.
- You can use qualifiers (such as “excellent”, “good”, etc.) for a criterion. You will be responsible for the interpretation and application of qualifiers in the evaluation of candidates.
- When writing qualifications, keep in mind that we have an obligation to reasonably accommodate persons with disabilities. Therefore, try to write what is to be done, as opposed to how it is to be done, so as not to exclude a person with a disability who may be able to do what needs to be done in a different way.

### 2. Supplemental Questions

Supplemental questions are generally used to gather additional information about applicants in order to make a better decision about who to interview. Responses to supplemental questions may be requested as part of the original application, or may be requested after an initial screening of applicants in order to effectively screen the pool further.

#### *Considerations*

- While an effective means of gathering additional information, supplemental questions may discourage applicants from applying, especially those who learn of the job at the last minute.
- If requested as part of the original application, longer initial review periods (at least an additional week) should be allowed to provide applicants with sufficient time to complete and return their responses.
- Staff Human Resources will not screen out applicants who do not provide responses to the requested supplemental questions. Job postings will state “Completion of Supplemental Questions Requested for Full Consideration.”. All applications received by Initial Review Date will be released to the Unit who will make the decision on how to evaluate the applications of those who do not provide responses to the supplemental questions.
- It is important to keep in mind that supplemental questions is a tool used for the purpose of gathering additional information to assist you in selecting the best-qualified candidates for interview. Options for using the supplemental questions in screening include doing an initial screening of all applications, based on the information available (including responses to additional questions), and selecting the best qualified for interview or contacting those who did not provide a responses and providing an additional opportunity to respond.

### 3. Outreach/Advertising

A comprehensive outreach and advertising plan will increase the probability of attracting highly qualified diverse applicants.

#### *You Should Consider:*

- Job group underutilization
- Appropriate recruiting area (i.e., local, regional, national)
- Reasonable initial review period
- Free advertising
- Paid advertising
- Networking opportunities (e.g., professional organizations, colleagues at other higher ed institutions)

Plan components should be identified prior to the initiation of a recruitment. See [Recruitment Advertising Resources](#) for more information. Your [HR Service Team Representative](#) or [Recruitment Specialist](#) can assist with plan development.

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

#### 1. Can I use a degree as a qualification?

- The basic principle is that an educational requirement must have a significant relationship to successful job performance or there must be other business necessity, since a degree requirement may disqualify members of a protected group at a substantially higher rate than non-protected group members (adverse impact).
- A degree qualification for professional and highly skilled jobs is generally more supportable than, for example, blue-collar jobs. Educational requirements are even more supportable if “knowledge equivalent to degree” is used.
- If you choose to use a degree as a qualification you should consider the negative impact it may have on the diversity of your pool and be prepared to support such a requirement if challenged by an outside agency.

#### 2. When writing qualifications, can I specify that the people have recent experience?

- The recency of a person’s job experience may matter, but only in fields that have changed significantly, and remember that an applicant may be able to keep him or herself current in other ways.

## Search Committees

### 1. Hiring Manager

The purpose of using a Search Committee is to increase the likelihood that a better hiring decision is made. A Search Committee is any group of two or more people involved in the evaluation of applicants for a position.

#### *Hiring Manager Responsibilities*

- Determining whether or not s/he will chair the search committee
- Determining the charge and involvement in the process of the search committee
- Designating a search committee chair and selecting search committee members
- Ensuring that the chair of the search committee has participated in the mandatory Fair Hiring training
- Ensuring that the search is conducted fairly
- Determining priorities regarding qualifications for the position and communicating those clearly to the Search Committee Chair
- Assembling documentation of the search

#### *Search Committee Size*

- While it is usually helpful to have at least one other person besides the hiring manager involved in the evaluation of applicants, larger search committees can be costly to the University and may make the search process less effective by extending the time it takes to select a candidate. However, consideration should be given to having a gender and ethnically diverse committee.
- The key consideration for whether more people need to be involved is **whether the hiring decision will be better**. Other considerations include:
  - How well the hiring manager knows the job
  - Degree to which the position interrelates with various campus constituencies
  - The cost to the campus of the time and effort required by additional members
  - Impact of lengthening the process by involving more people
  - Degree of campus buy-in needed

### *Search Committee Role*

The role of the search committee is determined by the hiring manager and should be communicated clearly to the search committee. Any search committee is advisory to the hiring manager. A search committee can provide service in a variety of areas such as:

- Outreach efforts
- Screening applications
- Interviewing applicants and:
  - Recommending an unranked list of top candidates
  - Presenting a ranked list of top candidates
  - Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of top candidates
  - And/or recommending a top choice
- Developing interview questions
- Ensuring that diverse applicants are given a fair evaluation
- Assisting with documentation
- Responding to applicant inquiries
- Reference checks
- Or any combination of the above

## **2. Committee Chair**

### *Search Committee Chair Responsibilities*

- Ensuring search committee members understand their roles and the charge
- Ensuring fair hiring practices are followed
- Documenting process and providing documentation to the hiring manager at the end of the process
- Designating a committee member who will handle applicant inquiries
- Obtaining advice/problem resolution assistance from the appropriate office when necessary
- Ensuring that search committee members maintain confidentiality

### *Recruitment Process Planning*

- Make certain that search committee members are available
- Prior to the initial review date for the recruitment, schedule search committee activities:
  - Meet at least once prior to screening applications, to discuss fair hiring practices and review criteria
  - Meet at least once to decide on interviewees and discuss interview questions
  - Schedule blocks of time for interviews, allowing for reflection time after each interview
  - Schedule any other meetings, such as a final meeting to evaluate candidates and meetings with the hiring manager, if he/she is not a member of the search committee

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

### **3. If I have decided that I need a committee of more than two people to make the best hiring decision, what should I consider when selecting committee members?**

- Diversity - think about the gender and ethnic mix of the search committee
- Buy-in - is it important that certain constituencies be represented so that they will be supportive of the selected candidate and enable him/her to function more successfully in the position?
- Availability
- Interrelationship of the position with other campus units - can someone from another unit provide a useful perspective on evaluating certain qualifications.

### **4. What if a member of the search committee misses one of the interviews?**

- While it is always best for all search committee members to participate in all interviews there will be emergencies such as illness where this is not always possible. In this case you may want to have someone on the committee take more detailed notes than normal and then brief the missing committee member on the content of the answers to the interview questions. How to account for this in the evaluation process will differ depending on what method is being used to evaluate or rank the candidates and how strong a candidate this applicant was both before and after the interview process.

### **5. What should a committee member do if there is a potential conflict of interest with one of the applicants (e.g., discovers**

**a friend in the applicant pool)?**

- The first step is for the committee member to honestly assess whether or not they can be objective in their evaluation of the applicants. If they cannot, they should consider withdrawing from the committee.
- The committee member should discuss all potential biases with the rest of the search committee.

**6. Are search committee deliberations confidential?**

- Yes. The search committee chair should make sure that everyone understands that although there is no hotter gossip than search committee discussions; leaks in confidentiality typically create horrendous problems, hurt feelings, and sometimes complaints. This is especially true when current employees have applied for the job.
- A good rule of thumb is that committee members can share information about what stage the committee is in, but nothing about the committee's evaluation of individual candidates, nothing about who said what, and nothing about whom they think will get the job.

**7. How should a search committee make decisions? Consensus? Majority vote?**

- The committee chair should make sure that the group agrees on a method of decision-making before applications are discussed.
- To take best advantage of the diversity in perspectives on a search committee, talk through differences of opinion to see what they're about. In particular, fairness may depend on talking through any differences in opinion between men and women or between people of different cultural backgrounds, or differences in how the committee is evaluating men and women, or candidates of different cultural backgrounds. Take the time to talk it through -- everyone may learn something, and you'll probably make a better decision.

**8. What should we do if one person is biased?**

- Every human being has her/his own set of biases about what kind of person makes a good employee -- not just gender or racial bias, but also our personal idiosyncrasies.
- A good way to begin the search committee is to encourage members to voice opinions freely, and to ask everyone to speak up if they see the committee being swayed by an assumption that may not be universally true. Search committee chairs can model this behavior for everyone else.

## Applicant Communications

### 1. General Communications

Prompt, effective and clear communications with applicants are key to maintaining good community relations and ensuring that well qualified people want to work at the campus. Contrary to popular belief, all communications with applicants do not have to be funneled through the Employment Office. If a verbal inquiry or complaint is received by the Unit, it is often more effective for the Unit to handle the initial response.

#### *Responding to Applicant Inquiries for Additional Information about the Job*

- Part of the process of finalizing the recruitment strategy will include determining what approach you wish to take regarding providing additional information and who the contact will be. All applicants who make similar inquiries should receive consistent information.
- Information that is provided by the Unit to applicants may include:
  - Copy of the full job description
  - Organizational Chart
  - Information about the Unit's mission and goals
  - Clarification about the work schedule or other special conditions of employment

#### *Respond to Other Applicant Inquiries*

- Units may provide the following kinds of information in response to applicant inquiries:
  - Size of the pool
  - General characteristics of the pool
  - Number of applicants selected for interview
  - The criteria the unit used to evaluate applicants and the general process followed
  - The criteria the applicant did not meet as strongly as other applicants
- Units should not provide the following kinds of information
  - Who else applied for the job
  - Any information about individual applicants

### *Final Communication*

- After your selected candidate has accepted the position, you should notify applicants who were interviewed but not selected that the position has been filled.
- If you did not do so earlier in the process you should also communicate to those applicants referred but not selected for interview or alternate that the position has been filled. You can do this either by phone or by letter.

## **2. Responding to Complaints**

### *Verbal Complaints:*

- If an applicant phones in a complaint, ascertain the reason for the complaint and, if possible, respond to the complaint using factual, job related information. If it is not possible for you to respond to the applicant's satisfaction, you can give the applicant the option of calling the Employment Office or Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Office with their complaint.

### *Written Complaints:*

- You should always consult with the Employment Office prior to responding to any written complaint. If the complaint alleges discrimination contact the Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Office.

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

### **9. What can I say if an applicant asks for feedback on their interview?**

- You can provide information, which is related to their qualifications, and how those qualifications were evaluated. Avoid providing any information that is not job-related and was not considered in the evaluation of the interviewees.

### **10. Is it appropriate to suggest to an unsuccessful candidate who asks what they could do differently in the future that they might benefit from participating in an interviewing skills workshop?**

- This could be appropriate if you can give the candidate an example from the interview where it seemed from the application that they had a certain level of experience or skill but when it came to conveying it in the interview they had difficulty responding effectively to the interview questions. A suggestion that an interviewing skills workshop might provide them with some useful tools to assist them in conveying their skills and experiences more effectively in an interview situation could be helpful.

## **Screening/Evaluating Applications**

### **1. Screening/Evaluating**

*The objective of this process is to select the best-qualified applicants for interview.*

- If the hiring manager does not chair the Search Committee, s/he should communicate clearly to the Search Committee what s/he deems to be the most important qualifications for the position. The hiring manager should be consulted at any point in the process if further clarification is needed.
- Decide what qualifications you can evaluate from information provided in application materials - don't try to evaluate qualifications that can't be assessed from the application alone.
- Determine whether there are certain qualifications or sets of qualifications that are more important than others.
- Narrow the pool to the best-qualified applicants for interview.
- If there are a large number of well-qualified applicants, it may not be to your advantage to screen out candidates based on small qualification differences. You should always focus on the most important qualifications. If there are not significant differences on the application that allow you to screen your pool further, consider gathering additional information that will assist you in selecting the best qualified applicants to interview using one of the following tools:
  - Brief phone interviews
  - Pre-interview reference checks
  - Supplemental questions
  - Work sample
- Try to resolve differences of opinion among search committee members regarding a candidate's qualifications through discussion, rather than resorting to artificial means (e.g., averaging committee's numerical ratings of a candidate), which may not result in selection of the best-qualified applicant.
- The individual designated as the contact for applicant inquiries should retain all applications and screening documentation until the process is completed.

- After screening applications it is recommended that all applicants no longer under consideration receive some type of communication from the hiring manager regarding their status in the recruitment.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### 11. Who should be involved?

- People who know the job well, such as people in the unit, people outside the unit whose jobs interrelate, constituents or customers.
- People who have been through the Fair Hiring workshop (minimum requirement is that the Hiring Manager and the Committee Chair be trained).
- At least two people to look over each application, if at all possible.

### 12. What's the first step?

- First, decide which qualifications you'll be able to evaluate from a paper application. Don't try to evaluate qualifications that can't be assessed from the application alone.
- The hiring manager should determine which qualifications are most important and communicate those clearly to those involved in the screening process.
- Decide whether any qualifications are absolutely necessary, such that an applicant not possessing those qualifications would automatically be eliminated. You may also assign weights to criteria -- i.e., decide that some are more important than others are.
- Discussion and debate can clarify which skills are most important, what experiences are most likely to give transferable skills, and which sets of skills will best meet your needs.

### 13. What process works best?

- A process that includes both people evaluating applications alone and people discussing their judgments together.
- Most people find it easiest to do a quick screening to eliminate applicants who don't have the absolute necessary qualifications, then take a more careful look through the rest. As extra insurance, you can have someone else look through the "rejects" with the sole goal of identifying people who might have been overlooked because their background isn't typical.
- Do use the criteria as a guide, to make sure you are consistent, evaluating each applicant against the same criteria (some people like to use a rating matrix, to record which applicants have which qualifications; others just take notes).
- If you have a large search committee, you may want to have two people volunteer to do the first screening, and everyone involved in more carefully evaluating the rest. If you have a large pool, it's fine to split up the applications among pairs of people, who take responsibility for presenting them to the rest of the group.

### 14. Deciding on a 'short list' (interviewees and alternates)?

- You will make better decisions if you use a search committee to discuss the applicant's qualifications, rather than just averaging numerical ratings. If you cut off debate too quickly, you waste the benefit that different perspectives can bring to the difficult task of evaluating qualifications.

### 15. How should the process be documented?

- The chair is responsible for ensuring that the group's judgment is recorded on the [Applicant Selection Log \(ASL\)](#).
- In addition, the search committee chair should record briefly what the process was (who did what when) including decision points (e.g., "we decided to interview only people who had both the computer skills and experience with implementation of a new system".)
- All records of recruitment, including interview notes taken by all search committee members and reference check notes, will be retained for three years by the appropriate HR Service Team.

### 16. How can you tell if people really have the abilities that they claim to have?

- At the application screening stage, you have to take their word for it. You may get a better idea in an interview or a reference check. If a person is hired and is unable to perform their assigned tasks because they lack the necessary qualifications, they can be released during their probationary period or through corrective action.

### 17. What should I do if all the applicants did not provide responses to the supplemental questions?

- It is important to keep in mind that supplemental questions is a tool used for the purpose of gathering additional information to assist you in selecting the best-qualified candidates for interview. Options for using the supplemental questions in screening include doing an initial screening of all applications, based on the information available (including responses to additional questions), and selecting the best qualified for interview or contacting those who did not provide a responses and providing an additional opportunity to respond.

**18. To what extent can one assess interpersonal skills from a written application?**

- At best, you may see that an applicant has done work that probably required those skills; you cannot tell how good the person's skills are. Interpersonal skills are best assessed through interviews and reference checks.

**19. Does the recency of a person's education or job experience matter?**

- It may, but only in fields that have changed significantly in recent years, and remember that the applicant may have kept him or herself current in other ways.

**20. When is more experience better?**

- It depends, and you can't always tell. More isn't always better -- twenty years of experience may mean a person is extremely knowledgeable and skilled, or it may mean the person got stuck and couldn't move out of that job.

**21. What should be done with an "overqualified" person?**

- There are good reasons why a person might choose to take a job with a lower level of responsibility than they've had in the past. If you find yourself making assumptions about the person's motivation, check them out at the interview, or call the person and make sure they understand that the job will not be at a higher level than advertised.
- Don't assume that holding a higher-level job necessarily means that a person can do lower-level tasks. You need to assess each person's qualifications for this position. If the person's application suggests that they can do the job, UC's policy is to hire the best-qualified person.

**22. What is "equivalent" to a college degree?**

- Evidence of course work or work experience that would give the applicant the knowledge or skills you need. It's the applicant's responsibility to explain or demonstrate that s/he has equivalent knowledge or abilities.

**23. Is it appropriate to make judgments about a person's skills from the way they fill out the application (or other application materials)?**

- If the job requires good spelling and grammar and the application is filled with errors, it's appropriate to assume they don't have these skills. But don't screen out applicants for trivial reasons just to reduce the pile -- you may be missing a great employee.

**24. How should patterns in a person's job history be evaluated?**

- Be careful not to make unwarranted assumptions. People may have reasons for changing jobs or taking time between jobs that have nothing to do with how good they are as an employee. When checking references, check whether the reason for leaving stated on the application is consistent with that given by the reference.
- Progressively responsible job experience can be a positive indication of the applicant's ability to adapt to new situations and grow within a job.

**25. When is it appropriate to favor an applicant who has done very similar work over one who has done less similar work -- e.g. to favor a person with UCSC experience over one with similar experience elsewhere?**

- When you absolutely can't afford (in time or other resources) to let the person learn on the job, e.g. for a short casual job or one which requires complex knowledge they wouldn't otherwise have. If it's just a matter of learning something about UCSC procedures or systems, it's probably better to invest in the person who will be able to do the best job in the long run.

**26. How do you evaluate transferable skills versus actual experience?**

- Think through whether the experience the person has had required the same sorts of skills that you will require. Look for or try to obtain evidence of the strength of that person's skills to help you assess how successful they might be in applying those skills in your job.

**27. What should you do when you have more information about one applicant than another? -- e.g. if one person submits a lot of extra material with their application?**

- Just remember that having more evidence about a person's qualifications doesn't necessarily mean they are better qualified. You can always take steps to get more information on applicants -- e.g. with a phone call or request for more written information -- as long as you don't give anyone an unfair advantage.

**28. How much weight should letters of reference be given?**

- Letters of reference should not be taken at face value. Letters of reference, which speak to an individual's specific

accomplishments, can generally be given more consideration. Remember that a letter of reference does not replace the need for a reference check, should the candidate be selected.

**29. Do I have to consider out of town applicants?**

- The location of a candidate's residence shouldn't be used as a selection criterion. If you are unable to pay travel expenses, consider doing the first interview by telephone or asking the candidate to pay his/her own travel expenses.

**30. What if the applicant is currently making a higher salary than you are able to offer?**

- If you are concerned that if selected, the applicant may not accept the position because of salary limitations, you may advise the applicant when they are contacted for an interview that you are concerned about a potential salary issue and then reiterate the salary. This allows the applicant to make the decision as to whether s/he is still interested in the position.

**31. What if the applicant has a disability?**

- It is illegal to discount an otherwise qualified individual because s/he has a disability. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that the University take steps to reasonably accommodate individuals with disabilities so they may perform the essential functions of a position. Keep the focus on whether the individual has the skills to perform the position.

**32. What if a current UCSC employee applies for the job and you know more about them (positive or negative)?**

- You don't need to try to forget what you know, but only reliable information (not rumors or reputation) about their actual job performance is appropriate to use.
- You should evaluate the information in terms of the qualifications established for the position. If the information influences your decision to interview or not interview the applicant you should document the information for your own recruitment notes. If the information is negative and causes you not to select the applicant for interview you should indicate the number of the related qualifications on the [Applicant Selection Log \(ASL\)](#) in the appropriate column.
- Keep in mind that you can also call a current or past UCSC supervisor for a reference check, just as you would someone who works outside the university. If you have concerns about a candidate who remains among your top candidates after the initial screening, consider doing pre-interview reference checks on all your top candidates.

**33. What should be done when, after screening on the criteria, there are too many well-qualified applicants to interview?**

- It may not be to your advantage to screen out candidates based on small qualification differences. You should always focus on the most important qualifications. If there are not significant differences on the application that allow you to screen your pool further, consider gathering additional information on the best qualified applicants by using one of the following tools to assist you in selecting interviewees:
  - Brief phone interviews
  - Pre-interview reference checks
  - Supplemental application
  - Work sample request

**34. What should units do with perceived pressure for a "courtesy interview"?**

- It is important to apply the criteria selected for evaluating applicants consistently to all applicants. Interviewing someone who is not as qualified as other applicants on a 'courtesy' basis can raise unrealistic expectations on the part of the interviewee and may form a basis for a complaint of discrimination by other applicants. This includes internal applicants that you know are not qualified based on personal prior knowledge of the applicant's performance.
- You may wish to offer an informal meeting with the individual to discuss their interest in the position and explain why they were not selected for an interview.

**35. How many applicants should I select for interview?**

- The number of applicants you select for interview will depend on many things: how large the pool is, how qualified the applicants are, how much time you can make for interviews, etc. If you find that you have too many well-qualified candidates to interview, consider using the tools mentioned in FAQ#33 to narrow them down to a manageable number.

**36. What should units do about affirmative action?**

- You should try to maximize the diversity of the pool by advertising as widely as possible and making use of the outreach program for positions where there is underutilization. When screening applications, you will not receive information on applicant's sex/ethnicity since you may not use an applicant's sex/ethnicity as a basis for selection for interview.

## The Interview

## 1. Before the Interview

To get the best information from interviews, **adopt the strategy that you want every applicant to be able to present his or her qualifications as thoroughly and as positively as possible.** You can start by making sure that all applicants have the same expectations about the interview and that interview questions are well thought out in advance.

- When you call to invite an applicant for an interview be sure to give information regarding how to get to the interview location, who will be involved in the interview, and what process will be followed (see [Frequently Asked Question #37](#)). Give the applicant an opportunity to ask questions.
- Be cautious when leaving messages for an applicant that you are unable to reach in person in order not to jeopardize their current employment and to maintain confidentiality.
- When scheduling the interview, ask every applicant whether there is anything they'll need for the interview (e.g., map, disability accommodation, etc.).
- If an applicant requests a disability accommodation you don't know how to provide, call Staff Human Resources for information and assistance. For more information see [Disabilities](#).
- Schedule all interviews in fully accessible rooms with good lighting.
- Consider providing the applicant with a copy of the interview questions a few minutes prior to the interview. This will allow the interviewee time to formulate a response and may relieve some stress for the individual during the interview.

## 2. Developing Interview Questions

- Develop a standard set of questions to be asked of all applicants, based on the requirements for the job. A good way to start is to write one question for each qualification, to make sure you cover the territory. You can eliminate areas you already have adequate information on from the application and focus on those you need to learn the most about.
- You may also note any particular questions you have about any applicant's application, e.g. "We couldn't tell from your application whether you actually resolved customers' complaints, or just received and recorded them for someone else to resolve."
- Don't ask for information that's illegal to use:
  - Age or birthdate
  - Maiden name or prior married name, marital status
  - Birthplace, nationality, race
  - Religion
  - Financial status (e.g. loans, bankruptcies, garnishments), or whether they rent or own a home
  - Arrest record (the application asks about convictions, not arrests)
  - Number and age of children, childcare arrangements
  - General medical condition, state of health, history of illnesses
  - Record of receiving Workers' Compensation benefits
  - Dates of military service, type of discharge

## 3. During the Interview

- Try to put the applicant at ease. Introduce everyone and provide water. It's O.K. to chat a bit, and it's O.K. to smile and be friendly.
- If the applicant gives very short answers, ask some follow-up questions, rather than just noting "gave short answers."
- If the applicant misunderstands a question, try saying it again in a different way.
- If it is clear after the first few questions that the person isn't a good candidate for the job, continue the interview and try not to let it show. When it's obvious to a candidate that they aren't being taken seriously, it's easy for them to conclude that the process isn't fair, possibly resulting in a formal complaint.
- Leave time for an important last question: "Do you have any questions you'd like to ask us?"
- Plan to close the interview by thanking the person, describing the rest of your process, and telling them when they can expect to hear from you.
- Interviewees who aren't being offered the job appreciate it if you call and tell them. At minimum, you should notify them by letter immediately after the selected candidate has accepted the offer.

## 4. Disabilities

*Ask about a person's abilities, not about her or his disabilities.*

- You may ask all applicants, "Can you perform this task, either with or without accommodation?"
- You may ask all applicants to describe or demonstrate how they would perform a task.
- You may ask whether a person can meet the attendance requirements of the job.

- Don't ask questions about the nature or severity of a disability.
- Don't ask questions about how much sick leave a person used in prior jobs.
- Don't ask applicants whether they will need accommodation in order to do the job.
- If an applicant raises the issue of needing accommodation, simply confirm that it is the university's policy to provide employment accommodations, and if they're the successful candidate, you can discuss that before or when they start work.

#### *Advice for interviewing applicants with visible disabilities:*

- If an applicant is missing a hand or arm, follow their lead: shake whatever they offer.
- Talk directly to the applicant, even if the applicant is using a sign interpreter or has an attendant present.
- Look directly at the person, even if they are blind, because it will direct your voice in the right direction.
- If an applicant appears with a guide dog or helper-dog, remember that it's not a pet, but a working dog. Don't try to interact with the animal.
- When talking to a person in a wheelchair, try to be at eye level.
- Ask if a person needs assistance before assisting.
- If you're not sure how to assist, ask what kind of assistance would be helpful.
- Speak in a normal tone unless requested to do otherwise.
- Allow ample time for responses from people with speech disorders (and don't assume a speech impairment means the person has a mental impairment).
- If you do not understand what an applicant is saying, don't pretend you understand. Ask him/her to repeat what they said.

## 5. Cultural Bias

### *Bias in Interviewing – Cross Cultural Misperceptions*

Culture consists of learned and shared values, beliefs and behaviors. We all come to interviews with preferences for certain culturally defined behaviors, values and norms. Being aware that we bring these personal inclinations to interview situations allows us to become more inclusive of individuals who are culturally different than ourselves.

- Cultural programming influences how we interpret **what we hear** and the behavior that **we see** during job interviews. We interpret what we see and hear through our own cultural lenses.
- Be aware of UCSC "culture" and how applicants from certain ethnic and other groups may not share the values and norms prescribed by UCSC culture, or may simply be unaware of them.
- The structure of the interview itself is a construct of UCSC culture that reflects certain values and expectations for behavior. Even though we may have explained the interviewing process to each candidate, we cannot assume that everyone we interview will be familiar with the subtle hierarchy of values and expectations that govern our interactions during an interview.
- Be aware that sometimes what we consider to be appropriate or desirable qualities in a candidate may reflect more about our personal preferences than **what is actually needed to perform the job**. Being culturally inclusive requires a willingness to see differences as possibilities rather than obstacles.

### *To Avoid Being Sabotaged by Your Own Cultural Programming*

- Understand how powerful culture is and have a generosity of spirit about the difference. Learning a new culture is very difficult and takes a lot of effort. The adaptation process gets even more difficult in stressful times (such as when you're in an interview) and we resort to familiar and comfortable behaviors.
- Expect that the people you will hire will be reshaped by being part of UCSC and in turn, UCSC will change. The process is positive and reciprocal – adaptation goes both ways.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### 37. When I call applicants for an interview, what kind of information should I give them?

- Explain how to get to campus and to the building and room and what the parking arrangements are (meters, parking permits), if driving. Mention the closest disability parking spaces.
- Given them a general description of the interview process, (e.g., people will take turns asking you questions; they'll be taking notes to refer to later.") and how many people will be participating.
- Advise them if they will need to arrive early to complete or provide missing information on an application and if they should bring a list of references. Consider providing them with a copy of the interview questions a few minutes prior to the interview.
- Give the applicant your name and telephone number, to call in case they have to contact you about the interview. Give them an alternate contact name and phone number for the day of the interview.
- Don't forget to ask if they will need anything else for the interview and if they have any questions.

### 38. What if I can't reach a candidate to schedule an interview or what if they will not be available during the timeframe established for interviewing (e.g., they are on vacation)?

- While it is important to be as flexible as you can in scheduling interviews for your top candidates to ensure that you get the best qualified person for your position, you must balance this against your need to fill your position in a timely manner. If you have selected a candidate for interview and you are unable to hold an interview because of issues related to availability, you should indicate that the applicant was unavailable for interview on the [RMS Worksheet: Job Offer - Open/Campus-Only Recruitments](#).

### 39. Do I have to ask each applicant the same questions?

- During the interview, while the same standard questions should be asked of each applicant, you do not have to ask exactly the same questions of every applicant. You may deviate from your standardized questions by asking for clarification, asking an applicant to give examples or more description, or asking follow-up questions about one applicant's specific work history.

### 40. How can I use my interview time most effectively?

- Interviews are best used to gather information about a person's past work experience, knowledge, and potential to be successful in the position. They're poorest when trying to get material to make indirect inferences about a person's motivations or hidden character flaws. For example, if you're tempted to ask a "if you were a color, what color would you be?" question, ask yourself what that has to do with job performance.

### 41. What are the best kinds of interview questions?

- The best interview questions are simple and direct, asking about a person's ability and experience with respect to the requirements of the job, e.g. "Have you worked with UNIX before? Would you please describe what you did? What other kinds of computers and software have you used?"
- The best predictor of future performance is past performance: ask applicants about what they've actually done, in specific behavioral terms whenever possible. For example, instead of asking, "Are you a good employee?" ask for specifics: "What kinds of documents did you prepare? What kind of volume? What kinds of decisions were you asked to make? How often were you asked to do a form over again? For what reasons?"

- **Examples of kinds of interview questions:**

- Questions of *clarification* that you might ask one person and not another, e.g.: We couldn't tell from your application whether you designed workshops yourself or just conducted workshops that other people had designated. Could you tell us exactly what your responsibilities were?
- *Direct* questions are easy to understand, and are more likely to yield concise answers and specific information. Ask what you want to know, e.g.:
  - What were your responsibilities at your last job?
  - What kinds of software have you used? For what kinds of tasks?
  - What kinds of decisions did you have authority to make on your own?
- *Open-ended* questions allow the candidate to decide how to present an answer, and may therefore reveal something about speaking skills, ways of organizing information, and the way a candidate thinks about things, e.g.: Tell us about your job. What do you think is the best way to develop leadership skills in students?
- *Problem or situational* questions require a candidate to analyze a situation and can tell you something about how they approach a situation, e.g.: What would you do in a situation in which ...? When you evaluate someone's performance, how do you handle areas in which the person is not performing adequately?
- Questions that ask candidates to recall their *actual past behavior* in a situation can avoid some self report problems, e.g.: Think of a time you had to make a quick decision, and describe it for us. Tell us about a time when you disagreed with your supervisor. How did you approach him/her, and what was the result?
- *Probing* questions ask the candidate to tell you more or clarify, e.g.: Could you explain more about what you mean by "student-oriented leadership"?

### 42. How can I assess multicultural competence?

***Don't assume, ask questions such as:***

- What, if any, has been your experience working or living with people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds?
- What have you done that required communicating with people whose first language was not English? What do you think is important to be aware of in communicating with non-native speakers?
- We'd like you to think of a time when cultural differences came up in a job you held. Please describe the situation as well as how you dealt with it.

### 43. Can I ask hypothetical questions?

- It's fine to ask hypothetical questions, e.g. "What would you do if ...," but remember that many people turn out to behave differently than they claimed. You are more likely to get accurate information if you ask a person to describe their actual experience, e.g. "We'd like you to think of a time in your past work experience when you had to deal with a conflict with a customer. Would you tell us what the conflict was, and how you handled it?"

#### 44. What are common problems in making interview judgments?

- **First Impressions** - Forming a favorable or unfavorable impression of someone in the first few minutes of the interview, and filtering or distorting information that comes later. E.g., we may immediately like a charismatic person and not notice that he or she lacks specific qualifications for the job. Or, we may decide right away that the person is unsuitable and tune out for the rest of the interview (creating the danger that the person will notice s/he isn't being interviewed seriously and assume the worst).
- **Halo Effect** - Over generalizing: being so influenced by one striking characteristic of a person that we ignore all others, e.g. rating someone high overall because that person seems to be articulate, or rating someone low overall because she or he is shy.
- **Contrast Effect** - The tendency to evaluate someone in comparison with something other than the criteria -- e.g., evaluating a candidate too highly because he or she was interviewed right after a very unqualified candidate, or because she or he is most unlike your last unsuccessful employee.
- **Negative Information** - When trying to distinguish among well qualified candidates, searching for any negative information to disqualify a person, and therefore giving undue influence to a negative factor that may not make that much difference in later performance, or just might not have been obvious on another person's application.
- **Fleeing to Objective Indicators** - When faced with difficult decisions among well-qualified candidates, the tendency to search for any information that appears to be "objective" -- e.g., number of years of experience -- when it may not be a valid predictor of a person's performance.
- **The "Similar to Me" Effect** - Being influenced by some way in which the candidate shares an experience or characteristic -- e.g., where a person is from, what school they went to, etc. Similar dynamic is whether a person is "a UCSC kind of person."
- **Stereotyping** - Usually, using common social stereotypes to make assumptions about a person based on group membership -- e.g., Asians are attentive to detail but not assertive, or men won't take orders from women. We each also have personal stereotypes, based on past experiences -- e.g., a woman who would wear pants to an interview will have bad judgment dealing with people; or overweight people don't care about themselves and will not care about their work; or people with Southern accents are ignorant, but people with British accents are intelligent.
- **People who "will fit in well"** - Feeling most comfortable with people like us, and thereby screening out diversity of all kinds. Important to try to distinguish a valid criterion of "interpersonal skills" from prejudiced judgments of personal style. Dangers to watch for: individual differences in dress, accent, eye contact, degree of formality in an interview, assertiveness, etc., can have a very different meaning in different cultures and subcultures. Also watch for sex differences in evaluating "style" -- e.g. confident women may be more impressive to women than to men; tentative and friendly women may be more impressive to men than to women. Make sure your judgments are job-related.
- **Inferences about Motivation** - Assuming that we can know something about a person's motivation by inference from his or her life circumstances -- e.g., that a person who "really needs a job" will be more highly motivated than a person who isn't dependent on the income, or that a person who is currently commuting to a job "over the hill" is just looking for a way to avoid the commute. Related: "overqualified" judgments, i.e., that a person who has more than the required qualifications "will be bored with the job" and will leave as soon as a "better" job is available.

## Reference Checks

### 1. Checking References

**Always** check references, especially from former supervisors, including UCSC applicants, before you make a final selection. This is applicable whether the position is being filled via recruitment, non-recruitment, or waiver. Always check more than one reference.

Reference checks are a critical part of the selection process. Reference checks can give you information on how an applicant has actually performed and past performance is the best predictor of future success. In addition, employers have sometimes been found liable for negligent hiring when an employee with a history of violence or other serious problems is hired without a reasonably thorough reference check.

You may check references at any time in the process. When you are unable to distinguish among candidates based on the application alone, especially when interpersonal skills or judgment are essential for the job, it may be worth the investment of time to do a reference check on your top group of candidates before you decide whom to interview.

#### *Advising the Applicant*

- As a courtesy, inform an applicant before you check references. An applicant's permission is not required except in the case where the applicant has asked that we not contact his/her current employer. In this situation you should call and explain that you are now checking references. If the applicant refuses to give you permission, explain that without this information you will not be able to consider him/her further.
- It is legally permissible to contact references other than those provided by the applicant. Again, as a courtesy, inform the applicant that you will be doing this. If the applicant has concerns about a particular person, you may certainly take those concerns into consideration.

#### *Conducting the Reference Check*

- Job-related questions are the key to a good reference check. You can establish what the applicant's duties were, how their performance was evaluated, and what strengths and weaknesses were identified.
- It is a good practice to develop a set of reference questions and use them for each candidate on which you are seeking information.

- Remember that the illegal questions used for interviewing also pertain to reference checks.
- After identifying yourself and your reason for calling, describe the job and find out what kind of work relationship the reference has had with the applicant -- first hand observation of performance is most valuable, and we have a responsibility to evaluate the credibility of the information we receive in the reference check.
- You may ask about whether the applicant had an acceptable attendance record but may not ask about a person's use of sick leave, medical leave, or workers' compensation. Do not discuss a person's disability, and ignore any information about disability that is volunteered. If a reference begins to discuss impermissible areas, steer the discussion back to job-related factors.
- You should check the references of a UCSC applicant in the same manner as any other applicant, including contacting current and former supervisors.

### *Confidentiality*

- It is not necessary to advise contacts for reference checks of circumstances under which information they provide will be disclosed to the applicant at the outset of the reference check. However, do not promise that information will be kept strictly confidential.
- Applicants who request information regarding reference checks will be told that it is not our practice to disclose this information. However, applicants who make formal written requests are entitled to copies of your notes from the Reference Check. If the reference asked for confidentiality and is not a current supervisor, details can be deleted from the notes that would identify the source.

## **2. Internal Candidates**

### *Reference checks on internal candidates:*

- Should always be conducted
- Provides an opportunity to validate anecdotal or second hand information
- Hiring Managers and Hiring Committee Members can view the personnel file for UCSC internal candidates. Call the SHR Records Coordinator, at 459-2027 to arrange an appointment.

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

### **45. How many references should I check?**

- More than one. If you get inconsistent answers from the first two, you may want to check more than you ordinarily would.

### **46. What if you encounter resistance?**

- Some organizations have a policy of not releasing information, but you should know that a new law in California protects reference checks unless they are untrue, without a valid basis, or given with malice.
- Try another approach. Ask for advice on how best to manage the person to bring out her/his abilities. If you're not getting answers to standard questions, try painting a picture of your work culture and its unique pressures, so that the supervisor can give a realistic evaluation. For example: "We're a high volume customer service office. The phones don't stop ringing, the paperwork is endless, and we're considering Ms. Smith for a position in our unit dealing with our most demanding customers. Is that an environment in which she would excel?"
- Sometimes references are uneasy about determining someone else's fate. Try to downplay their role, e.g. "I want you to know that I'm not burdening you with the responsibility of judging this person's past. We're just at the evaluation stage right now. There are several candidates in contention for the job, and we're just trying to determine who would fit into the unit best."
- Sometimes giving the reference a structure for responding, e.g. "Some people constantly look for new ways to reinvent their jobs and assume responsibilities beyond the basic job description. Others adhere strictly to their job duties and 'don't do windows,' so to speak. Can you tell me where Ms. Smith fits on that continuum?"

### **47. What if a reference won't give any real information?**

- If a reference refuses to cooperate, put it in perspective. If other employers are giving rave reviews and one supervisor refuses to provide information under any circumstances, the silence shouldn't necessarily disqualify an applicant. But if a string of past supervisors are "taking the 5th" and refusing to share information, this should raise a red flag.
- If you cannot get good reference checks on an applicant, you may also (1) inform the applicant that you have been unsuccessful and will not be able to consider their application further, (2) ask the applicant to encourage the reference to talk, and/or (3) suggest that the applicant sign a release to permit references to speak to you.

### **48. What if a reference check reveals negative information?**

- You may choose to inform the applicant that you have gotten negative information and give them a chance to refute it, although this is not required. Be cautious about relying on information of which the reference has no personal knowledge and which may be no more than unsubstantiated rumor.

#### 49. Can I use negative information that a reference check has given me in confidence?

- The only way to keep information completely confidential is not to record it, and then it can be problematic to use in making a hiring decision. You have an obligation to try to verify the information, if you can. If you are unable to verify the information, you should contact Staff Human Resources for advice.

## Records Disposition

### 1. Records

After the selected candidate has accepted, the Search Committee and Hiring Supervisor should gather all documentation related to the recruitment for the Unit's recruitment file. Documentation, which should be kept in the file, includes:

- Copy of the appropriate RMS Recruitment Worksheet (see [Recruitment Forms](#))
- Copy of completed [Applicant Selection Log \(ASL\)](#)
- Interview questions
- Interview or other notes from Search Committee members
- Reference check notes
- Copy of [RMS Worksheet: Job Offer - Open/Campus-Only Recruitments](#)
- Any other information gathered on applicants during the process such as work samples, supplemental applications, pre-interview reference checks, etc.
- Brief written summary of the process which was followed
- Copies of letters sent to applicants

This file will be retained for three years by the HR Service Team Representative.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

#### 50. How should the process be documented?

- The chair is responsible for ensuring that the group's judgment is recorded on the [Applicant Selection Log \(ASL\)](#).
- In addition, the search committee chair should record briefly what the process was (who did what when) including decision points (e.g., "we decided to interview only people who had both the computer skills and experience with implementation of a new system".)
- All records of recruitment, including interview notes taken by all search committee members and reference check notes, will be retained for three years by the appropriate HR Service Team.

## Related Policies, Contract Articles and References

### *Forms*

- [RMS Worksheet: Open/Campus-Only - all types except Straight Replacement](#)
- [RMS Worksheet: Open/Campus-Only - Straight Replacement](#)
- [Applicant Selection Log \(ASL\)](#)
- [RMS Worksheet: Job Offer - Open/Campus-Only Recruitments](#)

### *Resources*

- [Recruitment](#) (UCSC Local Procedure)
- [Recruitment Advertising Resources](#)
- [Diversity Guide for Employment](#)
- [Filling a Vacancy](#)

### *Training*

- [Fair Hiring Workshop](#)
- [EEO/AA Offerings](#)