

unisa

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

INFORMATION FOR PANEL MEMBERS





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Introduction

The Information for Panel Members Guide has been developed to assist panel members effectively participate on selection panels. It contains information about those aspects of the recruitment and selection process that panel members are primarily involved in such as shortlisting, interviews, reference checking and making the decision. Further information about the other steps in the recruitment and selection process can be found in the [Recruitment and Selection Good Practice Guide](#).

Principles

The [Recruitment and Selection policy](#) provides the key principles that should be applied during each recruitment process. The effective application of the principles is the responsibility of the Chair of the selection panel. Two of the major principles that underpin all of the University's selection processes are detailed below.

The principle of merit

All appointments will be made on the basis of careful and consistent application of the principle of merit. This means staff will be appointed based on their ability to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the position including abilities and skills gained in community service. The panel should be aware when making its decision that the University does not condone nepotism.

Fair and equitable treatment of all applicants

Recruitment and selection processes will be conducted on the basis of fair and equitable treatment of all applicants. During the selection process the panel will ensure that each applicant is treated in an equitable and consistent way.

Recruiting a diverse workforce

The University recognises the importance of a diverse workforce. The University's [Equal Opportunity policy](#) and all other equity policies and principles apply to the selection process.

Specific information relating to equity considerations in recruitment and selection can be found in the [Equity and Diversity](#) section on the Human Resources website or by contacting the Human Resources Unit.

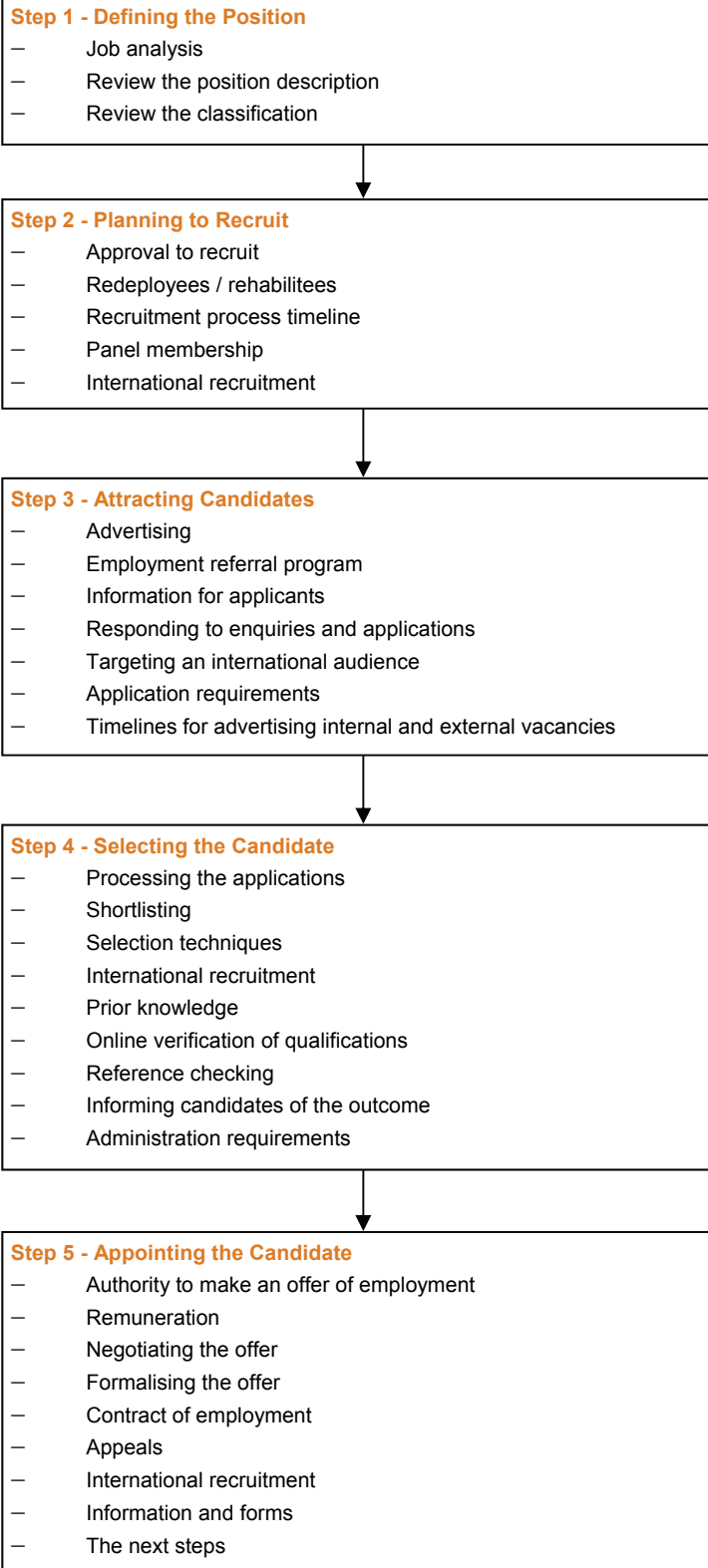
The Recruitment and Selection Policy and the Equal Opportunity Policy should guide panels in all aspects of selection.

Role of the Human Resources professional

Your local Human Resource professional can assist with job analysis, recruitment planning, advertising markets, competitive salary, selection committee membership and selection strategies.

Recruitment and Selection at UniSA

Recruitment and selection at UniSA follows the following steps.



FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THESE STEPS IS AVAILABLE FROM UNISA'S [RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE](#)



Shortlisting

Eligibility

To be eligible for employment with the University, an applicant must have the right to work in Australia as determined by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. The local Human Resources professional will consult with the Human Resources Unit before advising on eligibility.

Prior knowledge

Every panel member needs to focus on maintaining an objective, merit-based process. It is preferable to address any prior knowledge (for example, past poor performance) of a candidate during the decision making process so it can be dealt with in an equitable manner. Not disclosing prior knowledge of a candidate could influence the process subconsciously or covertly.

Caution and care should be exercised when introducing prior knowledge because it may be out of date, be atypical or highly subjective and overly advantage or disadvantage particular candidates. The panel is to seek as much relevant information as possible to validate the final decision. Only prior knowledge that has been tested can be used in the final decision making process.

Members of a selection panel should discuss withdrawing their panel membership with the Chair if they believe they have information about a candidate, which will, or may, preclude them from making an objective judgement.

Shortlisting

Shortlisting is conducted to determine which applicants will proceed to the next stage of the selection process.

Panel members involved in shortlisting will be provided with all the relevant information about the selection process:

- applications including any supporting documents, for example, the cover sheet, covering letter/email and curriculum vitae
- the advertisement and position description
- a [selection grid](#) (if required)

Shortlisting may be conducted by a sub-group of the panel and generally will involve the Chair and the Human Resources professional on the panel. It may also involve other members of the selection panel as determined by the Chair. This is likely to be dependent upon the nature or level of the position, the key accountabilities of the position and the relevant expertise of the additional panel members.

Panel members who have been selected to shortlist and are unable to attend shortlisting can either forward a copy of their completed selection grid for presentation at the shortlisting meeting or ensure their opinions are represented through another panel member (generally the Chair).

There may be a necessity to undertake a second shortlisting prior to interview if an assessment activity has been utilised or if there are too many candidates to interview.

If the panel believes that none of the applicants should be shortlisted, the position description should be reviewed and the market tested again. Panels should not shortlist applicants for the sake of it.

Recording the shortlisting outcomes and other details relevant to the recruitment plan (for example, assessment, interviews, referees) is recommended to assist the panel with its decision making, writing the selection report and the Chair with providing feedback to candidates.

Internal candidates who are not shortlisted should be provided with the opportunity for feedback. This is given by the Chair (or nominee).

Selection criteria

Addressing selection criteria is no longer essential for University vacancies, particularly professional positions. The process is considered tedious and may deter some highly skilled but time poor candidates from applying.

Where a statement of claims against the criteria is requested at the time of advertising the vacancy, a [selection grid](#) can be used to provide comments.

Applicants who prima facie meet all of the essential criteria should be shortlisted. If a large pool of applicants meets the selection criteria, the panel will decide upon strategies to shortlist a reasonable number of applicants to interview based on the degree to which the applicants meet the criteria and the weighting of each criterion. If there is an inadequate pool of candidates, re-advertising is an option.



Selection Techniques

Panels are encouraged to use a multi-faceted approach in the selection process to gain as much information as possible from the candidates.

It is appropriate to make reasonable adjustments to the selection process to accommodate candidates who have a disability.

Interviews

The interview is a two-way communication between panel members and the candidate. It allows the panel to assess the candidate's potential and enables the candidate to assess the University's proposed position and environment. The University typically uses a selection panel to conduct interviews.

Where possible, shortlisted candidates should attend an interview in person. Where this is not possible the selection panel may agree to an alternative, such as telephone interview or videoconference. If an invited candidate is unable to attend an interview the panel is encouraged to find an alternative time. However there is no requirement to reschedule the interview.

The format of an interview should be relevant to the position. Each interview should allow equal and sufficient time, be kept similar in structure and ensure the same core questions are asked of each candidate. However, this should not prevent the panel from exploring particular areas of the candidate's experience in relation to the criteria for the position, provided these questions are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

On occasion the panel may decide to appoint an internal candidate without a formal interview, provided they are the only shortlisted candidate. It is recommended that at least one form of assessment be included in the process, as well as a discussion to confirm claims and discuss performance expectations of the position.

If you have a large number of candidates to choose from, or are having trouble separating your top two or three, then a second interview may be useful. Remember this will add to your selection timeframe.

It may be appropriate for the Chair or the position's supervisor to meet with the preferred candidate. This allows for further information to be obtained from the candidate and also for the candidate to seek additional information about the role and the University.

Whilst the interview is one of the most commonly-used selection techniques, panel members are reminded that it is only one part of the selection process.

Presentations

Presentations can be a good method of testing the candidate's verbal or oral communication skills (if presentations are a requirement of the position).

View past work (journals, research papers)

In some situations it may be useful to view work produced by the candidate to assess their skills in a particular area. For example, a journal published or brochure with their copyright. Past work should be clearly identifiable as the candidate's or verified by a referee.

Assessments

There are a number of assessment methods available including Psychometric testing and work area assessments to test specific job role tasks and skills.

Selection methods for international applicants

The strategies listed below are examples of methods used by the University to select and appoint staff from overseas.

- telephone interviews, teleconference, video conference
- scheduling interviews when candidates are in the country or when senior staff are in the applicant's country sighting samples of work which can be verified
- flying the candidates to Australia (generally used only for very senior positions).

Conducting the Interview

At the start of an interview candidates should be:

- introduced to the panel members
- explained the structure of the interview
- advised of the approximate length of the interview and which panel member will be time keeping
- advised they are able to clarify any question at any time
- put at ease
- able to bring in additional information for panel perusal or notes to guide their answers.

Before concluding the interview, the candidate should be provided with the opportunity to ask questions to clarify any issue relating to the position or terms and conditions of appointment (for example, remuneration). This is an ideal opportunity to promote the [benefits of working at UniSA](#). The candidate can also provide any additional relevant information. The panel should advise on the timeline for decision-making and notification of the outcome of the process.

It is important to avoid mistaking a person's performance at interview with their capacity to perform the position. Some instances of past performance, such as research output, could be influenced by the availability of resources. This may have improved or detracted from the candidate's performance. Questioning to probe the reasons and context for particular performance results may be very informative.

Due regard to 'potential' and 'transferable skills' is recommended. The task of the panel is to explore and consider how quickly a candidate would learn and develop to the required level.

If panel members believe a candidate is not suitable for the advertised position, thought should be given to whether they may be suitable for referral to other areas within the University, with the applicant's approval.

Interview techniques

There are different ways to conduct an interview and the technique chosen should enable the panel to gain the most valuable information about the candidate in the most efficient way.

The University encourages the use of structured behavioural interviews. A behavioural interview has questions specifically targeted at gaining information about the candidate's past experience and skills by providing real examples. Please refer to page 9 for further information about behavioural interviewing.

The panel should choose questions relevant to the position that will allow the candidate to provide evidence of their abilities.

Conditions of employment

The University has excellent conditions of employment, which should be highlighted to applicants during the interview. The [Attraction Checklist](#) is a valuable tool to use when communicating with the candidates.

Cross-cultural interviews

Interviewing people from different cultural backgrounds or for whom English is a second language can be challenging.

It is important to allow people, whose first language is not English, time to think about the questions before providing an answer. A little more time than usual may be required and should be allowed without prejudice.

In addition, the selection panel can significantly increase the quality of the interview outcome by:

- Providing a written copy of the questions to the candidate
- Offering to repeat the questions for the candidate
- Avoiding questions which contain slang, colloquialisms and terms which have recently become fashionable
- Avoiding words and phrases with more than one meaning within questions. For example, "I'm a bit rusty/ Let me pick you up/run you over/drop you down to the office".

Body language and the norms associated with various cultures should also be considered during interviews. For example, some cultures do not feel comfortable when eye contact is maintained.

Graduate Certificate in Education (University Teaching)

As part of probation academic staff members (Levels A to C) are required to complete the Graduate Certificate in Education (University Teaching). This requirement should be discussed with preferred candidates at the interview stage and at the time of offer.

The staff member may be granted part or full exemption from participation in the program if the staff member can demonstrate that they have completed a similar program at another university or that they have gained equivalent experience.

The Do's and Don'ts when conducting interviews

Do:

1. Use the introduction period to relax the candidate to gain the most from the interview
2. Seek information from the candidate relevant to the essential criteria needed for effective job performance
3. Ask for specific examples to find out what duties/tasks the candidate has actually performed
4. Ask competency-based questions to candidates
5. Be consistent when asking questions. Ask the same core questions of all candidates
6. Follow-up with probing questions to determine actual behaviour and performance outcomes
7. Spend more time on analysing recent events rather than earlier experiences
8. Phrase questions positively rather than negatively
9. Take notes
10. Promote the University to the candidate where appropriate
11. Take time to determine the candidate's fit with the University
12. Have a second interview or meeting to get more information from the candidate, if required

Don't:

1. Keep the candidate waiting too long
2. Ask long, complex questions
3. Ask direct or closed questions when you require more information than yes or no
4. Ask leading questions, you will only get an answer that the candidate thinks you want
5. Ask questions already answered in the CV or application (unless verifying information)
6. Express value judgements or personal opinions in questions or observations
7. Ask discriminatory questions about sex, marital status, age, pregnancy, family responsibilities, sexuality, race, disability, political or religious belief
8. Be affected by bias, stereotypes, or prior involvement with the candidate
9. Make decisions too quickly
10. Talk too much. The candidates should do most of the talking to confirm their qualities and attributes
11. Introduce or ask questions about additional duties or responsibilities not specified in the job description
12. Be afraid of silence. Allow the candidate to think through the question before responding

Creating Interview Questions

A series of questions related to the position should be agreed prior to the interview.

In determining interview questions:

- Ensure the question is relevant to the selection criteria
- Seek specific examples of past experience
- Test the questions by answering them yourself
- Keep the questions short and clear to encourage the candidate to do most of the talking
- Avoid asking more than one question at a time

The [Question Bank](#) is a good resource of interview questions.

Using the selection criteria to create questions

The selection criteria from the position description provide a good basis for creating interview questions. They provide information to determine the most ideal person for the position. Good interview questions will source appropriate information to gauge whether the candidate meets the criteria, however just asking the criterion in question format may not elicit the most valuable response.

For example, one of the criteria may be *“Demonstrated ability to provide leadership to a team in a diverse and highly complex organisation”*.

What you are looking for is abilities, skills and real-life experience in managing a team and a candidate that is flexible and able to perform in an organisation with conflicting demands. You will also be looking for a candidate that can empathise with the diversity and complexity of the University due to their experiences.

You could ask, *“Tell me about a time when you have led a team in a diverse and highly complex organisation. What challenges did you face and how did you manage them?”*

Behavioural interviewing

The University encourages the use of behavioural interviews. Behavioural interviews are based on the theory that past performance is a good predictor of future behaviour. A behavioural interview is a more interactive approach and allows the panel to get information about real situations candidates have faced and how they performed and reacted. For example, If an individual could type 75 words per minute yesterday, the probability is that they would be able to do the same tomorrow. While tomorrow's material may be somewhat more complex and therefore reduce the exact 75 words per minute in the short term, the probability is still high that with practice, the standard would be reached again based on past experience.

Behavioural questions take the format of *‘Tell me about a situation...’* or *‘Describe an event where...’* The questions seek to determine what the candidate's actual skills or aptitudes are through real experiences.

Some benefits of conducting a behavioural style interview are:

- Removing misunderstandings about past experiences as the candidate is able to describe in detail the situation and their performance;
- Reducing the impact of personal impressions and therefore allowing the candidate to highlight good performance regardless of their projected image;
- Reducing the chances of the candidate faking the interview as they are required to provide real-life examples of what they have done, not what they would do; and
- Allowing the panel to hear information about the candidate's performance and not just theory from a textbook

There are several other ways that behaviour can be assessed (see the section on Selection Techniques). Some of the standard processes used include:

- Direct on-the-job observation
- Written or practical exercises/activities
- Assessment workshops
- Referee reports with specific behavioural examples

Creating Interview Questions (cont.)

The STAR technique

When asking behavioural questions the panel should be listening for specific answers to the questions. A proven method used by Human Resource professionals is the STAR technique.

STAR is an anagram for - **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction and **R**esult.

It is useful for the panel to understand the STAR technique and apply it to their questions to assist them to extract the relevant information from the candidate's answer.

Candidates should be encouraged to use the STAR technique when responding to interview questions.

Situation – There should be a brief description or contextual statement of the past situation and environment that the interviewee was faced with.

Tactics/task – The candidate will describe the actual tasks they were responsible for or the tactics they used to carry out the tasks. This clarifies what the interviewee was intending to do.

Action – The candidate should also describe when, where, why and how the task was carried out. This part of the answer should describe their behaviour, skills and expertise.

Result – This should provide the panel with an outcome that was actually achieved because of the tasks and action (the candidate's skills and tactics).

The following is a good example of a response using the STAR technique:

'As Research Support Officer at the Department of XYZ, I needed to ensure that managers were kept informed of policies and procedures. To do this, I initiated a monthly newsletter, which was emailed to each manager. I took responsibility for writing the main articles in each publication. This involved obtaining ideas and input from other stakeholders to ensure that the articles reflected the needs of managers, both in terms of content and language. I received consistently excellent feedback in relation to this newsletter from these internal clients and my own manager. I received a divisional achievement award for the quality of this newsletter from management. Importantly, this initiative resulted in improved lines of communication between managers and the Research Support Unit.'

The elements of this STAR response are:

Situation – Role as Research Support Officer at Department of XYZ.

Tactics/task – Needed to ensure that managers were kept informed of policies and procedures.

Action – Initiated monthly newsletter, which was emailed to each manager. Took responsibility for writing the main articles. This involved obtaining ideas and input from other stakeholders to ensure that the articles reflected managers' needs (in terms of content and language).

Result – Feedback was consistently excellent. Received divisional achievement award for newsletter quality. Led to improved lines of communication between managers and the Research Support Unit.

The STAR technique is useful for panels as it provides them with a basis on which to assess the candidate's answers. It will also guide them to seek more information from the candidate. For example, the candidate may talk about the situation and the result but not the actual task or actions taken. The panel could then probe further by asking the candidate to tell the panel what skills they used and the tasks necessary for achieving the particular result/outcome.

Other types of interview questions

A variety of questions based on the selection criteria can be used to measure an interviewee's ability.

Technical questions

These are usually asked in a 'What is an X' or 'What does X refer to or mean?' format. They require candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of terms, concepts, and tools.

Open or probing questions

This type of question asks 'why', 'how', 'explain'. They encourage the candidate to expand on a question and provide a detailed response and should be used after a behavioural question to gain further information.

Closed questions

These questions will only elicit a yes or no answer from the candidate and are only useful in specific situations. For example, 'Are you able to start work on Monday?' or 'Did you manage the project?'



Creating Interview Questions (cont.)

Follow-up questions

At times the candidate may provide information that satisfies part of the question or their answer may create a question for the panel. Seeking clarification about a specific answer is appropriate. However the panel should be mindful the follow up questions are to provide clarity to a previously asked question only and should not stray from the purpose. Panels should also be consistent and ask follow-up questions to other candidates when appropriate.

Examples of follow-up questions may be:

- Please clarify what you mean by ...
- How did you feel when that happened?
- What other options did you consider?
- How do you think others felt about your actions at the time?
- How did the outcome satisfy you?
- What did you learn from that situation?
- What was your role / involvement? (for example, when a candidate uses 'we')

Question styles to avoid

Hypothetical/situational questions

These questions take the form of 'What would you do if ...' or 'What could happen if ...'. Answers to hypothetical questions are not based on past performance. However, hypothetical questions may be used when seeking how a candidate would approach the new position should they be successful in their application.

Leading

This type of question normally indicates the answer wanted and should be avoided since they are not likely to generate original thought by the candidate. For example, 'I expect you'd be able to handle the responsibilities of this job, wouldn't you?'

Double Barrelled

These have two or more distinct parts, each requiring an answer. They lack clarity and can confuse the candidate. For example, 'Can you tell us how your management style and the local work culture helped you in resolving that conflict situation.' If used, they should be designed so each part can be answered separately.

Heavy preface

These questions involve a long preamble or explanation. This type of question may be necessary at times but can confuse the candidate. If it is necessary, first provide the context and then ask the question. For example, "One of the things you might have to handle in this job is people coming to you stating they've got too much work to do. It often happens that they'll have a mixture of work with tight deadlines and things which have to be done sometime but have no particularly urgency. You have to be able to determine where the priorities lie, and work out whether their load really is all that demanding. That requires you to know, in considerable detail, what sort of demands there are on this area and how quickly they can reasonably be met given our staffing levels. Tell us about when you've worked in this kind of situation before?"

Inappropriate questions

It is illegal to discriminate on the grounds of sex, marital status, age, pregnancy, family responsibilities, sexuality, race, disability, political or religious belief. Therefore, the panel should ensure they do not ask inappropriate questions that may appear discriminatory to the candidate or other panel members. For example: "Are you married?", "Do you have children?" or "Who collects the children after school?".

It is important not to make assumptions. For example, it is wrong to assume that a candidate with children will be unable to work outside of normal business hours. All candidates, regardless of their family status, may have outside commitments that will influence their working hours.

If the position has a requirement to work outside of normal business hours this should be specified as a criterion or responsibility of the position when it is advertised. The panel may also ask if there is anything that would preclude the candidate from being able to meet this criterion. This type of question should be asked after the panel has had the opportunity to assess the skills of the candidate and should be asked to all candidates.

Further information about discrimination can be found on the University's [Equity and Diversity](#) webpage or by contacting your local Human Resources professional.

Reference Checking

References are a critical component of the recruitment process and it is important to undertake a thorough checking of all preferred candidates. Reference checking should be conducted by the Chair of the panel or the Human Resources professional.

The candidate, where possible, should nominate work referees (rather than character referees) who can confirm the skills and attributes demonstrated. Referees could include members of the selection panel in which case they should declare this at the beginning of the recruitment process. If all of a particular candidate's referees are on the selection panel, a request for a non-panel additional referee from the candidate is recommended. The Chair of the panel may only contact someone not listed as a referee with the candidate's consent.

The panel may request additional referees from the candidate if required. However, if the candidate is not able to nominate someone, then this is not to be construed negatively by the panel.

It is wise to critically appraise and validate any written or verbal referee statements as referee reports can have limitations, including:

- Candidates naming referees who they believe will provide only positive comments
- Referees not having a detailed understanding of the position and the work environment
- Referees who may have an interest in either keeping or losing a staff member
- Referees reporting on positive aspects and not report on any weaknesses

Questions asked of referees and of previous employers are subject to the same legal considerations as those asked of the candidate. Discriminatory questions must not be asked.

It may not always be possible to provide the referee with a copy of the position description so it is suggested that the position be described to the referee prior to asking any questions.

It is recommended that the panel determine the questions to be asked of referees, including asking whether they would re-hire the candidate. A negative response may require further probing.

Accurate notes should be taken and it is recommended to paraphrase back to the referee a summary of the responses. A typical format for [referee reports](#) has been developed to use as a guide.

Before and/or after interview

Referee checking can occur before and/or after interview. This decision is to be included in the recruitment plan and depends on the nature of the position. Reports obtained before interviews provide the opportunity to investigate particular matters which may be identified in the referee report with a candidate during the interview (while maintaining confidentiality of the referee). However, it is a time consuming process to be done for all shortlisted candidates and additional reports may be required following interviews to check a particular aspect of the criteria that may have emerged during the first interview.

The selection panel should determine what information they wish to seek from the referees as this assists in determining the best time to obtain them. For example, prior to interview allows the panel to seek clarity about issues raised by the referee and after the interview allows the panel to verify or confirm their selection.

Verbal or written reports

Referees tend not to document a candidate's shortcomings but they may be prepared to discuss them by telephone in more detail. Often what is not said is a signal for further probing. For this reason, verbal references are preferred. A structured approach, where similar topics are covered with each referee and the answers are recorded, provides the best result. Questions should pursue issues raised in the interview and confirm information asserted by the candidate.

If the panel decides that written references are required the referees are to be provided with a copy of the position description and encouraged to address the selection criteria. All referee reports remain confidential to the selection panel and are to be destroyed at the completion of the selection process.

Making the Decision

Decision making is most effective when the collection of information about the candidates is conducted in a structured and systematic manner and then thoroughly evaluated against the predetermined set of criteria and standards (as detailed in the position description).

The panel's decision is reached after all the evidence obtained about the candidates has been considered. The role of the panel is to choose the most meritorious candidate based on all of the evidence. When deemed equally appointable, preference should be given to internal candidates over external candidates.

All members of the selection panel have equal participation rights in discussions. The panel should aim for a unanimous decision, however, if this is not possible, a consensus should be reached.

Consensus in group decisions is reached when members have an opportunity to discuss and explore the relevant merit of each candidate. Each member's contribution must be considered. In consensus there must be substantial agreement, with three major ground rules:

- no averaging
- no 'majority rule'
- no 'trading off' positions

Steps towards consensus include:

1. Each person independently decides an order of merit on the basis of all selected information
2. Each panel member then explains their decision using evidence
3. Panel members should not agree automatically with the most vocal or forceful panel member
4. Differences of opinion should be used for a more thorough consideration of all information
5. Panel members should express their own opinions and not change their minds just to avoid conflict and to reach agreement, but should thoroughly discuss the reasons for the disagreement. If a panel is unable to reach a consensus, additional information should be discussed to assist in reaching a decision. This should include an additional interview or meeting with the Chair for particular candidates and if a consensus decision is still unable to be reached, the Chair should make the final determination.

Where contradictory information exists the panel should explore this prior to making a final decision as all candidates should be given the 'benefit of doubt' until additional information is obtained.

In the event that there are no suitable candidates the panel will refer the matter back to the relevant manager. The position description should be reviewed and the market tested again. The panel should not appoint a candidate for the sake of it.

Informing candidates of the outcome

The Chair should advise candidates of the outcome as soon as practicable. Unsuccessful interviewed candidates should be provided with the opportunity for feedback. Feedback should be provided in verbal format only.

If the candidate is the second preferred candidate then it is appropriate to tell them so. Any candidates deemed appointable but ranked second should not be told they are unsuccessful until such time as the successful candidate has accepted.

Providing feedback

When providing verbal feedback be sure to:

- be sensitive - choose the most appropriate time and place
- give specific reasons for the decision
- demonstrate the decision was based on information related to the position description and selection criteria
- ensure the maintenance of confidentiality of the process
- focus on the experience or skills gap and not the person
- provide examples of where the panel saw experience or skills gaps
- focus on observations, not inferences or judgement
- be constructive in giving the feedback by providing information that will assist the candidate to perform better next time.

Further information on providing feedback is available in [Tips for Giving and Receiving Feedback](#).