

Guidelines for Assessment Boards

INTRODUCTION

The University's Strategic Development Plan recognises the critical role that the attraction and retention of high quality staff will make to our future. Effective recruitment and selection assists us to attract, retain and maintain our employees and to recognise the value of our people.

This guide has been developed to support you in your role as a member of an Assessment Board. It should be read in conjunction with UCD's Recruitment and Selection Policy, available on the UCD Staff Manual.

THE ASSESSMENT BOARD

The Assessment Board is responsible for undertaking a selection process that achieves a selection decision based on the principles of equity and merit. Every candidate should have the opportunity to compete via fair and open competition based on his or her own skills, qualifications, personal attributes and experience.

COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT BOARD

Individual members of an Assessment Board are selected on the understanding that they meet the following requirements:

- adequate knowledge of the requirements of the job;
- an understanding of the recruitment and selection process;
- are of an equal or higher grade than the vacant position;
- are free from bias in relation to any candidate;

Assessment Board members should ensure that they are available to participate in all aspects of the selection process, including presentations where these are being used.

THE CHAIRPERSON

The Chairperson is normally nominated by the Head of School that 'owns' the vacant position. In the case of Professorships, the Chair is nominated by the Academic Council Committee on Chairs, and the Assessment Board reports directly to the President.

It is the role of the Chairperson to:

- Liaise with the UCD HR Administrator regarding the scheduling of interviews;
- ensure all board members are kept informed of any changes affecting the boards composition;
- ensure the overall integrity of the recruitment and selection process;
- lead the short-listing and interview process - including the introduction of candidates to the Assessment Board and explanation of procedures;
- ensure that a Selection Report and recommendation is prepared and signed by all Assessment Board members;

- ensure that all Interview Notes generated during the interview process are collated at the end of the process for retention by HR;
- co-ordinate the provision of feedback to unsuccessful candidates;
- advise unsuccessful candidates by telephone (Professorships only).

THE HR REPRESENTATIVE

The Staffing Unit of UCD HR will, **on request**, assign a representative to each Administrative/Technical Assessment Board. It is the role of the representative to:

- Provide guidance to the Assessment Board in relation to the conduct of the selection process;
- Ensure that the Assessment Board complies with University policy and key legislation in relation to –
 - employment equity;
 - discrimination;
 - freedom of information.
- Participate as a full member in all activities of the Assessment Board - including the decision making process.

CHANGE IN ASSESSMENT BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Changes to Assessment Boards should generally be avoided however unforeseen circumstances may make it necessary to replace some members. In these instances you should:

- notify UCD HR of the change of Assessment Board membership;
- afford the new member the opportunity to review all of the applications and add candidates to the short-list, if deemed appropriate.

If a new College Principal/Head of School or Unit takes up duty during the interview process the former Principal or Head will remain on the Assessment Board in his or her original role if still a member of staff.

A member who leaves an Assessment Board before the interview process has concluded cannot advocate for the appointment of any candidate.

PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE AND BIAS

It is not uncommon for an Assessment Board member to have personal knowledge of a candidate(s), however, close personal relationships (or commercial dealings) may cause a conflict of interest and could ultimately lead to claims of bias and discrimination. It may be appropriate in such instances to voluntarily withdraw from the selection process.

If you have personal knowledge of a candidate that you feel does not present a sufficient conflict of interest to withdraw from the Assessment Board you should:

- disclose this to the other members of the Assessment Board;
- document your knowledge so that it can be confirmed with a source external to the Assessment Board.

SELECTION STRATEGY

The Assessment Board's plan is referred to as the Selection Strategy and it involves determining:

- what tools you will use to assess the relative merit of candidates;
- what process you will use to rank/score candidate's performance against each of the tools.

Your decision on a selection strategy decision should give due consideration to:

- the requirements of the position;
- the competitiveness of the candidate pool (it may not be possible to differentiate candidates by application, interview and reference check alone);
- the availability of time and resources.

Whatever strategy your Assessment Board decides to use, the important factors are that it is:

- Transparent – i.e. it is conducted in a way that would stand up to external scrutiny such as Freedom of Information;
- Reliable – i.e. it provides a consistent measurement tool for the assessment of each candidate;
- Valid – i.e. it is appropriate given the requirements of the job;
- Supports appointment on the basis of merit.

In most cases, written applications, interviews and reference checking will form the basis of the selection process. In the case of academic and senior administrative posts, this may be supplemented with a presentation or seminar.

Some of the other techniques or tools that can be used include:

- Work Samples;
- Work Related Tests.

WORK SAMPLES

A work sample is a piece of work completed by the candidate in the course of their previous experience that demonstrates skills or abilities relevant to the selection criteria.

It is important that the Assessment Board have clear agreement as to how the sample will be assessed. The chairperson, in co-ordinating the selection strategy, should ensure the entire Board understands fully which aspect(s) of the criteria a particular work sample relates to.

The results of all work sample assessments must be documented as part of the individual selection report completed for each candidate.

WORK RELATED TESTS

Work related tests simulate a scenario or activity that the candidate may expect to encounter in their day-to-day work. The academic presentation is one example of a work related test. It is imperative that a work related test is:

- valid for the purpose for which the test is to be used;
- reliable, so that it will accurately measure the required factors;
- fair and equitable;
- directly related to the selection criteria of the position.

The use of work related texts should be considered early on in the formation of a selection strategy following consultation with UCD HR.

RATING SCALE

It is necessary to agree a rating scale that will be used consistently for shortlisting, interview and any other selection exercise by each member of the Assessment Board.

The Assessment Board can develop its own rating scale to meet their specific requirements however the scale below is provided as a guide.

RATING	DESCRIPTION
1	Inadequate - the candidate's response was determined as unsatisfactory in meeting the minimum requirements of the job and the candidate was deemed by the Assessment Board to have an inadequate level of skill in this area.
2	Marginal - The candidate shows some ability however was deemed as not having met the required level of skill, knowledge or ability for the position; and/or the candidate was assessed as not meeting the criteria to the minimum level and requiring further development.
3	Acceptable - the candidate's response indicated that they were able to meet the minimum requirements of the criteria.
4	Good - the candidate's capability was assessed by the Assessment Board as demonstrating full competence in respect to the criteria, and was able to back this up with some examples that demonstrate ability. Examples reflected a lower level of skill, knowledge and ability than was considered excellent.
5	Excellent - the candidate's capability was assessed as excellent by the Assessment Board in respect to the criteria. The candidate demonstrated a comprehensive ability against all aspects of the criteria and was able to back this up with excellent examples. The candidate is deemed by the Assessment Board to have an exceptional level of skill, knowledge or ability in respect to the criteria.

REVIEW OF WRITTEN APPLICATIONS AND SHORTLISTING

Written applications (UCD's application form, applicant's cover letter and curriculum vitae) are distributed to designated Board members within 48 hours of the application deadline passing. Once received, the Board should convene at a pre-arranged date and time to discuss the applications and decide collectively which candidates will, or will not be, short-listed for interview.

Short-listing is a process used to:

- determine those applications that meet the selection criteria to an appropriate level;
- ensure that candidates meet any mandatory selection criteria;
- commence the assessment of a candidate's competitiveness and relative merit.

Should a candidate's written application fail to demonstrate sufficient evidence of skills, knowledge and abilities relevant to the selection criteria, their application may at this point be excluded from further consideration. The Chairperson must complete a selection report in order to verify and record the Board's decisions. These reports will facilitate any subsequent feedback requests from candidates and should provide clear and comprehensive reasoning as to why candidates were excluded.

Please note: applicants must not under any circumstance be excluded from at this stage on the basis of potentially discriminatory grounds, i.e. personal bias, age, disability, gender or race.

Following confirmation of the candidate short-list and receipt of the completed selection report, UCD HR will write to all non short-listed applicants to inform them of this outcome.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews are the most commonly used assessment tool. Some of the advantages of interviews are that they enable you to:

- assess the personal attributes, past performances, technical skills, strengths and weaknesses;
- gain insight into attitudes and values;
- probe for inconsistencies and contradictions;
- provide candidates with more detailed information about the position.

CONTACTING SHORT-LISTED CANDIDATES

HR will contact short-listed candidates and invite them to attend for interview in accordance with previously proposed interview dates.

It is essential that candidates receive sufficient notice of approaching interview so as to allow them ample time to prepare for interview, and if necessary, to gather any requested work samples. In the case of Academic interviews, candidates will often have the added requirement of co-ordinating travel arrangements. Minimum notice requirements are:

Non Academic Posts – Local Candidates	1 week
Academic Posts – Local Candidates	2 weeks
All Posts – International Candidates	2 weeks

HR will telephone short-listed candidates and verbally confirm their willingness to attend interview, followed by a formal letter of invitation. Whenever possible, the interview schedule will be finalised taking into account a candidate's current commitments and availability. Should the candidate not be able to attend on the allotted date, the Board will decide whether or not an alternative interview date can be facilitated.

PLANNING THE INTERVIEW

To make the most of the interview opportunity, the Assessment Board should pre-plan the interview environment, the process to be used and the questions to be asked. Assessment Boards should allocate sufficient time well in advance of the interview date for this to occur. The short-listing meeting is a useful opportunity to undertake this task.

➤ Planning the interview environment

The Chairperson (or their nominee) is responsible for arranging a suitable location for interviews. The following should be taken into consideration:

- adequate lighting and heating;
- comfortable seating;
- no noise distractions;
- appropriate reception facilities – i.e. someone not on the Assessment Board to meet and acknowledge candidates;
- appropriate waiting space for candidates;
- appropriate literature to review while waiting for interview i.e. a copy of the Job Description.

➤ Designing interview questions

Interview questions should be designed to elicit the desired responses from candidates and to assess their level of knowledge, skills and abilities in relation to the selection criteria.

It is essential that you use the same base structured questions for all candidates. You can use additional or probing questions to clarify points and to clarify claims made in their application. See Appendices 2 and 3 for more information.

VIDEO CONFERENCING

Many of UCD's vacancies attract international applicants. For some of these candidates an interview via video conference can prove to be a suitable alternative to international travel.

Please refer to your HR Representative or the Recruitment and Selection Policy for more information.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Some circumstances will necessitate conducting interviews by telephone however this is only recommended in exceptional circumstances.

Please refer to your HR Representative or the Recruitment and Selection Policy for more information.

REFERENCE CHECKS

References are obtained by the HR Administrator and without exception, must be conducted before a candidate is offered appointment to a position.

In the case of academic appointments (and certain senior support staffing posts) confidential written referee reports for short-listed candidates will be requested by UCD HR in advance of the interview. All references received before the scheduled interview date(s) are made available to the Assessment Board on the day. In the case of Professorial posts, a list of publications will also be provided.

In the case of applications for academic posts where the candidate's PhD is described as in progress or submitted, the candidate's PhD Supervisor must be contacted as one of their referees.

DETERMINING YOUR PREFERRED CANDIDATE

The selection decision should be made based on the outcome of all selection tools and consideration should be given to how candidates rated across all of the areas of the job's requirements, be that research, publications, teaching, leadership or administrative factors. The best person for the job will not necessarily be the person who performed best in the interview.

If the Assessment Board cannot reach agreement on the nominated candidate, the final decision rests with the Chairperson.

If the Assessment Board determines that no candidate is deemed to fulfill the criteria for appointment, no appointment will be made. The Chair of the Assessment Board and/or relevant Head of School/Unit should liaise with UCD HR regarding appropriate strategies to either re-advertise or re-design the role to better meet the University's needs and the skills available in the job market.

In certain cases the Assessment Board may name a reserve candidate. A reserve candidate should only be identified if the Assessment Board is satisfied that the candidate is appointable without reference back to the Board, if the recommended candidate declines to accept the offer. In all other instances where a successful candidate declines appointment, the HR Administrator will refer back to the Chairperson for further instruction.

DOCUMENTING YOUR SELECTION DECISION

Your selection decision and any supporting evidence must be documented. This document is called the Selection Report and consists of the signed recommendation and completed score sheets for each candidate.

The Selection Report outlines the process that the Assessment Board undertook and their rationale for the appointment of the nominated candidate(s). The Selection Report also provides a useful reference to demonstrate that the appointment is being made consistent with the principles of merit, transparency, validity and reliability.

FEEDBACK AND GRIEVANCES

The HR Administrator will notify all unsuccessful candidates in writing on the result of their application and the opportunity for feedback.

Feedback is normally given by the Chair of the Assessment Board, but may be delegated to other members of the board with their consent. The purpose of feedback is to provide the candidate with factual and accurate information on:

- the process used by the Assessment Board;
- the reasons why they were unsuccessful in being appointed to the position, relevant to the selection criteria;
- areas for future development.

The discussion should be confined to comparing the candidate's abilities, knowledge and skills against the selection criteria and genuine job requirements. Briefly document the feedback given and pass these notes to the HR Administrator for retention alongside individual candidate selection reports.

FOI AND RECORD MANAGEMENT

The University's recruitment and selection procedures are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 1997 and 2003 and the Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2003. It is important that your decision making process is clearly and comprehensively documented, and that all assessment records, including any individual notes of panel members are retained and returned to UCD HR for storage in accordance with the University's records management procedures. If in doubt about the status of assessment records contact UCD HR.

Appendix 1

CHECKLIST FOR CHAIRPERSON

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	Assessment Board	Board members meet the requirements set out Board has gender balance, externs as appropriate
	Selection Strategy	Assessment Board has collectively agreed on Selection Strategy Rating Scale is agreed
	Short-listing	Board members have reviewed all applications Short-listing matrix and notes completed Applicant assessment applied fairly in line with Selection Strategy
	Pre Interview	Interview Dates agreed and communicated to UCD HR Seminar and Interview locations confirmed Interview Questions prepared
	Interviews	Location is suitable, seating, lighting, no noise Administrative support to meet/greet candidates Board members are briefed on the structure of the interview and appropriate questions have been assigned to all Board members are aware of the risks associated with inappropriate questions or probing. Academic Referees reviewed and verified along with publications (Professorships appointments only) Selection reports fully completed and are signed by all the Assessment Board members. Board members understand the need for confidentiality during the remainder of the appointment process. Recommendations are not communicated outside of HR until References, Transcripts and Medicals are completed.
	Post Interview	Completed Selection report returned to HR Administrator Chairperson or nominated Assessment Board member is agreed for feedback requests

Appendix 2

INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

The following principles are provided as a guide to support your interview process:

- begin by exchanging a few pleasantries and introducing the candidate to the members of the Assessment Board;
- proceed to ground familiar to the candidate, such as current work responsibilities (to reduce nervousness and help establish rapport with the Assessment Board);
- ensure that all questions are relevant to the job requirements, even those used to open the interview;
- probe each content area completely before moving on. For example, in determining the supervisory experience of the candidate it is not enough simply to know whether or not he/she has had supervisory experiences. Interviews should determine how much experience in terms of the number and level of persons supervised;
- if the candidate cannot answer a question (after a reasonable pause) try rephrasing it;
- spread the task of posing questions evenly among members of the Assessment Board;
- use the same base structured questions for all candidates;
- use additional or probing questions to clarify points and to clarify claims made in their application;
- don't make assumptions about candidates or question in a way that infers unfair or biased attitudes such as gender, marital status, age, disability, race, colour, religious belief, ethnic origin or sexual orientation. These are factors which have no bearing on the selection criteria or an applicants ability to perform the role;
- maintain individual interview notes that will be useful in supporting your assessment and rating of the candidate; these are retained by HR along with a definitive assessment record for each candidate for the provision of feedback and in compliance with current Freedom of Information Legislation;
- do more listening than talking - ideally, the ratio of listening to talking should be around 70% to 30%.

Appendix 3**DESIGNING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

There are a range of different question types that can be used in interviews. However what is most important is that all questions are relevant to the selection criteria and job requirements. A summary of each type and use is outlined below as a guide.

Question Types	Purpose	Examples
Open	Encourage candidates to talk Provide space for candidate to expand his/her thoughts Relax the candidate at start of interview, need to be framed succinctly	Please tell us what you know about this School or Unit.
Closed	Encourage specific, short responses Typical answers are yes/no, true/false Tactfully 'slow' a talkative candidate, but need to ensure that flow of interview is not interrupted Obtain clarification Check technical knowledge	Have you had experience managing people? Do you find problem solving difficult?
Probing	Seek clarification, expansion or more detail	You mentioned having some time off. What did you do between September 1997 and January 2000?
Problem Solving	Simulates a situation and enquires how a candidate would respond Can be used to preface a behaviour-based question	What would you do if one of your staff members was late for work several days in a row?
Reflecting	Clarifies the Assessment Board's understanding of the candidate's response and probes for more information	You say you enjoy minimum supervision. Do you see any drawbacks to this?
Focusing	Focus the discussion back onto position-related criteria	Let's return to organisational skills. How do you actually organise your work?
Self-Appraisal	To have the candidate appraise him/herself	How well do you think you can manage deadlines? What did you learn from your experience in that position?
Statement Questions	To present a point of view and ask for an opinion and justification.	Decentralised, accountable management. What does this mean to you?