# Step 7: Interviewing Applicants

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| **Recommendation** | **Considerations and Actions** |
| Establish an inclusive interview environment where the physical and cultural needs of applicants are met | * Interview venue and process is accessible and appropriate and any needs of the applicants have been taken into account
* Where appropriate, organise in advance [Interviews involving whanau](https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/the-university/how-university-works/policy-and-administration/university-organisation-and-governance/legal/conflict-of-interest-policy.html) and any other support required
* Ensure Committee is comfortable pronouncing applicants names
* Ensure there are accessible and gender-neutral toilets nearby
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| Ensure a robust, structured and standardised process with reference to the pre-determined selection criteria and methods of evaluation[[1]](#footnote-1), [[2]](#footnote-2), [[3]](#footnote-3) | * Use an objective and structured framework or scoring system[[4]](#footnote-4), See Appendix 2 or use SmartRecruiters Star System[[5]](#footnote-5) or the scoring example in the Leadership Success Profile [[6]](#footnote-6)
* For each criterion the committee has an understanding of the evidence and standards required for rating applicants on how they meet the criteria[[7]](#footnote-7)
* The scoring system reflects the weight of the most important criteria
* See also Step 6: Culling Applications
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| Build rapport equitably | * The general tone of the interview should be one of helpfulness and friendliness so as to maximise forthright communication
* Be aware of affinity bias[[8]](#footnote-8),[[9]](#footnote-9) ie, having a more favourable opinion of someone like ourselves, often expressed as a preference for one applicant over the other because of ‘cultural fit’; and can be seen in increasing rapport building with applicants more familiar to interviewers and less rapport building with those less familiar to interviewers
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| Interview applicants fairly and consistently | * Use a structured and standardised approach, asking the same questions in the same order and using a criteria matrix (See Appendix 2)
* Probe or follow-up questions should be asked to get a complete understanding of the example the applicant is providing (not relying on assumptions). Although time needs to be managed to ensure no applicant has an unfair advantage
* Include behaviour-based questions[[10]](#footnote-10) where applicants are encouraged to answer questions using examples of skills and attributes obtained through employment, community, voluntary and caring work
* Use inclusive language, being conscious of terms that assume identity or demographics
* Be aware of psycho-social and organisation barriers, assumptions, myths, discrimination, [common decision making biases](https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/about-us/about-the-university/equity-at-the-university/about-equity/unconscious-bias-/common-decision-making-biases-.html) and cognitive errors [[11]](#footnote-11)that may result in unfair evaluations
* Eliminate unlawful[[12]](#footnote-12), personal, invasive and irrelevant questions such as those relating to family status, child care arrangements, sexual orientation, religion, disability etc
	+ Note: It is appropriate to ask an applicant with a disability if they require any reasonable accommodations to perform the inherent requirements of the job. But it is not appropriate to ask for details about their disability. Seek advice from the Equity Office or HR rather than make assumptions regarding employment and disability.
* Avoid hear-say including committee members making personal enquiries about applicants
* If personal attributes such as ‘communication skills’, ‘team player’, ‘ability to manage conflict’ etc are essential requirements, consider in advance how they will be fairly assessed
* If unsure of the appropriateness of a question, seek advice from the Equity Office or HR
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| Ensure applicants giving presentations or job talks are treated equitably | **Research:** A 2017 [study](https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/6/1/29/htm) found female applicants giving their research presentation or job talk during the selection process were faced with more audience interruptions and less time on their prepared talk. * To ensure equitable treatment, consider having a facilitator monitor questioning and examine the connections between the number of questions posed at the job talk and actual job offers extended to candidates.
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| Support applicants to present their best selves by providing them with the questions beforehand | * Providing interview questions in advance can reduce applicant’s nerves, level the playing field between experienced and inexperienced interviewees, and allow them to prepare more thoughtful answers.
* Not all questions need to be provided, just those most pertinent to the tasks and responsibilities of the role
* One option is to ask applicants to arrive 15minutes prior to the interview at which time they are provided with the questions to consider before the actual interview
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| Recognise and value diversity | * Applicants who have different to the norm perspectives and career paths can provide unique and valuable contributions to their work and the organisation,
* Membership of an equity group is of value in of itself rather than an impediment through their lived experience and their ability to be a role model for other staff and students
* Consider the value of academics publishing on Ti Tiriti, gender equity and other equity topics which may not be in mainstream journals, however don’t assume candidates will only be interested in research or professional activities tied to their identities
* Be open to non-traditional career paths and work patterns
* Avoid assumptions about what a person may or may not be able to do
* Be open to different ways of doing a job; avoiding ‘that’s the way we do it around here’ attitude
* Ensure there is access to information about support available such as flexible work options, ECE facilities etc.
* Consider that Māori, people with disability and Carers may have different needs for flexibility
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| Assess demonstration of equity | * Ask applicants how they demonstrate their understanding of equity (team member roles) or their commitment or ability to implementing equity (senior roles)

*(See Appendix 1 for examples)* |
| Prevent bias in **virtual interviews** | * Be aware that biases can be amplified in virtual interviews;
	+ Be careful of making assumptions based on the background presented over video
	+ Be consciously aware of the impact any interruptions that cause
	+ Separate unreliable technology and internet connections from how the applicant meets the criteria
	+ Ensure that applicants with a disability or English as a second language are not unfairly disadvantaged or judged
	+ Initiating the process with a phone conversation to break the ice and get to know candidates before meeting over Zoom may assist
* **See also Sep 6.3 Shortlising and video screening**
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| Committee members individually assess applicants | * Committee members rate applicant’s responses against the criteria and evidence standards and record using the applicant’s own words rather than paraphrasing
* Using a criteria matrix, Committee members rate each criterion immediately after the applicant answers rather than leaving it to the end. This helps protect accuracy of the applicants answer and to avoid group think [[13]](#footnote-13)
* Judgement against criteria should take account of diverse ways which responses may be demonstrated
* Independently, each panel member should rank the candidates in order
* Again, to avoid group think and the influence of senior or more vocal members, the committee should not discuss applicants between interviews

**Group think** happens when a selection panel is influenced by the ideas of a particular member/s because they feel conscious or subconscious pressure to form a consensus. This can discourage creativity and diverse perspectives which may raise valid concerns about whether a prospective candidate is right for a particular role. |

1. [Isaac, Lee & Carnes, 2009](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19881440/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Bohnet, I. HBR 2016](https://hbr.org/2016/04/how-to-take-the-bias-out-of-interviews), [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [Crewscale 2019](https://www.crewscale.com/blog/hiring/how-recruiters-can-eliminate-hiring-bias/) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [Evaluation Rubric Examples UNC Charlotte](https://advance.uncc.edu/programming/programs/faculty-recruitment/resources-search-committees-including-evaluation-rubrics) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [SmartRecruiters Interviewing](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Ccwal774%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CTemp%5CAdvertised%2004%20Submit%20interview%20feedback%20and%20compare%20candidates.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [Leadership Success Profile Recruitment Guide NZ Government 2017](https://mylsp.ssc.govt.nz/assets/LSP_Guide.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005](https://ed.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/uhlmann_et_2005.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. [Harvard Business School Reducing bias in recruiting](https://www.hbs.edu/recruiting/blog/post/actively-addressing-unconscious-bias-in-recruiting) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. [How to reduce personal bias when hiring HBR](https://hbr.org/2019/06/how-to-reduce-personal-bias-when-hiring) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. [Structured behavioral and conventional interviews: Differences and biases in interviewer ratings](https://www.elsevier.es/en-revista-revista-psicologia-del-trabajo-organizaciones-370-articulo-structured-behavioral-conventional-interviews-differences-S1576596217300427) P. Alonso, S Moscoso 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. [Ohio State University Implicit Bias Resources](https://womensplace.osu.edu/resources/implicit-bias-resources) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. [Human Rights Commission Job application questions](https://www.hrc.co.nz/enquiries-and-complaints/faqs/job-application-questions/) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. [Britannica Science Groupthink](https://www.britannica.com/science/groupthink) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)