



Recruitment and Selection

Interview Panel Skills Course Handout



Contents

	Page
Slides	1
Assurances that must be provided to Commissioners at <u>4 Key Stages</u> of the Senior Civil Service (SCS) Competition	7
Listening checklist	9
So what are we listening for?	11
Probing and pacing the interview	14
Further questions	15
Stop and Swap Exercise	16



Recruitment & Selection

Interview Panel Skills



Aim



The aim of this course is to provide you with the relevant skills to conduct recruitment interviews

Objectives



By the end of this session, with the aid of handouts and notes, you will be able to:

- State the skills and behaviours to be demonstrated during a recruitment interview
- Conduct a skills practice mock interview using generic criteria
- Practice marking following the mock interview

Introductions



- Your name
- Where you work
- Have you interviewed before?
- What panel are you sitting on?
- Are you going to chair or be a panel member?

Course Programme



- Skills
- Behaviours
- Preparation for Interviews
- Skills practice
 - Stop & Swap
 - Mock Interviews
 - Scoring & Rating



Civil Service Commissioners for NI Principles of Recruitment

1. Appointments should be made on merit
2. Appointment process should be fit for purpose
3. Appointment processes should be fair and applied with consistency
4. Appointments should be made in an open, accountable and transparent manner



Role of Civil Service Commissioners for NI

- Ensure appointments to the NICS are on the basis of merit
- Approve appointments through fair and open competition to the NICS
- Publish and maintain a Recruitment Code
- Audit recruitment policies and practices
- Require Departments and Agencies to publish information about their recruitment practices



Article 6 Approval Process for SCS Competitions

1. Authorisation to advertise the proposed appointment
2. Authorisation to issue the invitations to interview, and first and second assessments if appropriate
3. Authorisation to notify the successful candidate(s)
4. Approval to issue final offer(s) of appointment(s)



Skills required

- Questioning
- Listening
- Rapport building
- Teamwork
- Time management – Interrupting
- Note-taking
- Body language
- Completion of documentation



Completion of board forms

- Candidate's identification name/number
- Time in, time out
- Personal marks for each individual criteria
- Comments as evidence for marks awarded
- Agreed panel assessment mark
- Signature & date
- Be careful to note candidate responses factually and legibly so that meaningful feedback can be provided on request

Objectives



You are now able to:

- State the skills and behaviours to be demonstrated during a recruitment interview
- Conduct a skills practice mock interview using generic criteria
- Practice marking following the mock interview

ASSURANCES TO COMMISSIONERS AT 4 KEY STAGES OF SCS APPROVAL PROCESS

- Stage 1:** Authorisation to advertise the proposed appointment.
- The NICS seek authorisation to advertise the proposed appointment. The Competition Initiation Meeting has taken place and the Candidate Information Booklet and advertisement have been prepared.
- Stage 2:** Authorisation to issue the invitations to interview and first assessment.
- The NICS seek authorisation to issue invitations to interview or first assessment as appropriate. The panel have applied the eligibility/shortlisting criteria to the candidate application forms
- Stage 3:** Authorisation to notify the successful candidate(s).
- The NICS seek authorisation to notify the candidate that they have been successful. All assessment stages/interviews have been completed and the merit list has been created
- Stage 4:** Approval to issue final offer(s) of appointment(s).
- The NICS seek approval to issue the final offer of appointment to the candidate

Listening checklist

Listening is a key skill in interviewing.

You may be able to ask the best questions in the world, but if you don't listen to the answers, you will have nothing on which to base your assessment of the candidate.

Listening is, crucially, hearing with understanding.

And it is an active skill. By giving the candidate your full attention you can show him/her that you are listening to them and taking their answers on board.

Listening to what is being said and understanding all of it is a vital part of the assessment process.

When you give the candidate your full attention several things can begin to happen. You can begin to forget your own nerves, you put the candidate at ease and you begin to gain useful information on which to assess the candidate against the criteria while giving them the confidence that they have had the opportunity to give of their best.

Sometimes our listening is not as good as it should be. Maybe we are distracted or just bored and uninterested or maybe we are just tired. We need to be on our toes to prevent these seeping into the interview room, otherwise a candidate may feel that they have not been given an equal opportunity with the others.

It is important that we create a rapport with each candidate and we can do this by giving them our full attention. Smiling, greeting them, using their name, and looking at them without staring are all ways of helping create rapport.

Listening checklist

What follows is a range of things that you can do to both show that you are listening and encourage the candidate to tell you more. Use them sparingly and naturally as appropriate - a lot of any of these might come across as false.

- Nodding** – the speed, depth and timing of nodding are important but be careful not to overdo things – a candidate may interpret it as your affirmation!
- Eye contact** – this is not staring.
- Silence** – leave them time and space to talk. Let the silence run for a few seconds. Listen and watch them to check that they are not about to say anything before you say anything else. Do not let the silence become threatening use your judgment.
- “Hmm”,
“Yes”,
“I see”, “Oh”,
“Ah hah”** – these “noises” are encouraging to the candidate but are short enough not to interrupt their flow. But they should not convey any evaluation of what you are hearing. They should simply confirm that you are up to speed with the story so far
.
- Do not deliberately mirror body language** – please be very careful how much you do of this. Candidates will pick this up quickly and may react adversely to it. Best advice is to let it happen naturally.

So what are we listening for?

Essentially, we are trying to find convincing evidence that the candidate has the skills required to do the job. As the candidate tells us about their use of a particular skill we can listen for the stages of the answer.

Context and **Challenge** are usually the first components of any reply. This is the scene-setting phase when we hear about the situation that they faced. A few sentences is usually enough.

Action is in the second phase of the answer. Here we should hear about what the candidate did to meet the *Challenge* and you should hear “I”.

Results come in the third and last phase of the answer when we should hear about the outcome of all the candidate’s actions. The results might lie in three different areas:

- how well their personal *Action* met the *Challenge*, and/or
- what would they do differently, and why, in a similar situation, and/or
- what they learned about themselves or their abilities.

This model is, not surprisingly, known as CCAR.

A close relative uses STAR for Situation, Task, Action and Result.

By listening carefully, we can quickly identify if we are hearing lots of scene-setting, for instance, or that we have not yet heard about the result or, even, much about the candidate’s own role or contribution!

Your Supplementary Questions will probably be in the areas of either *Action* or *Results* – and are likely to be “what” or “how” questions.

You can help an immature, nervous or lost candidate to get restarted by reminding them of the *Context* and *Challenge* part of their answer.

So what are we listening for?

Careful listening will help you spot things that we need to react to.

Listen for the candidate using words like *we*, *generally*, *usually*, *sometimes*, *normally*, *always*, *would*, *should*, *could* or *if*. They should be warning bells. As should the candidate who lapses into the present tenses and tells you how you would do his or her job . . . “and then what you have to do is . . .”.

These words should alert you to the candidate going away from the “one specific incident in the past” that we want to hear about and examine. If these wanderings happen, you should challenge and press for what they personally did and listen for “I”. Otherwise there will be confusion and uncertainty when evaluating the evidence later.

Careful listening will also identify *Bing* words. These are words which alert us to something that needs to be probed or clarified. For instance “Yes, I managed to get that report in on time - just about” where the final couple of words will raise something that you will want to probe.

We are **not** listening for how well the candidate cleverly weaves key or buzz words into sentences – we need to be convinced by their report of their actions and our probing of what we have been told.

Careful listening will help you identify:

- the breadth, depth or range of the example
- the complexity or difficulty involved
- the degree of initiative needed
- the thinking and logic behind courses of action
- the impact of the actions on others, the organisation, the customers or the level of service
- the consequences - short and long term

So what are we listening for?

Careful listening will also identify the **False Stars**. They sound good but are, at best, generalisations that tell us little or nothing about the candidate's abilities. We can assume nothing about what the candidate did or how well they did it.

False Stars can be grouped into:

Feelings and opinions

- “I always enjoy working with clients.”
- “I worked well beyond what the Job Description called for.”
- “I get bored with success – I am always looking for a new challenge.”

Theoretical or future-oriented statements

- “Next time, I will be sure to include all my staff in meetings like that.”
- “There was a set procedure for issues like that.”
- “There's always the one who picks holes.”
- “What you have to do in situations like that is . . .”

Vague statements

- “I always had the best interests of the customer in mind.”
- “I didn't always agree with the policies.”
- “Some of the grammar could have been better.”
- “There weren't many times that I wasn't able to meet deadlines.”

Your reaction to these distractions should be to recognise them for what they are and steer the conversation back to what you are trying to assess - their application of the skills in the criterion.

Probing and pacing the interview

Remember, candidates must be asked roughly the same kinds of questions. This does NOT mean that each candidate must be asked an identical set of questions as everyone else, but it does mean that the questions will be similar – after all you are trying to measure the same skill as with everyone else.

In your probing, be sensitive to candidates reaching their own wall beyond which they either cannot go or will struggle and appear uncomfortable. You can be convinced of their level of skill without there being blood on the floor!

There are, broadly, three types of candidate who call for special attention.

The Talkative Individual

Your response might be to use questions that require short explicit answers.

You might take control by politely interrupting at an appropriate time and ask another question.

You could ask for brief explanations and responses.

The Nervous Individual

Add a couple of positive evaluative and encouraging comments.

Use positive body language such as smiling and nodding.

Encourage the candidate by picking up on their feelings and reflect them back as part of a question.

The Quiet Individual

Use open questions to start with.

You may need to ask more supplementary questions from this candidate.

Pause, smile, make eye contact, and encourage them to speak

Further questions

You can ask them for **another example** in the same criterion area. Your confidence in awarding a mark will increase if you are convinced that the candidate has applied the skill in a range of situations. The better candidates will make this second (or even third) example very different from the first; it won't be just a change of cast or a timing change.

You can ask them to **compare and contrast** their examples in terms of difficulty, own contribution, or learning, for instance.

You can ask for **contrary evidence**. We are not interested in blaming and shaming but in how they handled the situation, how well they coped, what their thinking was, what they learned from the experience, and how they would (or have) applied the learning since then. "Tell me about a time when your planning did not go according to plan. How did you cope?".

Along the way, you will want to gather evidence on their ability to **think** and to **learn** from their experiences. This is probably the only time that it is always legitimate to use the hypothetical question - "If you were in that situation again, what would you do differently?".

Your Supplementary Questions do not have to follow an identical pattern for each candidate. Use your listening skills and compare what the candidate is telling you with what you need to be sure of. That will allow you to identify what it is that you need to chase, probe, or explore. Do not be fobbed off with generalities, go for specifics.

For this reason it is important that additional supplementary questions are recorded along with the answers.

Remember, for each criterion area, we want to assess each candidate's

knowledge,
skills and abilities
thinking and
learning.

Supplementary Questions should be agreed beforehand, but you do **not** have to ask all supplementary questions.

Stop and Swap Exercise

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

1. Tell us how you have aligned your objectives and those of your team to the wider departmental priorities

- How did you identify the key business priorities?
- How did you engage your team/stakeholders in this process?
- What did you consider to be important?
- How did you monitor progress?
- How did you measure success?
- Would you do anything different?
- What did you learn?

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Stop and Swap Exercise

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

Summary

Role of the Chairperson

The following is a list which should be used as a guide of what to address in the introductions of the interview:

- Welcome interviewee
- Ask the candidate to confirm their full name
- Introduce self and other panel members
- State that this is a criterion-based interview and state competition (whether trawl or general service board)
- State the number of competencies you will be testing against and list them
- Explain who will ask each competency in the order they will be asked
- State how long the interview should last
- Explain that the panel members will be taking notes throughout the interview
- Offer the interviewee a glass of water
- Advise them that they can ask you to repeat Lead questions and clarify supplementary questions if necessary
- Explain to the candidate that the interview is time bound and we may need to interrupt them
- Remind the candidate to switch off their mobile phone
- Ask if the interviewee is clear on all the above, then proceed with the interview