

Interviewing applicants with disabilities

Departments need to ensure that all candidates receive fair treatment during their interview.

All candidates should be interviewed and assessed against the selection criteria listed in the job description. Interviews must always focus specifically on examining the skills, training, experience and ability of the interviewees and questions should not focus on any personal details of the applicant's disability.

Arrangements for any special equipment which may be required, or for any organisational implications of the candidate's disability, should be dealt with separately; it should be clear to the candidate that selection decisions are being made on the basis of their skills and abilities to carry out the duties of the post. The advice of the [University Disability Adviser](#) may be sought concerning arrangements for the interview, including the suitability of tests.

Mobility difficulties

Prior to interview it may be necessary to arrange to have a parking space close to the building made available to the candidate. Both the candidate and security personnel should receive notification of this arrangement. The room in which the interview is to be held should be fully accessible to wheelchair users and have sufficient space to allow the applicant to manoeuvre while in the room. The space must also be adequate to allow the applicant comfortably to view all the interview panel members. Accessible toilet provision should also be available.

Not all people with mobility difficulties are wheelchair users; some may depend on crutches, therefore the floor surfaces should be non-slip. The interviewee may also prefer a chair with arms which will give assistance in rising from the sitting position. A straight-backed chair will also help with posture.

Hearing impairments

Selection decisions are usually based on a flow of information and feedback from the interviewer and the applicant. A break-down in this flow can easily occur when interviewing a person with a hearing impairment. Some hearing impaired people may be profoundly deaf, others may have a little hearing and are assisted by the use of hearing aids. Hearing aids amplify all sound, so excess noise during the interview should be kept to a minimum. This may simply mean keeping the window closed to cut off traffic or building work noises.

The hearing impaired person should be allowed the opportunity of having the services of an interpreter and if one is present during the interview it should be remembered that questions must be directed to the interviewee and not the interpreter.

It is helpful if each person on the interview panel has an identifying name block directly in front of him/her. The light within the room will best facilitate the hearing impaired person if it falls on the face of the interviewer so lip patterns and facial expressions can be read with ease. Speech patterns should be natural without over emphasising lip movements. Shouting does not help; slow clear speech will be of greater assistance. The mouth area should never be covered by the hand or any other object.

When one interviewer has finished asking questions the hearing impaired person's attention should be directed to the next interviewer. Try not to flit from one interviewer to another as this can cause confusion and embarrassment to both parties. Do not be embarrassed to repeat questions if the candidate has misunderstood the topic. It would also be useful if a pre-planned format of the interview was given to the interviewee in advance of the interview.

Blindness and visual impairments

The degree of visual impairment can vary greatly from person to person; for example, short or long sightedness, colour blindness, tunnel vision, patchy vision and in rarer cases, total blindness. The majority of people with a visual impairment do however have some residual sight.

On arrival for interview some blind or visually impaired people may require guidance to the interview room. If this assistance is required, the receptionist must know whom to contact to ensure this task is carried out. Such assistance is given by asking the person to place his/her hand on the guide's arm just above the elbow. It should only be given after an offer of help has been accepted by the visually impaired person. The guide leads by walking half a step ahead of the person. A blind person's guide dog must also be allowed into the interview room. Please be aware that the dog is working and should not be distracted or petted. The person will be assisted if they are guided to the chair and their hand is placed on the back of it.

Blind or partially sighted candidates will appreciate it if each member of the interview panel clearly identifies him/herself and their relative location in the room. When an interviewer has finished asking questions, each new interviewer should identify him or herself to avoid confusion. The light should also fall on the interviewers to help partially sighted candidates have a clearer picture of gestures, body language and facial expressions.

Learning difficulties

People with learning difficulties may have a mild to severe impairment to their intellectual abilities which will generally mean they will be slower at learning certain skills or tasks or dealing with new information.

A map or plan of where the interview is to be held would be of assistance to those with learning difficulties. It would also be helpful to allow a person with severe learning difficulties to be accompanied by an advocate or a friend during the interview; this will greatly enhance their ability to cope with the stress of the situation. Questions however should always be addressed to the applicant and not to a third party.

An informal interview approach will also be more effective than a formal interview panel and extra efforts should be made to ensure the candidate is relaxed.