

Introduction

Preparation is the key to successful interviewing. This ranges from basic requirements such as making sure you have booked time in your diary reasonably near to the closing date of your advertisement, to ensure that all members of the interview panel have been properly trained in interview and selection techniques.

It is Council policy that at least the chair of the panel has received Recruitment & Selection training. Please contact the Learning and Development team on learninganddevelopment@carmarthenshire.gov.uk to find out more details of training in this area.

Planning & Preparation

Setting up the interview schedule

As part of the recruitment process, once you have created your vacancy on Oleeo you can set up your interview schedule. The system will allow you to set up self-scheduling interview slots, whereby the candidate can book their own interview slot from the schedule; pre-allocated interview slots, whereby you can allocate a candidate to an interview slot. Interview slots can be arranged to be held face-to-face or via Teams.

[Interviews Assessment Schedule Overview \(vimeo.com\)](#)

[Live Interviews via Microsoft Teams](#)

When planning interviews, make sure you allow time for the interview itself; assessment of each of the candidates; some leeway if you overrun your planned schedule and time for you and the rest of the panel to have breaks. Interviewing can be tiring, and it is important that you stay alert and listen carefully all the time. Having short breaks for coffee etc. after every two or three candidates is therefore sensible and needs to be built into your interview timetable.

Make sure when setting up the interview schedules you give clear instructions on where the interviews will take place; where candidates should report to/whom they should ask for on arrival; whether there will be any assessments as well as the interview e.g., presentation, tests etc.

Make sure you allow a reasonable amount of time for all parties to ask questions. Consider if the applicant has any need for reasonable adjustments e.g., if the applicant has dyslexia, they may require more time for assessment testing.

Inviting candidates to interview

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Once you have shortlisted candidates for the post, you will need to update **all** the applicants' shortlisting decisions and workflow stages on the Oleeo ATS System. The reasons for not shortlisting candidates must be recorded on the Oleeo ATS system.

For applicants who are moved to ***Invite to Interview*** status, you will be prompted to send the Invite to Interview email notification to the applicant with details of their pre-allocated interview slot or self-selecting interview slots.

Example of Invite to Interview email:

Dear Linda,

We are pleased to invite you to interview for the **PEC Test LJT** opportunity.

Please sign up for one of the available interview slots by logging into your **Application Centre**.

Kind Regards,

Example of Application Unsuccessful email:

Application **Teaching Assistant**

Status: Application Unsuccessful

Thank you for your interest in Carmarthenshire County Council.

On this occasion, we have decided not to move forward with your application for this position.

We wish you the best for the future.

Before the interview

Having a structured interview process creates consistency across the organisation. You know what questions to ask, the order of the questions, and how to score the responses. There's no confusion among interviewers because it's all pre-planned and the same process for every candidate.

Meet with the other panel members sometime before the interview to agree the format and style of the interview. As a panel you should agree the standard interview questions. Be clear about where you want to focus your questions. You'll need to know which skills, competencies, experience, and values you're targeting and how you'd expect them to be typically expressed by the applicant.

When preparing your questions, some areas you might want to consider are:

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Essential and Desirable Criteria or Competencies	These are practical skills that relate to the role. For example, if you're recruiting a care worker, the ideal candidate will have experience of working in a care establishment, they will understand the social care sector; experience of supporting people to remain independent at home.
Soft skills	These skills that relate to the way the candidate works and interact with others. They include critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and teamwork. These skills are often the focus of interview questions as they help you understand how a candidate behaves and responds to certain situations.
Core values	Represent a candidate's priorities and beliefs. In interviews, questions about core values determine if the candidate has similar values to the company. This helps the recruiting manager determine if they'd be a good cultural fit for the organisation.

It is essential to have a pre-agreed list of questions to ensure you ask all candidates the same basic 'core' questions. Clearly it will be necessary to ask some candidates to elaborate on their answers so it is inevitable that different supplementary questions will be asked of candidates.

Have supporting questions for your main questions as candidates get nervous, forget things, and may not give you the information you need to determine if they're right for the job. If you feel like a candidate could expand on their answer, have some related questions in place.

Imagine asking a candidate to describe a time they had to lead a team. To dig a little deeper, you could ask follow-up questions like:

- What was the hardest part about leading a team?
- How did you overcome any hurdles?
- How did you implement new management methods?

All these questions encourage the candidate to expand on their original answer.

Make your questions open-ended. Open questions encourage people to provide thorough and detailed answers, whereas closed questions can prevent this from happening. It's a great way to encourage candidates to elaborate on their answers; if you ask a closed question, the candidate can simply answer with "yes" or "no."

Here are a few examples of how you can change closed questions to open-ended questions.

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Closed questions.

Have you overcome any challenges in your previous role?

Can you tell me about your work experience?

Do you have experience leading a team?

Open-ended questions

What challenges have you overcome in your previous role?

How will your work experience help you in this role?

Tell me about a time when you led a team and explain what happened.

Note responses that fall outside the remit of your questions. The interview scoring matrix offers structure for your interviews, but you should allow some room for notes outside your pre-planned questions.

For example, the interviewee might not have experience in a certain area, but they could have relatable skills that transfer to the role. Employers should be willing to hire someone with transferable skills, so it's not unheard of. Note these skills down in your matrix and consider them when making your final decision.

It is a good idea to read through the job profile and advertisement again to remind yourself of the specific requirements of the job, as well as the working hours and salary level. Make sure you feel confident about any questions regarding Conditions of Service you may be asked. In the event of you being asked a question to which you, as the interviewer, do not know the answer, say you do not know, but that you will find out. Giving wrong information about a matter relating to Conditions of Service may cause contractual difficulties later if the candidate becomes an employee believing they are entitled to a benefit, which is then not able to be granted.

It is worthwhile reading the application forms again and identifying any areas you may wish to explore in more detail particularly if there are any gaps in the applicant's employment history.

Decide how soon after the interviews you are going to let candidates know the outcome. The successful candidate should be informed as soon as possible. If a decision is likely to be delayed candidates must be advised accordingly. You can use the Communication functionality to send information out to your applicants to ensure they all receive the same message at the same time.

Accessibility

Consider any special needs an interview candidate may have. For example, a candidate with a physical disability may not easily be able to reach the office where you plan to hold the interviews. Similarly, a disabled candidate (perhaps who is blind or deaf) may wish to be accompanied by a friend or interpreter, and you should indicate that this is perfectly acceptable. It may well be more appropriate to contact a blind or partially sighted candidate

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by telephone than by letter. For guidance on the suitability of venues please refer to corporate property's meeting room accommodation guidance.

The following are the types of questions you may like to ask yourself:

- Is the venue wheelchair accessible?
- Are translation facilities available?
- Do you need a loop system?
- Do you need an interpreter for people who are deaf?

For further advice please contact your HR representative

Interview Scoring Matrix

Setting up the scoring matrix

A clear and consistent interview process also gives candidates a better experience. Put yourself in the shoes of a job seeker. If you attend an interview that feels unprepared and unstructured, it's hard to gather your thoughts. What should feel like a good conversation jumps from one topic to the next with no clear direction and doesn't give a great impression of the company.

If you go to an interview that's structured and well-planned, the process feels less overwhelming. The questions are concise, and you move through the interview with a clear direction. As a candidate, this makes the interview easier to follow and shows you that the company has put time and consideration into the process.

A company that cares about its interviews is a company that wants to attract top talent. It's a good sign for candidates and a better process for employers.

Using an interview scoring matrix provides structure for both the interviewing panel and interviewee. For example, if you don't have predetermined questions, one interview could last 30 minutes, while another could last two hours. It's fairer and easier to manage time with planned questions. It is also easier to review and compare candidates as everyone is scored against the same criteria when using a scoring matrix.

Once your vacancy has been approved, and you have discussed the interview format and interview questions with your panel members, you can set up the interview scoring matrix on Oleeo.

INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

Details | Description | Participants | Interviews | Applications | Agency Postings | History

Vacancy Requisition Form **Completed**

Setup Interviews **Not Started**

[View](#)

Select how you will be scoring your interviews

BRIEFING EXERCISE *	<input type="text" value="Choose one..."/>
PRESENTATION *	<input type="text" value="Choose one..."/>
GENERAL *	<input type="text" value="Choose one..."/>
JOB RELATED EXPERIENCE *	<input type="text" value="Choose one..."/>
JOB RELATED SKILLS *	<input type="text" value="Choose one..."/>
KNOWLEDGE *	<input type="text" value="Choose one..."/>
PERSONAL SKILLS *	<input type="text" value="Choose one..."/>

[Submit](#)

You can print out a copy of the scoring matrix and distribute to the panel prior to the interviews.

Day of the Interviews

Conducting the Interviews

Few of us like being interviewed and most of us are usually nervous to some degree. To help candidates settle into an interview, first help them feel at ease by:

- Introducing yourself and other panel members, briefly saying the name, job title and reason for them being on the panel.
- Invite the candidate to make themselves comfortable, for example, where appropriate, by inviting them to remove their jacket.
- Explain the plan for the interview, e.g. "We have allowed an hour for your interview. We will start by asking you some questions about your present (most recent) job and then we will move on to some questions relating to our vacancy. At the end of the interview there will be an opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have".
- Try to be relaxed yourself! Conducting interviews can seem stressful - it is after all, a very responsible task and should be undertaken thoroughly and properly.

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- Discreetly take some notes, as this will help you recall a candidate's answers to a particular question later so that you can fill the interview assessment sheet after the interview. Note taking can be distracting for the candidates, so explain the reason for this activity before the interview commences.
- At the end of your questions, make sure you allow the candidate the opportunity to ask questions as necessary, or to add anything else to what they have already said. It is possible you have overlooked something in your questions, and this gives the candidate the chance to give you additional information, which may help you in your final selection.

How to use the Interview Scoring Matrix

During the interview, you should assess what level of evidence the applicant has provided to demonstrate how they have met the competencies/criteria for the post and assign a rating against each one.

Score	Descriptor
5	Meets all the competency/criterion definition
4	Meets more than half the competency/criterion definition
3	Meets half the competency/criterion definition
2	Meets less than half the competency/criterion definition
1	Meets almost none of the competency/criterion definition

When the interview wraps up, take time between interviews to review the matrix scores and capture any points that you think should be taken into consideration in the final decision-making process, then tally the scores.

After the Interview

The Chair of the panel should be responsible for collecting any paper copies of the application forms, assessment forms, etc and retaining them securely for a period of one year following recruitment has finished.

If a job applicant makes a complaint either because they were not invited to interview or were not appointed after being interviewed, it will be the responsibility of those people who formed the interview panel to be able to demonstrate, if necessary, that all the Council's procedures were complied with and that the decision to appoint the successful candidate was both fair and appropriate.

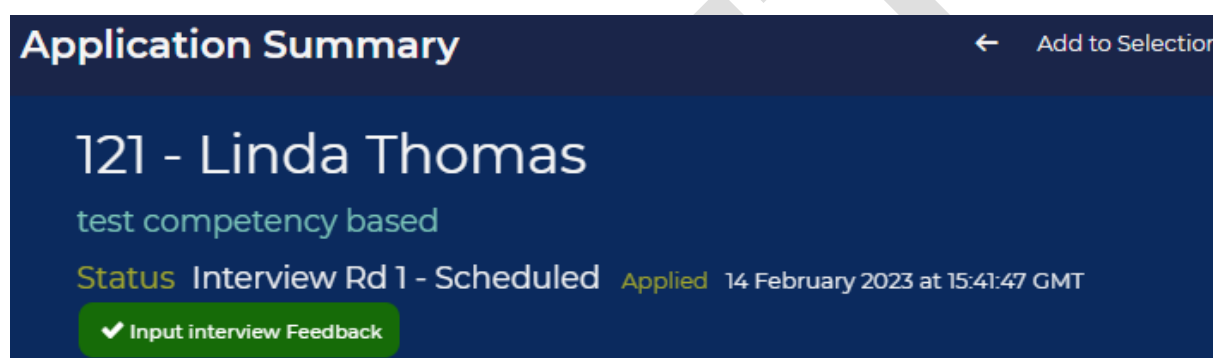
When the interviews wrap up, the panel should:

- **Tally the scores.** Start by adding up the scores for each candidate. Review which candidates rank well in certain areas and who ranks well overall. This will help you make an informed and unbiased hiring decision.

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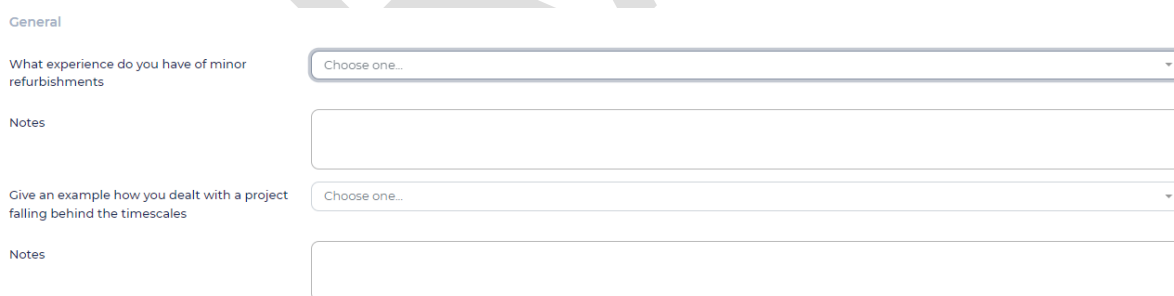
- **Discuss the candidates.** Choosing a new employee should be a collaborative process. When all the scores are tallied up, review all the candidates, and discuss the pros and cons for each interviewee, along with their scores, and take everyone's perspective into account.
- **Review any additional notes.** Before you make your final decision, don't forget to review any notes you have for answers that fall outside the pre-planned questions. Any transferable skills from other areas should be considered.
- **Make a decision.** After reviewing all the interview notes, feedback, and scores, you can make your final hiring decision.

Once you have completed the wrap up session, the recruiting manager/panel chair will be responsible for completing the collective online Oleo interview feedback sheet for each interviewee.



The screenshot shows the 'Application Summary' for candidate '121 - Linda Thomas'. The interface is dark blue with white and green text. It includes a back arrow and 'Add to Selection' link in the top right. The candidate's name and ID are prominently displayed. Below the name, it says 'test competency based'. The status is 'Interview Rd 1 - Scheduled' with 'Applied' on 14 February 2023 at 15:41:47 GMT. A green button with a checkmark and the text 'Input interview Feedback' is located at the bottom left of the summary card.

You will be required to enter the average¹ “score” each competency/criterion achieved and add any notes to support your scoring decision.



The screenshot shows the 'General' section of the feedback form. It contains two sets of questions, each with a dropdown menu and a text input field for notes. The first question is 'What experience do you have of minor refurbishments' with a dropdown menu showing 'Choose one...'. The second question is 'Give an example how you dealt with a project falling behind the timescales' also with a dropdown menu showing 'Choose one...'. Each question is followed by a text input field for notes.

A total score will be calculated once all the competences/criteria have been entered into the Oleo system. You should double check that the final score matches the final score the panel arrived at. Again, capture any comments to support your final decision.

You will then need to complete the 'Recommendation' section which will give you the option to 'Progress' or 'Reject' the applicant and will update the status against the candidate.

¹ The average score will be taken from the individual score from each panel member and calculating the average figure e.g. a score of 3, 4 & 2 from each panel member will result in an average score of 3

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Score

Total Score

0

Recommendation

Recommendation *

Comments

Choose one...

- Recommend Reject
- Recommend Progress

Submit

Next Steps

Depending on the recommendation, the applicant will move on to the next step in the recruitment process:

Reject

The Oleo system will automatically change the status of the applicant to 'Interview Rd 1 – Results Complete'.

At this stage you will be asked to capture the reason why the applicant was rejected, and you can add comments to support your decision. This information will not be shared with the applicant but will be available should they ask for feedback or challenge the decision.

121 - Linda Thomas

test competency based

Status Interview Rd 1 - Results Complete Applied 14 February 2023 at 15:41:47 GMT

Progress On Hold Reject

Summary | Comments | Forms (5) | Other Applications (52) | Referrals (0) | Access | History | Interview Reject Reason Form

View Print Close Launch Another Form

Reject Reason *

Stronger candidates considered (Other candidates have stronger relatable experience and/or skills)

Comments

On submit of this form, the candidate will be automatically emailed.

Submit

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Upon submission, an automatic email notification will be sent to the applicant.

Dear Linda,

Thank you very much for interviewing for the test competency based opportunity.

Unfortunately we will not be proceeding with your application at this time. .

We sincerely appreciate your time and interest in Carmarthenshire County Council and wish you the best for the future.

Kind Regards,

Progress

The Oleo system will automatically change the status of the applicant to: “Offer – selected for Offer”.

It is at this stage; we would anticipate that recruiting managers/panel chair would telephone the preferred candidate to make them a verbal provisional offer. Once the candidate has verbally accepted, then you can create the provisional offer letter.

121 - Linda Thomas

test competency based

Status Offer - Selected for Offer Applied 14 February 2023 at 15:41:47 GMT

✓ Create Offer

The system will ask you to confirm some employment details, which may need to have approval from your HR Advisor before being able to generate the provisional offer letter. Please refer to the Oleo Guidance for more details.

[Insert hyperlink](#)

Once ready, you will be able to preview the offer letter before submitting to the candidate.

121 - Linda Thomas

test competency based

Status Offer - Preview Offer Letter Applied 14 February 2023 at 15:41:47 GMT

If you are happy that the provisional offer letter is correct, you can ‘Extend Offer’ to the candidate.

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121 - Linda Thomas

test competency based

Status Offer - Ready to Extend Applied 14 February 2023 at 15:41:47 GMT

✘ Verbal Offer Declined

✔ Extend Offer

The applicant will receive an email notification informing them there is a provisional offer letter in their Applicant Portal.

Application **test competency based**

Status: Offer Extended

[Review Offer](#)

We are very pleased to extend you an offer for this position.

Please click on the 'Review Offer' button above to view your offer letter and inform us of your decision.

A copy of the offer letter will be available for the applicant to download, and they will be asked to make a recruitment decision:

test competency based

As communicated, we are happy to extend you an offer for this position. Please download your offer letter here

We recommend you save a copy for your personal records and then let us know of your decision by selecting the relevant option below.

Your decision *

Choose one...

- Accept offer
- Decline offer

[Submit](#)

If you require any further information on Interviewing, please contact the Recruitment Team or your HR Advisor. Alternatively, you can refer to the Oleo ATS Guidance.