

# Interviewing Strategies

## Conducting the Interview

A supervisor's initial conversation with a student staff member provides an opportunity to set expectations and to illuminate the impact of the student's work in the department. By asking thoughtful and intentional questions, the supervisor will be able to have a thorough understanding of the student's competencies and fit for the position. This tool offers a suggested framework for conducting interviews with student staff members.

1. Create a positive interview climate.
  - a. Choose a location free from interruptions and distractions (hold all calls and turn off computer volume to avoid any Outlook notifications).
  - b. Establish a supervisor/supervisee relationship at the beginning of the interview by spending a few minutes putting the student at ease (welcoming the student and asking simple questions).
  - c. Remember this may be the student's first interview and they might not know what to expect.
2. Set an agenda for the interview.
  - a. Describe the interview structure to the student. This will help the student understand the flow of the interview.
    - i. e.g., "We will be asking you questions for approximately 15-20 minutes and you will also have an opportunity to ask questions".
3. Take notes as needed.
4. Listen to the student carefully.
  - a. Take this interview seriously, your dedication and level of interest in what the student has to say is noticeable from the student's perspective.
  - b. No matter if you are a seasoned student supervisor and have interviewed many students, act as if what the student says is unique. If more information is needed, ask follow up questions after the student completes their thought.
5. Help keep the student's focus on the interview.
  - a. Due to nerves or inexperience in interviewing, the student may start talking fast or go off topic.
  - b. If the student goes off on a few tangents, ask a specific question to help get the student back on target.
6. Show patience throughout the interview.
  - a. If this is the first time a student has been asked difficult questions, the student may need some time to put together their thoughts. Let the student know that if they need a few moments to gather their thoughts that is acceptable.
  - b. The student may need to be coached to be able to answer the question fully. If the student shows signs that they are struggling to answer the question, use the STAR method to ask follow up questions (ask about the **S**ituation they were in, the **T**ask or obstacle at hand, the **A**ctions they took, and the **R**esults of their actions).

## Closing the Interview

1. Ask whether the student has anything they would like to share that has not already been stated or if they have any questions about the job.
2. Provide a tour of the office and the student's work space.
3. Explain the next step in the process (onboarding, training, etc.).
4. Thank the student for interviewing for the position.
5. Complete your notes immediately so later on you don't have to rely on your memory.
6. Decide whether the student meets, exceeds, or does not meet the requirements to help craft a training plan specific to the student's needs.

# Developing Interview Questions

Ask questions that draw out competencies that are related to the job responsibilities. Start by brainstorming the core competencies of the student position. By creating a correlation between questions and job requirements, you'll receive valuable information about the student's skillset and ability to do the job.

## *Types of Questions*

- **Open-ended questions** ...lead to an effective interview as they allow applicants to reveal information and ideas that they feel are important. For a student who is interviewing for the first time, be prepared to ask follow up questions to help the student fully answer the question.
- **Behavioral questions** ...ask how the student has handled situations relevant to the student position. This question helps the interviewer to evaluate the student's ability to recognize important aspects of the situation, analyze them, and provide the actions taken to arrive at a solution as well as assess the outcome.
- **Situational or hypothetical questions** ...ask the student how they would respond to any given future scenario. This information helps the interviewer understand the student's problem solving ability, especially if the student has not had similar experience in this area.

## *Sample Interview Questions*

### **Ethics/Integrity**

- Describe a situation where you had to say "no" to a customer, co-workers, or supervisor because you didn't think saying "yes" would be right.
- Describe what you would do if a co-worker asked you to lie for them.

### **Customer Service**

- Describe a time when you provided excellent customer service by going beyond your primary job responsibilities.
- Describe an encounter with an irate customer or coworker.

### **Communication**

- Describe the most significant written document, report, or presentation which you completed.
- Give an example of a time when you were able to communicate with a person who didn't seem to like you.

### **Problem-Solving**

- Give an example of a time in which you had to solve a problem. What strategies did you use?
- Describe a time when you were the receiver of a complaint from another department about services provided by your department.

### **Flexibility**

- Describe a time in which you felt it was necessary to modify or change your actions in order to respond to the needs of another person.
- Describe a time when you came to work expecting to do a specific thing and you were asked to do something else.

### **Technology**

- If you were asked to use a computer program you've never used before, what would you want to know first?

### **Self-Management**

- It is your first day on your new job and your supervisor is pulled away for 3-4 hours on an emergency. What would you do?

### **Teamwork**

- Describe an effective or ineffective teamwork experience. What made it effective or ineffective? How did you contribute?

## *Questions to Never Ask*

A reminder that any question relating to gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, color, race, religion, national origin, medical condition, pregnancy, or disabilities are inappropriate and against the law.