

COMPETENCE BASED INTERVIEWING

CANDIDATE NOTES

These guidance notes have been put together to help you prepare for your interview.

What is a competence?

A competence is simply a word that is used to describe a group of behaviours which are shown to be effective. They include attitudes, skills and knowledge, demonstrated as behaviours.

Why are they used?

By using a single competence framework we ensure a consistent approach to describing job requirements and people across a central service. There is a direct relationship between demonstration of competence and our performance at work. Consequently, it makes sense for interviewers to ask candidates about their competencies and see how they 'match' the job requirements. Similarly, from the individual's point of view, they can assess whether the job matches their competencies and whether they are suited to a role.

What is a competence based interview?

A 'competence based interview' is an interview in which each candidate is asked similar questions, designed to obtain information about the match between the candidate's competencies and those required for the job.

How is this different from other interviews?

In a competence based interview, questions that give information about the key competencies for the job are asked. These questions concentrate on the most important parts of an individual's past experience, focusing on the behaviours that were demonstrated. The responses will then allow the interviewer to 'match' the individual to the job, based purely on what is necessary to be successful in the role.

So what will happen during the interview?

Initially, the interviewer(s) will usually ask you some questions about yourself and your background to get to know you better. These will be followed up with questions to gain information about the key competencies, often beginning with phrases like:

- "Tell me about a time when"
- "Describe an occasion when"
- "When has it been important to"

This may feel strange at first, not least because it appears rather formal as an approach, and the interviewer will be taking notes of all the evidence for each of the competencies from your responses to the questions.

Remember that the interviewer is interested in finding out about you and what you have achieved, not about your team, project or manager's achievements. So, remember to talk about the part you played in the team's achievements, your contribution to the project's deliverables and how you have supported your manager and the Business through the achievement of your objectives.

During the interview, remember that you should try to answer the questions as specifically as you can. If the interviewer stops you from expanding on a particular point, don't let this put you off. The interviewer must ensure that you have sufficient opportunity to discuss the key competencies they are interviewing for. They may steer you back onto areas where you describe your competencies in more detail.

There will be an opportunity at the end of the interview for you to add any information that you think is relevant, but has not been covered during the interview. This is also the point at which you should ask any outstanding questions you have about the job.

And after the interview?

The interviewer will review the notes taken during the interview, and make a decision regarding each candidate's suitability for the role.

Summary

In summary then, the Competence Based Interview is being used to improve the objectivity and quality of selection decisions. It makes no additional requirements of you, but you should prepare for the interview in a slightly different way, as outlined above. The benefit of this approach is that it allows each individual interviewed the opportunity to explain how their own competencies and experience match the particular requirements of the job.