Working Towards Inclusion:

Equitable Practices
for Hiring Student Staff
and New Professionals

2021

Letter from the CACUSS Board

August 2021

Over the years, the Canadian Association of College & University Student Services (CACUSS) has produced monographs and publications which address important conversations in our field. Often these documents fill a gap that exists at our member institutions, and/or compile a collection of promising practices from across the country.

We have seen an increased recognition of the systems of racism, colonialism and bias that have shaped post-secondary institutions in Canada. In turn, some institutions have invested additional resources and staffing to catalyze equity and inclusion on campus for students, faculty and staff. However, not all institutions have access to the same resources and in many cases, attention is paid at senior or executive level roles, but less support is available for entry level, paraprofessional, and student positions. Our members have also asked us to examine the role that our organization can play in eliminating barriers and creating more avenues for racialized and Indigenous peoples to feel supported to engage and advance in student affairs roles on our campuses.

While recruitment and hiring remains the purview of institutions and departments, CACUSS believes that resources like this one can support staff responsible for hiring students and new professionals by further equipping them to implement inclusive hiring processes. This aligns with our role and responsibility in shaping a more inclusive and representative student affairs profession in Canada. We hope this resource will enable members to think more critically when recruiting new professionals and student staff, and view hiring as an opportunity to actively contribute to advancing equity in our practice and profession. Expanding the diversity of our talent pool by recognizing the value of different lived experiences will help our field progress, and will position us to better support our changing student population in new and more meaningful ways – now and in the future.

This document draws on evidence from academic sources, best practices from recruitment professionals, and recommendations from student affairs professionals well-versed in inclusive hiring. We acknowledge that this document does not address specific human resources policies or rules related to unionized environments. However, our hope is that it will still prove to be useful in guiding professionals to implement some foundational changes that will support more equitable hiring. We also recognize that there is more work to be done. In alignment with CACUSS's strategic priorities and commitments, we plan to offer additional opportunities to advance equity, inclusion, and belonging in our field, including the launch of a mentoring program in 2021 for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour to help pave pathways for career access and success.

We would like to thank the authors — Sania Hameed and Mary Stefanidis — for their thoughtful approach to developing, drafting, and consulting on this resource. In particular, we would like to acknowledge and share our appreciation for the input provided by members of CACUSS, the Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Community of Practice, and the CACUSS Board of Directors. Our gratitude to Andrea Rodriguez as well for undertaking the design and layout of this resource.
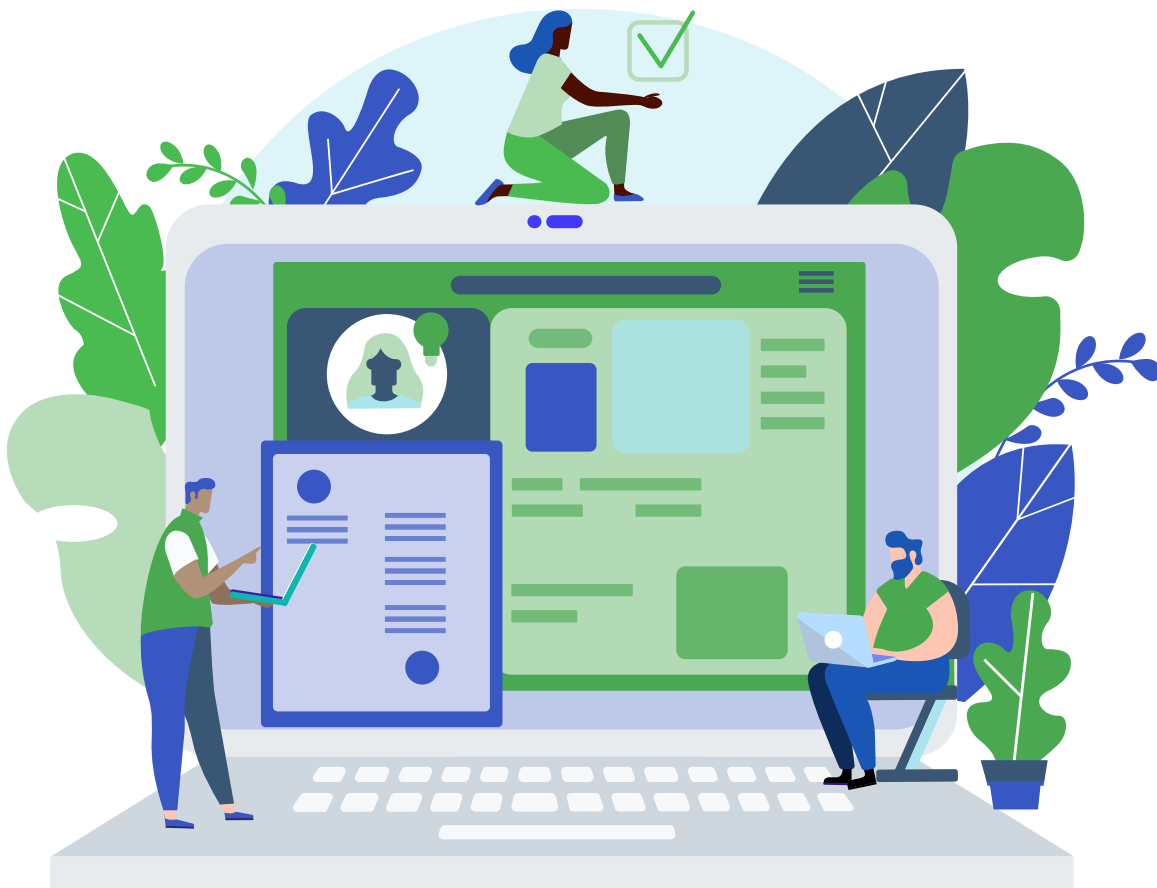
We welcome your feedback. Our hope is that this document will continue to evolve over time; CACUSS is committed to updating the document as more equitable hiring practices develop. Please send your suggestions to contact@cacuss.ca.

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Addressing some myths about equitable hiring

Myth: Equitable hiring focuses on identity rather than qualifications. This is unfair for some candidates.

The goal of equitable and inclusive hiring is to remove and reduce biases and barriers in the recruitment process that may disadvantage or discriminate against *qualified* candidates from equity-deserving groups. Some of these biases and barriers exist as early on as the screening stage. For example, Artificial Intelligence and algorithms used for recruitment may have bias coded into their programming, which could exclude diverse candidates from being considered. Furthermore, the assumption behind this myth — that certain candidates are 'diversity hires' — not only devalues and demeans the candidate's merit and strengths, but can also reveal your own expectations and bias towards what a successful candidate 'should' look like.

What is an equity-deserving group?

Equity-deserving groups are social groups whose members face marginalization (both historically and presently) because of their social identity. Within Canada, while each province or territory's human rights legislation may differ slightly, aspects of identity that are protected from discrimination under the law include race, age, mental or physical disability, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and religion.

Myth: We tried, but there just aren't enough diverse candidates in our pool or pipeline.

While Student Affairs has a shared commitment to improving student success and the student experience, the field can attract a diversity of professionals across various fields — health education, data science, career services, and more. Given the breadth of the field, positioning the issue as a lack of qualified applicants in the candidate pool places the onus on underrepresented groups and assumes that they lack the skills and experience required to be successful in Student Affairs. If we focus on a perceived "pipeline problem", we end up ignoring existing biases and barriers — within our organizational cultures, hiring practices, and processes — which contribute to perpetuating the current status quo.

By focusing our efforts on reducing barriers, we can give candidates from equity-deserving groups a fairer chance when moving through the selection process.

One study found that if you had only one minority candidate in your pool, their odds of being hired were statistically 0. But when they changed the pool to include more minority candidates, the impact was significant. Regardless of the size of the candidate pool…

79x greater — Having at least 2 female candidates in the pool resulted in the odds being 79 times greater for a woman to be hired

194x greater — Having 2 non-white candidates resulted in the odds being 194 times greater for a racialized candidate to be hired

Myth: I don't have conscious bias against members of particular groups, so my hiring decisions will be unbiased.

Cloning bias

Cloning bias is a phenomenon where hiring managers tend to favour candidates they perceive as being similar to themselves — this perpetuates the status quo, as those being hired are similar to those doing the hiring.

In-groups and out-groups

Hiring managers may also unintentionally have higher (and double) standards for candidates who are dissimilar to themselves (out-group members), as they may view candidates who are more similar (in-group members) as ones that better meet notions of professional "fit". Notions of in-group and out-group can be based on a variety of factors including identity-related characteristics, but it can also be something as simple as the hiring manager feeling a connection with (and therefore having a more positive impression of) a candidate who is an alumnus of the same graduate program.

From unconscious bias to being bias-conscious

It's challenging to avoid a bias that you aren't aware of. That's why it's important to shift the conversation from unconscious bias, to being bias-conscious.

Diversity training — what it is and isn't

While diversity training is a popular approach used by institutions to show that they're hiring in an equitable way, several studies indicate that diversity training on its own doesn't get rid of biases. In fact, it can sometimes even lead to less equitable decisions. For example, on one hand, resistance towards the idea of mandated diversity training can further deepen an individual's preconceived notions and biases; on the other hand, choosing to engage in diversity training can lead to some individuals feeling overly confident in their hiring decisions due to their voluntary participation in a workshop (this aligns with a concept called the Paradox of Meritocracy). While diversity trainings can share useful information, reflecting and understanding our own biases and expectations of 'ideal' candidates is a critical part of equitable and inclusive hiring. This better positions us to actively negate the impact of unintentional bias and evaluate candidates more fairly.

The Paradox of Meritocracy

According to Castillo and Bernard (2010), the paradox of meritocracy in organizations involves two concepts: moral credentials and self-perceived objectivity.

- **Moral credentialism:** individuals are more likely to act on their biases when they feel that they have sufficiently demonstrated that they are an unbiased person. Voluntarily attending diversity training could be one way that an individual might feel that they've demonstrated this.
- **Self-perceived objectivity:** the more individuals view their decisions as objective, the more confident they feel about their decisions and beliefs.

The combination of these two factors results in individuals being less likely to reflect on or scrutinize their decision-making, which then leads to them being more likely to act on possible biases.

"Like people in most other human endeavors, hiring managers are powerfully and often unwittingly influenced by their biases. While it's exceedingly difficult to remove bias from an individual, it's possible to design organizations in ways that make it harder for biased minds to skew judgment. …Smarter design of our hiring practices and procedures may not free our minds from our shortcomings, but it can make our biases powerless, breaking the link between biased beliefs and discriminatory […] actions." — *Bohnet (2016)*

Inclusive job postings

Regardless of whether you're posting a new position, or filling a pre-existing role, it's helpful to consider job requirements, the way information is presented in the posting, and how you might advertise the job.

When considering job requirements:

☑ **Critically reflect on the number of requirements for a job.** Having too many requirements can discourage promising candidates as they might self-select out of the process when faced with an overwhelming list of requirements. This is particularly important when trying to diversify your candidate pool. As you narrow the list of requirements, take some time to reflect on and consider how candidates will be supported in leveraging transferable skills and experiences when applying to the role.

💡 Individuals from equity-deserving groups face structural barriers to accessing opportunities; as a result, while they may have the skills necessary to succeed in a role, they may not have had opportunity to gain specific credentials, experiences, or titles. Avoid inflated or overly specific requirements to reduce barriers, and consider how applicants may demonstrate their strengths outside of formal credentials and traditional roles within the field.

☑ **Training and onboarding should be taken into consideration when refining required qualifications.** What skills would a candidate need to demonstrate in order to successfully carry out the responsibilities of the role, and what can they be trained on or learn on the job?

💡 In Residence Life, student and professional staff may have to implement and uphold particular policies as they respond to different challenges. Learning about specific procedures (e.g. roommate conflicts, addressing unauthorized gatherings) would fall within the scope of the training you're expected to provide as a hiring manager. Consider how you might focus on relevant skills instead, such as navigating conflict, de-escalation, or general experience with applying procedural knowledge in a situation.

☑ **Avoid seemingly neutral requirements or statements, as these can be coded with implicit bias.** For example, a phrase like "we're looking for a fun, out-going person" is not necessarily related to the skills required to perform well in a role. Also, it's subjective and suspectable to stereotypes. What is considered fun by the hiring manager? Are there particular groups that are thought to be more or less outgoing?

💡 Ground your requirements in skills related to the role. For example, rather than fun and outgoing, you may be looking for a candidate who is creative and has strong interpersonal communication skills.

When drafting the posting:

☑ **Be intentional with your language.** Be mindful of words that might inadvertently discourage applicants from particular groups. For example, gendered language can subtly communicate an implicit preference, which can make the posting less appealing to applicants who don't align with the gender that is implied as being preferred.

💡 Describing the candidate as "he" (rather than something more inclusive like "they", "the successful candidate") is a clear example of language that is discouraged by relevant human rights legislation. Gendered language can also apply to words that hold stereotypical connotations, such as "dominant" or "caring". There are helpful, free, web-based tools that can support you in being more inclusive when drafting job postings, such as the Gender Decoder.

☑ **Present information in an accessible manner, using plain language.** Avoid using jargon and acronyms within the posting. Structure the posting so that it is easy to determine the essential responsibilities and requirements of the role. Being transparent and clear about expectations will support prospective candidates who aren't familiar with your organization or office, as they will be better positioned to understand the job and decide whether it aligns with their skillset and career interests.

💡 To align with values of transparency and equity, it is best practice to provide salary information as well (whether it is a specific figure or a salary range), as well as information on working conditions (hours, flexible work arrangements).

☑ **Include a statement demonstrating your departmental and/or institutional commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).** This includes a commitment to equity in the recruitment process, but also in the work and values of the department within which the role is situated. While the job posting is a tool to communicate with and attract prospective candidates, it is also something that candidates can use to assess a prospective workplace.

💡 Beyond EDI statements, how are you demonstrating to equity-deserving applicants that you foster inclusion in the workplace, and that your department is deserving of their talents?

When advertising the position:

☑ **Advertise the role in a variety of spaces.** While jobs will typically be posted on an institutional job board, consider sharing the posting more broadly so that it can reach more people. You can also take the initiative to advertise with specific listservs, websites, or organizations that serve different equity-deserving groups in order to attract a diverse candidate pool.

💡 Sharing your posting via CACUSS is one way to increase your candidate pool when recruiting new professionals, due to a wide membership base.

☑ **Be mindful when relying on personal networks to circulate the job posting.** While referrals are considered an effective recruitment tactic, it is important to consider: who is doing the referring, and what might their networks look like? Referrals typically tend to reproduce the status quo, and privilege those who have connections and/or insights into the recruitment process.

💡 One way to counter the impact of referrals reproducing the status quo effect could be to encourage referrals from underrepresented populations. However, it is important to remember that people need to have a level of trust in the organization or department to feel comfortable referring qualified colleagues. Would individuals from equity-deserving groups feel confident referring their contacts to your department?

"When targeting an employer that presents itself as valuing diversity, minority job applicants engage in relatively little resume whitening and thus submit more racially transparent resumes. Yet… organizational diversity statements are not actually associated with reduced discrimination against unwhitened resumes. Taken together, these findings suggest a paradox: minorities may be particularly likely to experience disadvantage when they apply to ostensibly pro-diversity employers." — *Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik, & Jun (2016).*

Candidate selection

There are many considerations before and during the interview you can take to ensure as equitable and fair a process as possible. Ultimately, the time and care you put into the selection process will better position you to determine the best candidate(s) for your team.
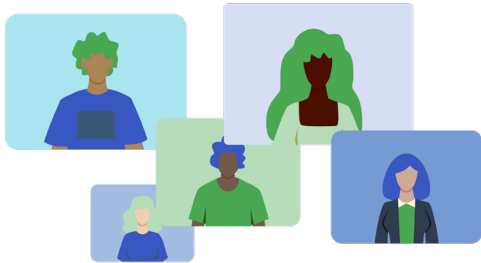
Planning the interview process

Assembling an interview panel

Being intentional with composing and preparing a hiring panel can be an effective way to reduce bias, as having multiple people and perspectives involved in the process can mitigate the limitations of individual (1:1) interviews.

- Consider various stakeholders and/or partners who might be impacted by the portfolio you're trying to fill and include their perspectives. Stakeholders and partners could include colleagues from a different team or department, or inviting a student peer to participate in the panel.

    - **Ask early.** This will help you avoid feeling rushed at the interview stage and will also establish clarity across the panel in terms of the qualities a promising candidate might bring to the role.
    - **Establish a diverse panel.** Engaging in inclusive candidate selection means doing your best to establish a diverse hiring panel. One study shows that a panel with even one member of a racialized group can make the hiring process more equitable. An added benefit? This can help candidates from underrepresented groups feel more comfortable during the interview.

- Meet with the panel to review and seek feedback on the proposed interview process, logistics, interview questions, and evaluation criteria.

    - **Consider the interview process and logistics.**
        - How might we develop introductions for the interview that contribute towards creating a welcoming environment?
        - Will follow up questions or prompting be allowed, and how might this be applied consistently across interviews to minimize variation and bias?
        - What values do we want to demonstrate throughout the hiring process?
        - How should we proceed if we run out of time during the interview?
        - What is our approach to requests for a 'coffee chat' or informational interview, being mindful of how this can create opportunities for bias?

    - **Discuss interview questions and their evaluation.** Working through the panel's perceptions of the position and the priorities of the department, how might you co-design the interview questions and evaluation criteria to be more reflective of the skills and experiences required to be successful in the role? It can be helpful to prepare an answer to a couple of questions and practice scoring them via the rubric, to ensure the panel is aligned in how to best evaluate the candidate, and that each individual is able to justify their score.

- As a panel, have a direct conversation about implicit and common biases. One example is the horn/halo effect, in which a singular aspect of a candidate skews your overall impression of them to be overly positive or overly negative. How might you account for or mitigate this through the evaluation process? What cultural cues, experiences or characteristics may sway the panel to prefer one candidate over another? Additional questions you may what to consider as a panel include:

  - What biases might we each bring toward the position?
  - What might each of us value in a candidate based on those biases?
  - What will we do when we come up against a bias that's influencing our decisions?
  - What experiences are currently over- or under-represented on the team, and how can we remain open to a diversity of experiences from a range of backgrounds?
  - How can we be mindful of the fact that what might be seen as a strength or skill for one candidate, may not be perceived as such for another, and therefore our assessment of competency may be impacted by identity?
  - How do we hold space for cultural differences when it comes to the self-promotion that is expected in interviews?

Unpacking 'Fit'
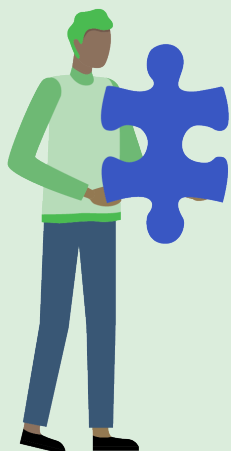
'Fit' — along with 'likeability' — is a term that is commonly used in hiring conversations. However, it is highly subjective and can have coded expectations that can be implicitly discriminatory. 'Fit' can perpetuate the status quo by creating more room for cloning bias, where like attracts like; this could be based on identity, preferred credentials or specific experiences, and how well a candidate measures up to unspoken expectations that aren't explicitly required in the job description. 'Fit' might also imply a preference for someone who can join the team and require the least amount of change or onboarding to the existing team and culture — someone who would easily feel included. Equitable processes, on the other hand, would emphasize doing the work to foster an inclusive environment where a diverse team feels supported in sharing different experiences and perspectives.

To mitigate the issues that 'fit' can raise, it is critical to unpack what exactly the hiring manager or panel means when talking about fit: Is it a set of values? Competencies? Transferable or soft skills? Decode the message behind fit and transform it into concrete strengths or qualities a candidate can bring to the role. These skillsets can then be integrated into interview questions and evaluated more effectively through a rubric. There are many frameworks you can refer to (e.g. The Big Five Model, UNESCO's Transversal Competencies) that can support you in measuring soft skills (communication, collaboration, etc.).

Reviewing applications

When selecting prospective candidates to invite to the interview, one of the first challenges might be the impact of first impressions. Hiring decisions can be easily influenced by emotions and personal preferences.

As first impressions are snap judgements, these can be based on personal interpretations of a candidate's character rather than evidence.

The first 10 seconds of an interview can significantly influence the interview's final outcome due to confirmation bias (the tendency to pay attention to information that supports pre-existing beliefs), according to one study.

Take your time when reviewing applications and rely on a rubric to guide you as you begin selecting candidates to invite for an interview.

- Reflect on any biases or preferences you bring to the applicant screening process that may lead you to assign individuals a higher or lower score. For example, do you value a credential from a particular post-secondary institution over another? How open are you to transferable skills and non-traditional pathways?
  - If you feel that perceived bias might interfere with your ability to evaluate a candidate fairly, consider seeking support from the hiring panel to 'double check' potential marking inflation or deflation.
- Review the job description and assign a numerical score to each skill and qualification based on how important it would be for a candidate to meet a particular requirement or asset. You can then use this information to create a rubric to score and rank applications.
  - When possible, it's helpful to have multiple individuals review and rank candidates for a more balanced assessment of applicants.

If you notice that shortlisted candidates form a fairly homogenous pool, pause to ask yourself why this might be, and consider what could be done differently at the application review and/or job posting circulation stage.

Sending an interview invitation

Interview invitations are a great opportunity to highlight the values of your department and do your part to ensure that the candidate feels supported during the interview process. Being intentional with your language, sharing relevant information, and demonstrating a willingness to accommodate a candidate's needs can contribute to a more inclusive process for prospective candidates.

Before drafting the invite, reflect on the interview location (virtual or in-person) and any potential barriers to safely accessing the space. For in-person interviews, it is important to consider access from a variety of perspectives to assess whether the environment actively welcomes members of equity-deserving groups. For example, are there all-gender washrooms close by? If the building has an elevator, is it currently functioning?

When drafting the invitation, it may be helpful to:

- **Re-share a copy of the job description.** Particularly if you're recruiting for a student staff role, consider sharing career resources that students can leverage to better prepare for the interview.
- **Indicate the scheduled length of the interview along with the time and date.** Be mindful of major religious and cultural observances when scheduling the interviews.
- **Specify where the interview will take place.** Provide instructions on how to access the interview space (platform if virtual, location if in-person).
- **Offer clarity on the dress code.** This could reduce uncertainty for candidates who may not have the socio-economic or cultural knowledge required to be familiar with expectations around attire. There isn't a correlation between competency and attire, so focus on emphasizing comfort, and share general expectations ("business casual", "whatever you might wear to class"), or consider sharing how you will be dressing for the interview.
- **Outline the different portions of the interview if any (e.g. carousel, presentation).** Additionally, detail how long each section is expected to take. If there is a pre-interview assignment that needs to be prepared prior to the interview, specify how much time a candidate might be expected to dedicate to it.
- **Provide the name and job title of those on the hiring panel.** Clearly identify who the candidate should reach out to for further clarification about the interview process or requests for accommodations. Emphasize your commitment to ensuring an inclusive process.

Structured Interviews

It is best practice to conduct structured interviews. The consistency of the format — asking the same questions to each candidate, in the same order — results in structured interviews being more equitable and more effective when evaluating candidates.

Structured interviews involve the intentional development of interview questions based on key skills and qualifications required for a role. This lends itself well to drafting rubrics that contain specific criteria, which can then be used to evaluate each candidate's responses. It is important to be thoughtful when drafting the evaluation rubric. If the criteria isn't clear, non-job related factors may impact a candidate's score, and this can create room for bias.

While structured interviews may limit which professional achievements candidates are allowed to share, this can be countered by offering a question at the end of the interview, inviting the candidate to share any relevant experiences, interests or skills that they may not have had the opportunity to during the interview. This is also a good time to give them a chance to add to or clarify a response to a previous question. Holding space for this can support a candidate in re-emphasizing their ability to meet requirements, or revisit an answer that may have been influenced by nerves. In terms of evaluating responses to this open-ended question, scores for relevant interview questions may be adjusted based on the competencies the candidate chooses to elaborate on.

Types of Interview Questions

There are four key types of interview questions (as depicted in Fig. 1) that you can leverage to gain a better understanding of candidates. The two most common question types used to predict job performance are situational and behavioural.

Skills tests can also supplement the interview process and can happen before, during or after the interview. Skills tests might include presentations, written knowledge tests, demonstrating technical skills, and more. These tests can help determine whether a candidate has the essential skills or knowledge required to succeed in the role. However, if the test is not strongly tied to a critical job requirement, skills tests may inadvertently eliminate an otherwise qualified candidate.
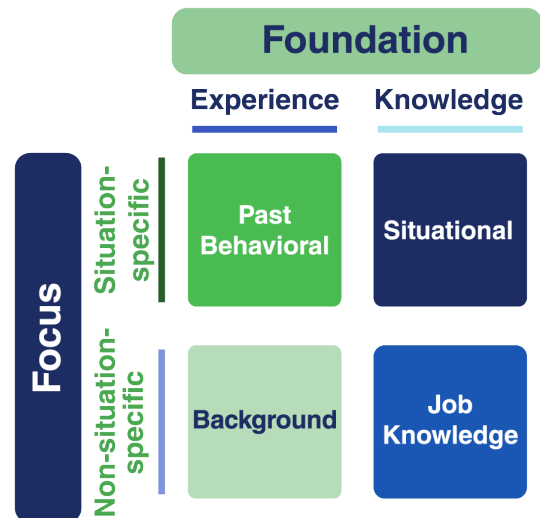

Fig.1. Conceptual model of structured interview question types, adapted from Hartwell, Johnson, & Posthuma (2019).

"Tell me about a time when…"

Behavioural questions are focused on past experience or situations, and seek to find out how a candidate demonstrated a particular competency. The assumption is that past behaviour is predictive of future performance. While this allows applicants to share experience directly related to the role they're interviewing for, overly specific questions can be limiting. Behavioural questions can therefore occasionally pose a challenge to individuals from equity-deserving groups, as they may have the skills necessary to succeed in a given role, despite not having had the opportunity to build specific experiences.

"What would you do if…"

Situational questions involve a hypothetical scenario that a candidate may face in the role, and seeks to find out how the candidate might address, resolve, or take action in a particular job-related scenario. The assumption is that the way the candidate thinks through the scenario in the interview is predictive of how the candidate might respond to a similar situation in the future. Situational questions allow a candidate to demonstrate their problem-solving skills and apply job-related knowledge, and does not disadvantage those who may not have direct experience.

Developing Interview Questions

Decide which competencies and strengths are essential for success in the role. You may have already done this when drafting the job posting or meeting with the hiring panel. Base your questions and evaluation process on these core requirements.

Offer a variety of questions, and consider the following:

- Are both interpersonal and technical skills included?
- Do you invite candidates to share relevant transferable or direct experiences?
- Will candidates have an opportunity to demonstrate their values and their approach to various challenges?

The following examples are intended to provide some guidance on how you might approach a couple of different question types when interviewing either students or new professionals.

Question on subject matter knowledge:
If you require the candidate to demonstrate subject matter knowledge, specify this within the phrasing of the question.

- **For student staff:** "If you were asked to support the creation of a workshop on useful academic skills, what topics would you consider, and what types of activities would you recommend to keep students engaged during the workshop?"
- **For new professionals:** "Tell us about a time you developed a program that supported academic skills development for undergraduate students. What theories and strategies did you leverage and why?"

Question inviting transferable experiences:
If direct experience is not a requirement to meet a required competency, create enough openness in the question so the candidate can share a parallel experience.

- **For student staff:** "Can you tell us about a curricular or co-curricular experience where you supported a peer in developing a skill? What was the situation, how did you provide support, and what was the end result?"
- **For new professionals:** "Describe your experience developing programming that support skills development. Please share details in relation to program conception, execution and assessment."

The Interview

Interviews are often nerve-wracking. Setting a welcoming tone and engaging in inclusive practice can support candidates in feeling set up for success. One recommended practice is to offer interview questions to the candidate ahead of time — even if it's just half an hour before the interview — or provide the questions in writing during the interview. This gives candidates the opportunity to collect their thoughts, and be better positioned to demonstrate the strengths and skills that the hiring panel is interested in learning about.

Although interviews are an opportunity to get to know a candidate better, veering into more personal information can increase the likelihood of deviating from job-related information, and can potentially create space for bias early in the interview (for example, based on how likeable you find the candidate). Consider having a conversation with the hiring panel on the difference between being personable and being too personal in an interview, and discuss how you'll keep each other in check.

Setting Up:

- **Introduce yourselves.** All panelists should have the opportunity to share their names, pronouns if comfortable, and a little bit about their current role.

- **Outline the interview structure.** For example, "We have 8 questions we'd like to ask you, and each of us will take turns asking a question. At the end, there will be an opportunity for you to ask us any questions you might have in relation to the role."

- **Foster a comfortable environment.** Consider adding statements that can foster a more comfortable environment for the candidate, for example:
  - "Before responding to any of the questions, feel free to take a few moments to collect your thoughts and think about how you might want to answer."
  - "If you need a question clarified or repeated, please don't hesitate to ask."
  - "We'll be taking notes throughout, so we may not always make eye-contact, but we are listening attentively to your responses."

Wrapping Up:

- **Provide an opportunity to give more details.** Offer the candidate an opportunity to supplement a previous response or share any additional details relevant to their candidacy for the role. This allows candidates to revisit questions where their nerves may have gotten the better of them, or showcase experiences or skills that they didn't have the chance to share during the interview.

- **Do you have questions for us?** Ask candidates whether they have any questions for you and respond as much as time permits. If you are running out of time, let them know who they can contact with questions, and commit to providing a response.

- **Share your timeline.** Share your anticipated recruitment timeline so that candidates know when they can expect to hear back. Let them know that all interviewees will be informed whether the position has been filled.
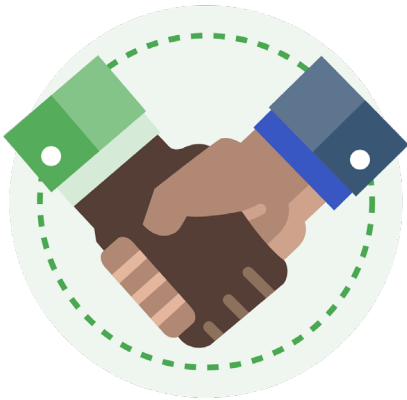
Evaluation and Decision-Making

The reliability of your evaluation is strongly connected to the rubric you create (or co-create with your hiring panel). A rubric that effectively captures the knowledge, skills, and qualities required for the role will help you make clearer, evidence-based decisions. Rubrics should also be considered for any skills tests the candidate undertakes before, during, or after the interview.

General considerations for assessing candidates

Though you may have worked through aspects related to evaluation when you initially met with the hiring panel, there are some general considerations to keep in mind when assessing candidates. To ensure the panel is aligned on these considerations, set aside some time at the end of the interview process to discuss each candidate's performance; this will support you in making a more informed decision.

- **Have clear evaluation guidelines.** Each question should define the relevant competency it's assessing and be accompanied by a rubric with a Likert scale. At least every other point on the scale should have a description — this increases reliability and supports the panel in being more consistent and accurate when scoring candidates.

- **Take notes.** During the interview, take factual notes — capture what the candidate shared, rather than how it may have made you feel. When possible, it can be helpful to mark a candidate after each question, as opposed to waiting till the end; this decreases the likelihood of feelings or memories clouding your judgment, and supports a more accurate review process when debriefing with the hiring panel.

- **Beware of common pitfalls.** When marking candidates, be mindful of a few common pitfalls, such as central tendency and contrast effect.
  - **Central tendency** is the inclination to avoid assigning very high or very low scores, and instead picking more moderate scores.
  - **Contrast effect** is the tendency to compare candidates as you're engaging in the interview process. This can lead to a lower or higher score comparatively across candidates, rather than aligning with the criteria established in the rubric. Try to ensure that the evaluation of candidates is based on meeting specific qualifications, rather than relative performance.

- **Weighting each question.** Consider the weight of each question when assigning an overall score to the candidate. Not all competencies are equally important to being successful in a role, and some questions may be weighted more than others. Try to use whole numbers in your evaluation to decrease variance and better align with the rubric.

- **Don't make decisions before the interview.** Steer clear of comparing rankings at the start, as this may lead to group think. Avoid discussing or making any decisions around how promising a particular candidate is prior to reviewing their individual responses. In general, rather than focusing on candidates who stood out (positively or negatively), review each candidate individually, going question by question, and take the time to discuss any significant variances in scores.

"People will say that you can't have a maybe in interviews because you want to force people to pick one side or the other [...however] we should not be so scared of "maybe" responses in interviews. If the interviewer is clear on what they are interviewing for, has a trusted/consistent rubric they follow for structured interview questions and is thoughtful and meaningful about how they give feedback, the maybe is an opportunity to find more about, and perhaps even hire, a potentially incredible candidate that may have fit outside the traditional (ahem: biased) norms of the role.." — Merill (2019)

Strategies for equitable and inclusive hiring

While equitable and inclusive hiring is important, engaging in improving process can sometimes feel challenging due to time constraints and a lack of clarity on where and how to start. The following lists of strategies and reflective questions are not comprehensive by any means — they're designed to be a starting point for you to feel supported in considering what actions (big or small!) you can take to improve your hiring practices.

Short-Term Strategies

Time investment: limited
Who can implement? Individuals

- **Assemble a diverse hiring panel.** Consider who you may need to involve when establishing a diverse hiring panel - this might involve students and/or colleagues from different departments. Coordinate a meeting with the hiring panel to offer an opportunity to establish shared expectations for the role and the candidate evaluation process.

- **Revise your job posting.** Review the job description and limit the number of requirements, relying more heavily on skills and competencies than specific experiences and credentials. Update the language to be more inclusive and accessible, avoiding jargon and acronyms.

- **Update your interview invitations.** Set interview candidates up for success by sharing information about the composition of the panel, the length of the interview, the location and directions to access the interview, as well as any other relevant details. Be sure to include a statement that demonstrates your willingness to accommodate, and clearly define who candidates can reach out to for more information or to request accommodations.

- **Use a structured interview process.** Ask each candidate the same questions, in a consistent order, and evaluate their responses using a rubric. Consider what you can do to foster a more welcoming environment for the interviewee; this could include sharing your pronouns in your introduction, offering a written copy of the questions to each candidate before or during the interview, etc.

- **Follow up with interviewees.** Once a successful candidate has accepted the position, follow up with all other interviewees by letting them know that the position has been filled. Consider offering the opportunity to provide feedback to interviewees.
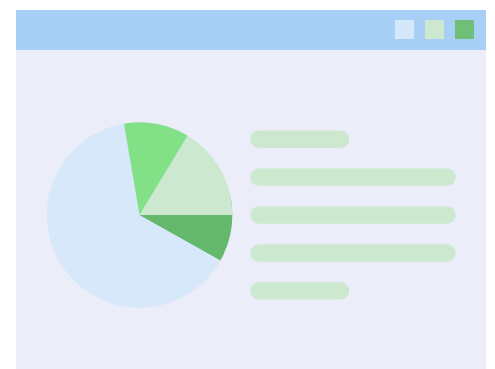
Medium-Term Strategies

Time investment: Moderate
Who can implement? Collegial or departmental support may be required

- **Increase the reach of your job posting.**
  - What channels are being used to share the role, and who is most likely to access these channels?
  - What gaps exist, and who might not have the opportunity to learn about the role?
  - How can you be intentional about increasing opportunities for equity-deserving groups to learn about the role, and feel welcomed to apply?

- **Create an interview question bank within the department.**
  - What overlap exists in terms of skills and competencies required across various roles, and what is unique about each role?
  - What are your departmental values, and how are they integrated into the question bank?
  - Are there specific questions you might want to ask to evaluate a prospective candidate's understanding of equity?

- **Develop consistent rubrics and evaluation approaches.**
  - Does each interview question have its own specific criteria to be evaluated against?
  - In a given interview, are questions weighted differently or evenly?
  - Are there standard practices and approaches to evaluation within your department?
  - Is everyone involved in the hiring process aware of these standards and approaches?

- **Reflect on your role as a hiring manager and supervisor.**
  - Do you have the time and resources you need to be able to effectively engage in the hiring process?
  - Are you going through the motions or are there opportunities for hiring and supervising to be part of your own professional development?
  - What training can you seek out to improve your understanding of equitable hiring processes and your skills as a manager?

- **Review your on-boarding and training processes.**
  - What might an inclusive and supportive onboarding process feel like?
  - How can you better support the professional and personal well-being of a new hire as they transition into the organization?
  - How will the candidate be set up for success in developing their skills, and building relationships with colleagues?

Long-Term Strategies

Time investment: Substantial time (and financial resources)
Who can implement? Departmental or organizational culture change required

- **Support staff members.**
  - How are staff supported to engage in equitable and inclusive hiring practices?
  - Are staff offered the opportunity to learn about and participate in a hiring process?
  - How are staff resourced to implement the changes that need to be made, and given the space within their portfolio to be intentional about hiring?

- **Allocate and protect time.** Developing equitable hiring processes may involve considerable time for reviewing, reflecting and discussing various aspects of the recruitment cycle, including applicant reviews, interviewing, and onboarding. Time is also needed to implement these processes and practices. Ask yourself, is hiring perceived as an interruption to the operations of the department, or is it valued as an opportunity to advance equity and build a diverse team? Allocating sufficient time to the hiring process can help deter the inclination towards a 'quick' hire over an equitable hire.

- **Invest in relationships.** If you have inclusive hiring processes at the interview level but not at the application stage, your efforts will only go so far.
  - How can you move beyond referrals and relying on the same promotional avenues?
  - What measures can you take to build strong relationships across and external to your institution, and build a reputation for inclusion as a department?
  - How can you meaningfully involve partners and stakeholders in this process?

- **Determine and live your values.**
  - Does your department have established values?
  - How are these leveraged when creating and communicating the culture of the department?
  - Is a commitment to equity one of those values?
  - How do these inform your strategic and annual plans?
  - How might this show up in job descriptions, interviews, onboarding, and transition?
  - How are staff members supported in enacting these values?

- **Pay attention to retention.** Hiring diverse staff is not the same as retaining them.
  - Is there a 'revolving door' for candidates belonging to particular social groups?
  - How might you continually invest in a culture of inclusion?
  - What policies and practices are needed to better support individuals from equity-deserving groups, and create an environment where they can thrive?

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