

**NORTH WESTERN HEALTH BOARD**

Bórd Sláinte an Iar-Thuaiscirt

# **RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION GUIDELINES**



## **Notes for Members of Interview Boards**

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT  
1996

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

### **Foreword**

Thank you for agreeing to partake in the Board's Recruitment and Selection Process. Research has shown us that a well planned and well focused interview is still one of the most commonly used and most reliable methods of selecting employees.

Good Recruitment and Selection Procedures are key requisites to the development of an effective workforce. With the current emphasis on cost effectiveness, efficiency and accountability it is of particular importance in highly labour intensive organisations such as Health Boards, that the Selection method matches the right person to the job. It is essential therefore that we get the 'best fit' candidates to match the strategic and operational requirements of the Board.

This Booklet is designed to assist you in the Interview Process. The contents are not intended to be an exhaustive guide, but will hopefully ensure a common understanding and approach to the Interview Process in Staff Selection.

If you require further clarification regarding any of the details outlined in this booklet please contact our Personnel Officer or members of staff from the Recruitment Department.

Donal O Shea,  
Chief Executive Officer.

# Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

## Contents

	Page No.
<b>SECTION ONE</b>	
INTRODUCTION .....	1
PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW .....	2
Confidentiality	
Appointments	
PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW .....	3
Constitution of the Board	
Pre-Interview Meeting	
What to look for and how to find it	
AT INTERVIEW .....	5
Introductory remarks to Candidates	
Testing Knowledge and Experience	
Questioning the Candidate	
Interests	
Candidate Assessment	
EVALUATING THE INFORMATION .....	9
The Scoring System	
DECISION MAKING .....	10
Recommendation	
<b>SECTION TWO</b>	
ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON .....	12
Managing the interview	
Role prior to the interview	
Role during the interview	
Role - post interview	
APPENDICES	14

# Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

## INTRODUCTION

This handbook is one element of an ongoing process within the Board which will provide a more in depth analysis of selection criteria, interviewing skills, questioning techniques and legislative awareness. This handbook is intended for the use of all those involved in the recruitment and selection process and is divided into two specific sections, namely:

- 1) Interview board members
- 2) Chairpersons of interview boards.

We would strongly advise, however, that all interview board members read this handbook in its entirety.

## Equal Opportunities Policy

The North Western Health Board is committed to providing equality of opportunity in all our employment practices. It is the Board's policy that all staff and potential staff have equality of opportunity regardless of sex, marital status, religion, political beliefs, race, sexual orientation or disability.

The purpose of the equal opportunities policy is to eliminate unfair illegal discrimination in access to employment or promotion within the Board. This in turn means that the criteria for selection and promotion is determined solely by the requirements of the post and that people are appointed on the basis of their merit in relation to relevant experience, abilities, aptitude and qualifications.

## Legislation

A number of important documents and legislation which have direct or indirect implications for the Recruitment process include:

- Employment Equality Act 1977
- Terms of Employment (Information) Act 1994
- Circular 10/71
- Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977-1993
- Workers Protection (regular part-time employees) Act 1991

If you require further information concerning the aforementioned legislation, please contact any of our staff in the Recruitment or Industrial Relations Sections

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

### SECTION ONE

#### PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW

The purpose of the interview is to obtain and assess information about a candidate which will enable a valid prediction to be made of future performance in the job in comparison with the predictions made for any other candidates. Interviewing, therefore, involves processing and evaluating evidence about the capabilities of a candidate in relation to the personnel specification.

Some of the evidence will be on the application form but this must be supplemented by the more detailed or specific information that can be obtained in a face to face meeting. Although further evidence may be obtained from selection tests or from references, the interview remains the main method by which recruitment decisions are made.

An interview has been described as a conversation with a purpose. The conversation has to be planned, directed and controlled to achieve its main purpose which is to make an accurate prediction of the performance in the job for which the applicant is being considered.

The interview also has the purpose of helping the applicant to make an assessment of both the job and our Organisation and consequently it is important to be aware of the impression we are creating of the Board.

#### *Confidentiality*

The Board wishes to emphasize the necessity for observing strict confidence in all matters pertaining to the interview, both before and after it. This includes all information received by members of a board regarding candidates and reports made by it to the Chief Executive Officer.

It is essential that members of interview boards should not, under any circumstances, discuss or reveal to anybody the names or the order in which candidates have been recommended for posts.

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

### ***Appointments***

The recommendations of an interview board will only be implemented after they have been accepted and approved by the Chief Executive Officer. Notification to successful candidates will only be issued after references have been checked and also pending where appropriate, successful completion of medical examination and verification of qualifications. In some instances, applicants will have to sign a declaration and agree for references to be obtained from the Garda Síochána. An offer of employment will not be issued until the above procedures have been completed.

### **PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW**

### ***Constitution of the Board***

The interview board, which is set up by the Chief Executive Officer to assess candidates and advise on their qualification and suitability, normally consists of a Chairperson and a number of other members, including persons with expert knowledge in the relevant field. It is the Board's intention that the interview board should operate as a team and that its recommendations would be a product of the contributions of all members. Some members may of course be better placed than others to advise the Board on specific matters, e.g. professional matters in relation to their own specialities, but it is highly desirable that the recommendation be a consensus of the judgement of all the members.

### ***Pre- Interview Meeting***

The interview board should meet well in advance of the interview. The pre-interview discussion will be "managed" by the Chairperson of the interview board in conjunction, on some occasions, with members of the Personnel Department.

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

At this meeting the interview board will discuss the job description/profile and decide on the personal and professional qualities needed to carry out the tasks. This is commonly known as matching the "Personnel Specification" to the "Job Description/Profile"  
(See Appendix 1)

**The Pre-Interview meeting is a key element in the Selection Process.**

***What to  
look for  
and how to  
find it***

This is a matter of knowing the job description/profile and the personnel specification and then whether or not the applicant meets the specification under each of the factors: qualifications, experience, knowledge, skills etc.

Knowing how to find the information required is a matter first of planning the interview and then of conducting it in a way which will obtain all the data needed to make a balanced decision.

The importance of planning cannot be overemphasized. To be able to find and make the best use of interview information, Interview Boards must build sufficient planning time into their process.

The board should meet in advance of the interview to discuss the following:

- How the interview will be conducted so as to elicit sufficient information to assess each of the applicants.
- The order of importance of this information.
- How questions should be framed.
- How questions will be allocated among board members.
- In what order questions will be asked.
- How responses to questions should be followed up.

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

- A list of areas to be tested through interview questions should be developed followed by a set of core questions all of which should be objective and job related.
- How responses will be assessed.
- How board members will evaluate interview performance.
- How missing information will be gathered.

The purpose of each question is to elicit evidence in support for each of the predetermined factors recorded on the Personnel Specification.

### **AT INTERVIEW**

Each board member is furnished with particulars of the candidate's application. This should be read before the candidate enters the room and any points requiring special attention during the interview, should be marked. This avoids delaying the commencement of the interview, which can upset the candidate. If a board member discovers that one of the candidates is either related or otherwise connected with him/her to a degree that might be considered to effect impartiality, the matter should be mentioned to the Chairperson before the candidate enters the room and guidance requested as to what attitude should be adopted.

### ***Introductory Remarks to Candidates***

The Chairperson should introduce the board to the candidate. The first few minutes are critical to the success of the interview. The candidate should not be judged during this period. Instead the Chairperson should concentrate on putting the candidate at ease, with "small talk" if necessary.

## **Recruitment and Selection Guidelines**

### ***Testing Knowledge and Experience***

This will be dealt with by the appropriate expert(s) on the board. Experience or knowledge specified as essential or desirable should be ascertained. A candidate must not be rejected for not having some particular qualification, knowledge or experience which is not — either explicitly or by clear implication — specified as essential. If in doubt as to whether a particular field has been covered, the attention of one of the "professional or technical" members should be drawn to the point unobtrusively by the chairperson.

It is particularly important that candidates be fully questioned on each item of experience or knowledge specified as essential or desirable.

Where experience has to be of a certain type and duration, the members of the interview board should satisfy themselves that all candidates comply fully with the requirements.

If possible, the candidate should be questioned first on the subject he/she is likely to know best.

### ***Questioning the Candidate***

The interview should take the form of a pleasant chat rather than an inquisition. Questions should be worded in such a way that:—

- (a) they do not indicate the answers favoured by the questioner, and
- (b) they leave the candidate to do most of the talking.

Avoid interrupting while the candidate is talking and keep "cross-examination" to a minimum. Questions answered by "yes" or "no" should be avoided as far as possible. Lead the candidate gently to each new subject.

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

Some candidates may not volunteer information regarding matters they consider unfavourable (e.g. failure in examinations, reasons for leaving jobs), unless they are specifically asked about them. If a candidate mentions something which appears unfavourable, it should be treated in a matter-of-fact way.

Complimentary remarks, where appropriate, may encourage a candidate to volunteer further information.

It is advisable to avoid expressing agreement or disagreement with a candidate's answer, and it is better not to refer to one's own knowledge or experience of the matter under discussion. Candidates who become aware of incorrect answers may fail to do themselves justice during the rest of the interview.

Once it has been found that a candidate has little knowledge of a particular field, it is advisable to proceed to the next topic.

As far as possible, each question put to a candidate should serve a particular purpose. Board members should be on their guard against the very real danger that the interview may go off on a tangent as a result of the candidate's mentioning some item in which they are specially interested.

### ***Interests***

Information regarding a candidate's current and past interests outside of work is often of value in assessing the candidate. It also affords an opportunity to close the interview on a pleasant note. It is desirable to ascertain briefly the depth of a candidate's interest in the matters he/she mentioned.

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

### **Candidate Assessment**

The candidate should be assessed independently by each board member. The final mark under each heading should be agreed after discussion. It is essential that a board member who seems to have reservations about the proposed mark be given ample opportunity to voice them.

Markings will normally be provisional in the first instance (markings of first candidates interviewed, in particular, may require reconsideration).

#### Some 'tips' on Listening Skills

- Concentrate on your candidate. Make sure there are no distractions which can lure your mind away, even for a moment.
- Judge **WHAT** is being said, not just **HOW** it is being said. Your candidate may be well spoken but the content of what they are saying may not be good.
- Listen for ideas and concepts, not just facts.
- Avoid jumping to conclusions, and assuming you know what the candidate is about to say. Do not be tempted to interrupt.
- You can think about four times faster than the candidate can speak, so you have spare "thinking time".

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

### EVALUATING THE INFORMATION

Interview boards should agree on how candidate responses are recorded i.e. who will take notes at any particular point. Notes should be factual and objective and boards should note what candidates have said or note particular behaviour. Notes such as "very good answer" etc. should be avoided.

While one board member is asking questions the others can make the detailed notes on responses being given. It is difficult to take all the notes if you are doing the questioning. It is useful at the commencement of the interview to tell the candidates that notes will be taken during the interview.

The following provides suggestions which may aid your decision-making.

- Look for specific evidence that the candidate will perform in the job. How has the candidate performed in similar situations in the past?
- Look for trends and patterns — has your candidate been consistent?
- Look at what people have actually done, not what they say they will do.
- See how the candidate has handled difficult or stressful situations in his/her life or career.
- What does the candidate enjoy doing most? It may be what he/she is best at.
- What does the candidate enjoy doing least? It may be what he/she finds most difficult.

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

### **The Scoring System**

It is the interview board's decision on what "headings" to use in the Personnel Specification and what marks should be allotted. To assist in the scoring system we are listing five criteria which may be of assistance under each "heading".

5. **Excellent Performance** - difficult to see how it could be improved upon.
4. **Superior Performance** - an area of distinctive strength.
3. **Acceptable high standard** - achieves a sufficiently high standard to work at the target job level.
2. **Patchy Performance** - significant weak areas or uneven aspects to performance.
1. **Little Evidence of Competence.**

### **DECISION MAKING**

Decision-making is a crucial part of the whole selection process. To begin the decision-making process board members should refresh their memory about what criteria they had specified as required for the job.

Once this has been completed ranking of candidates should take place and then discussions should begin.

#### **REMEMBER:**

1. Each interview board member allocates an individual total score.
2. The post should be offered to the top ranking candidate provided he/she is suitable in all areas.
3. Every time you appoint someone to a job, you are making a major financial commitment on behalf of the Board.

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

4. It takes a lot less time to re-advertise than it does to dismiss an unsuitable employee.
5. The cost of poor selection is high in terms of money, efficiency and effectiveness.
6. Poor Selection can leave you and the Board vulnerable to complaints.

### ***Recommendations***

The recommendation report which board members sign at the end of the interview is based on the candidate's interview and the written statements furnished by the candidate. If, as sometimes happens, a board member has information about a candidate to which he/she feels the Health Board's attention should be drawn, the item should not be mentioned at the interview but should be conveyed privately to the Recruitment or Personnel Officer.

The Health Board has undertaken that all matters relating to a candidate's application for a post will be dealt with in strict confidence. It is for this reason that we ask particularly that all documents relating to the interview be given to the chairperson or the secretary of the board after the interview.

The information sought by the Chief Executive Officer from the interview board, i.e. personnel specification, marking sheet and order of merit form, must be fully completed in respect of each candidate and each page must be signed by all interview board members.

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

### **SECTION TWO**

### **ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON**

#### ***Managing the Interview***

The Chairperson of interview boards plays a pivotal role in the interview process and carries out a number of key tasks before, during and after the interview. This document outlines the key tasks involved and should be read in conjunction with Section One of this Booklet.

The Chairperson has a key role to play at the pre-interview meeting and also of course the important function of managing the interview itself.

The interview falls into three main phases.

The **OPENING** where the applicant is introduced to the board, the procedure of the interview is explained and the candidate is settled down.

The **MIDDLE** or main body of the Interview, where you collect the information you need, clarify inconsistencies, and probe motivation.

The **CLOSE** where the applicant can ask questions, add further relevant information, be given details of terms and conditions and some indication of when they are likely to be notified of the outcome.

#### ***Role prior to the Interview***

- Meet with the other members of the Interview Board and ensure that the Job description/Profile and Personnel Specification are matched (Appendix 1) and that the agreed criteria is listed on the Personnel Specification Form (Appendix 2).
- Ensure plans for interviews are negotiated with agreement of all board members.

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

- Reach agreement on specific areas and sequence of questioning.
- Ensure questions are free from bias.

The Chairperson may refrain from taking a detailed question area to concentrate on chairing the panel.

### ***Role during the Interview***

- Introduce the board.
- Put the candidate at ease.
- Explain structure of Interview.
- Keep board to planned sequence.
- Keep an eye on timing.
- Pick up on missing points.
- Make links between different parts of interview.
- Close interview and explain what happens next.

### ***Role - Post Interview***

- Ensure each candidate is rated against the Personnel Specification and Job Description/Profile.
- Ensure judgements are based on evidence available to board.
- Control decision-making, making sure differences of opinion are dealt with.
- Ensure that decisions are clearly recorded.
- Ensure that the recommendation sheet, marking sheet and personnel specification forms are completed and signed by each member of the interview board.
- Collect all documentation regarding the interview process and return same to Personnel.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX

#### 1

### *Job Description/ Profile*

A Job Description/Profile as the term implies, describes the purpose, scope, main duties and responsibilities of the job.

A good Job Description/Profile is vital to the success of a selection procedure because it is the foundation upon which all other processes are based. The personnel specification, advertisement, interview, testing and assessment procedures are normally derived from it. Generally the form will include:

- Employing Authority / Unit
- Title
- Minimum Qualifications
- Reports to / Responsible to
- Initial Location
- Core Purpose
- Key Tasks
- General Management Responsibilities
- General statement that job description may be modified to meet changing needs and any other duties that may be required.

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

### **Personnel Specification**

The purpose of a Personnel Specification is to identify the personal attributes, qualifications, skills and knowledge which are necessary for effective performance of the job.

- The aim must be to be objective and as precise as possible about the criteria that are needed. It is used together with the Job Description/Profile to facilitate short-listing, interviewing and the selection of the final candidate(s).
- The information on qualifications, experience and qualities should be derived from the analysis of the knowledge and skills needed to carry out the job. These should therefore be specified e.g. the skills an operator requires to operate a machine or group of machines, the technical ability needed by a technician in whatever speciality, the computer skills which may be necessary for a clerical person or the persuasive ability needed by a personnel officer.
- The list of criteria for the job should be as exact as possible so that at the interviewing stage the interviewer can ask direct questions about what the applicant knows or can do.

Criteria should be set which are clear and measurable eg. "recent relevant experience in a senior management position" should be further defined as to what is considered to be "recent", what is "relevant experience" and what is "a senior managerial position".

All criteria must be recorded on the Personnel Specification and only criteria relevant to the job will be considered. These can be analysed under suitable headings and the Personnel Specification form is left blank so that the individual factors appropriate to this job can be noted.

# Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

## APPENDIX

2

## PERSONNEL SPECIFICATION

Each statement contained in the Personnel Specification must be justifiable by evidence obtainable from an analysis of the job. The specification should describe the person who is capable of doing the job adequately. Factors shown below are examples and may not be relevant for all posts. If so, they should be marked "Not applicable". Blank boxes are available to note additional factors.

POST:	
DEPARTMENT:	
LOCATION:	
DATE:	

FACTORS	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
QUALIFICATIONS AND / OR EXPERIENCE (Length & type)		

ORGANISATION KNOWLEDGE		
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE		

# Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

FACTORS	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
SPECIAL APTITUDES		
SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES		

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

The following are suggestions of the type of characteristics within various categories. However it is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

### **Qualifications/ Experience**

Education  
Qualification/Further Qualifications  
Level of Experience  
Specialisms

### **Organisational Knowledge**

Overview of Services.  
Reporting Arrangements.  
Awareness of Level of Services.  
Political Awareness

### **Professional Knowledge**

Clinical Knowledge  
Human Resource Knowledge  
Technical Knowledge  
Theoretical Knowledge

### **Special Aptitudes**

Interpersonal Skills  
Communication Skills  
Numeracy Skills  
Computer Skills  
Motivation  
Assertiveness  
Leadership Skills  
Innovation  
Presentation Skills  
Manual Skills

### **Special Circumstances**

Shift Work  
Corporate Responsibility  
Unsocial hours  
Driving Licence  
Access to a Car  
Call-Out  
Proximity.

