



Structured Interviewing Guide

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WHAT IS A STRUCTURED INTERVIEW?

NYCPS strongly encourages all hiring managers to use structured interviewing methods to assess job candidates. Structured interviewing means using the same interview methods, i.e., using the same questions and scoring, to assess and compare candidates for the same job. This process enables all candidates to experience the same screening process and all interviewers to assess candidates **using the same criteria**.

“Research shows that structured interviews can be predictive of candidate performance, even for jobs that are themselves unstructured.”¹

INCREASE YOUR KNOWLEDGE BASE

- Familiarize yourself with the [Federal Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures \(UGESP\)](#)
- Learn about the NYCPS [Non-Discrimination Policy](#), and
- [Chancellor’s Regulation A-830](#)

HOW DOES STRUCTURED INTERVIEWING HELP IN HIRING?

A structured job interview allows the employer to focus on the specific skills and abilities required for the position. By asking questions focused on how the candidate’s specific skills align with the job description, this interview style is considered a more effective way of testing a candidate’s potential performance on the job. This interview format also allows employers to assess hard-to-measure skills, like interpersonal skills and oral communication.

¹<https://rework.withgoogle.com/guides/hiring-use-structured-interviewing/steps/introduction/>

WHAT IS BIAS AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT HIRING?

Biases can prevent employers from hiring people who best fit the job and encourage emotion-based hiring. Structured interviews help keep hiring managers from basing hiring decisions on “feelings,” commonalities, or non-job-related aspects of a candidate. Structured interview questions are job-related and allow for greater objectivity.

Unconscious/Implicit bias: an unaware, subconscious preference for or against a group based on attitudes, stereotypes, and other oversimplified beliefs.²

HOW TO PERFORM A STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Step 1: Evaluate the job description and gain clarity on the specific needs for the role.

Creating a structured interview system begins with knowing specifically what is stated in the job description and determining the key/core competencies needed for success on the job. Develop a firm understanding from your team about what you are looking for from candidates.

Step 2: Develop a list of relevant, skills-based, and job-related questions.

Develop a list of job-related questions to ask each candidate that relate to the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be successful in the job. These questions should be standardized in their delivery and utilize plain-speak language that does not contain agency and or industry jargon.

Structured interviewing utilizes two types of structured interview questions: **Behavioral** (“Tell me about a time your behavior had a positive impact on your team.”), and **Situational/Hypothetical** (“How would you handle a customer who isn’t happy with your service even though it was the customer’s error?”). Behavioral questions are good at revealing patterns of behavior and situational/hypothetical questions allow you to see how a candidate will respond to position-related situations.

Step 3: Think about who will work closely with the new hire from inside and outside of your team and include them in the interview process.

Consider including employees from varied backgrounds (e.g., expertise, skills, tenure) that can improve the quality of discussion and lead to better decision making.

²<https://students.wustl.edu/glossary-bias-terms/>

Step 4: Assemble a diverse interview panel.

The members of the diverse interview panel should receive appropriate structured interviewing training. To the extent possible, interview panels should consist of at least three members who represent different diverse communities and a variety of related positions (e.g., entry-level, middle management, leadership, and civil service), expertise, skillset, and tenure. Additionally, panelists should understand the concept of unconscious or affinity bias and provide any training and related materials to support their understanding of the importance of reducing bias in the interview and hiring process.

Step 5: Develop a rubric with standardized evaluation criteria.

A rubric containing standardized and skill-based evaluation criteria will serve as a checklist, ensure consistency between interviewers, and create documentation to support decisions regarding each candidate. The diverse interview panel should consider the relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities that the candidate will need to be successful in the job role. In order to do this, the team should develop a standard scoring system (1-5) to evaluate each answer as well as anticipate possible answers to each question and where each will fall in the scoring system.

Step 6: Conduct the structured interview.

During the interview, the panelists should be aware of the following four types of unconscious bias:

- **Affinity Bias:** Predisposition to people perceived to be “like me.”
- **Perception Bias:** Stereotypes about certain groups.
- **Halo Effect:** Belief that everything about someone you like is good.
- **Confirmation Bias:** Holding a certain belief about your own or a different social identity group.

To further help avoid bias during the interview, the panelists should take detailed notes that relate to the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for the job role. The notes should not contain subjective information concerning the evaluator’s opinion about the candidate being interviewed. The evaluator should capture the factual details of what the candidate said or accomplished. Do not make any notes about the candidate’s appearance, human characteristics, or their membership in a protected class.

DEVELOPING AND CRAFTING THE MOST EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Competencies/Knowledge, Skills, Abilities (KSAs)³

Choose the most important attributes that are required to be effective in the job for which you are interviewing. Gather questions from each of the selected competencies to create your list of interview questions.

Within each competency, sample questions can be organized as follows:

- **Behavioral.** An interview technique that focuses on a candidate's past experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities by asking the candidate to provide specific examples of when he or she has demonstrated certain behaviors or skills as a means of predicting future behavior and performance.
- **Situational.** An interview technique that gives the interviewee a hypothetical scenario and focuses on a candidate's past experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities by asking the candidate to provide specific examples of how the candidate would respond given the situation described.
- **General.**
Competencies:
 - o Business Acumen
 - o Communication
 - o Consultation
 - o Critical Evaluation
 - o Ethical Practice
 - o Flexibility
 - o Global & Cultural Effectiveness
 - o HR Expertise
 - o Leadership & Navigation
 - o Learning Orientation
 - o Relationship Management
 - o Stress Management/Composure
 - o Interview Question Category

To illustrate, if testing for “communications” competency, you can divide questions into buckets of behavioral vs. situational vs. general, as indicated below:

Behavioral Questions

- o Give some examples of how and when you were the spokesperson for your current(or most recent) company.
- o Give an example of how you carefully considered your audience prior to communicating with them. What factors influenced your communication?

³<https://www.shrm.org>

- o Describe a time you used your communications skills to negotiate with an angry person.
- o Have you ever given a presentation to a group? How did you prepare for it? What would you do differently? What would you do the same?
- o Describe a time when you were able to overcome a communications barrier(s).
- o Tell me about a time when effective listening skills helped you in a problematic situation.
- o Tell me about a time when you thought someone wasn't listening to you. What did you do?
- o Recount an occasion where you were met with a greeting that was not normal for you. How did you respond?

Situational Questions

- o Suppose two managers have difficulty communicating with each other, but you understand both. Would you try to help the two managers understand each other better? If so, how?
- o Two members of a team do great work, but they do not work well together. What are some of the keyways to get them to work together more effectively?

General Questions

- o Effective communication requires both strong writing and verbal skills. When it comes to giving information to employees that can be done either way, do you prefer to write an e-mail, send a memo, or talk to the employee? Why?
- o How well do you communicate with others? What communication techniques do you use?
- o When do you think it is best to communicate in writing? When do you communicate face-to-face?
- o In terms of communication (face-to-face, phone, e-mail, instant messaging, texting), when might you use each?

STRUCTURED INTERVIEWING RECAP

1. **Review job description and determine competencies needed for the job**
2. **Develop a list of job-related questions (behavioral & situational)**
3. **Create a rubric with evaluation criteria**
4. **Conduct interviews**

SOME HELPFUL TIPS:

- ✓ The Human Resources Director (“HRD”) or the Office of Employee Relations should review the questions to be asked during the interview and the rubric/scorecard to be used by the interviewers.
- ✓ During the interview, ask the candidate if they have reviewed the job description and go over the basic elements of the position e.g., discuss with the candidate and provide clarification as needed, bring a copy of the job description to share, ask relevant open-ended questions that can reveal how the candidate’s previous experience relates to specific items in the job description.
- ✓ During the interview, do not ask questions that may be implicitly or explicitly

related to a candidate's actual or perceived membership in a protected class, as defined by Federal, State, and City laws and regulations.

- ✓ Take relevant notes on what the candidate said or accomplished as it relates to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the job, such as "Candidate trained in...", "Candidate stated...", or "Candidate has not completed..." Avoid subjective/evaluative comments such as, "I think he is a good fit because..." or "She is a poor candidate for this position because..."

RESOURCES

Don't go it alone! There are many resources available to assist you in this process.

- [Chancellor's Regulation A-830](#), NYCPS' Anti-Discrimination Policy and Procedures for Filing Internal Complaints of Discrimination includes definitions of protected classes and resources for EEO legal support.
- Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) DCAS' [Citywide Training Center](#) offers training on Structured Interviewing & Unconscious Bias. If you would like to participate, contact: CITYWIDETRAININGCENT@DCAS.NYC.GOV for the schedule of upcoming training dates.
- [Recruitment and Hiring page](#) (includes Inclusive Recruitment and Hiring Toolkit and policy)
- Federal Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (UGESP) (1978) [CFR-2011 Employee Selection Procedures](#)
- United States Office of Personnel Management [OPM Structured Interviews: A Practical Guide](#)
- [Sample Structured Interview Individual Rating Form](#)
- [Customizable Sample Structured Interview Individual Rating Form](#)
- [NYCPS Structured Interview Group Rating Form](#)

Questions?

For questions related to this guide and to learn more about relevant training opportunities, visit the [Recruitment and Hiring Infohub page](#) or email DHR@schools.nyc.gov. If you have questions regarding the NYCPS Non-Discrimination Policy or Chancellor's Regulation A-830, please contact the Office of Equal Opportunity & Diversity Management ("OEO") at OEODiversity@schools.nyc.gov.

Sample Structured Interview Individual Rating Form

[\(From Appendix G of OPM Guide\)](#)

GENERAL COMPETENCIES:

The proficiency-level behavioral examples below illustrate the types of behavior associated with each proficiency level, across the full range of HR functions. They are only examples, and candidates may demonstrate proficiency through behaviors not listed. Please [click here](#) for a customizable version of this form.

Writing: Recognizes or uses correct English grammar, punctuation, and spelling; communicates information (e.g., facts, ideas, or messages) in a succinct and organized manner; produces written information, which may include technical material that is appropriate for the intended audience.

Proficiency Rating (choose only one)	Proficiency Level Definition	Proficiency Level Behavioral Examples for Typical HR Positions
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	The candidate can apply the competency in the simplest situations. The candidate requires close and extensive guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately copies information from one source to another. • Composes basic memos and emails. • Completes standard forms such as training forms and travel orders.
<input type="checkbox"/> 2	The candidate can apply the competency in somewhat difficult situations. The candidate will require frequent guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists in developing training materials for managers and employees. • Writes responses to non-selected job applicants. • Writes congratulatory letter to award recipients.
<input type="checkbox"/> 3	The candidate can apply the competency in difficult situations. The candidate may require occasional guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proofreads internal memos for format and grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors. • Prepares informational material to communicate a new leave policy to employees. • Prepares a flowchart of the organization's hiring process. • Develops recruitment materials for a job fair.
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	The candidate can apply the competency in considerably difficult situations. The candidate requires no guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes a handbook for employees to describe HR procedures. • Prepares correspondence on a sensitive discipline case. • Prepares a position paper to defend a controversial HR program. • Prepares organization's written comments on proposed classification standards.
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	The candidate can apply the competency in exceptionally difficult situations. The candidate has served as a key resource & advised others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes the organization's strategic human resources plan. • Authors an article about the organization's innovative HR practices. • Develops legislative proposals to resolve critical HR issues affecting the organization's ability to achieve its mission.

Oral Communication: Expresses information (e.g., ideas or facts) to individuals or groups effectively, taking into account the audience and nature of the information (e.g., technical, sensitive, controversial); makes clear and convincing oral presentations; listens to others, attends to nonverbal cues, and responds appropriately.

Proficiency Rating (choose only one)	Proficiency Level Definition	Proficiency Level Behavioral Examples for Typical HR Positions
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	The candidate can apply the competency in the simplest situations. The candidate requires close and extensive guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains procedures for changing a beneficiary. • Refers prospective applicants to organization's website. • Responds to customer inquiries about pay schedules.
<input type="checkbox"/> 2	The candidate can apply the competency in somewhat difficult situations. The candidate will require frequent guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on project status during weekly team meetings. • Explains special pay rate eligibility criteria to employees. • Presents information about flexible work schedules at new employee orientation. • Conducts exit interviews.
<input type="checkbox"/> 3	The candidate can apply the competency in difficult situations. The candidate may require occasional guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes the organization's employee assistance program to groups within the HR community. • Presents a summary of new regulations affecting the organization's mission at a staff meeting. • Responds to position classification inquiries from managers who are posting vacancies. • Describes new HR services to managers.
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	The candidate can apply the competency in considerably difficult situations. The candidate requires no guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates focus groups to elicit feedback on proposed performance management system. • Presents controversial decisions about organizational restructuring to employee groups. • Explains complicated new pay regulations to a lay group. • Explains to recruiters the impact of a legal decision on application procedures.
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	The candidate can apply the competency in exceptionally difficult situations. The candidate has served as a key resource and advised others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents controversial workforce diversity findings and recommendations to management. • Testifies about the organization's selection procedures at administrative proceedings. • Informs management of their misinterpretation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and recommends corrective action.

Problem Solving: Identifies problems; determines accuracy and relevance of information; uses sound judgment to generate and evaluate alternatives, and to make recommendations.

Proficiency Rating (choose only one)	Proficiency Level Definition	Proficiency Level Behavioral Examples for Typical HR Positions
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	The candidate can apply the competency in the simplest situations. The candidate requires close and extensive guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corrects simple problems with Health Benefits Election forms. • Identifies missing training forms from personnel files. • Reviews information justifying employee award nominations for completeness.
<input type="checkbox"/> 2	The candidate can apply the competency in somewhat difficult situations. The candidate will require frequent guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determines the appropriate changes to employees' official personnel folders in cases of marriage or divorce. • Recommends options for an employee who has no accrued annual or sick leave and is adopting a child. • Suggests review process for vacancy announcements to improve accuracy and clarity.
<input type="checkbox"/> 3	The candidate can apply the competency in difficult situations. The candidate may require occasional guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolves classification issues by researching precedent-setting case decisions. • Analyzes relevant information to identify barriers preventing participation in a mentoring program. • Applies pay rules and regulations to resolve a pay-setting dispute for a new employee.
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	The candidate can apply the competency in considerably difficult situations. The candidate requires no guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrates a variety of strategic hiring flexibilities to address recruitment and retention problems. • Identifies the immediate training needs of employees to address customer complaints. • Resolves union concerns about inconsistent performance ratings across the organization by implementing mandatory supervisory training.
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	The candidate can apply the competency in exceptionally difficult situations. The candidate has served as a key resource and advised others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzes and solves complex labor-management disagreements involving vague and untested areas of case law regarding working conditions. • Resolves logistical problems associated with hiring several thousand employees to meet a temporary staffing need. • Resolves projected shortages in critical occupations by developing a comprehensive recruitment program to include outreach, mentoring, internships, and financial incentives.

Interpersonal Skills: Shows understanding, friendliness, courtesy, tact, empathy, concern, and politeness to others; develops and maintains effective relationships with others; may include effectively dealing with individuals who are difficult, hostile, or distressed; relates well to people from varied backgrounds and different situations; is sensitive to cultural diversity, race, gender, disabilities, and other individual differences.

Proficiency Rating (choose only one)	Proficiency Level Definition	Proficiency Level Behavioral Examples for Typical HR Positions
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	The candidate can apply the competency in the simplest situations. The candidate requires close and extensive guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greets job applicants when they arrive for interviews. • Works with others in the HR office to organize information materials for employee orientation sessions.
<input type="checkbox"/> 2	The candidate can apply the competency in somewhat difficult situations. The candidate will require frequent guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers to assist employees in resolving problems with their benefits election. • Works with other HR staff on a cross-functional team to improve coordination of activities. • Works with others to minimize disruptions to an employee working under tight deadlines.
<input type="checkbox"/> 3	The candidate can apply the competency in difficult situations. The candidate may require occasional guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restores a working relationship between angry co-workers who have opposing views. • Acts courteous and tactful when confronted by an employee who is frustrated by a payroll problem. • Establishes cooperative working relationships with managers, so they are comfortable asking for advice on HR issues.
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	The candidate can apply the competency in considerably difficult situations. The candidate requires no guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates an open forum to discuss employee concerns regarding new compensation system. • Maintains contact with stakeholder groups when implementing new employee development program. • Builds on the ideas of others to foster cooperation during bargaining agreement negotiations. • Identifies and emphasizes common goals to promote cooperation between HR and line staff. • Identifies and alleviates sources of stress among a team developing a new automated HR system.
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	The candidate can apply the competency in exceptionally difficult situations. The candidate has served as a key resource and advised others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents shortcomings of a newly installed HR automation system in a tactful manner to irate senior management officials. • Explains the benefits of controversial policy changes to upset individuals at a public hearing. • Diffuses an emotionally charged meeting with external stakeholders by expressing empathy for their concerns.

Final Rating

Candidate: _____ Rater: _____

General Competencies:	Proficiency Level
1. Writing	
2. Oral Communication	
3. Problem Solving	
4. Interpersonal Skills	

ACTION:

Highly Recommended for Position

Recommended for Position

Not Recommended for Position

Interviewer's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Sample Structured Interview Group Rating Form

[\(From Appendix H of OPM Guide\)](#)

Candidate Name: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Instructions: Transfer each interviewer’s competency ratings onto this form. A consensus discussion must occur with each panel member justifying their rating. Any changes to the individual ratings during consensus discussion should be initialed by the panel members. A final group consensus rating must be entered for each competency.

Panelists’ Individual Ratings

Competency	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Consensus Group Rating
Writing				
Oral Communication				
Problem Solving				
Interpersonal Skills				

COMMENTS:
Name of Panel Chairperson #1:
Name of Panel Member #2:
Name of Panel Member #3:

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Thank You

For questions about this guide, contact the Division of Human Resources

DHR@schools.nyc.gov

