

Consistency and Equity in Online Interviews

Many of the University's regular business processes are moving to the online environment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes interviewing practices related to faculty and staff selection. If the recruitment and selection process for a position in your area cannot be reasonably postponed on the basis of business necessity, the following are a few things to consider for ensuring as similar an online experience as possible for candidates, in particular where an ongoing selection process already was partially conducted in-person but now the remainder of the process has to be conducted online. All candidates should be contacted to identify if any reasonable accommodations will be necessary to participate in an online format.

1. Maintain Consistent Stakeholder/Search Committee Participation

- The same people who met (or would meet) with candidates in-person should also meet with candidates during online interviews. For example, if the interviewee met (or would meet) with the Department Chair individually and with the Search Committee as a group, the same should be true of the online interview.
- If for some reason an individual from the search committee or a stakeholder group is not able to participate in an online format, this change and the rationale should be documented in the search file. This is the same approach as with any circumstance where the composition of the committee might change for some reason.

2. Ensure Substantially Similar Agendas

- The length, order, questions, and types of interactions (formal interview and stakeholder meetings) should be maintained as similarly as possible to in-person interviews.
- Formal interview questions, or question theme areas, and the basis for the evaluation of responses (*i.e.*, a rubric) should always be created in advance of an interview and this also is required for the online format.
- Where a process already was underway and it is no longer possible for candidates to meet with certain individuals in an online format, the reasonable justification for this should be documented.
- Informal discussions that previously would have occurred between a candidate and the committee or stakeholder groups in situations, such as over coffee or lunch, are most prone to a process perception bias as informal discussions may feel more "formal" in an online setting. To mitigate the potential difference in perceptions of certain communication and behavioral competencies, and/or perceptions of concepts such as "collegiality," stakeholder groups should be reminded of the possibility for such biases on the basis of the interaction medium, and all participants promptly should be given structured feedback mechanisms after the interaction that focus on the specific type of feedback being requested in relation to their evaluation of job-related criteria.

3. Maintain An "Interview Day" Contact/Guide

- During in-person interviews, it is common to have individuals who help candidates stay on time, navigate different meeting locations, and answer basic questions about life at the University.
- If a contact/guide would have been involved in the process, an individual should still be available to support the candidate in ensuring they have all of the appropriate links for the separate online meetings that will be hosted and to help communicate to UVA officials if some interviews have gone over time or if there are other issues of which they should be aware.
- When sending the agenda to a potential candidate, a best practice would be to include the links for each "meeting room" at the outset of the process.

4. Evaluate The Candidate And Not The Technology/Medium

- A candidate's issues with the technology, internet connections, background scenery (some candidates may not have easy access to dedicated quiet space), or familiarity with a technology should not be factored into the selection decision. In most instances, such issues are not job-related and would not have been a consideration for in-person interviews.
- Common non-verbal communication factors may be more difficult to assess and/or become a point of hyper-focus in an online format. Specifically, perceptions about a candidate's "eye-contact" and level of engagement with the audience will be different in an online format and interviewers should be sure to evaluate candidates on the content of their answers and presentations, not their online performance acumen.