THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Hiring Toolkit
for
Staff Positions

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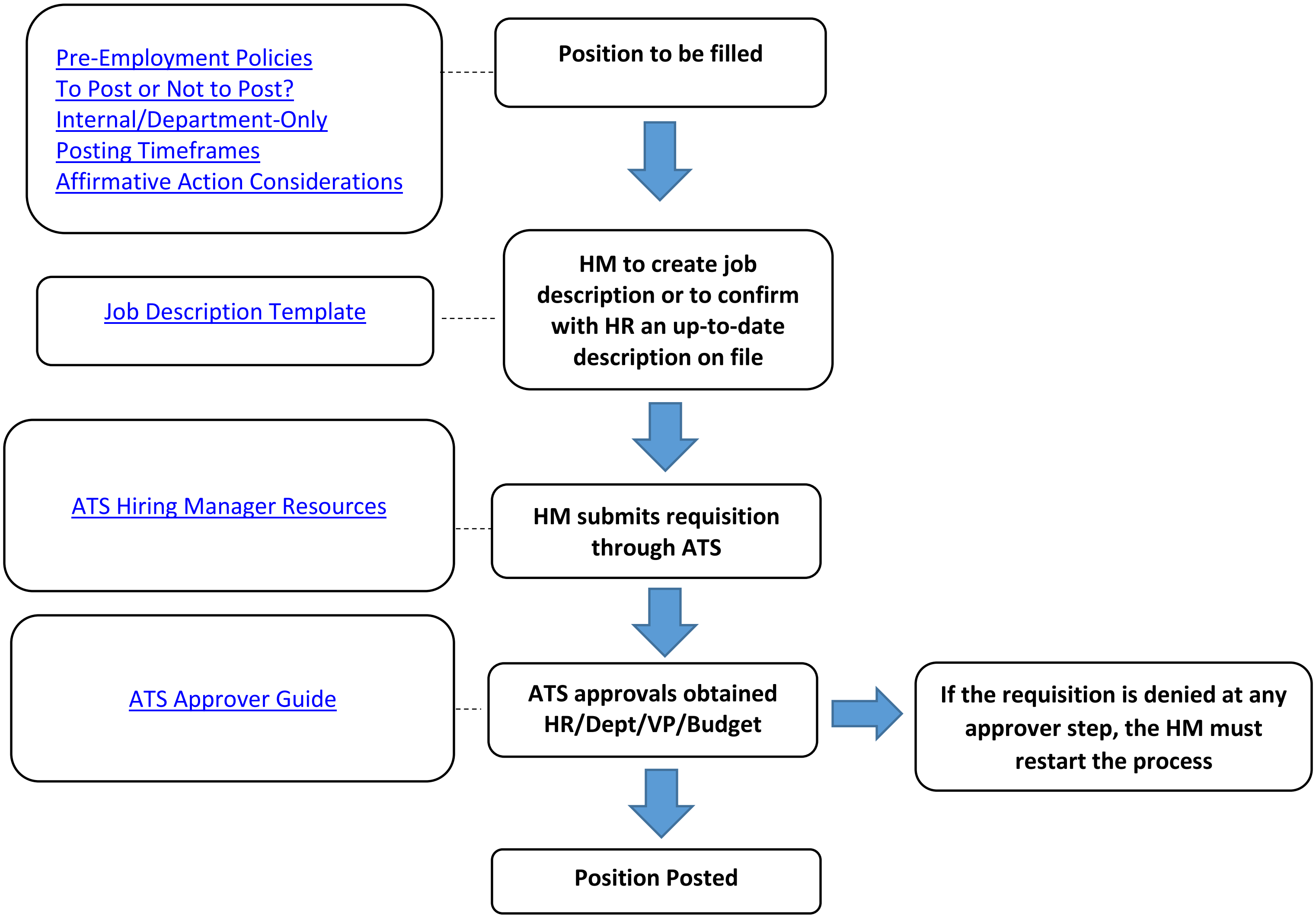
Posting a Job



- All positions will be posted by Human Resources (HR) through our Applicant Tracking System (ATS).
- The Hiring Manager (HM) is responsible for developing and maintaining an accurate description of the essential responsibilities of the job, which is to be maintained in HR.
- HR will review job descriptions for consistency across the University and recommend edits as necessary.
- HR will create the template for positions not yet in the ATS.
- The Department will be responsible for editing specific details needed within the posting.
- The last step in the ATS routing will be with HR and the position will be posted after this stage.
- Discuss with your HR Partner posting and sourcing strategies for position.
- Note that different VP units may have different processes in addition to those outlined in this toolkit, such as a process to approve positions prior to submitting in the ATS.

To Post or Not to Post?

USM policy states that all full-time and part-time faculty and staff positions are required to be posted through the applicant tracking system unless one of the following exceptions apply:

- Interim
- Student worker/Graduate Assistant
- Job enlargement

An interim assignment is when an employee assumes a new position or additional duties on an interim, or temporary, basis, oftentimes used to cover job responsibilities during a vacancy. Keep in mind that while interim assignments are not required to be posted, if the position ever becomes part or full-time the position will be required to be posted at that time. Therefore, consideration should be given to who is selected to fill the temporary/interim role.

For example, a supervisor position of a team of 5 project managers becomes vacant. All 5 project managers may be qualified and/or interested in the supervisor position. If you hand select one of the project managers for the interim role, you are essentially giving that person a competitive advantage in the selection process as they will have had the opportunity to learn the job and demonstrate their abilities, for which the others are not being given the same opportunity. In this situation, consider instead an informal selection process for deciding who should receive the interim role (some fair way to make the decisions where everyone interested receives consideration). You may also consider having the project managers rotate the supervisory role giving all interested parties an opportunity to gain the experience and demonstrate their abilities.

Student worker positions are posted through the student jobs portal managed through Career Services.

A job enlargement is when a position is assigned additional duties that are not temporary in nature. These duties may be of a similar level of the position's current responsibility or of a greater responsibility. So long as the position is essentially the same, even if given a new title, no job posting is necessary and a pay raise may be given according to the Salary Guidelines. When the job responsibilities are of a higher nature, the job change may be viewed as a promotion. Even so, a job posting is not required if the position is essentially the same, even with higher level responsibilities, the former position will not be backfilled, and there are no other incumbents in the position. Consultation with HR is required for making this determination.

For example, the department currently has a financial coordinator position. Additional workload of a higher level is added elevating the position to a financial manager. Despite the increase in responsibilities, the incumbent is still responsible for performing the primary duties that were part of the financial coordinator role plus the additional responsibilities. Also, the financial coordinator position is not being backfilled to compensate for the job change. Lastly, there are no other financial coordinators in the department who may be eligible/qualified for the positon (such as in the previous example of project managers). If all three criteria are met, the job enlargement may occur, and a pay raise may be given according to the Salary Guidelines.

Please note that the policy does allow the AVP for Human Resources to waive the posting requirements in critical situations. Please consult with Human Resources for more information.

Internal/Department-Only Postings

Hiring Managers have the discretion of posting positions as internal-only (limits applicants to USM employees) or department-only (limits applicants to those currently working in the same department as the vacancy). The position is still required to be posted; however, a statement such as “Internal candidates only” is to be included in the special instructions on the posting (note that in Phase 2 of our Cornerstone implementation, this process will be enabled by the system). Please note that external applicants and those outside of the department may still view the job posting and apply (not restricted until Phase 2 is implemented), you will not be able to give consideration to external candidates and must move them to “Not Hired” status regardless of their qualifications. If you do wish to consider external candidates, you are required to repost the position as such (as someone may have not applied because it stated internal-only).

While USM desires to provide promotional opportunities within, we must also be mindful of our diversity efforts. Bypassing the posting process may limit the diversity of the applicant pool. If your department is already diverse, this may not be an issue. However, if the department lacks diversity (or if the position you are recruiting for has an Affirmative Action goal), then it is recommended that the decision to limit the posting to internal-only be reconsidered. This decision must be balanced with the qualifications of the current staff as well as reorganization or budget needs.

Posting Timeframes

USM policy states that all positions must be posted for a minimum of five (5) working days unless otherwise waived by the Associate Vice President for Human Resources. Positions may be posted for a longer duration of time, which should be indicated on the requisition at the time submitted (please state the number of days to post and not a date, such as “post for 10 days”).

A Hiring Manager may request a position be “posted until filled” as opposed to posting for a specific duration of time. A reason may be that the position is difficult to fill and there is a high probability that a candidate will not be selected from the initial pool of applicants and more applicants will be desired. However, posting until filled creates a unique problem in that you are still taking applications while interviewing and making hiring decisions thus not necessarily giving all applicants consideration.

For example, the job is posted on August 1. On August 15, well after the 5-day minimum posting requirement, the Hiring Manager looks through the applicants and selects 3-4 to interview. One of those is extended an offer. However, twenty more applicants applied between August 15 and when the offer was made who did not receive consideration despite their qualifications.

To resolve this issue, you will need to identify a cut-off date for your applicant pool (such as 10 days after posted) and first review and consider only those applicants who applied before the cut-off date. If you are able to hire from that pool, you do not have to consider any other candidates who applied after the cut-off date regardless of their qualifications. If you are unable to make a decision from that pool, you can extend your cut-off date and repeat. The important part with this process is that you give no consideration to anyone who applied after the cut-off date.   You should post your cut-off date in the special instructions section of the job posting, such as, “Candidates who apply within the first 10 days of posting will receive first consideration.”

Affirmative Action Considerations

The University of Southern Mississippi offers to all persons equal access to employment opportunities without regard to age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, gender identity, genetic information, religion, race, color, national origin, and/or veteran status pursuant to applicable state and federal law. It is the responsibility of all persons making employment decisions to support this policy and ensure the work environment is free from discrimination as established in the University's Affirmative Action Plan.

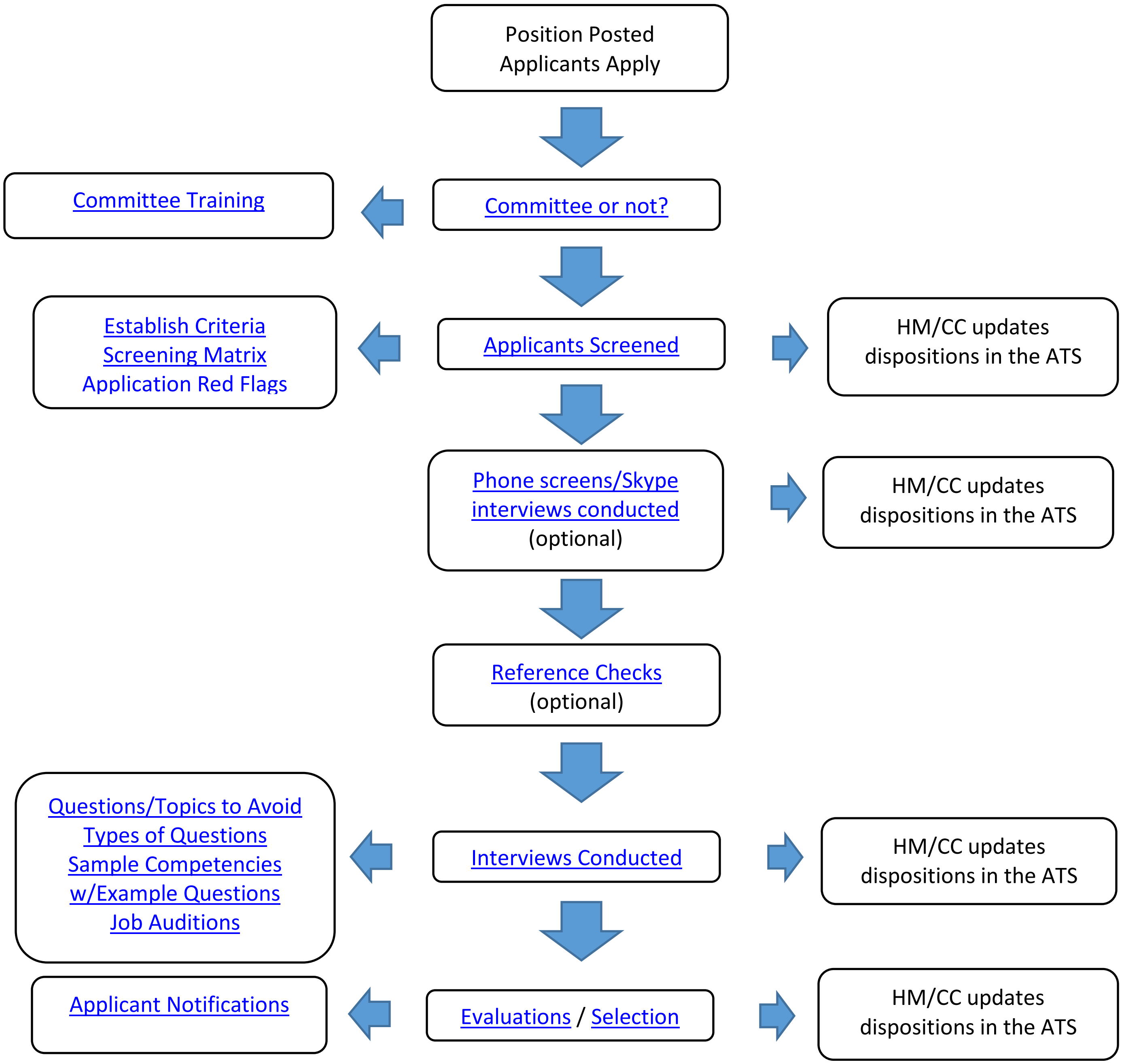
So what is Affirmative Action?

- An Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) is a requirement of Executive Order 11246 which mandates government contractors take affirmative actions to ensure equal opportunities exist in every aspect of the employment process.
- An AAP is a management tool designed to ensure equal employment opportunity for minorities, women, veterans and persons with disabilities.
- Affirmative Action is based on the premise that over time, and absent discrimination, the University's workforce will reflect the ethnic, racial and gender make-up of the labor markets used to recruit applicants.
- As part of the AAP, we are required to conduct an assessment annually of our labor markets and identify gaps where minorities, women, veterans and persons with disabilities are underrepresented (i.e. a greater representation in the workforce than at USM). Those gaps are then translated into goals.
- Goals are created for all EEO job groups for each campus location as well as USM as a whole
- Goals are not quotas.
- Our obligation under the AAP is to make "good faith efforts" to achieve our goals by increasing the pool of qualified minority, female, veteran and disabled candidates when recruiting for open positions.
- We identify our good faith efforts as part of our AAP each year.
- All leaders will receive training on the affirmative action plan, identified goal areas, and good faith efforts action plan on an annual basis.
- Examples of USM's good faith efforts include:
    - Analyze all job descriptions to ensure descriptions accurately reflect position functions
    - Review minimum qualifications of like-positions to ensure consistency across departments
    - Utilize the Mississippi Department of Employment Services, job fairs and recruiting programs sponsored by local community colleges and other community organizations.
    - Identify and utilize targeted recruitment sites for qualified minority and female applicants.

As a Hiring Manager, how can you support our affirmative action efforts?

- Partner with University HR to ensure your job descriptions and postings are consistent with like jobs across the University and accurately reflect appropriate minimum qualifications.
- Adhere to University hiring policies.
- Utilize Diversity Recruitment Resources to source applicants.
- Ensure all participants in the hiring process receive Committee Training.
- Consider diversity when selecting committee members.
- Do not make any employment decisions based on a protected class.

Screening/Selection



- All positions are required to be posted for at least 5 business days.
- All applicants are required to complete an online application in order to receive consideration.
    - Job postings can require attachment of resume, cover letter, reference letters, or additional documents.
- The Hiring Manager (HM) may delegate responsibility for steps in the process to the Committee Chair (CC) if one is selected.
- Reference checks are optional and may be performed at any stage of the process at the HM or CC's discretion.
- The "Special instructions" section of the job posting should contain information regarding posting closing date, required attachments, internal-applicants only, and other information needing to be conveyed to candidates.

Committee or Not?

The use of a committee for staff positions is not required; however, committees are customarily formed for positions with a wide scope of responsibility and/or influence. A committee ensures applicants selected for interview and final consideration are evaluated by more than one individual and minimizes the potential for personal bias. The Hiring Manager may identify members who will have direct and indirect interaction with the applicant in the course of their job. Committees should represent a diverse cross section of the staff.

The Hiring Manager should decide how they would like to use a committee throughout the process at the time the position is posted and make those connections and requests early to ensure that the committee members can accept the responsibilities that follow.

There are two different kinds of committees, and a committee can perform the singular function or a combination of both committee functions:

- Search Committees
    - Review the applicant pool (entirely) and make recommendations for who should be interviewed to the Hiring Manager or select who will be interviewed.
    - Search Committee members should understand and agree on what the minimum and preferred qualifications are for the position prior to reviewing applicants.
- Interview Committees
    - Participate in the interview phase (phone and/or in-person) and make recommendations on the candidates' ability to successfully perform the job.
    - Consider using internal customers, peers, or your HR Partner when developing an interview committee.

For positions that are frequently recruited using a committee, the mix of members should change frequently, as well, to minimize the risk of "group think" or collective bias.

No more than 6 members are recommended for a committee and composition of the committee should be based on the nature of the position. Consider the following when selecting committee members:

- An individual who has a strong understanding of the role and its contribution to the department
- A job specialist (technical or functional)
- An individual who will interact closely with the position and/or serves as a main customer

Committee members must ensure no conflict of interest in relation to the applicants under consideration and must never be an applicant him/herself. Committee members must sign a Confidentiality Agreement form at the start of the process. Committee members should ensure they are well-equipped for their role in the recruitment process to ensure fairness and compliance.

The Hiring Manager and/or committee chair is required to provide Committee Training on the process to all committee participants.

Sample Committee Training Agenda

- **Sign Confidentiality Agreement**

- **Review the job description for the posted position**
    - o What is the role and qualifications of this position?

- **Establish criteria to be evaluated**

- **Establish questions that will be used in phone screens and/or in-person interviews**
    - o Establish how and by whom the questions will be established
    - o Questions should correlate with the established criteria
    - o Use the Sample Competencies With Example Questions as a guide

- **Create a schedule**

- **Complete any required training**
    - o Review the contents of the Screening/Selection portion of the Hiring Toolkit
    - o Implicit Bias training

- **Determine next steps**
    - o Determine who is to do what by when and establish next steps

Implicit Bias

Key points to remember:

- Also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.
- These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control.
- Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness.
- The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance.
- These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often-cited origins of implicit associations.

Key Characteristics of Implicit Biases:

- Implicit and explicit biases are **related but distinct mental constructs**. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.
- The implicit associations we hold **do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs** or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.
- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that **favor our own ingroup**, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our ingroup.
- Implicit biases are **malleable**. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques.

*Taken from the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Ohio State University

Next Steps…

- Continue the conversation with friends, family, colleagues
- Learn more about implicit bias and how it impacts your life
- Take the "Project Implicit" assessment

Establishing Criteria

Criteria are the competencies and qualifications you will establish to screen applicants, determine questions, and make decisions. Criteria is based off of the minimum and preferred qualification as taken from the posted job description, including the required skills, knowledge and abilities (SKAs). SKAs represent competencies needed in the job, such as experience with Microsoft Office or the ability to type 100 wpm or professionalism.

Established criteria must be consistent with the minimum qualifications of the job per the job description. In other words if the job description states that a minimum of 5 years of experience is required, the established criteria must be no less than 5 years of experience. If an established criteria is "strong communication skills" and the person submits a resume with typos and inconsistencies, you may consider that information when assessing the candidate's qualifications. The minimum qualifications serve as the base-line for establishing the applicant pool. If minimum qualifications are not met, the applicant's status should be changed to "not hired" and s/he should be eliminated from consideration.

All applicants who meet the minimum qualifications compose your applicant pool. Once your applicant pool is established, you then need a way to begin evaluating applicants and determining "best qualified" for interviews. Note you are under no obligation to interview every candidate who meets the minimum qualifications of the job. In this stage you may elevate your requirements to begin differentiating candidates. For instance, though only a bachelor's degree may be required, you may score applicants higher for having master's degrees.

Establishing criteria will also be the basis of the questions to ask in both the phone screen and interview stages. For instance, if experience with Microsoft Word is an established criteria, you will want to ask questions specific to evaluating his/her ability to use Microsoft Word. Refer to Sample Competencies with Example Questions for more examples.

When establishing criteria, consideration may be given to the current needs and composition of the department. For instance, if the department is well-established with many senior staff, consideration for a more entry level candidate could be given; whereas, if the department currently has many new and/or vacant positions then more weight could be given to the preferred qualification of more years of experience or a higher level of competency. While minimum qualifications should never deviate from what is listed on the job description, preferred qualifications can change depending on the current needs of the department.

The stages of criteria include:

1. Using the qualifications on the posted job description, criteria is established. Examples of established criteria include 5 years of related experience, a master's degree, proficiency in Microsoft Excel, or strong communication skills.
2. Established criteria will be used for the initial screening of applications to determine your applicant pool (meets minimum qualifications) and then to begin evaluating "best qualified" for further consideration.
3. Established criteria will be used to formulate questions for the phone screen and/or on-site interview.
4. Established criteria will be used to evaluate candidates and determine your hiring decision.

These stages are explored further in the next sections of the hiring toolkit.

Screening Applicants

Prior to reviewing applications and making screening decisions, the Hiring Manager and/or committee chair must understand and agree on what the minimum qualifications and established criteria are for the position. Qualifications will be based on the posted job description.

All applicants who meet the minimum qualifications must receive consideration. Consideration does not mean that they must be interviewed; however, they must stay in "in review" status until the screening process is complete. Any applicant who does not meet minimum qualifications can be immediately moved to "not hired" and should not receive consideration.

The applicants who meet minimum qualifications and are "in review" status compose your applicant pool. The Hiring Manager is under no obligation to interview every one of these candidates and can now employ a screening process to select the "best qualified" candidates for consideration. Please note that "best qualified" is not the same as "most qualified." The Hiring Manager is under no obligation to select the applicant with the most education and experience as qualifications are broader than just those two essentials (i.e. competencies).

For example, applicants with extensive work history may be eliminated due to an unprofessional resume with typos and grammatical errors. Or a candidate with only 5 years of specific experience in the job duties may be considered a better candidate than one with 10 years of related but not specifically the same experience.

In order to make these decisions, it is recommended that you utilize a screening matrix. The matrix allows you to identify your criteria and rate applicants accordingly. You then select the top candidates (how many is up to you) to move on in the process. If those candidates are not successful, you can then move on to the next highest rated candidates, etc. The screening matrix enables a bias-free evaluation of the candidates as well as documentation for why decisions were made.

If you have received an unmanageable amount of applications for a posting, you can work with your HR Partner to take steps to narrow down the applicant pool without having to review and consider every single qualified candidate.

A Note on Motivational Fit

Motivational fit is defined as the extent to which an applicant's expectations of what s/he will get out of a job match up with what the job provides. Why is s/he interested in this job? Will the job meet those needs? Will the job be satisfying and engaging? Motivational fit is considered one of the strongest indicators for predicting success in both job performance and longevity. Consider making motivational fit an established criteria for every position. Refer to the Sample Competencies with Example Questions for more information.

Sample Screening Matrix

Position: Name of Position

Posting Date: Date Position was Posted

The column headers represent the established criteria as determined by the job description and posting. At this stage, criteria should be limited to what can be determined directly from the application.

Candidate	Associate's Degree	1 year related exp	Academia Experience	Comm/Prof	Total Points	Comments
Sally Smith	1	1	0	0	2	Selected for interview
Peter Jones					2	Selected for interview
Alfred Sooza					1	Selected for interview
Penelope Whip					1	Selected for interview
Susie Shaw					0	In review
Jenny Ginger					0	In review
Lonny Lanes					0	In review
Dena Patrick	DNM	0	0	0	DNM	Not hired

If Sally had a B.S. when only an Associate's was required, she "exceeds" expectations and scored a 1. If she had more than 1 year of related experience, she may score higher there as well. According to the legend a 0 represents that the criteria is met but not exceeded.

The top 4 rated candidates were selected for interviews. If no selection is made from those 4, the hiring manager can move down the list and select more for consideration. The HM can determine the number of candidates to further consider, but must consider all candidates with same total points. For instance, if three candidates score a 1 and you want to consider one of those candidates (or a 0), you must consider everyone with that score)

The legend can be changed

Legend:

Does not meet criteria (DNMC)- Not hired

Meets criteria- 0 points

Exceeds criteria- 1 point

If a person receives a DNMC on any of the minimum criteria, the comment should read "not hired" and they should no longer be considered a candidate.

Click here for a Screening Matrix form

Application Red Flags

When reviewing applications/resumes, be on the lookout for red flags. Although red flags themselves are not necessarily reasons for eliminating an applicant from consideration, they may be useful in developing your line of questioning.

Some examples of red flags include:

- Gaps between employment
    - Did the person find him/herself unintentionally without a job (i.e., fired), which is why there wasn't straight employment?
    - Does this person resign positions without having a new one lined up indicating s/he impulsively quits?
    - Did the person take another job that didn't work out and didn't put that on his/her application?

- Short stints at jobs
    - Is this person a job hopper?

- Drastic changes in types of jobs
    - Does this person really want to do something else and is just settling?
    - Has this person been unable to find work in his/her field?
    - Does this person have a career path or just jobs?

- Career ladder discrepancies
    - Why did s/he change jobs for a lower level position or pay cut?
    - Is this a step down for him/her? Why is s/he interested?

- Reasons for leaving
    - Are these reasons going to affect his/her satisfaction in our job as well?
    - Have those reasons been rectified?
    - Do the reasons given match with job changes and dates of changes?
    - Do the reasons show good judgment?

- Indicated preferences (shift, pay, location, etc.)
    - Was s/he able to articulate why s/he is interested in something that may seem undesirable?
    - Is s/he going to take something just for "a" job but keep looking?
    - Is s/he just trying to get a foot in the door and then hope that you will offer the preference desired? Is that going to happen?

Red flags are not disqualifiers, they are subjects to pursue in your questioning and evaluation

Social Media Searches

Many Hiring Managers like to review a candidate's social media to assess professionalism. However, this practice presents challenges because it also exposes information about the candidate that could be considered protected, such as age, national origin, religion, pregnancy, number of children, marital status, disability, etc. Once the Hiring Manager (or others involved in the process) have looked at the information, it is hard to prove it wasn't part of the consideration if ever challenged. Therefore, it is recommended that the Hiring Manager enlists a third-party unaffiliated with the hiring process to conduct the search and report back on only relevant job related factors. Relevant information might include vulgar posts or images, discriminatory language, or the use of social media to harass. Please consult with Human Resources if you have questions.

Phone Screens/Skype Interviews

Phone screens (or use of Skype or similar) are conducted to further drill down on candidate qualifications. Although a candidate may look well qualified on paper, s/he may be lacking the competencies required for the job that are difficult to evaluate from an application/resume alone. Therefore, a phone screen allows a mini-interview to assess skills, knowledge and abilities without requiring the extensive time commitment that a full interview entails.

Also, a phone screen is a good opportunity to discuss deal breakers like schedule, travel, salary, location, and benefits. A phone screen enables you to ensure the candidate understands the job requirements and is still interested before anyone's time is wasted finding that out at the end of the process (such as turning down an offer because of salary).

The questions to ask in a phone screen are to be established in advance, based on the criteria established, and should be asked to each candidate being interviewed for consistent evaluation. A phone screen should be treated like any interview and a Phone Screen Evaluation should be completed afterwards. You should then narrow down your candidates for on-site interviews based on the evaluations from the phone screens.

If you are dissatisfied with your candidates after the phone screen, go back to your screening matrix and identify the next group of applicants for consideration. If none of the applicants meet minimum qualifications or pass the phone screen step, you may repost. While you can reevaluate your preferred qualifications with this applicant pool, you cannot decrease minimum qualifications without reposting the job (and having a new job description reviewed and approved by HR).

Note that the candidate with the most experience and education is not always the "best" candidate for the job. You are under no obligation to hire the person with the "most" qualifications. The "best" candidate may be determined by skills, knowledge, abilities, salary expectations, interest in the position and other competencies. Oftentimes the "most" qualified person is "over" qualified for the position. Being overqualified in and of itself should not disqualify a person but may be a negative if it skews their salary expectations or would inhibit their interest in the job duties to be performed, for instance.

When to talk money?

You are encouraged to talk salary, at least generally, as early in the process as possible. In fact, HR encourages you to include salary information in the job posting. If a person's expectations for pay is considerably different than what we are offering, it is recommended you know that as soon as possible so as not to waste time and money pursuing someone who will not be interested. Just remember to never overpromise or set unrealistic expectations.

Sample Phone Screen Evaluation

Candidate's Name:		**Date:**	
Job Title:		**Completed By:**	

1. **Why are you interested in this position?**

Possible Deal breakers

2. **Confirm applicant's interest in pay, schedule, and location.**
3. **Confirm applicant's education and certifications.**

The questions should be determined based off of the criteria being evaluated.

4. **Describe your administrative assistant experience.**
5. **What is your experience specific to contracts and budgets?**
6. **If I were to contact your current manager, would they recommend you for this position? Why or why not?**
7. **Share overview of position and ask for questions and response.**

1- Does not meet criteria; 2- Meets criteria; 3- Exceeds criteria

Scale may be changed

Criteria	Rating	Comments
Motivational Fit		
Education/certification		Criteria is determined by the qualifications and KSAs of the posted job description
Overall Experience		
Contract & Budget Experience		
Professionalism		

8. **Additional Comments:**

Recommend: Recommend can be "Recommend for interview" or "Not Hired" or "Keep In Review pending other candidates", etc.

Click here for a Phone Screen template

International Hires

If a candidate will need visa services to work in the United States, the Hiring Manager should consult with the Office of International Student and Scholars Services (ISSS) to determine a candidate's ability to work in the United States or can be provided the appropriate visa to work at USM. When possible, this should be done prior to inviting the candidate to campus as a finalist. Finalists must either meet in person with the ISSS to review their immigration status and potential additional information needed or communicate via email.

A Hiring Manager is not obligated to sponsor applicants for work visas and may reject applicants with such a need. While national origin is a protected class, you are not making a decision to not hire because of where the person is from but because you do not wish to sponsor the applicant. That is allowable under law. In fact, our application asks questions about visa status and sponsorship so that information is available to you as part of your screening process. If the Hiring Manager does not have a budget and the applicant answers yes to requiring visa sponsorship, that can in and of itself be a screening criteria (i.e. anyone who needs sponsorship is automatically eliminated).

Reference Checks

Reference checks are optional and can be done at any stage of the process. As reference checks can be time consuming, it is recommended that they are not completed sooner than after the initial screening as the candidate pool has narrowed to a more reasonable number of applicants at that point. If the candidate is currently employed at the University, it is customary to contact their current supervisor to conduct a reference check prior to extending an offer.

A reference check form should be used when checking references both External and Internal.

Note that internal references should be limited to documented performance only. It is unacceptable for a current supervisor to relay issues with performance or behavior that have never been discussed with the employee formally, such as in a disciplinary action or a performance evaluation. A supervisor should limit their feedback to the most recent performance evaluation and any active documented counselings. If there are issues with the employee that are not documented, the supervisor should simply respond, “No documented performance/behavior issues.” It is also improper for a supervisor to give a positive reference contrary to performance or behavior issues; for instance, not sharing the issues in an attempt to transfer the employee out of his/her area of responsibility. It is important to ensure that the information being shared is fair to all parties involved.

Requests for information from external sources may be more robust and detailed asking about knowledge, skills and abilities. The information requested should mirror the criteria being evaluated. The information gathered should be job-related and should not be in conflict with the Questions and Topics to Avoid.

Sample Internal Reference Check

Candidate Name:	Position in Consideration:
Reference Name:	Date:

1. Can you describe the key duties and responsibilities of the position this candidate has/had in your department?

2. For the most recent performance evaluation, what was the candidate's overall rating?

3. What competencies are documented as strengths?

4. What competencies are documented as areas in need of improvement or development?

5. Does the candidate have any current documented counselings on file? What are the issues being addressed?

6. What is the status of the documented counselings? Has the candidate resolved the issue(s)?

Reference Checked By:

Date:

Click here for an Internal Reference Check form

Sample External Reference Check

Candidate Name:	Position in Consideration:
Reference Name:	Date:

1. What is the nature of your relationship with this Candidate? (Probe for Professional/Academic/Personal knowledge; length of relationship; and still in contact)

2. Can you describe the key duties and responsibilities of the position this candidate had with your organization?

3. Can you comment in regard to this candidates performance in: (1=Poor, 3=Average, 5=Excellent)

This list should include the established criteria

Ability to Multi-task:	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
Customer Service:	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
Quality of Work:	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
Use/Knowledge of relevant technology:	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

4. What area of responsibility did s/he excel in?

5. What area of responsibility did s/he have the most room to grow in?

6. Would you rehire this candidate if you had the opportunity?

7. Would you recommend this candidate for _________________ Position?

8. Is there anyone else you can think of that I should contact as a reference for this candidate?

Any additional comments as we consider this candidate for a position:

Reference Checked By:

Date:

Click here for an External Reference Check form

On-Site Interviews

All Hiring Managers, committee members and others involved in the interview and selection of candidates must attend Committee Training on the hiring process and become familiar with basic interview guidelines. Hiring Managers or committees can use the Sample Competencies with Example Questions to craft an interview script for both phone and in-person interviews. The interview questions are to be established in advance, based on the criteria established, and should be asked to each candidate being interviewed for consistent evaluation. This criteria should be added to the Interview Evaluation form and should be tailored to the specific position based on the qualifications and SKAs of the posted job description.

The Hiring Manager and/or his proxy (ex., administrative assistant or committee chair) is responsible for scheduling interviews. Considerations when scheduling interviews:

- Who will participate in the interviews and what role will they play?
- Where and when will the interviews be held?
- Who will train the interview participants and prepare them? When will that be done?
- Who will help manage travel arrangements and reimbursement, if needed?
- Will meals be necessary? Who will arrange and who will be involved?
- Will the candidates need transportation and who will provide?
- If assistance with disability accommodations is needed, contact the AA/EEO office in HR.

You want to accomplish 3 things in an interview:

- Obtain information about the candidate's qualifications to determine if s/he meets the established criteria
- Provide information about the job and University to the candidate
- Document the interview on an evaluation form

Establish rapport

- Greet the applicant with a pleasant smile and handshake.
- Make appropriate small talk ("Did you find us ok?").
- Explain who you are and how the interview process will work.

Gather information

- Refer to Questions and Topics to Avoid.
- Verify specific information on the application/resume.
- Verify that the applicant is interested in the position available (hours, pay, travel, location, etc.).
- Gain information by using the Sample Competencies with Example Questions.
- Be sure to ask the same questions to all candidates.

Sell the job

- Encourage the candidate to ask questions and answer the questions as honestly as possible. Keep in mind that we do not want to mislead candidates. The more accurately you describe the job, environment and expectations, both pros and cons, the less surprises there are for new hires. Telling about the challenges of the job can be just as important as selling the good, but of course you want to emphasize the positives over the negatives.

Close

- Thank the candidate for his/her time. Explain the next step in the process so s/he knows what to expect and when it will be.

Evaluation

- Complete the Interview Evaluation immediately following the interview while your impression is still fresh.

Interview Notification

When scheduling interviews with candidates, the best recommendation is to contact each candidate by phone to make the arrangements and then follow up via e-mail. You may also utilize the ATS to schedule interviews. When you follow up in writing, it is recommended that you utilize a professional notification with complete information about the interview process so that the candidate can prepare accordingly.

For instance:

Interview Details:

Name	Susie Candidate
Date	Tuesday, May 16, 2017
Time	1:00 p.m.
Location	The University of Southern Mississippi Hattiesburg Campus 118 College Dr., Hattiesburg, MS Human Resources McClemore Hall Rm 301
Attire	Business Professional

1:00 p.m.
Hiring Manager

Name:	Title:
Phoebe Buffay	Therapy Manager

2:00 p.m.
Interview Committee

Name:	Title
Dr. Ross Geller	Chair, Department of Anthropology
Rachel Green	Buyer
Joey Tribbiani	Actor
Chandler Bing	Transponder

(Please note participants could change due to last minute scheduling conflicts)

If you have questions, please contact Monica Geller at 601-266-5000.

Questions and Topics to Avoid

Employment law prohibits making employment decisions based on the following:

> Age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, gender identity, genetic information, religion, race, color, national origin, and/or veteran status

Any questions relating to these areas should ***never*** be used. Some examples are "Where are you from originally?" (national origin), "Where do you go to church?" (religion), "How old are you?" (age), or "Do you intend to have children?" (pregnancy). You also want to avoid how you phrase things: "We are looking for a recent college graduate" (age) or "young and energetic" (age) or "Man's work" (gender). Questions like this should be avoided even during small talk.

Other areas to avoid:

> Marital status
> Number of children
> Arrest record
> Military discharge
> Economic status
> Mode of transportation
> Medical problems
> Attendance at previous jobs

The bottom line is that these areas are not job-related. Anyone can be arrested but that doesn't mean s/he was guilty; the background check provides us with any information we should know. How a person gets to work is irrelevant, as long as they indicate that they ***can*** get to work. Therefore, instead of asking if s/he has children or has a car- something that may concern you about his/her ability to get to work reliably- you should ask instead if s/he can meet the work schedule. Also, asking questions about attendance issues at previous jobs can be tricky as it may reveal medical conditions, something you shouldn't ask about or discriminate against. Your questions should stick to if the candidate is able and willing to perform the duties of this position.

However, even if you don't ask, it is possible that the person might offer the information on his/her own. If this occurs:

- Do not write the information down.
- Do not pursue the subject with the applicant.
- Do not discuss amongst the committee members.
- Do not base your decision on that information.
- Get help from University Human Resources.

Use care in crafting your questions sticking closely to the criteria you've established.

Types of Questions

<u>Open-Ended</u>

- Allows candidate to open up and respond freely.
- Generally begins with “explain how,” “tell me about,” etc.
- Use open ended questions to
  - Collect Information
    - “Why did you choose Human Resources for a career?”
    - “How do you go about setting goals?”
  - Promote discussion and expand on ideas
    - “Tell me about …”
    - “What do you mean by …”
  - Personality insight
    - “Why do you consider yourself a good leader?”
    - “What has been your greatest accomplishment?”

<u>Closed</u>

- Allows interviewer to receive a specific response.
- “Yes” or “No” or limited response (such as “five years”)
- Generally begins with “have you,” “do you,” “how much,” etc.
- Use closed questions to
  - Gain clear understanding of remarks
    - “Were you ultimately responsible for…”
    - “How much time did you spend on that project?”
  - Substantiate understanding
    - “How much autonomy were you given by your manager?”
    - “Are you looking for a nightshift position?”

<u>Behavioral-Interviewing</u>

- Based on the premise that the best predictor of future performance is past performance.
- Questions are formulated based on the criteria established for the position (as defined by the interview evaluation)
- Use behavioral-interview questions to surmise experience, or lack of
    - Was the candidate able to give an example that demonstrates experience?
    - Did s/he handle the described situation well?
    - Is his/her experience relatable to our environment?
    - Was s/he able to give multiple examples to reaffirm experience level?
- Traditional interview question: “What is your leadership style?”
  vs.
  Behavioral interview question: “Tell me about a time when you successfully coached an underperforming employee.”
- Requires the candidate to demonstrate his/her experience and decision making as opposed to telling you what s/he thinks is the right answer.

Sample Competencies with Example Questions

The following is a list of sample job-related criteria used to evaluate candidates along with a brief explanation of what the criteria is used to measure. In addition, example questions are provided to guide you in determining how to probe the criteria for effective evaluation. Keep in mind that you are not limited to the criteria or questions provided in this guide; these are for sample purposes only.

Experience & Education- Goal is to find if candidate's past has helped prepare him/her for the available position. Does s/he have the required education and experience?

- Describe the responsibilities of your former position?
- Tell me about your experience with…
- What was your specific role in the process?
- What sort of projects did you work on at school that helped prepare you for…?

Motivational Fit & Enthusiasm- Gauges how well the person 'fits' the job. Will s/he be happy and satisfied? Is s/he going to get what s/he is looking for out of this position? Is it going to help her/him reach her/his future goals? Is s/he going to be personally fulfilled in this position? Is the person excited about the job or are they just looking for "a" job? You can gauge also from the type of questions the candidate asks (if any asked at all).

- Why does this job interest you?
- What are you expecting to gain from this position?
- How do you feel about taking on these responsibilities?
- What are you looking for out of a job?
- What part of your work gives you the greatest feeling of satisfaction?
- What has been your favorite/worst job and why?
- What type of environment do you prefer to work in?
- What are your future career goals?

Adaptability /Multi-Tasking- Assessing a person's ability to adapt to change and handle multiple different job duties at once. Are they "slow and steady" or do they have the ability to quickly change gears and not be overwhelmed by constant interruption and requests for help?

- Give me examples of how you've gone above and beyond in your current job?
- Sometimes we are asked to solve problems without the proper resources and tools. Do you have an example of when this has happened? What did you do?
- Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.
- How do you handle a challenge? Give me an example.
- Tell us about a situation in which you had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?
- Describe one of the most difficult, challenging, demanding, or frustrating work experiences you have faced. Why was it so difficult? How did you handle the situation? What did you learn from the situation?

Communication Skills & Professionalism- In this assessment you are looking for the 3 main behaviors that affect patient satisfaction: communication, listening and respect. A lot of this is observable. Does the candidate communicate on a level appropriate for the job? Did the candidate make eye contact? Were his/her answers appropriate for the questions? Did s/he listen attentively or did s/he interrupt you? Does s/he have a demeanor of confidence? Does s/he understand what proper business behavior is?

- What do you do when you don't understand your supervisor's instructions?
- Tell me about a time when you struggled to communicate with someone.
- Tell me about a difficult patient you had to care for. What made them difficult? How did you respond? What was the outcome?

Customer Service Orientation- In this assessment you are looking for a service attitude. Is the person eager to help and willing to go above and beyond? Can they diffuse negative situations? Will they relentlessly hunt down answers and solutions?

- Provide an example of a time in which you had to use your fact-finding skills to gain information for solving a problem
- Tell me about a time that you helped resolve a particularly difficult customer issue.
- Describe the most creative way you have solved a customer's problem
- Tell us about a recent success you had with an especially difficult employee/co-worker.
- Please describe a time when you were working with a customer (internal or external) and were not able to give him or her what was originally requested. How did you approach this customer? What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you worked with a demanding customer. In what ways was this customer demanding and how did you go about working with this person. What was the outcome?

Project Management- Assessing a person's experience and ability to manage projects.

- Describe a project you have recently managed? What role did you play? What were you trying to accomplish? What barriers did you encounter? What was the end result?
- How do you ensure a project stays on track? What tools do you use to plan your activities?
- In your experience, what are important skills for a project manager to be successful?
- Tell me how you schedule projects and establish timelines.

Consultation Skills – Goal is to find out how well the person can interact with various customers, handle tough situations, gain credibility and respect, and be influential.

- Tell me about a time you disagreed with a customer on how to resolve an issue. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you had to speak out about something you felt was wrong?
- *Give an example when you* persuaded management to do something *they were first reluctant to do. What was the result?*
- Have you ever had to "sell" an idea to a customer or a group? How did you do it? Did they "buy" it?
- How do you go about establishing rapport with a customer? What have you done to gain their confidence? Give an example.
- Have you ever had to introduce a policy change to your work group? How did you do it?
- Have you ever met resistance when implementing a new idea or policy to a work group? How did you deal with it? What happened?

Leadership- Goal is to find out if the person demonstrates the ability to motivate the team and make good decisions. Is/she someone who acts as a role model and leads by example? Is s/he someone who understands the role of a leader?

- What have you done to improve your leadership skills over the last year?
- What personal standards do you hold yourself to as a leader?
- Tell me about a time when you were successfully able to turn a failing employee around.
- If you took your manager's position tomorrow, how would you improve the department?
- Tell me about a tough employee relations situation you've had to deal with.
- How do you make constructive feedback motivational?
- What was the toughest business decision you ever had to make?
- Why have you chosen to be in management?

Judgment/Decision Making- Indicates ability to make appropriate decisions in a thoughtful way. Does the candidate have the ability to work in an environment of uncertainty and change? Does the applicant take action to achieve goals and go beyond what is required? Can they demonstrate ability to exercise discretion and judgment in matters of sensitive or confidential nature?

- Tell us about a time you made a mistake. What did you do? How did you handle it?
- What was the toughest decision you had to make in your last position?
- Tell me about a decision you made that you later regretted.
- Tell me about a termination decision you made. What would you do differently now?
- How do you handle last minute changes?
- Tell me about a major change in your previous position and how you dealt with it.
- Describe a project or idea you originated.
- What kind of changes did you make in your past positions?
- What personal standards have you set for yourself? How do you keep from falling short?
- What do you do when you disagree with a decision your manager has made?
- Have you ever missed a deadline? Why?
- Tell me about a time you didn't complete your work. What did you do about it?

Results-Orientation- In this assessment, you are identifying if the person is capable of seeing the big picture and how all the pieces and parts contribute to the end goal. Are they able to identify when something doesn't make sense and needs to be changed or are they solely process focused? Do they have initiative to get things done?

- Describe a project or idea that was implemented primarily because of your efforts. What was your role? What was the outcome?
- What impact did you have in your last job?
- What projects have you started on your own recently? What prompted you to get started?
- Give some instances in which you anticipated problems and were able to influence a new direction.
- Being innovative sometimes means getting away from the same old way of thinking. Tell me about a time when you were able to break away from the traditional way of thinking to come up with new ideas.
- Give me examples of how you've gone above and beyond in your current job?

Job Auditions

A job audition is when you require, as part of the interview process, the candidate to perform some job-related activity to demonstrate his/her competence. Examples include:

- Conducting a presentation (could be used to assess presentation skills and/or subject matter expertise).
- Sharing examples of past work products (examples might be an advertising campaign or fundraiser they worked on, something they've written such as a policy or program or article, or a training class they developed.)
- In-basket exercises (During the test, the applicant is given mail, telephone messages, documents and memos that they have a limited period of time to set priorities, organize their working schedule accordingly and respond to mail and phone calls.)
- Demonstrating ability to utilize computer systems, such as creating a spreadsheet
- A writing sample

If the person needs to prepare for the job audition in advance, this information should be included as part of the Interview Notification. Give specifics as to what is expected, time and length, as well as any resource considerations (such as file types for presentations or equipment that will be made available).

For example:

> Please be prepared to give a brief presentation (10 minutes) on the topic of Diversity- your philosophy and recommended approach. The format and overall content for this presentation is what you would like for it to be – no content requirements. You may e-mail your PowerPoint (if applicable) in advance to mgellar@usm.edu so we will have it ready and available for you at the time of your interview. If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to Monica Geller at 601-266-5000.

Other examples of job auditions include:

- Applicants for an administrative assistant position are asked to edit a piece of written correspondence, complete a purchase requisition and/or fill out a travel voucher.
- Applicants for positions in public relations, communications or marketing may be asked to write a press release responding to a reporter's written questions and/or provide feedback on a draft brochure intended for the general public.

If a job audition is included in the process, it should align with the criteria established for the job. For instance, an administrative assistant applicant's performance on a Microsoft Excel task should be used to rate the established criteria of experience or his/her performance on an in-basket exercise should be used to rate the established criteria of organization skills.

If using a job audition as part of your process, it is recommended that you consult with Human Resources.

Evaluating Candidates

Interview evaluations should be completed immediately following the interview while your memory is still fresh. Keeping track of candidates may be difficult, and relying on memory is risky and inefficient. Using an Interview Evaluation not only gives you the opportunity to record information about the candidates but also ensures that you evaluate each candidate using the same job-related criteria. A structured evaluation form used for all applicants also helps eliminate interview bias.

When completing an evaluation:

Identify useful information
Record information related to each criteria. The best information is "evidence statements," which are precise sentences or phrases used by the applicant.

Evidence is clear if…

It is specific and factual
It makes sense
It enables understanding of the situation, opinion or thought being conveyed

Evidence is relevant if…

It pertains to one or more of the established criteria identified in the posted job description

Evidence is adequate if…

You have obtained enough evidence for each job-related criteria to make a hiring decision.

Assess applicants
Rate applicants against the established criteria.

A simple rating scale might be (optional):

Exceeds Criteria (E): Evidence shows that the applicant's skills and competencies go beyond what is required to do the job.

Meets Criteria (M): Evidence suggests that the applicant will be able to perform at an acceptable level with respect to the established criteria.

Does Not Meet Criteria (D): Evidence suggests that the applicant would not be able to perform at an acceptable level with respect to the established criteria.

Stick to Established Criteria when Evaluating Candidates

Use care in noting your impressions of the candidates on evaluations. For instance, comments such as "accent is too thick" or "not sure they could meet the physical demands of the job" are veering into protected categories that could be construed as discriminatory. Utilize the Questions and Topics to Avoid as your guide for what aspects are to be avoided, and stick to evaluating established criteria to ensure all assessments are job related. When in doubt, get help from your HR Partner.

Sample Interview Evaluation

______________________________ ______________________________________

Candidate Name Position

______________________________ ______________________________________

Interviewer Date

Each participant in the interview should complete an evaluation

Rating scale can be changed

Criteria	Rating Does not meet– Partially Meets- Meets – Exceeds- Highly exceeds					Not Rated
Experience/Education	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ NR
Communication Skills	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ NR
Organization	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ NR
Interpersonal Skills	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ NR
Conflict Management	□ 1	□ 2	□ 3	□ 4	□ 5	□ NR

Criteria should be established from the qualifications and SKAs of the job description and posting. At this stage the candidate has already been deemed "minimally qualified" so more focus should be given to required competencies.

MAJOR STRENGTHS

The positives the candidate has going for them.

AREAS OF CONCERN

List any negatives in regards to the criteria. For example, "the candidate struggled finding examples to support his statements" or "lacks experience in…"

There is no recommend or total scoring on this evaluation; Intended for documentation of the interview and feedback purposes for the Hiring Manager only.

Click here for an Interview Evaluation form

Making the Selection

Congratulations! You have completed the screening, interviewing and evaluation process and are ready to make a selection.

1. Collect interview evaluations from all parties who participated in the interview process. Discuss and/or clarify any issues or concerns resulting from the evaluations before finalizing your decision.

2. Compare and contrast your candidate feedback to the established criteria. Who is the best candidate? Why? Is your decision fully job-related? If you have concerns, get help from University HR.

3. Determine if more information is needed. For instance, you may wish to bring your top candidate(s) back for a follow-up interview if there are still lingering questions or doubts.

4. If it wasn't part of the interview process, consider bringing the top candidate(s) in to meet the team and view the work environment prior to making an offer.

5. Record your decision on the Selection Document form.

6. Create a file- either electronic or paper- to store all of the forms and documentation used as part of the process and keep on file for a minimum of 3 years. This documentation will be used to support the hiring decision should it later be challenged, such as through a discrimination claim. You only want to keep the official documentation, such as screening matrix, interview evaluations, reference checks and selection documentation. Handwritten notes from the interview, for instance, can be discarded as the relevant information is provided on the interview evaluation.

7. While the applicant tracking system will automatically send notifications to the candidates who were not selected once their status is changed to "Not Hired", consider reaching out directly to those you interviewed to notify them they were not selected. Doing so is not only respectful but also maintains the relationship in the event of future opportunities.

Note: Unlike our former Applicant Tracking System that did not send notifications to candidates until the position was closed, the current ATS sends notifications at any point in the process as soon as the applicant's status is changed to "Not Hired." Notifying candidates in a timely manner that they are no longer in consideration is respectful and considerate. Do not leave people hanging.

Sample Selection Documentation Form

General Information			
Job Title:		**Department:**	
Hiring Manager:		**Date of Posting:**	
Requisition Number:			
Scope of Candidates:	☐ USM Internal	☐ Department Internal	☐ External

☐ Search Committee Members ☐ Interview Committee Members ☐ No Committee
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
Committee Chair:

Results of On-site Interviews

Candidate(s) Hired:	Reason(s)

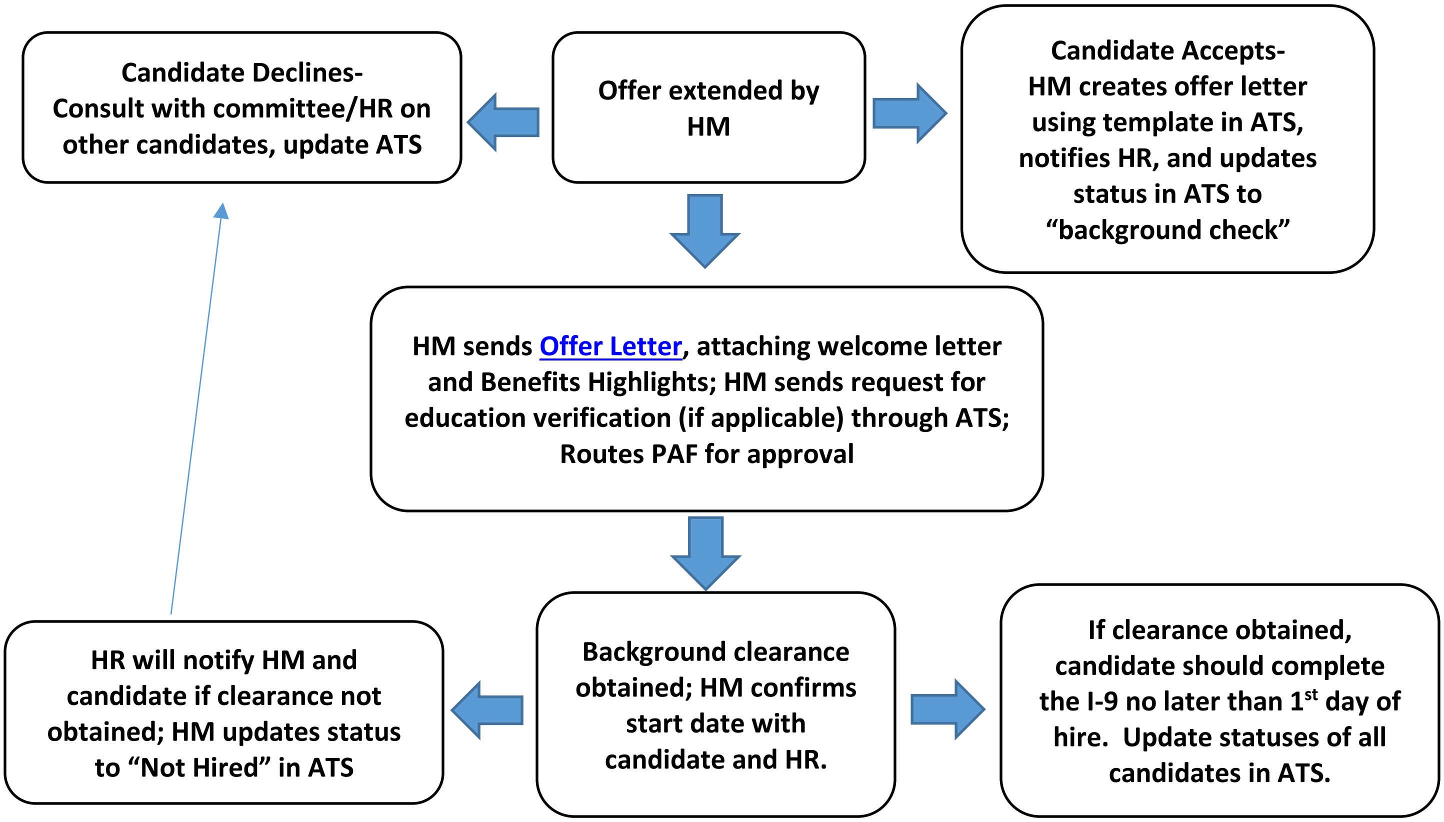
Candidate(s) Not Hired:	Reason(s)

Additional Notes:

Prepared by: **Date:**

Click here for a Selection Document form

The Hiring Process



- **HM extends offer to candidate and sets tentative start date.**
  - HM responsible for following budgetary and compensation guidelines when making offers.
  - If candidate declines offer; HM will update status in ATS and determine next steps with the Search Committee and HR Partner.
  - If candidate accepts offer; HM will create offer letter and new hire PAF then advise HR Partner.
- **At the time of offer, HM will send candidate welcome letter with new hire processing instructions.**
  - If the position will be located at Stennis or Gulf Park, advise candidates that they will contact the Gulf Coast HR Partner to schedule an appointment to deliver forms.
  - If the position will be located at GCRL, advise candidates to contact the GCRL HR/Payroll Coordinator.
  - If the position will be located in Hattiesburg, advise the candidate on location of HR Office and office hours to drop off necessary forms.
  - Information should be provided to the candidate that completing the I-9 form is required and instructions and a list of acceptable documents can be found in the new employee forms.
- **HR will notify the department once background clearance has been obtained. Upon clearance, HM should reach out to the new hire, confirm a start date and answer any questions s/he may have about starting work and then confirm the official start date with HR.**
  - Employee ID generated by HR after New Hire Paperwork has been processed.
  - Department should make final adjustments to requisition in ATS marking candidate as hired and a final disposition on all other candidates.
  - Candidate must complete I-9 no later than 1st day of hire including providing acceptable documentation for completion of Section 2.

Offer Letter

USM policy requires all candidates who receive a job offer at USM be given a written offer letter. Templates for offer letters are included in the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) and may be sent to the candidate through the ATS. While edits may be made to the template, the information within the template should not be changed and you should include Human Resources as an approver if you add significant content or make material changes. For faculty offer letters, a representative from the Provost's office must be included as an approver before sending the offer letter.

In addition to the offer letter, you are encouraged to attach a welcome letter and a copy of the Benefits Highlights. The welcome letter provides instructions for the new hire processing: where to find forms, where to submit them, how to complete the background check, etc. This is an important document for you to provide to candidates as their employment may be delayed or even revoked if they do not complete the process timely or correctly. Templates for Welcome Letters are available on the HR website. The Benefits Highlights is a short summary of the benefits offered at USM. This would be an appropriate document to send to any benefit-eligible applicant during the interview process or at the time of hire. That document is also available on the USM website.

If the offer letter is sent to the candidate using the ATS, the candidate should then confirm the offer letter in the ATS system as well. If the ATS is not used for the offer letter, the returned signed copy of the actual letter should then be uploaded into the ATS. Instructions are included in the ATS Hiring Manager Guide.

Onboarding

Be sure to utilize the Department Onboarding Checklist to ensure you appropriately prepare for your new hire's arrival and provide him/her with the information and training they need to be successful. Give them a great start at USM!