RAMSTEIN AIR BASE INTERVIEW GUIDE

The Right Person for the Right Job at the Right Time

Title of Position
Grade of Position

Provided by: Ramstein Manpower & Personnel Flight

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References:

OPM Guide: Structured Interviews: A Practical Guide
http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/structured-interviews/guide.pdf

OPM Slides: how to Conduct a Successful Interview:
http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/examples/how-to-conduct-a-successful-interview.pdf

29 CFR 1607*, Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures*
http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&rgn=div5&view=text&node=29:4.1.4.1.8&idno=29

DoD Interview Guidelines:
https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/Directorates/HROPS/Staffing-and-Civilian-Transition-Programs/Hiring-Reform/documents/Interview%20Guidelines.pdf

DoD Interview Tip Sheet:
https://dodhrinfo.cpms.osd.mil/Directorates/HROPS/Staffing-and-Civilian-Transition-Programs/Hiring-Reform/documents/16_Interview_Tip_Sheet.pdf

Assessment and Interviewing

Assessment

Candidate assessment is the method of collecting information on individuals' relative quality for the purpose of making a selection decision.

This is done through a process referred to as job analysis. You play a huge role in helping Human Resource (HR) specialists understand key aspects of the job so that they can define its qualifications and factors that distinguish quality candidates and construct the assessment tool or crediting plan that's needed.

Ideally, you, or a subject matter expert you designate, work with HR and possibly Career Field team members to complete the following steps:
- Identify major job requirements and knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) / competencies essential to job success
- Provide valuable information concerning the job itself, how it fits into the organization, and its relationships to other positions and organizations
- Determine factors that make meaningful distinctions between basically qualified candidates and the best qualified candidates.

Normally, developing the job analysis and its corresponding crediting plan requires only one meeting. If the same product is to be used again for a subsequent referral, the developers may meet again to revalidate its currency and applicability or make necessary modifications.

These steps may be completed by the Career Field team and HR staff. In that case, you may have limited involvement.

Typically, HR will ask you to review and sign off on the results of the job analysis, ensuring that the key duties and KSAs/competencies are properly defined. HR may also ask you to review the crediting plan and vacancy announcement for the position.

Interviewing

As a hiring manager, you play a critical role in the interviewing process in order to select individuals who have the characteristics required for the job. The employment interview is an effective way of determining who has the right attributes.

Conducting candidate interviews is normally optional but very important in the selection process. Interviews provide further evaluation of referred candidates' quality of experience, education and training.   Interviews must be properly conducted in an impartial and objective fashion. Questions asked of candidates must be strictly job-related, and the interview process

and its results must be well-documented. All, some, or none of the referred candidates may be interviewed, unless otherwise specified in a local merit promotion plan or collective bargaining agreement - check with your civilian personnel section (CPS) or career field management team if the position has been identified as a career program covered position.

The interview is popular because it is more personal than traditional selection assessment tools, such as written tests, and because it can be used to evaluate job characteristics not easily measured with other procedures, including oral communication and interpersonal skills. Interviews are typically used for one of two purposes. First, the interview may be used as part of assessment process in which candidates are screened or ranked based on their scores. Second, and for the purpose of what you need to know when you interview the candidates given to you on a list provided by HR, a selecting official's interview may be used to verify and evaluate candidates' qualifications for a job after they have been rated by HR using other assessment methods, but prior to making a hiring decision.

Interview questions should be prepared in advance and the same job related questions, should be asked of all candidates being interviewed. Some installations further require that the CPS review questions before interviews are conducted to ensure that they are job related, appropriate, and help obtain useful information to further differentiate candidates.

Interviews can be conducted in a face-to-face meeting or over the phone. If candidates are located in the same commuting area, a personal interview is usually appropriate. If they are geographically distant, a telephone interview may be more appropriate. If repeated efforts to contact candidates are unsuccessful, the selecting official should document this fact.

There are three main types of interviews:

- The Exchange of Information is a very limited form of interview in which the manager and candidate discuss the duties of the position to be filled, work schedules, TDY requirements, and other factual matters. It is intended to familiarize candidates with the nature of the position, the work setting, special operating equipment, and other unique aspects of the work environment.
- The Selection Interview is usually a one-on-one meeting between the selecting official and the candidate. The primary purpose of this interview is to provide the manager with additional job related information upon which to base a selection. The majority of interviews are selection interviews, which are used to make further distinctions among referred candidates.
- The Ranking Interview is generally used by the civilian HR function and/or a panel of experts in combination with other factors to determine the final ranking of candidates prior to referral to the selecting official. These types of interviews are less common and are often best suited for professional, highly specialized, or cutting-edge positions.

Interview results should not be given undue weight in determining the best qualified candidate(s). Rather, they should be combined with the results of other assessment methods and evaluation criteria to determine a candidate's final position relative to other competitors.

The Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures contained in 29 CFR 1607 apply to all selection procedures used to make employment decisions, including interviews. The guidelines are designed to aid in the achievement of equal employment opportunity without discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or other non-merit factors.

Interview Questions

Developing Interview Questions

In some cases, pre-existing interview questions may not be available, and you will have to develop them before conducting your interviews. The position description and job analysis will contain a list of required knowledges, skills, abilities, competencies and behaviors that serve as a good basis for formulating your interview questions. These questions may be used for similar positions.

If you choose to use a point system to rate candidates' responses to your questions, be sure your method is well-documented and justifiable and that your ratings are consistent with your predetermined criteria. For example, candidates for a warehousing job might be asked how many months' experience they have in operating a forklift. You may have a predetermined "weight" for different responses, such as 0 points for no such experience, 5 points for 6-12 months' experience and 10 points for more than 12 months' experience.

Good interview questions have the following attributes:

- They are prepared in writing and approved before you conduct your interviews.
- They are objective.
- They provide evidence of directly related knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies and behaviors required to perform the job.
- They are concerned with experience or training. Ask for detailed information about particular phases of the candidate's experience or training if necessary; request that the individual expand upon his or her response if you need clarification.
- They allow the candidate to provide sufficient information.
- They contain appropriate vocabulary. Avoid specialized terminology, acronyms or organizational abbreviations in questions.
- They are straightforward and not designed to trick the respondent.
- They are asked one at a time; a question asking about multiple items or requiring

several responses is confusing for both the candidate and the interviewer.
- They cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no" response.
- They do not have obvious answers.
- They do not deal with sensitive subjects.
- They do not constitute a test.

Types of Interview Questions

There are several types of interview questions, including closed, open-ended, behavioral and hypothetical questions. Listed below are the types of interview questions, the criteria that distinguish them and one or more examples of questions within this type.

CLOSED QUESTIONS
- Require only a "yes" or "no" response or specific data.

Example:
-What was your title at your last job?

- If you asked a closed question, add follow-up questions that are open-ended using words such as "how," "what," "why" or "when."

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS
- Require the candidate to develop an answer and provide more detailed information.

Example:
-What was your most significant accomplishment?

- Open-ended questions lend themselves to developing follow-ups because the candidate is telling a story with many components, each of which can lead to more questions.

OPENERS
- A type of open-ended question that candidates are generally comfortable answering.

Examples:
-Tell me about your favorite job, and how your supervisor made it so special.
-Talk to me about your least favorite job.

BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS
- A type of open-ended question that allows the candidate to provide more concrete evidence of past behaviors.

Examples:
-Tell me about a time when you had to work really hard to complete a project.
-What was the most difficult assignment you ever had and how did you complete it?
-Tell me about a situation in which your supervisor was upset with the way
you did something. How did you handle it?
Examples (for management-level candidates):
-Tell me about a particularly difficult employee you were able to turn around and
help to become a good, solid worker.
-Tell me about a decision you made on the job that did not work out well. How did
you make that decision? What would you have done differently in retrospect?

• Reveals what a candidate actually did, thought, decided, created, led, negotiated, etc., in prior jobs.

• Responses to behavioral questions can be used to predict how the candidate may handle a similar situation in the future.

HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS
• A type of open-ended question that ascertains a candidate's problem-solving and reasoning skills and whether he or she can think creatively under fire.

Example:
-What kind of people do you feel represent a challenge to work with and
how do you best deal with them?
• Ask candidates to come up with a plan by describing a scenario that echoes a real-life job situation and see what they can do with it.

Example:
-Were you ever in a situation where you had too many things to do in the
time available? What happened and how did you handle it?
• Ask hypothetical questions that help you learn about the candidates' people skills.
Example:
-How do you work with new members of your group?

ACHIEVEMENT-FOCUSED QUESTIONS
• A type of open-ended question that focuses on the achievements of the candidate.
Examples:
-What makes you stand out among your peers?
-What has been your proudest accomplishment?
-What would your current supervisor say makes you most valuable to him or her?

"PRESSURE-COOKER" QUESTIONS
• A type of open-ended question that deals with difficult job-related situations and ways that the candidate dealt with those situations.

Examples:
-In what areas of your last performance appraisal were you most disappointed?
-Where do you disagree with your supervisor most often? How did you handle the last time he or she was wrong and you were right?
-What was your worst mistake last year, and how did you deal with it?

CHALLENGING CANDIDATES IN THE FINAL ROUND
• A type of open-ended question that gauges the candidate's level of motivation and engagement with your organization and the position you are trying to fill.

Examples:
-Why do you want to work here and what makes you right for this job?
-What do you know about our organization?

Prohibited Questions

PROHIBITED TOPIC	WHAT TO AVOID	PERMISSIBLE QUESTIONS
Security	*Do you have a secret, top secret or other security clearance?*	If the job requires a certain type of security clearance, this condition may be stated. *This job requires a top-secret clearance. Does this present any problem?*
Personal Plans	*How long do you plan to live in this area?*	None.
Sex	Any inquiry related to gender. *Do you plan on having children? Do you mind having a female supervisor? Can you work with a group of men?*	None.
Marital/Family	*Are you married? Do your children live with you? What ages are your children? Is your wife/husband in the military?*	None. Your HR servicing activity may verify if family members work at the same location/agency to fulfill OPM requirements.

Education	Any question asking about the racial or religious affiliation of a school. Any question asking for education level, not specifically related to the job to be filled.	Questions pertaining to how the candidate's academic, vocational or professional education may fulfill the required knowledge, skills, competencies or behaviors.
Organizational Affiliation	*To what organizations, societies or clubs do you belong?* Do not ask about affiliation with those whose name or character indicates race, religion, creed, color, national origin or ancestry of its members.	Questions related to the job to be filled and how the candidate's participation in the organization may fulfill the required knowledge, skills, competencies or behaviors (e.g., professional organizations).
Participation in Certain Activities	Do you plan to purchase savings bonds? Join the association for this DoD Component? Contribute to the Combined Federal Campaign?	None.
Police Record	*Have you ever been arrested?*	If the job to be filled has special requirements, such as bonding or security clearances, the following may be stated: *For this job you must be bonded or obtain a security clearance. Does this present any problem?*
Miscellaneous	Any inquiry that is not job- or competency-related.	Statement or notice that any misstatements or omissions of significant facts may be cause for nonselection.

Conducting Interviews

Before

Allow interviewed candidates to review the position description/core document for your vacancy, and to do so before the interview commences. This saves time for you, and avoids the appearance of administering a speed reading test. If you choose to provide the position description a day prior to the interview, then all interviewed candidates should be afforded the same courtesy.

Use the same interview method with all candidates (e.g., in person or by telephone). However, if a candidate is unable to meet with you in person because he or she lives in a different commuting area, it's okay to interview him or her by phone. Allow the same amount of time for each interview session.

Make sure the seating arrangement allows the candidate to feel comfortable and us an interview room that is free from interruptions and distractions.

Develop your questions and evaluation criteria.

Review the information on the candidate just before the interview so that the details are fresh in your mind.

During

Welcome the candidate, thank him or her for participating and relaying pertinent information about position duties, work environment, performance requirements, etc. Put the candidate at ease. Establish a friendly but business-like atmosphere. Ask the same questions, in the same order, of all interviewed candidates. Allow yourself time between interviews to record ratings and take complete notes. Obtain sufficient information with each question; ask follow-up questions when a candidate's initial response is vague or inadequate.

The volume and tone of your voice, your facial expressions and your body movements communicate much to the candidate, and vice versa. Candidates will respond more freely to a warm voice, to interviewers who look them in the eye and actively listen to responses. Interviewers who slouch, look down or away, lean back in their chairs, fold their arms, doodle or perform other distracting motions communicate disinterest, a lack of respect or boredom.

At The End

At the end of the interview, the coordinator should thank the candidate, answer any general questions, and excuse the candidate. Conclude the interview by summarizing what will happen next in the selection process (i.e., how notification will be handled). Inform the candidates that you may be contacting their supervisor in the near future for reference checks.

DO NOT notify candidates of their selection or non-selection. AFPC will notify candidates.

Panel Interviews

During the interview process, an abundance of information is exchanged between the candidate and the interviewer. A panel of two or three interviewers may be better able to document and interpret the information. A panel also reduces the risk of biases in ratings and allows for a diverse (e.g., race and sex) range of interviewers, indicating to the candidate that the organization values diversity and fair treatment.

Interviewers may conduct the interview together at one time or individually in a serial fashion in which the candidate progresses through multiple interviews. When feasible, the same interviewers should be used (either in a panel or serially) across all candidates, to ensure consistency in ratings.

In a panel interview, each panel member should individually observe, record, and evaluate the responses of the candidates. After each candidate, panel members should discuss their individual ratings. Final scores or ratings should be based on the consensus of the panel. This process is described in more detail below.

Although the interview panel works as a team, one panel member is typically designated as the chairperson or coordinator and he/she is responsible for the administrative and logistical arrangements of the interview and for documenting the process.

Conducting a Panel Interview

Before the candidate enters the interview room, the panel coordinator should verify all panel members understand the procedures to be followed and have all necessary materials. The interview process should be described in detail in the interviewer's guide and the guide should be provided to each panel member.
Upon each candidate's arrival, the panel coordinator should:
Welcome the candidate and introduce each panel member.
- Thank the candidate for his/her interest in the position and for coming to the interview.
- Briefly describe the job and relevant organizational characteristics as to allow candidates to become comfortable in the interview setting.
- Explain the interview process in a standardized way. This explanation may also be provided to applicants in writing.
- Inform the candidate that notes will be taken throughout the interview.
- Ask if the candidate has any questions before beginning.

At the end of the interview, the coordinator should thank the candidate, answer any general questions, and excuse the candidate.

Each panel member should **independently** review his/her notes immediately after the candidate leaves the room and, if the interview is not a selecting official's interview, rate the candidate. At this stage, each panelist is forming an independent evaluation without discussion with other panel members. Ratings should be specific, defensible, and supported by behavioral examples. Interviewers should include actual examples of answers given, explanations of how these answers apply to the competency being rated, and why they merit the given rating.

After panel members have independently rated all candidates, they should compare notes, ratings, and supporting observations. Panel members should thoroughly explore the basis for discrepancies in their ratings, and then reach a consensus on each candidate. Statements made by the candidate should be recorded to support specific ratings. Panelists should record the consensus rating for each candidate on a group rating form

After the last candidate has been rated, panelists should review the group ratings given to all candidates. This exchange will ensure the performance of each candidate has been considered thoroughly and objectively. This also ensures the final ratings represent the consensus judgment of the panel. After all ratings have been meticulously reviewed, they should be declared final and each member should attest to the final ratings by signing the group rating form.

Common Interviewing Mistakes

Interviewers tend to make rapid decisions about the qualifications of a candidate within the first few minutes of the interview based on minimal information. This rush to judgment can be very detrimental to the hiring process. Once you sense that you're forming an opinion about the candidate, ask questions specifically to find out if your impression is correct. You may confirm what you have already sensed or you may find yourself surprised to discover that the candidate has characteristics or traits that you completely missed in your initial assessment.

Unfavorable information tends to be more influential than favorable information. Interviewers should avoid focusing on negative information to the exclusion of positive information.

Interviewers who do not have a comprehensive understanding of the skills needed for the job often form their own opinion about what constitutes the best candidate. They use this personal impression to evaluate candidates. Therefore, it is important to make sure interviewers fully understand the requirements of the job.

When interviewers believe they need to make a decision quickly, they tend to make decisions based on a limited sample of information, or on a small number of candidate interviews. Interviewers should adhere to the established interview procedure and timeline with each candidate to avoid making erroneous decisions.

The order in which the candidates are interviewed can affect the ratings given to candidates. While making ratings, interviewers should refrain from comparing and contrasting candidates to those who have been previously interviewed.

Interviewers should base their evaluation of the candidate on the candidate's past performance and current behavior as it relates to the competency being evaluated and not just on how the candidate acts during the interview. Questions and probes relating to the competencies of interest will usually direct the interviewer to the important information.

EXAMPLES:

> • Indicating that you have made a selection.
> • Making promises of promotion or selection to any candidate.
> • Soliciting a declination from any candidate.
> • Assuming an accent to be a liability.
> • Using terms such as "girl," "boy," "gal," "honey," "dear" or any other derogatory names when addressing the candidate.
> • Wasting time with questions when information is already available through review of applications, resumes or candidate records.

Common Rating Errors

Rater Bias
Allowing prejudices about certain groups of people or personalities to interfere with being able to fairly evaluate a candidate's performance. Interviewers should refrain from considering any nonperformance-related factors when making judgments.

Halo Effect
The tendency to generalize either positively or negatively about a candidate's overall ranking or potential based upon a single attribute. Don't weigh your decision on a single accomplishment, association with a particular group, the college a candidate may have attended, etc.

Stereotyping
The tendency to attribute traits or characteristics to an individual based upon a preconceived notion of the sex, race, ethnic group, religion, creed or other grouping to which the individual may belong. For example, assumptions that candidates may be more or less disciplined, verbally astute or mechanically inclined based on their sex, race or national origin prevent an impartial evaluation of candidates and are always inappropriate.

Contrast Error
Occurs when the rating of one candidate is influenced positively or negatively in comparison with another candidate's performance, e.g., lower ratings for a candidate who immediately

follows a strong candidate and high ratings for one who follows a weak candidate. Candidates are to be evaluated against objective criteria rather than against each other.

Leniency or Strictness
A tendency for some interviewers to form uniformly high or uniformly low opinions. When most ratings fall at either one end of the scale or the other, it can be an indication that an accurate, objective assessment was not achieved.

Central Tendency
Similar to the leniency/strictness error except the interviewer limits ratings to the middle range. These types of errors often occur if the interviewing criteria are not adequately defined.

"Similar to Me"
Giving higher than deserved ratings to candidates who appear similar to you. People have a natural tendency to prefer others who are similar in various ways to themselves. Interviewers should concentrate on the responses given by the candidate in making

Designing an Assessment Strategy: 4 Steps to a Successful Strategy

Need help designing an applicant assessment process tailored to your specific hiring situation? Just take a look at the steps below:

Step 1: IDENTIFY *WHAT* TO ASSESS (A.K.A., the Job Analysis)

What work is performed on the job?
- What tasks are performed?
- What are the duties or responsibilities of the job?
-
What competencies are needed to do the work?
- What must be known to do the work?
- What skills or traits are needed?

Step 2: DESCRIBE YOUR HIRING SITUATION

What is the available budget for assessment?

What is the required timeframe?

What is the volume of applicants expected?

Will you develop your own customized assessment tool or purchase from a vendor?

What level of expertise is available to develop and to implement the assessment process?

Step 3: DETERMINE *HOW* TO ASSESS

Choose the job-related competencies you will assess (based on Step 1)
- Not all competencies related to job success can be readily assessed
- Focus on the most critical competencies required upon entry

Review assessment tools that are already available or can be developed to assess the competencies
- Some tools are better than others for measuring specific competencies
- Make sure the assessment tool is reliable and valid

Step 4: BUILD AN ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Decide how to score the assessment(s); the following are some scoring options to consider:
- Pass/fail
- Combine assessment scores; that is, cumulative scoring
- Scores for competencies assessed are equally weighted

Assessment Matrix Example

The following example shows how the selection criteria provides the basis for identifying the desired skills and how these can be assessed/rated. You can develop your own Assessment Matrix to help identify the skills pertinent to your Organization.

POSITION: _____ _____

APPLICANT: _____   DATE: _____

SELECTION CRITERIA	DESIRED SKILLS	ASSESSMENT	RATING
Highly developed written and verbal communication skills	Listens and considers the thoughts and opinions of other people in the workplace Expresses own ideas openly and clearly with work colleagues and deals positively with any criticism Composes routine memos, correspondence with accurate spelling and grammar Produces reports, agendas, business documents using Word, Excel, etc	What different approaches do you use in talking to different people? Tell us about a time when you felt strongly about an issue in the workplace. What did you do?	
Ability to work independently and show initiative	Works unsupervised in organizing own resource needs, resolves problems and makes decision without referral within area of responsibility Willing to think beyond the boundaries of the job to meet needs of the office	What tasks have you completed by yourself that you are most proud of?	

Ability to work productively as part of a team	Understands and works towards team goals Aware of and anticipates the concerns and feelings of colleagues Willing to share uneven workloads, information, skills Works positively with people of different backgrounds, status, education	Tell us about a time when you have seen an opportunity to make an improvement in the workplace. Describe a time when other members of the team weren't pulling their weight and what you did.	
Highly developed organizational skills and demonstrated ability to meet deadlines	Sets priorities and schedules tasks Plans ahead and manages work flow; keep track of information for action, bring up and follow-up; anticipates potential problems and takes appropriate action to minimize impact Attention to detail	We note you organized a conference. Tell us about your role in this, what you did…	

Total:

Rating Scale

5   Significantly exceeds criteria for successful job performance
4   More than exceeds the criteria relative to skill required
3   Exceeds the criteria relative to skill required
2   Meets criteria relative to skill required
1   Does not meet the criteria relative to skill required