

Values Based Recruitment



How to Design and Deliver Structured Interviews for Values Based Recruitment

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Work Psychology Group has over 20 years' experience of designing and evaluating assessment and recruitment methodologies for high stakes selection in healthcare, finance, engineering and professional services. The team is made up of experienced consultants who have worked in both research and industry, giving a unique blend of organisational and academic expertise, ensuring the latest research can be turned into practical, innovative solutions. For more information, please see www.workpsychologygroup.com.

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Overview

The following guidance is designed to highlight key considerations NHS employing organisations and admissions staff within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) may need to take into account in the delivery of structured interviews. It is intended to be used as a guide to assist with the planning, development and implementation of selection activities whilst recognising the need for individuals to tailor their approach to meet the needs of their own organisation.

It is recommended that utilisation of recruitment methods for assessment of values need to be considered with regards to the national core requirements, as set out in the national VBR framework. This recommends that an individual structured interview (including Multiple Mini Interviews) to assess values must be conducted as part of the overall recruitment process to effectively recruit for values. This may occur in isolation or as part of a wider process such as a selection centre or in conjunction with a screening method such as a Situational Judgement Test.

See the [HEE website](#) for more information about the national core requirements and to learn more about structured interviews.

Summary

- Good practice structured interview questions are designed around criteria relevant to the target role which have been defined through role analysis.
- The involvement of staff and service users in defining the criteria and/or interview questions helps to ensure relevance to the target role.
- The reliability and validity of structured interviews is improved through ensuring interviewers are trained appropriately.
- Whilst interviews can be used to assess an applicant's skills, knowledge and likely behaviour, they also offer the opportunity to assess an applicant's values through specific questioning techniques which focus on gaining insight into the reasons and drivers for behaviour.
- Good practice structured interviews are designed to enhance reliability and fairness across applicants and interviewers through the use of consistent and predetermined indications/scoring criteria and interview questions. The questions should be accompanied by a range of pre-agreed probing questions which can be used to elicit further information from applicants.
- Interviews can be conducted by a single interviewer, pairs of interviewers or a panel. Where resources allow, it is good practice to use multiple interviewers as this helps to minimise bias and enhance fairness.

What is a structured interview?

Structured interviews are interviews which ask a standardised set of predetermined questions so that each applicant receives the same, or very similar, questions. The interview is then scored against predetermined scoring criteria which are the same for all applicants. The interview may be conducted by a single interviewer or multiple interviewers.

There are at least two types of structured interview, including “situational interviews” and “behavioural interviews”.

- In situational interviews, applicants are asked to imagine a set of circumstances and then indicate how they would respond in that situation. Questions in situational interviews therefore are generally future oriented (for example, “*what would you do if...*”). Situational interviews are different to Situational Judgement Tests (SJTs) as interviewers are able to probe responses whereas SJTs have predetermined and fixed response choices. (See the HEE website for more information about using SJTs as part of a selection process.)
- Behavioural interviews on the other hand, tend to use past-oriented questions which ask the applicant to discuss examples from their previous experience (for example, “*tell me about a time when...*”). This style of interview is based on the premise that past behaviour is the best predictor for future performance in similar situations.
- It is possible for a single interview to be comprised of a combination of both situational and behavioural questions.

A Multiple Mini Interview (MMI) can also be considered as a specific type of structured interview. More information and guidance on designing and delivering a MMI can be found on the [HEE website](#).

Personality tests may be considered a useful tool to be used alongside a structured interview to provide prompts for the discussion. See the [HEE website](#) for guidance for using personality tests to complement VBR processes.

What is the evidence base for structured interviews?

Research consistently shows that interviews that are structured, ask relevant and standardised questions based on a thorough role analysis, utilise a panel of interviewers trained in best practice interview techniques and use a validated scoring criteria achieve the highest levels of validity.

For a more in-depth summary of the evidence-base relating to structured interviews please see the **VBR literature review** available on the [HEE website](#).

What makes a structured interview values based?

A **values based interview** (VBI) is a type of structured interview which is particularly focused on understanding an applicant's values. A VBI may appear similar to other types of interviews in that the format will involve asking applicants to provide examples of behaviour they have previously demonstrated or to explain how they would respond to a particular situation.

However, it is the **probing questions**, designed as part of a VBI, that are utilised to elicit detailed evidence in relation to **learning and reflection** that differentiate it. It is these probing questions that provide insight into an applicant's values or what they consider to be important. The probing questions that follow a lead question in a VBI focus on how and why an applicant makes particular choices in the workplace, providing insight into the reasons and drivers for their behaviour.

It is appropriate for values based questions to be asked alongside competency/situational-based questions which focus on an interviewee's skills or knowledge. However, in some cases it may be appropriate to separate out the two components into two distinct interviews (i.e. a VBI and a skills or competency-based interview), for example, if the two interviews were to be conducted by different assessors or on different days.

Key considerations for implementing a structured interview for VBR

When looking to implement or refine structured interviews within an organisation, there are a number of key considerations to be aware of. Recognition of such considerations will enable the delivery of an effective VBR approach.

Definition of key criteria

- The effectiveness of a structured interview is based on a thorough and accurate identification of the relevant knowledge, skills, attributes and values associated with successful performance in the role and in the organisation. A role analysis should be used to accurately identify the criteria to be assessed at the interview.
- The relevant criteria should be reflected in entry requirements, person specifications, job descriptions and attraction materials so that applicants are aware of what they will be assessed against.
- The criteria should be developed into specific indicators describing positive and negative demonstrations of behaviour. This is used to evaluate the responses provided by applicants in answering the questions.
- Defining the criteria in this way will ensure a fair interview process as all applicants applying for the same role are assessed against one standard set of relevant criteria and indicators.

Standardisation of interview documentation

- All applicants should experience the same interview process in terms of its delivery and execution. This ensures a fair, reliable and defensible process in accordance with best practice selection principles.
- The development of standardised interview documentation enables the consistent delivery of the interview across different interviewers. Documentation may include guidance for conducting the interview, an interview template or questioning framework, and a scoring framework and reporting template.
- Interview templates or questioning frameworks should contain a set of standardised lead questions and associated probe questions for each of the criteria assessed as part of the interview for a particular role. These questions should be aligned to the person specification.

Development of an interview bank

- Managers may find that the development of a bank of interview questions will assist with the development of interviews for specific roles.
- It is recommended that, where possible, stakeholders, including staff and service users, are consulted to develop and refine interview questions to ensure that they accurately reflect what is expected of successful applicants. Service users in particular may be able to provide valuable insight into what is important in terms of demonstration of skills or values as behaviours in practice.
- An interview question bank should be designed to be used flexibly by recruiting managers developing interviews for roles of different levels and complexity. Depending on the nature of the role being recruited for, there may be variation in the level and number of interview questions selected from the bank.
- An interview question bank should contain questions structured as follows; a lead question followed by a series of possible relevant probe questions, as well as a set of defined behavioural indicators. These will assist with the evaluation of an applicant's performance. For values based questions in particular, the questions should be designed to elicit evidence in relation to an applicant's learning and reflection in a given situation and focus on how or why they made particular choices.
- For illustration purposes, example question templates for two different criteria are provided overleaf including associated lead questions, probing questions and behavioural indicators.

Figure 1 Example structured interview template

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Criteria/ Value | Collaboration (<i>mapped to NHS Constitution value 'Working together for patients'</i>) | |
| Criteria/ Value definition | Works effectively with others, showing consideration to their needs and perspectives. Recognises the benefits that others can bring to a situation and seeks to learn from others. | |
| Lead question | Describe a situation where it was important for you to establish/develop an effective working relationship with someone... | |
| Probing questions to elicit further evidence | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why was this relationship significant? • What did you learn from this experience? • What was the outcome? • How did you react/feel about developing this relationship? | | |
| Behavioural indicators: What would you expect to see in someone demonstrating this criteria/ value? | | |
| <i>Positive Indicators:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers the needs/perspectives of others • Articulates the benefits of working together • Shows willingness to cooperate with others • Has strategies for working effectively alongside others (for example, through compromise) | | <i>Negative Indicators:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is dismissive of the views/perspectives of others • Makes inappropriate assumptions about others • Demonstrates a negative attitude towards working with others (for example, suggests preference for working alone/in isolation) |

Figure 2 Example structured interview template

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Criteria/ Value | Integrity (<i>mapped to NHS Constitution value 'Commitment to quality of care'</i>) | |
| Criteria/ Value definition | Is open, honest and transparent in all actions. Takes responsibility for challenging inappropriate behaviour and is receptive to feedback from others. | |
| Lead question | Tell me about a time when you had to address a difficult situation with a colleague... | |
| Probing questions to elicit further evidence | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why was it important to address this situation? • What was the outcome? • How did you feel about addressing the situation and the outcome? • How did you perceive your colleague's reaction? | | |
| Behavioural indicators: What would you expect to see in someone demonstrating this criteria/ value? | | |
| <i>Positive Indicators:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is proactive in identifying and addressing issues • Is sensitive and tactful when raising difficult issues • Is aware of the risks associated with inaction | | <i>Negative Indicators:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defers responsibility to others • Jumps to conclusions • Seeks to blame others |

Interviewer training

- Interviewers should be trained to deliver selection and assessment activities according to best practice principles. Interviewers should also be specifically trained in the techniques and approach for values based interviewing. Training should be regularly refreshed to ensure skills and knowledge remain up to date and to enhance reliability of the selection process.
- Following formal training, interviewers should familiarise themselves with the standardised interview documentation associated with the role being recruited for, in particular the behavioural indicators and key criteria differentiating effective and ineffective performance. Interviewers should also familiarise themselves with interview scoring frameworks to ensure interview evidence can be evaluated accurately and efficiently following the interview.
- The use of multiple assessors as part of the selection process can assist with enhancing the reliability and validity of the process. Panel style interviewing may therefore be considered.

Telephone or online interviews

- In some situations (for example, if recruiting internationally or during clearing and adjustment processes) it may not be possible to conduct a face to face interview and therefore telephone or online 'Skype' interviews might be considered as an alternative. Such interviews should follow the same best practice methods for structured interviews outlined in this document.
 - If this form of interview is being used for some applicants and not others it is particularly important that there is consistency between the two approaches to ensure the process is fair for all applicants. For example, if face to face interviews are conducted by two interviewers, the telephone or online interview should also be conducted by two interviewers.
- As applicants taking part in a telephone or online interview will not have the same opportunity to meet with assessors or other members of staff, it is particularly important that it is clear what will be expected of the applicant upfront and that they are able to ask any questions they may have.
- There may be a risk that the applicant might ask someone else to complete the interview on their behalf (especially with telephone interviews). It may therefore be beneficial to put in place a mechanism to deter this, for example, by asking the interviewee to confirm some detail from their application form or CV.
- Telephone lines and internet connections can be very unreliable and a disrupted line can have a significant impact on an interview. Consider what can be done to ensure a clear line, for example, asking the applicant to use a landline or to ensure they undertake the interview in a quiet, undisturbed location. Where possible,

schedule additional time at the beginning of the interview to check the connection and attend to any technological issues that may arise.

Stages of the structured interview process

An overview of the key stages involved in developing and delivering a structured interview is provided to support managers considering the implementation of a structured interview process. Organisations may need to tailor their approaches according to local needs and available resources and the following information is therefore provided for guidance purposes only, to outline some of the practical considerations.

Interview planning

- Before delivering a structured interview it is important to make sure that sufficient planning is conducted to ensure effective delivery within the required timescales. As part of the planning process it may be useful to consider the following:
 - Ensure the entry requirements or person specification and job description are up to date, reflective of current/future needs, and aligned to the criteria being assessed for and the values of the [NHS Constitution](#).
 - Identify an appropriate venue for the interview to be conducted. This may be using existing facilities in-house or may involve using an external venue. Where interview services are commissioned and external venues for delivery are required, consider who takes responsibility for arranging this.
 - Identify interviewers who are trained in the delivery of the interview and ensure their availability.
 - What are the timescales for the recruitment process? For example, when does the applicant need to be in post and how long will it take to complete a recruitment cycle (i.e. attraction, screening and selection)?
 - The approach to attracting applicants and required advertisement for the target role.

Interview preparation

- In preparation for the interview, the standardised documentation needs to be developed and provided to interviewers in advance of the process. This should include guidance for delivery of the interview and all supporting documentation.
- Relevant questions will need to be developed, or selected from an existing interview question bank and refined as necessary for the specific role. It may be useful to consider the following:
 - How many criteria are being assessed?

- How many questions (lead and probes) are required to effectively assess the applicant against the criteria within the time allocated for the interview?
- What probe questions are required to support the lead questions?
- How do existing interview questions need adapting to meet the level and complexity of the role?
- Have any relevant equality and diversity issues been identified and attended to? (See 'Equality and Diversity' section of **Choosing a selection method for Values Based Recruitment** available on the [HEE website](#) for more information).
- Ensure that the positive and negative behavioural indicators or key criteria have been identified for each of the questions incorporated in the interview as part of the interview scoring framework. This will be used to assist with objective evaluation of an applicant's performance.
- Following screening of applications, the relevant information should be distributed to applicants. This may include an overview of the process, focus and purpose of the interview and details of the assessment venue.

Conducting the interview

- Best practice assessment principles (FORCE) should be followed when conducting the interview.
 - **F – Familiarise:** Ensure that you are familiar with the interview materials to be used as well as the entry requirements or job description and person specification and values of importance for the role.
 - **O – Observe:** The key skill in observing is not to make judgements, but to be aware of what the applicant is saying or doing. Be aware of possible assessment bias.
 - **R – Record:** Make written notes of the applicant's responses and behaviour during the interview. An observation/recording sheet should be used.
 - **C – Classify:** Evidence of the required competencies and values should be identified through examining the information provided in the applicant's responses. Some comments will include evidence - these should be identified. Some comments may not be directly relevant to the target criteria.
 - **E – Evaluate:** The information identified in the response now needs to be evaluated. Look at the scoring indicators to decide on the quality of the evidence relevant to each criterion.

- Begin the interview by welcoming the applicant and providing an overview of the interview process. Ensure that the applicant is at ease, and allow time for building rapport.
- Before the interview begins, advise the applicant whether you will be writing notes as they speak and inform them if audio recordings will be used to assist with recall of information. Applicants' consent to being recorded should be obtained prior to commencement.
- Allow some time immediately after the interview for interviewers to finalise their notes as leaving this until later can result in distorted information.
- Consider the applicant's feelings at the end of the interview. There is a risk, particularly in VBIs where the questions will have explored the applicant's motivations and drivers, that an applicant could feel demotivated or that they have been 'exposed' in some way. Interviewers should be trained in appropriately closing an interview in a supportive and reassuring manner.
- Ensure the applicant leaves with a clear understanding of the next stages of the process and when they might be contacted again.

Decision making and feedback

- Based on the notes taken during the interview, evaluate the applicant's performance using the associated scoring framework. Ensure all interview scoring information is complete and that any summary comments are recorded.
- Combine the output of the interview with information obtained from any other assessments used as part of the overall selection process in order to inform selection decisions.
- Once applicants have been informed of the selection decision, ensure they are provided with appropriate feedback. Successful applicants may be given feedback as part of their induction to the new role.
- How feedback is provided to applicants should be defined as part of the interview planning and may be provided verbally or in writing. Provide constructive feedback to the applicant using examples gathered throughout the selection process. Be sure to describe the applicant's performance based on the behavioural indicators when providing feedback on the interview.
- Where possible it is recommended that verbal feedback is provided to applicants. This is more efficient for allowing the applicant an opportunity to respond to the feedback. This is especially valuable when conducting a values based interview.

Evaluation, monitoring and review

- It is important to consider monitoring the outcomes arising from a structured interview to determine its success; planning for monitoring, reviewing and validating the effectiveness of a structured interview should form part of the initial project planning phase. Considerations for evaluating the outcomes are as follows:
 - An initial review of the structured interview should examine whether it is fit for purpose. For example, consider whether the questions are reflective of aspects of the role; are the indicators for competencies and values clearly defined for assessment; are interviewers operating in accordance with best practice principles (the 'FORCE' principles outlined in 'Conducting the interview' above).
 - Consideration should also be given to whether the interview questions and follow up probing questions provided sufficient opportunity for applicants to demonstrate the intended competencies or values. Were there any difficulties obtaining information to allow effective assessment of any particular competencies or values? Was there enough time during the interview for interviewers to ask all of the questions expected? Some questions may also need to be refreshed periodically to ensure they remain up to date.
- Differentiating between applicants' performance in an interview should only be on the basis of demonstrated attributes. It is important to be aware of differential performance associated with membership of a particular ethnic group, gender or other protected characteristic.
- Procedures for efficiently and accurately capturing data should be put in place in order to inform evaluation. This will help to determine the validity and reliability of the interview.
- Evaluation of interviews should be rigorous and scientific as far as possible. This may include qualitative content analysis, statistical analysis and applicant/assessor reactions. Validation studies (matching interview outcomes to work-performance outcomes) should also be considered where possible.
- Further information regarding the criteria which can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of selection methods can be found in the literature review for VBR.

Example case studies

The [University of Birmingham](#) has developed a series of video clips of service users to be used as part of structured interview process for **Nursing** applicants. Applicants are asked to watch a video clip which lasts between 5 and 7 minutes and then are asked a series of questions based on this experience during a one-to-one interview. Interview questions and the

scoring criteria have been designed to assess the values of the NHS Constitution. Feedback from both applicants and interviewers has been positive.

[Sheffield Hallam University](#) uses a structured interview approach to test for values of **Nursing** and **Midwifery** students. Prior to the interview, applicants are asked to watch one of a series of video clips which have been targeted to each field of Nursing and Midwifery and involved the input of service users. During a short individual interview the applicant is asked questions based on the video clip which are designed to probe the applicant's values and are scored against set criteria.

[Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust](#) has developed a bank of interview questions which are applicable to **all staff levels** based on an established values and behavioural framework. Recruitment managers are encouraged to select the questions which are most relevant to the role they are interviewing for or to develop their own questions based on the framework.

[Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust](#) uses a **Healthcare Assistant** (HCA) recruitment process that includes an interview designed to ascertain an applicant's values. This interview follows an open day event which provides insight into the role. This approach has resulted in a lower attrition rate, a reduced sickness absence rate and has helped in the management HCA vacancy levels.

[Bradford District Care Trust](#) has developed a bank of structured values based interview questions which include clear scoring guides based on objective behavioural indicators. Appropriate training in values based interviewing is provided for managers and the HR team. This approach has been piloted for the recruitment of a range of roles including; **Healthcare Assistants** (HCAs), **Administrators**, **Speech and Language Therapists** and **Community Staff Nurses**.

[York Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust](#) uses interviews which emphasise the values identified as being important to the organisation. The competencies assessed are tailored to the specific role. This approach has been rolled out across the organisation and is also linked to a two week values based induction process.

[Oxford University Hospitals Trust](#) uses a values based interview as one component of wider VBR initiatives. Two-day values based interview (VBI) training courses were delivered to those working in **Care of the Elderly**, **Children's Services** and the **Clinical Support Worker Academy** following which the VBIs were introduced for all new recruitment to these areas.

[University College Hospitals London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust](#) uses a values based structured interview process to recruit **Medical** and **Dental Consultants**. This combines assessing values alongside abilities and personality traits (including working style). This is one part of broader initiatives to embed values across the organisation.

[Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust](#) has developed a bank of values based interview questions which are currently being piloted with all **Band 1** and **Band 4** posts with a view to extending this approach to all areas of the Trust. The questions are based

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around a behavioural framework which has been developed in collaboration with all staff groups across the Trust. The framework describes the behaviours expected from staff and highlights the importance of values.