



## **Interview Preparation and Candidate Interview Guide**

When preparing to interview candidates, first identify the competencies that someone needs in order to be successful in the position. With those identified, you can then create or select interview questions to focus on how the person has demonstrated this competency in the past. The best way to determine how someone will perform in the future is to find out how they have performed in similar situations the past.

The following sample questions are intended to elicit information from candidates about their demonstration of UR's core competencies in their past work experiences. Please select a few questions from the specific competencies critical to success in your position; it is not necessary to ask all of the sample questions for each competency. Choose the questions relevant to the position. Each candidate should be asked the same set of questions.

Open the interview with an introductory question such as "What made you decide to apply for this position?" This question sets the stage for a positive exchange of information during the interview.

### **Job Knowledge**

Possesses and continually updates requisite knowledge and understanding of assigned duties, responsibilities, policies, procedures and compliance requirements to perform the position. Demonstrates technical skills required for the position. Understands business needs and desired outcomes.

- Describe a task or project that you were responsible for that best demonstrates your ability to analyze information.
- Tell me about a time where you caught a discrepancy or inconsistency in the available information that might have caused significant problems if you had missed it.
- Describe a recent work problem you were asked to solve. What did you do? What alternatives did you consider?
- Can you give me an example of an innovative idea or concept you used to solve a problem that had a positive impact?
- In what ways has your current job changed since you started? How have you dealt with these changes? How did you adapt to these changes?

- Tell me about a time when you had a difficult and/or complex problem to solve similar to those you might find in this position. How did you organize the information you had available? How did you gather more information if needed? Was your decision/solution effective? Why?
- Give an example of a specific problem you had to solve or a decision you had to make about getting work done. What were the steps you went through to solve the problem? Please describe how you made that decision. Did you involve others? Why or why not?
- Discuss a time when you had to deal with major change in your work process or job duties. How did you prepare for the change? How did you respond in this situation?
- Provide an example of a time when you had to take action and didn't have enough time to prepare as much as you would like. How did you adapt to this situation?
- Describe a time when you had to complete a project in which there was very little direction. What are some of the issues you faced? How did you make decisions about how to proceed? How did you go about completing the project?
- Tell me about a time when you were asked to complete a task that required the use of information that wasn't easily accessible. Describe the process you went through to obtain that information.
- Tell me about the most complex or difficult information you have had to analyze to get your work done.
- Tell me about a time when you lacked much of the knowledge or information necessary to get a task or project done. How did you remedy this situation?
- Problems and difficulties often arise unexpectedly in the workplace. Give a specific example of a problematic situation and how you used your knowledge of the job to resolve it?
- Describe the most difficult work decision that you had to make. What made it so difficult?
- Give a specific example of a time when you failed to handle a problem or situation effectively. Why do you think your solution was ineffective? What, if anything, did you do after you recognized the problem was not handled appropriately?
- Tell me about a tough decision you had to make recently at work, how did you go about making the decision?
- What are the issues you have been facing in your current job which you would like to address but have not solved yet? What makes these issues so challenging?

- Describe a situation when you were given an assignment that was difficult to complete because you were uncertain of several key elements. How did you go about completing the project?
- Discuss a specific example of a time when you had to develop new resources to gather information. How did you develop those?
- Describe a past work success or failure. What did you learn from the experience and how have you applied what you learned?
- Tell me about a time when you realized you lacked a skill that you needed to do a task. How did you know you needed to improve? How did you remedy the situation?
- Describe a personal or professional development course that you have taken in the past. Explain how you have been able to apply that knowledge to your job.
- Describe a specific example of what have you done to grow and develop in your current job.

## **Work Product**

Demonstrates quality product including accuracy and thoroughness in work required for the position. Plans and completes acceptable quantity of work within deadlines. Works with diligence and identifies opportunities to streamline or improve processes.

- Give a specific example of a work situation you could have managed better. How did you know your performance could have been better? What did you learn? What steps did you take to prevent that from reoccurring?
- Describe the steps you take to manage a complicated project.
- Tell me about a time when you set a goal to improve your performance. Explain the goal. Did you achieve the goal? Why or why not?
- Give a specific example of a situation in which you were faced with a difficult deadline to meet. How did you respond? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about the last time you failed to complete a project on time.
- Often our workloads require that numerous tasks be completed simultaneously, which can put demands on us. Give an example of when you were in this type of situation and how you resolved it.
- Tell me about a time when you took on more than you could handle.
- Tell me about a challenging project you worked on. What skills did you have to demonstrate to tackle the project?
- We all have to work very hard at times. Describe a situation when you really had to put forth extra effort. What did you do? How did you ensure that your final product would be completed well?

- Tell about a time when you received feedback, either positive or negative, from management or another work colleague. How did you use this feedback?
- Tell me about the most difficult change you have had to make in your professional career. How did you manage the change?
- Tell me about a time when you initiated a procedural change on your own. How did you present these changes to your supervisor?
- Tell me about a time when none of your supervisors were available to guide or direct you on a particular project or problem. How did you approach the situation so that you could continue with your work?
- Tell me about a time when you wanted to initiate a project on your own. How did you gain support for this project?
- Describe a situation in which you identified a problem and took action to correct it rather than wait for someone else to do so.
- Describe a time when your quick response to a problem or situation made a difference. How did you know the steps to take? What happened?
- Describe how you have changed the way your business unit/department/group operates. What prompted you to make these changes?
- Think of a time you delivered a quality product even though you were extremely busy. How did you ensure a quality outcome?
- We all need to make sure that our work products are of high quality. Describe a situation when you made an extra effort to produce high quality output. How did you go about this? How did you know your work was high quality?
- Is there a situation when the quality of work you completed wasn't the highest quality it could have been? What were the circumstances and what did you learn?
- How do you prioritize each day's tasks? What do you do when you have multiple priorities?
- How do you organize and plan for major projects?

## **Customer Focus**

Consistently exhibits professional demeanor with internal and external constituents and peers through verbal and written customer focused communication. This includes listening, understanding customer expectations/perspective and acknowledging and responding to concerns in a timely and helpful manner. Demonstrates commitment to exceptional service, timely problem resolution.

- Who are your customers?

- Describe a time when you had to adjust your schedule or workload to ensure that you could meet a customer's needs. How did you meet these responsibilities?
- Explain a time when you were not able to respond to a customer as quickly as promised. How did you handle the situation?
- Describe a time when you worked with a difficult customer. In what ways was the customer difficult? How did you respond? What happened next?
- Describe a situation in which you anticipated, identified, and met a customer's needs. How did you know about the customer's need?
- Tell me about a time when you changed your priorities to meet others' expectations.
- Tell me about a situation when you received either positive or negative feedback from a customer. Why does this particular example stick out in your mind? What did you do with that feedback?
- Describe specific methods you've used to build relationships and gain the trust and respect of key stakeholders.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go out of your way to assist a customer. Describe the circumstances. What was the outcome?
- Give a specific example of excellent customer service you provided. Why do you think this was an example of excellent customer service?
- Customers can be very demanding. Tell me about a time when you had to manage a customer's expectation in order to avoid an unreasonable commitment.
- Tell me about a time you have "inherited" a customer. What steps did you take to establish rapport with them? What did you do to gain their trust?
- Describe a time when you had to ask questions and carefully gather information in order to understand the exact nature of a customer's issue or problem. What steps did you take to resolve the issue?
- Tell me about a time when you helped to successfully mediate in a conflict? How did you feel?
- Think of a time when you promised something to a customer or coworker by a certain deadline. What kinds of things did you consider when you agreed to the deadline? How did you go about meeting that deadline?

### **Dependability/Accountability/Professionalism**

Follows through on assignments. Takes ownership of work. Is reliable, professional and responsible. Adheres to procedures, practices, and work schedule. Work is completed in a timely manner and within established deadlines effectively using resources.

Demonstrates commitment to professional development.

- Tell me about a time when you couldn't meet a commitment to a business partner or coworker. How did you handle this situation? What was the outcome?
- Please describe a situation in which you received negative feedback from a supervisor, coworker, or business partner. How did you respond to this feedback? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to change your point of view or your plans to take into account new information or changing priorities.
- Discuss a time when you had to handle a situation with a coworker that could have been (or was) sensitive or uncomfortable. How did you handle this situation?
- Tell about a time when you made a difficult decision that was not well received by either your management or employees. How did you handle the feedback?
- Give a specific example of how you have demonstrated your ability to handle multiple priorities and deliver results. Describe the situation and the manner in which you addressed it.
- Describe one service, activity, or process for which you have been held accountable. How did you make sure you achieved results for this process or activity?
- Describe a time when you were unable to follow through on a commitment you made. What happened? How did you explain this to the other party?
- Discuss with us the last time your supervisor delegated a project to you. How did you handle it? Were you able to complete the project on time and accurately?
- Describe a time when you had to act with very little time for advance planning or preparation.
- Sometimes people delay taking action on something. Describe a time when you saw other people in the organization who were not acting and you took it upon yourself to lead the effort.

## **Collaboration/Teamwork**

Demonstrates cooperation and teamwork. Values and seeks input and expertise of others. Contributes to the team environment by working effectively with others on the team to accomplish work. Treats co-workers with respect, honesty and fairness. Resolves issues effectively and is viewed as a positive team member and/or colleague.

- Give a specific example of a time when a recommendation you made was rejected or criticized by others. How did you respond? What did you do next?
- Give me an example of a time when you tried your best to work with someone, but the problems still remained. What did you learn from that situation?
- What are the characteristics of a successful team?

- Tell me about a specific situation when you assisted a coworker/supervisor with a task or project. How did you assist that person? How was your assistance received?
- Tell me about a time when you had to enlist the support of your coworkers, subordinates, or supervisors to complete a task. How did you go about getting their help?
- Give an example of when you had to organize a team in order to achieve a goal. What process did you use to select the team members?
- Describe a situation in which a team you were responsible for was successful. What actions did you take to help achieve this success? What actions did you take, if any, to reinforce their performance?
- Tell me about a time when you had to help a co-worker who had made a mistake.
- Disagreements about work are pretty common. How have you handled a conflict with a colleague or manager?
- Give me an example of a time when you had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on your work?
- Describe a situation where you, at first, resisted a change at work and later accepted it. What, specifically, changed your mind?

## **Communication**

Communicates effectively and respectfully verbally and in writing. Follows instructions and shares information appropriately. Engages in meaningful two-way conversations. Listens attentively and clarifies information when necessary.

- Give an example of a difficult or sensitive situation that required extensive communication.
- Tell me about the most difficult or complex idea, situation, or process you have ever had to explain to someone. How did you explain it? Were you successful?
- Describe a time when you took extra effort to make sure the person with whom you were communicating with had really understood your point. How did you do this?
- Tell me about a time when you had to be very careful in communicating delicate information. What was the possible risk involved and how did you go about it?
- Give me an example of a time when you had to present complex information in a simplified manner in order to explain it to someone.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when you felt the individual did not value your perspective.



- Give me an example of an important report you have written that was well received by others.
- Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills to get an important point across.
- Describe the most significant or creative written presentation you had to complete.
- Give me an example of a time you used written communication to share information that in hindsight you realize should have been shared verbally, or the other way around.

### **Commitment to/Demonstration of Diversity & Inclusion & Welcoming Behavior in the Community**

Commits to conduct that prevents discrimination in the workplace. Creates a welcoming learning and working environment with productive and positive workplace relationships. Supports and includes employees from all backgrounds, experiences and perspectives by demonstrating respect in the workplace. Proactively identifies opportunities to increase awareness and hold self and others accountable for acting in a way which breaks down barriers between groups of difference and creates an inclusive climate that accepts and welcomes all members.

- Please describe how you would work to create a campus environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all members regardless of background, experience and perspectives.
- What opportunities have you had working and collaborating in diverse and inclusive settings?
- How do you encourage people to honor the uniqueness of each individual? How do you prevent discrimination, challenge stereotypes and promote sensitivity and inclusion?
- How do you seek opportunities to improve the learning environment to better meet the needs of the University's diverse workforce and student body?
- Tell us about a time when you had to work with someone who had the direct opposite personality of yours?
- What do you see as the most challenging aspects of an increasingly diverse academic community? Follow-up question: What initiatives have you taken to meet such challenges?
- Have you experienced a situation where you witnessed a co-worker making an insensitive remark to you or someone else? How did you respond?



- Tell me about a time when you helped a new person acclimate to your department. How did you go about making them feel welcome and a part of your unit? How was the new person received by your coworkers?
- Give an example of a time when a direct report was not offering any ideas regarding a problem or issue and you found a way to encourage them to contribute.
- Tell me about a time when members of your work team had difficulty adapting to the differences (e.g., personal, cultural, etc.) of others on the team. How did you handle the situation?
- Tell me about one case when you tried to solve a problem with a totally different approach than is normally used. Why did you try that approach? What was the result?
- Relate an occasion when you withheld your own opinion, and tried to obtain the opinion of others, and why was this action important?
- Describe a situation when you needed the cooperation of many diverse people in order to succeed. Did your approach vary from one person to the next? Why was that important?
- Describe a time when you had a disagreement with a colleague at work. How did you manage to work it out?
- Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to an uncomfortable situation.
- Tell about a time when you changed or altered a decision as a result of a different point of view. What occurred that made you re-evaluate the decision?
- Tell me about one case when you tried to solve a problem with a totally different approach than is normally used. Why did you try that approach? What was the result?
- Tell me about a time when you felt uncomfortable sharing your point of view with work colleagues? What about the situation made you feel uncomfortable? What would have allowed you to feel more comfortable?
- Can you tell me about a time when you backed off in a meeting because you felt someone else should speak or have an opportunity?
- Briefly describe a particularly good working relationship you've had in the past. Why was this relationship so successful? What did you do to maintain the quality of the relationship?
- Conflict exists in all workplaces. Give me a specific example of a conflict you have had with a coworker. How did you resolve that conflict? How were you able to maintain a working relationship with that individual?

- Give me an example of a time when you had to build an effective working relationship with an external partner, someone from outside your area, in order to be successful.
- Sharing information is critical to effective collaboration. Can you think of a time when important information was not shared? What happened and how did you handle it?

## **Management**

Establishes performance expectations for staff. Provides timely, effective and meaningful feedback that motivates staff members to improve their performance. Builds and supports a high performing team. Assists employees in eliminating barriers to performance and provides encouragement for skill development. Delegates responsibility appropriately. Recognizes and rewards achievement.

- Tell me about a time when someone came to you with a problem. What did you do?
- How well do you think you are developing as a manager/leader? What tells you this? What areas need further development? Provide some specific examples and the steps are you taking to improve.
- Tell about a time when your department or unit was not meeting established goals. What did you do to redirect the department or zone so that the goals could be achieved?
- Give an example of a time when you took a known risk in order to achieve a business goal or objective. What were the results?
- Everybody endures some stress in the workplace. Give a specific example of a stressful time at work. What caused the stress? What did you do to help others manage the stress?
- Tell me what you have done to ensure that your direct reports feel valued for their contributions on a consistent basis?
- Tell me about a time that you sensed that something was wrong with one of your direct reports and talked to him/her about it. What was the result?
- Give me an example of a time that you realized that one of your direct reports was overburdened with work. What did you do to help them manage the workload? How did your action affect the situation?
- Describe how you coached two different people to accomplish the same tasks. What similarities and differences were there in your approach?
- Describe a time when you used feedback to enhance the performance of a direct report or other employee. What was your approach?
- Tell me about a time you led a change effort.

- Give me an example of a time when you helped a direct report or other person in the organization accept change and make the necessary adjustments to move forward. What were the change management skills that you used?
- Please describe a time when you had to provide feedback to others on their performance. How did you go about this? What kind of feedback did you provide? How do you think the feedback was received by them?
- In your current position, how do your responsibilities play a part in your department's success in meeting its goals?
- Please describe a project you worked on recently. Explain how your responsibilities managing the project team helped your department meet its goals.
- Describe an example of when you had to train a new member of your work unit. Describe your approach.

## **Leadership**

Establishes clear vision for staff and motivates employees to achieve their best performance. Engages and motivates staff, coaching for peak performance. Promotes a welcoming, inclusive and supportive work environment and fosters continuous improvement. Makes outreach efforts and uses resources to create a diverse workforce. Leads and manages change. Builds and manages relationships across the department and University.

- Can you describe a time when you used financial or other data to identify key business planning issues or concerns?
- How do you communicate your work vision and get others to buy in?
- Describe a time when you communicated your company's vision to your employees in an effort to help them understand the reason for goals and objectives set by the department.
- Describe a time when you effectively integrated financial, enterprise, and industry data and indicators into a strategic plan or initiative.
- Describe the things you consider and the steps you take in assessing the viability of a new idea or initiative.
- Tell me about one of your most successful attempts to persuade others to your point of view.
- When was the last occasion that you had to use your negotiating skills to bring about a resolution that was in everyone's best interest?
- Think of a time when you acted as a role model for others. Why did they consider you a role model? How did you influence others?
- What methods have you used to evaluate employees job performance?

- What tactics do you use to motivate others to complete delegated tasks? Provide examples?
- Give a specific example of a time you were recognized for dealing effectively with a difficult situation.
- Describe a situation when you were in charge of a project and had to enlist the help of others. What were the circumstances? How did you delegate work?
- If your managers were asked to discuss your leadership skills, how would they reply? What would subordinates say?
- Tell me about a time you completed a goal or objective despite resistance from others. What specific actions did you take to overcome the resistance?
- What systems have you developed and implemented to improve operating efficiency in your department?
- We all make mistakes. Tell me about a time you made a mistake and accepted responsibility for it.
- Tell me about the ways in which you motivate others toward commitment and hard work.
- Describe a time when you were responsible for overseeing the implementation of organizational change.

## **Motivation**

Help you discover what motivate this candidate at work. Every employer seeks employees who have an intrinsic motivation that is related to work. Because all candidates are motivated about something, you need to discover what that is during the interview. You also need to learn about your job candidate's ability to create a working environment for other employees that they find motivational. Whether the coworkers are reporting staff or colleagues and peers, fostering motivation in others is a needed skill. The University's goal is to foster a work environment that is motivational and engaging for all.

- What are you looking for in a new role that you aren't getting in your current role?
- What would you need to be satisfied and productive in a role?
- What, in your experience, motivates your best, most successful job performance? Can you give us an example of this motivation in action in the workplace?
- What role does your manager or supervisor play in your personal motivation at work?
- You are assigned to participate in a team that has several members who are not motivated to work hard and contributes their best efforts. How have you in the

past, or would you, if you were to experience this, approach this motivation situation?

- Describe the work environment or culture in which you are the most productive and happy