

Search Committee and Interview Guidance for COVID-19

Search Committee meetings and interview processes will be impacted by restricted travel and social interactions. Search committee meetings and planning can proceed with their non-interview based meetings via video conferencing options such as Skype, Zoom and Google Hangouts. This can proceed under the other social distancing guidelines provided by the university.

Planning for modifying the interview process is something search committees should plan for now. One of the biggest opportunities for unconscious bias to creep into your hiring process comes with the delivery of interview questions as well as the social or informal interactions that come in between interviews and at meal-based interview slots. By using video-based interviewing, more structure is built into the process, thereby reducing these opportunities for unconscious bias to creep in. Video-based interviewing provides every candidate the exact same parameters to answer interview questions and the exact same question delivery. This standardization of the candidate experience means you can help ensure candidates are treated the same way, while still bringing personality to your candidate experience

Interview processes that are already underway (that is, candidates have been invited to interview in person) will continue to be allowed under the current social distancing guidance even if utilizing different platforms for each candidate in the search process. This is especially true for searches where interviews of candidates are already underway. See Example 1 below.

However, given the current social distancing guidelines, including restricted travel, search committees should review their traditional interview schedules, particularly for in-person interview activities, and plan now for making the necessary adjustments. Committees should examine whether all segments of “traditional” interviews must continue given the very likely circumstances of restricted travel and in-person contact. Typical multi-day, multi-constituent interview segments may still be needed, but should be reconsidered and/or modified. One college, College of Education, has already made such adjustments and approved for their schedule to be shared as an example. See Example 2 below.

Consider having fewer constituent sessions, extending the Q&A segment following a presentation portion to allow for sufficient non-search-committee questions. Be sure to allow for generous off-screen break times for the candidate and the search committee.

In addition, search committees should reconsider if “meal-based” interactions are necessary, and eliminate them if they are not.

Additionally, search committees should plan ahead for the potential that not all candidates would have access to online the necessary internet and computer equipment to participate in a video-based presentation.

Likewise, if candidates and/or search committee members are working from home, they may have other family members present (due to the social distancing being put in place), and should allow for breaks and interruptions that may occur during interviews, especially for extended interview schedules.

Lastly, search committees should plan in advance to consider reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities who may be asked to participate in on-line interviews. Captioning, large font materials, telephonic relay support, and other accommodations must be planned for. Consider connecting with NC State’s OIT Accessibility Coordinator for support. See <https://accessibility.ncsu.edu/>

Offer flexibility if candidates need to reschedule. With school and childcare closures and individual family care needs, there is a high likelihood that there will be candidates who will be completely unable to participate in an interview, virtual or in-person. During this time, hiring managers may need to accommodate candidate schedules so as not to prohibit any applicant from consideration due to circumstances beyond their control. See Example 3 below.

As always, the Office for Institutional Equity and Diversity as well as University Human Resources are available to help review individual situations and provide direct support and guidance. www.oied.ncsu.edu or send an email to equal_opportunity@ncsu.edu

Examples:

Example 1: Mid-search mixed candidate processes

One of three candidates has already completed an "on-site" in-person interview. The other two are scheduled within the upcoming two weeks. The department wants to know if it's possible to offer an extensive virtual interview process using Skype or Zoom for the remaining two candidates, even though they already did one interview in a different format.

Response:

Yes, this is allowable at this time. Generally, all interviews should be conducted in the exact same way. However, based on the timing of the restrictions/guidance coming into place, the department can proceed in this way without negating the whole search. They should proceed by making the decision to proceed in a uniform way - that is, moving all future interviews to the on-line interview process - versus offering the candidates the choice. This way everyone proceeds under the same conditions going forward, versus differentiating by each person's individual circumstances. The interview sections must remain the same between the in-person schedule and the video-based schedule. That means, having interactions that are with the same constituent groups, same amount of time, and same questions asked.

Example 2: Modified Interview Process (faculty job group)

Each candidate would be invited for approximately a 5.5 hour engagement with our college through Zoom that would entail:

- a. interaction with the nomination committee conversation of the kind that would occur in the first dinner meeting--providing an overview of college, position, opportunities and comfortable discussion (1.25 hour).
- b. presentation and q and a with faculty, staff and students regarding their research and possibilities at NC State (1 hour).
- c. meeting with associate dean for faculty and academic affairs and associate dean for research and innovation (1 hour).
- d. meeting with approximately 10 faculty closely related to the candidate's area of expertise and interest (1 hour).
- e. conversation/ interview with the dean (1 hour) .

This would not be a replacement for a campus visit but would enable us to maintain interest and possibly narrow the pool due to the conditions of uncertainty under which we are operating.

Example 3:

One of the candidates in a search is unable to travel to campus for an in-person interview upon the advice of their healthcare provider. While we would like for all candidates to have the same

interview experience, we also don't want to deny those who can travel an opportunity to visit campus.

Response:

Under the current guidance, it would be best for the department to make the decision to proceed with all interviews in one format for all candidates. That is, make all of the interviews done virtually. The department could arrange for an on-campus visit at a later time if that is an essential part of the process - consider whether it is essential, versus preferred, under the current circumstances. Offer flexibility if candidates need to reschedule. With school and childcare closures and individual family care needs, there is a high likelihood that there will be candidates who will be completely unable to participate in an interview, virtual or in-person. During this time, hiring managers may need to accommodate candidate schedules so as not to prohibit any applicant from consideration due to circumstances beyond their control.