



To enhance mission performance, TSA is committed to promoting a culture founded on its values of Integrity, Innovation and Team Spirit.

NOTE: Pursuant to Section 101 of the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (49 U.S.C. 114(n)), this directive establishes Transportation Security Administration (TSA) policy and supersedes Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) orders, policies, guidance, and bulletins regarding interviews and/or other final selection processes issued under the FAA Personnel Management System. This directive is TSA policy and must be applied accordingly.

1. **PURPOSE:** This directive provides TSA policy and procedures for using interviews and/or recommendation panels as part of the final selection decision regarding candidates for TSA positions.
2. **SCOPE:** This directive applies to all TSA employees, applicants, and positions with the exception of those under a Political Appointment or a Transportation Security Executive Service (TSES) position.
3. **AUTHORITY:** Public Law 107-71, the Aviation and Transportation Security Act, (ATSA).
4. **DEFINITIONS:**
 - A. **Assessment Tool:** A device or method used to measure the degree to which an applicant possesses the education, experience, competencies and/or knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) necessary for successful job performance. Examples of assessment tools include rating schedules, written tests, work samples, training demonstrations, interviews, paper and pencil or computer-based tests, questionnaires, application reviews, and assessment centers.
 - B. **Best Qualified (BQ) Candidates:** The most highly ranked candidates available for potential selection after recruitment and candidate assessment efforts are completed. BQ candidates are referred to the Selecting Official (SO) on a Certificate(s) of Eligibles. The order in which they are listed on the Certificate may reflect their eligibility for selection (including veterans' preference if external) and cannot be changed.
 - C. **Panel Interview:** A format for the SO's interview in which the interview is conducted by more than one interviewer interviewing the candidate at the same time.
 - D. **Selecting Official (SO):** The TSA employee who has the authority to make a final decision regarding the candidate to be hired for a specific position. In most organizations and for most positions, the Selecting Official (SO) will be the first-level supervisor of the position being filled; however, some organizations may require that selections be approved by a higher level official.
 - E. **Selecting Official's (SO's) Interview:** An interview of the BQ candidates, administered at the discretion of the SO. A SO's interview may be structured or unstructured in format and conducted by the individual SO or by a panel. The results of a SO's interview may be used to guide the SO's final decision among candidates referred for potential selection.

NOTE: The SO's interview should not be confused with an interview used at an earlier step in the candidate evaluation process to narrow the candidate pool and identify the BQ candidates from among all basically qualified applicants.

- F. Selection Recommendation Panel (SRP): A group tasked by the SO with further evaluating the BQ candidates and making a selection recommendation to the SO. Use of a SRP is optional. If a SRP is convened, the procedures in Sections 7C through 7F of this directive must be applied and the results of the SRP evaluation will be provided to the SO for consideration when the SO makes a final selection from the Certificate(s) of Eligibles.
- G. Structured Interview: An interview in which all candidates are asked the same questions in the same order and are evaluated on the same rating scale, and interviewers are in agreement on acceptable answers.
- H. Unstructured Interview: An interview in which candidates may be asked different questions, a standardized rating scale is not required, and interviewers do not need to agree on acceptable answers.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES:

- A. TSA managers, supervisors and local Human Resources (HR) representatives (or designated staff members) are responsible for:
 - (1) Adhering to the provisions of this policy in considering and selecting candidates for TSA positions; and
 - (2) Seeking guidance and approval from appropriate staff in the Office of Human Capital (OHC) before applying alternative procedures.
- B. Selecting Officials are responsible for the oversight and implementation of the selection process, ensuring that:
 - (1) The criteria and processes used in evaluating and selecting candidates are:
 - (a) In accordance with this directive;
 - (b) Fairly applied; and
 - (c) Clearly communicated to candidates for the position.
 - (2) Any others who participate in the selection process meet the requirements of Section 6A of this directive.
- C. Local Human Resources (HR) representatives (or designated staff members) are responsible for:

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- (1) Maintaining control, confidentiality, and oversight of materials to include the Certificate(s) of Eligibles, assessment tools, evaluation criteria and results, and other related documentation;
- (2) Serving as a member and/or facilitator for panel interviews and SRPs and immediately notifying the SO of any concerns with the conduct of any participant, evaluation criteria, and/or process being used; and
- (3) When necessary, coordinating with OHC for assistance.

D. The Office of Human Capital (OHC) is responsible for:

- (1) Developing, approving, and issuing all TSA assessment tools, including development of specific structured interviews that must be used when conducting SOs' interviews for certain types of positions; and
- (2) Providing guidance and advice to TSA management officials on the development and use of all assessment tools, including SO's interviews and evaluation tools for the SRP.

6. POLICY:

A. Selecting Officials must ensure that any others who participate in the selection process:

- (1) Hold a permanent TSA position;
- (2) Are sufficiently qualified to serve as a subject matter expert in the evaluation of candidates for the position to be filled (this means that in most cases he/she will either be at or above the pay band level of the position or have extensive experience and training in HR functions);
- (3) Are provided adequate instructions on their responsibilities; and
- (4) Are immediately removed from the process should there be any indication that there is either an actual or potential conflict of interest or that established procedures are not being followed.

B. Selecting Official's interviews, and any other assessment tools or processes applied in filling TSA positions, will be utilized in accordance with this directive and all other policies, procedures and guidance issued by the Assistant Administrator for Human Capital (AA/OHC). TSA officials are prohibited from using any assessment tool that was not issued, or reviewed and authorized for use as specified, by appropriate staff in OHC.

C. The SO's interview is a discretionary interview that may only be utilized after the SO receives the Certificate(s) of Eligibles for final selection. Therefore, SOs may decide to conduct a SO's interview of some, none, or all of the candidates referred for potential selection for a position. The option to interview only some of the referred candidates may be useful in particular circumstances; for example, when the SO is familiar with some but not all of the referred

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candidates, or when only some of the candidates whose names appear on the Certificate of Eligibles are potentially within reach for selection due to veterans' preference requirements.

- D. If OHC has developed a SO's interview to be used in making selections for positions of a specific type, that interview must be used without modification if a SO decides to utilize a SO's interview to fill such a position. OHC can provide information on the currently developed TSA SO's interviews.
- E. In the absence of an OHC-developed SO's interview, the SO may choose to develop a SO's interview. A structured format is recommended. SOs should refer to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) publication, *Structured Interviews: A Practical Guide* (available at www.opm.gov), for guidance in developing a SO's interview when an OHC-developed SO's interview has not been established for a specific type of position.
- F. Use of a panel interview to conduct SO's interviews is recommended when the SO believes that having more than one interviewer would be valuable. When a panel is used, the interview must be in a structured format.
- G. When the position being filled is managerial, and at the K pay band level or above, the panel format must be used if the SO elects to utilize a SO's interview before making a selection.
- H. A current TSA employee may only conduct a SO's interview, whether as an individual or as part of a panel, if the employee:
 - (1) Holds a permanent TSA position which is at or above the pay band level of the position to be filled;
 - (2) Is not a current applicant, or (as far as can be determined) a potential future applicant, for the vacancy being filled;
 - (3) Is not related by blood or marriage, or connected by close personal relationship, to any of the applicants for the position;
 - (4) Is a subject matter expert or is sufficiently familiar with the duties, responsibilities, and competencies of the position to be filled; and
 - (5) Has experience in conducting interviews, or has completed a training course on interviewing (through the Online Learning Center or live training) within the past year.
- I. SO's interviews will be conducted in person whenever possible; however, other means (telephonic, live video connection) may be used if necessary, provided that appropriate and sufficient controls are in place to verify the identity of the person being interviewed.
- J. Reasonable efforts should be made to facilitate interviews of candidates who are unavailable to be interviewed in person, such as those candidates living or traveling outside the area, applicants who are away serving on military duty, or those unable to travel due to physical limitations. In such cases, the SO should consider alternatives (within prudent funding and time constraints) such as using other interview locations, or telephone or video conferencing

capabilities. If applicable, a candidate may request a reasonable accommodation for a disability (see [TSA MD 1100.73-4, Reasonable Accommodation Program](#)).

NOTE: A candidate who, despite consideration of alternative options, cannot be reached for or cannot participate in a SO's interview due to absence for active military duty, will continue to be considered for the position as if he/she performed successfully in the interview.

- K. The results of a SO's interview must be used in the context of the applicable TSA internal or external competitive selection policy and process. For example, if a veterans' preference eligible on a list of external competitive candidates does not perform as well in a SO's interview as candidates without veterans' preference, this result alone does not authorize the SO to select the nonpreference eligible. TSA officials should consult with their local HR representatives and OHC for guidance on using the results of SO's interviews.
- L. The SO may, at his/her discretion, elect to utilize a SRP. SRPs can assist the SO by further evaluating, and making a selection recommendation from the BQ candidates for a vacancy. The SRP process may or may not include a SO's interview. If a SRP is convened, the results of the selection panel evaluation will be provided to the SO for consideration when making a final selection from the Certificate(s) of Eligibles. If a SRP is convened, the procedures in Sections 7C through 7F must be followed.
- M. Only the SO has the authority to make the final selection of a candidate for a position.

7. PROCEDURES:

A. Developing and Administering the Selecting Official's Interview

- (1) A structured format is recommended. Refer to an OHC-developed SO interview, if available. If an OHC-developed SO's interview is not available, for guidance on developing a structured interview and using panels, refer to the OPM publication *Structured Interviews: A Practical Guide*. Any locally-developed SO's interview must be reviewed by OHC prior to use.
- (2) Questions for a SO's interview must be developed using the Job Analysis Tool (JAT) for the position and other job-related documentation. Only job-related questions will be asked in SO's interviews and only job-related factors and behaviors will be evaluated in considering candidates for positions. When using a structured interview, the same or equivalent questions, rating scales and procedures will be used for all candidates who participate in a SO's interview for a specific position.
- (3) Anyone conducting a SO's interview is prohibited from asking questions related to the candidate's:
 - (a) Age;
 - (b) Race;
 - (c) Religion;

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- (d) National origin, lineage, ancestry, primary language, or native tongue;
 - (e) Racial, national, political or religious affiliations;
 - (f) Marital status;
 - (g) Sexual orientation;
 - (h) Maiden name or family surname;
 - (i) Relationships or people lived with;
 - (j) Family issues (parental status, age of dependents, plans for children);
 - (k) Height and weight;
 - (l) Physical/mental disabilities (this includes questions regarding genetic information, workers' compensation claims history, medications, past impairments or disabilities, or any other broad question about impairments likely to elicit information about disabilities);
 - (m) Arrests;
 - (n) Convictions, unless related to performance of the job;
 - (o) Military discharge; and
 - (p) Personal activities (that probe for personal affiliations, such as religious or political beliefs).
- (4) It is permissible, however, to present information related to the requirements of the job and ask the candidate whether he/she can meet these requirements. The SO should check with OHC if he/she is unsure about the propriety of any proposed interview questions.
- (5) Some topics, such as arrests or convictions, or military discharge, may affect a candidate's potential employability (suitability for Federal employment and/or ability to obtain necessary security clearances). If information that could affect employability is mentioned during the SO's interview, the interviewer should make note and follow up later with OHC and the TSA Personnel Security Division. In the meantime, the interviewer should proceed with the interview as planned and refrain from further discussion of these topics.
- (6) When SO's interviews are conducted using a panel interview format, the same panel members should participate in all of the interviews conducted if possible, except in emergency or other unusual circumstances (such as the sudden illness or other unavailability of a panel member).

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- (7) The SO or panel members conducting an interview will work in conjunction with the HR representative to ensure that the SO's interview questions will be applied and/or presented in a fair, consistent, and nondiscriminatory manner to each BQ candidate.
- (8) The SO or panel members conducting an interview will inform each candidate of the requirement to maintain discretion in discussing the SO's interview questions (or any other information related to candidate evaluation) with other candidates so as not to give an actual or perceived advantage to any candidates.

B. Utilizing Interview Information

- (1) The SO or panel members conducting an interview should evaluate each candidate against the established criteria only and not against one another.
- (2) For external certificates, the results of the panel interview or of the SRP evaluation cannot change a veterans' preference eligible's standing on an External Certificate of Eligibles. That is:
 - (a) The SO may not pass over a veterans' preference eligible to select a non-preference eligible based solely on the results of an interview or the findings of a SRP;
 - (b) The results of an interview or other assessment evaluating critical job-related competencies may be used to support a request for an objection or passover, if appropriate; and
 - (c) The SO is required to submit and obtain approval of a request for an objection or passover if he/she believes a veterans' preference eligible should be eliminated from consideration for a vacancy announced externally.
- (3) If there is a priority consideration or priority selection requirement for a position, interview results will be applied in accordance with OHC policies and procedures.
- (4) The SO will return the annotated Certificate(s) of Eligibles to the HR representative. The HR representative will inform the SO once the selectee has been contacted and given a tentative offer of selection. Until that time, no interview results or other information will be released or discussed with any candidates.
- (5) All applications and evaluation tools (i.e., interview questions, candidate scores, and other information related to the selection process) will be maintained, secured and controlled in accordance with TSA records management requirements.
- (6) A candidate may be given feedback on the results of his/her interview or SRP evaluation upon request. Candidates should not be provided their actual scores/ratings, but rather given information on areas where he/she could make improvements. A candidate will not be provided information on his/her interview performance in comparison to other candidates. Candidates may be directed to the [Career Toolbox](#) for resources that may help them in pursuit of career advancement.

C. Selection Recommendation Panel – Membership and Responsibilities

- (1) Use of a SRP is optional. If a SO elects to convene a SRP, the procedures in Sections 7C through 7F must be followed.
- (2) SRPs will normally consist of two or three members. All members must be familiar with the duties and responsibilities of, and the competencies and experience required to successfully perform the position being filled. SRPs:
 - (a) Must include either the first-level supervisor over the vacancy being filled (this may or may not be the SO for the position) and/or another individual holding a permanent position at or above the pay band level of the position being filled who has sufficient knowledge of the competencies and experience necessary to perform the duties of the vacancy being filled; and
 - (b) May include a representative with experience and training in HR functions (most often this will be the local HR representative for the office/organization).
- (3) As a member or facilitator of the SRP, the HR representative will ensure that the process is fair, consistent, and nondiscriminatory.
- (4) The SRP members are responsible for ensuring they have full understanding of the requirements before serving as a SRP panel member. In addition, while the SRP is responsible for providing the SO with a recommendation based on fair and equitable evaluation of all candidates, the panel is not the deciding entity for making the final selection(s).

D. Selection Recommendation Panel – Evaluation Criteria and Process

- (1) The SO and SRP members will develop the evaluation criteria and, if applicable, SO's interview questions, in accordance with all applicable interview policy and guidance distributed by the OHC. When utilizing an interview in filling a position for which OHC has developed and issued a SO's interview, only that interview and scoring procedure will be used, without modification.
- (2) The SO and SRP panel members will work in conjunction with the local HR representative to ensure that all evaluation criteria are:
 - (a) Developed and structured around the core competencies required to be successful when performing the duties of the position; and
 - (b) Applied and/or presented in a fair, consistent, and nondiscriminatory manner to each BQ candidate.
- (3) The SRP may use all, or any combination, of the following criteria to evaluate each BQ candidate:

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- (a) **Background and Experience:** When using this criterion, the panel members will evaluate the information provided by the candidates on their applications (i.e., resume and responses to the vacancy announcement knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs/competencies) against established criteria such as depth and recency of specialized experience, job-related education and training, self-development, and awards and recognition.

- (b) **Performance and Conduct**
 - (i) When using this criterion, candidates will be grouped into pre-established categories based on past performance and conduct.

 - (ii) The categories will be established based on performance rating levels and conduct issues. For example: The highest category could include all candidates with at least three years with the highest performance rating possible and no disciplinary actions during the same time period; the next level defined as those with only two years with the highest performance rating and no disciplinary actions; etc.

 - (iii) The panel members can request performance rating and conduct information from a current TSA employee's supervisor.

 - (iv) The panel members can ask candidates external to TSA to submit documentation of performance not already included in the application package (i.e., performance appraisals or similar documentation for the last 3 years). However, the panel must allow appropriate time for candidates to provide the additional information/ documentation. The panel will also inform candidates that if the documentation is not received by the date requested, he/she will be assumed to have had "Satisfactory" performance ratings.

- (c) **Structured Interview**
 - (i) If the SO decides to use a SO's interview as part of the evaluation criteria, the SO may request that the SRP conduct structured interviews with all of the BQ candidates, or may utilize one or both of the other criteria in Sections 7D(3)(a) and 7D(3)(b) in a phased approach to help reduce the number of candidates that will be interviewed. Note, however, that all available BQ candidates remain listed on the Certificate of Eligibles in their original order of referral, whether or not they are interviewed.

 - (ii) When there are a large number of BQ candidates on the Certificate of Eligibles, the phased approach will help reduce the number of candidates to be interviewed. The phased approach will consist of the SRP first evaluating all BQ candidates on their "Background and Experience" and/or "Performance and Conduct." Based on the results of the completed evaluation(s), the SRP will suggest a reasonable number of candidates to be interviewed. Note, however, that all available BQ candidates remain listed on the Certificate of

Eligibles, in their original order of referral, whether or not they are interviewed.

- (iii) The SO's interview must be in a structured format and questions must focus on job-related competencies and requirements. When filling a position for which OHC has developed and issued a SO's interview, only those interview questions and scoring procedures will be used without modification. The prohibited questions referenced in 7A(3) also are prohibited here.

E. Selection Recommendation Panel – Evaluation Results

- (1) The SRP will record their evaluation results on a chart or matrix similar to that in Attachment 3 of the [*TSA Handbook on Permanent Internal Assignment Procedures*](#) for [*TSA MD 1100.30-4, Permanent Internal Assignment Procedures*](#).
- (2) After completing all evaluations, the SRP will provide the SO with the results of each candidate's evaluation along with the recommendation(s) for selection. The panel members may recommend more than one candidate to the SO for each vacancy, especially if the panel members have different opinions on who should be recommended for selection.

F. Final Selection after Panel Recommendation

- (1) When making the final selection(s), the SO will consider the results from the SRP in conjunction with the established procedures that apply to the final Certificate(s) of Eligibles.
- (2) Although it should rarely be necessary, an SO who elected to utilize a SRP may still elect to conduct a structured or unstructured SO's interview(s) with some, none or all of the BQ candidates, regardless of whether the SRP process included an interview.

8. EFFECTIVE DATE AND IMPLEMENTATION: This policy is effective immediately upon signature.

APPROVAL

Signed

6/4/2009

Richard A. Whitford
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Date

Distribution: Assistant Secretary, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Assistant Administrators, Area Directors, Senior Field Executives, Federal Security Directors, Special Agents in Charge, Administrative Officers, and TSA affiliated HR Offices
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