

Best Practices for Virtual Faculty Interviews

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, many units are conducting virtual faculty interviews. This document offers concrete strategies for setting up and conducting successful virtual interviews.

We would like to acknowledge Queen's University for sharing their document titled "Best Practices for Conducting Faculty Interviews Remotely", from which a number of these suggestions were adapted.

1 General Principles to Keep in Mind

- **Ensure all candidates have the same or a comparable experience.**
- **Ensure you continue to follow a rigorous recruitment strategy that attracts an excellent and diverse candidate pool.**
 - ▶ **Consult the [Strategies for Recruiting an Excellent & Diverse Faculty Complement](#) for concrete approaches to help broaden candidate pools and to support diversity at each stage of the recruitment and search process.**
 - ▶ **Continue to challenge unconscious biases** throughout the hiring process.
- **Continue to accommodate accessibility needs.**
- **Be flexible in the scheduling of interviews.** Keep in mind that these are extraordinary circumstances and candidates may need flexibility in the interview process to manage childcare, illness, etc.
- **Replicate your regular interview format as much as possible/appropriate,** including seminar talks/presentations and graduate student meet & greets if these are the norm in your unit.

2 Setting Up Online Interviews

- **Select a user-friendly platform like Microsoft Teams or Zoom for remote interviews.** Consult [Academic & Collaborative Technologies \(ACT\)](#) for information on video-conferencing solutions supported by the University. (Note: Make sure you understand the difference between Zoom Meetings and Zoom Webinars. Zoom Meetings are fully interactive – participants can hear one another, see one another, and screen-share. Zoom Meetings are suitable for any component of the interview where participants will be directly engaging with one another. Zoom Webinars allow you to broadcast to a large group of people, but those individuals will not be able to interact. Zoom Webinars may be suitable in a situation where a

candidate is giving a presentation to many members of your unit who are not contributing in any way beyond viewing.)

- **Remember that candidates may be in a different time zone, so schedule interviews at a mutually suitable time and communicate the time zone clearly.**
 - ▶ Consult the [World Clock meeting planner](#) to ensure time conversions are done correctly, with close attention to when clocks spring forward and fall back
 - ▶ Consider including both the time and day in Toronto and the time and day in the candidate's region on the interview schedule to limit confusion.
- **Enable passwords for meetings that are confidential.**
- **Assign someone to “moderate” the interview day(s).** This person will be responsible for virtually “bringing” the candidate to each meeting and for being available to the candidate by email and telephone to troubleshoot technical issues.
- **Enable the “mute all” function for the moderator.** In situations where there is excessive background noise during the interview or presentation, the moderator can mute everyone, and then unmute the candidate only.
- **Set up different links for meetings that are happening on different days,** even if the meetings are with the same people.
- **Always set up a separate meeting link for committee members to discuss the candidate.** Resist the urge to ask members to “stay on the call” to discuss matters/debrief after the candidate has signed off; instead, ask members to log on to an entirely new link. **Be mindful that the candidate could read the entire Teams meeting chat for any meeting they were originally invited to, even after they have signed off from the meeting.**
- **When planning for sessions where a variety of faculty or students may be joining the candidate for short conversations at different times over the course of a longer period, consider using a moderator to manage attendance.**

3 Preparing Your Candidate

- **Offer to set up a technical practice session with the candidate** before their interview. This gives the candidate an opportunity to practice signing into the meeting and to test their presentation.
- **Offer to pay for a local hotel with a reputation for reliable Wi-Fi** (or any additional Wi-Fi charges) for the night before each interview day and for the full

duration of each interview day. This is to help ensure that your candidate can interview in a quiet place, free from distractions.

- **Offer to pay for childcare and/or eldercare for dependents during the interview, and the night before, if relevant.**
- **Understand that your candidate may have questions about relocating to Toronto.** The University of Toronto's Faculty Relocation Service (more information below) can provide assistance.
 - ▶ Consultations are free and confidential. You should consider arranging a consultation for your candidate as a part of the remote interview process.

4 Preparing Your Committee

- **Follow your normal best practice to ensure a well-structured and fair interview process.**
- **Encourage committee members to try to connect into the virtual interview from a quiet place, free from distractions.**
- **Ensure committee members have received copies of the interview questions in advance and have been briefed on the structure of the interview.**
- **In the list of interview questions, clearly note the order of the questions and the name of the person who will ask each question.** In the absence of visual cues, it is important to be explicit about this.

5 Troubleshooting

- **Run through all the technologies used for the interview process and resolve any technical difficulties.** Do not use your first candidate as the test case.
- **Ensure that all participants in the interview process including the candidate have access by phone and email to someone who can help with technical difficulties.**
- **Have a plan (and communicate the plan) for what to do if a call is dropped.**
- **If you experience unresolvable technical difficulties, consider rescheduling the call.**

6 Negotiation Stage

- **Understand that your candidate may feel a degree of uncertainty and apprehension about making decisions regarding a relocation without first visiting Toronto.** The University of Toronto's Faculty Relocation Service assists recently appointed faculty with most aspects of relocating to Toronto. Consultations are free and confidential. You should consider arranging a consultation for your prospective new hire as a part of the remote interview process. The Faculty Relocation Service will help ensure the candidate's transition to life in Toronto as part of the University of Toronto is as comfortable as possible.

Faculty Relocation Service

<https://www.facultyrelocation.utoronto.ca/>

For specific advice in the context of the pandemic, your candidate may find the following helpful:

<https://www.facultyrelocation.utoronto.ca/planning-your-move/covid-19-resources/>

Telephone: 416-978-0951

Email: faculty.support@utoronto.ca

- **Consider setting up an informal conversation for the successful candidate with members of the committee and colleagues to give the candidate a chance to ask more questions about unit, the University of Toronto, and Toronto.**