



Interviews and Inappropriate Interview Questions UO Faculty Recruitment Workshop Series – March 2026

Thoughtful interviews provide the search committee and university hiring authorities with an opportunity to make a well-informed hiring decision. They also provide candidates with firsthand opportunities to learn more about the position, the university, and the community.

The interview process should be carefully designed to learn more about top candidates and their qualifications while also protecting candidates from unlawful discrimination. Inappropriate interview questions can pose legal risks for the University and poorly formulated questions may fail to gather useful information and introduce bias into the selection process.

- To optimize interviews, search committees should consider the following interview principles: An interview is a mutual exchange of information. The interview should be structured so candidates can share relevant information and ask questions.
- Candidates will have different communication styles, some of which may be influenced by culture or gender. Unless communication style directly relates to job requirements, it is important to focus on the substance, not style, of a candidate's response. It is also important to be mindful of the potential for implicit bias when evaluating communication styles.
- Those involved in the interview process should have a common understanding of the interview questions and, in general, the kinds of information the questions hope to elicit. If technical or industry-specific questions are being asked, a subject matter expert can be used to identify appropriate responses.
- Everyone involved in the interview process should remember that while they are assessing candidates, the candidates are also evaluating the position, hiring department, and the University of Oregon. It is important in recruiting to reflect a positive image and provide clear and accurate answers to candidate questions.

While a candidate may share personal information during an interview, to protect individual rights and avoid inappropriate and possibly illegal questions, the interview should remain focused on **job-related information**—essential functions of the position for which you are interviewing, and the job-related experience, training, skills, or other attributes the candidate brings to the position.

The following pages cover common topics that those involved in interviews may wonder about, and appropriate and inappropriate questions. It's strongly recommended that anyone involved in the search process, whether they are a committee member or participating in an open session, be aware of these inappropriate questions.

Topic	Appropriate Questions	Inappropriate Questions
Age	None	How old are you? What is your birth date? What are your retirement plans?
Arrests or Convictions of a Crime	None Oregon law prohibits inquiry of criminal history in the selection process. Criminal history findings on a background check are evaluated on a job related case by case basis.	Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Have you ever been arrested? Do you have a criminal record?
Citizenship or Nationality	Can you show proof of your eligibility to work in the U.S.? Are you fluent in any languages other than English?*	Are you a U.S. citizen? Where were you born? You have a distinctive accent or name. What is your background?
Disability	Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job with or without reasonable accommodation? As noted above, for all candidates the interview process should focus on the ability to perform the essential functions of the position. If a candidate has an obvious disability or discloses a disability that reasonably might interfere with his/her ability to perform the duties of the position, it is acceptable to ask the candidate to explain how he/she would perform the essential job functions, with or without reasonable accommodation.	Are you disabled? What is the nature or severity of your disability? Have you ever filed a Workers' Comp claim? How much work time have you missed due to illness or other medical condition?

Topic	Appropriate Questions	Inappropriate Questions
Family Status	<p>Do you have any responsibilities that conflict with job attendance or travel requirements?*</p> <p>*Must be asked of all applicants, and not based on assumptions of family or parental obligations.</p>	<p>Are you married?</p> <p>What is your spouse's name?</p> <p>What is your maiden name?</p> <p>Do you have any children?</p> <p>Are you pregnant?</p> <p>Who takes care of your children?</p>
Name	Do you have any professional information or publications under a different name?	<p>What is your maiden name?</p> <p>Do you go by Miss, Mrs., or Ms.?</p> <p>That's an interesting name, what is its origin?</p>
Organizations	What professional organizations are you involved with that relate to the position?	<p>What organizations are you involved with outside of your professional work?</p> <p>Where do you volunteer your personal time?</p>
Race/Ethnicity	None	What is your race/ethnicity?
Residence	What is your address?	
Religion	None	<p>What is your religion?</p> <p>Which [place of worship] do you attend?</p> <p>What are your religious holidays?</p>
Sex	None	<p>What is your gender?</p> <p>What is your gender identity?</p>
Sexual Orientation	None	Is your partner male or female?