STAFF HIRING GUIDELINES  
Walla Walla University

Click on one of the quick links below to be directed to more information about important steps in the staff hiring process. If you have questions that arise while using these guidelines please contact the Human Resource Department at (509) 527-2820.

QUICK LINKS TO STAFF HIRING GUIDELINES

1. Completing a Personnel Action Form – Contact Human Resources, HR will initiate this form.
2. Job Descriptions – Details about creating and updating job descriptions
3. Job Announcements – Advertising open positions
4. Employment Applications – internal/external applicants process
5. Interviewing - Preparing and conducting interviews, do’s and don’ts, etc.
6. Making a Selection – Reference checks, pay rates, offers of employment, background investigations, etc.
7. Preparing for a New Employee – Employment forms, departmental orientation

1. PERSONNEL ACTION FORM

When additional or replacement staff are needed a Personnel Action Form (PAF) must be completed, including signed approval as indicated below. The hiring department contacts Human Resources to initiate the hiring process. (509) 527-2820.

Signed approval from:
   • Director of Human Resources
   • Department Head
   • Area VP
   • Associate VP of Financial Administration
   • TROIKA

2. JOB DESCRIPTIONS

To maintain current standardized job descriptions for staff positions, HR will check to see if a current job description is on file (current means the job description was created using a Job Analysis Questionnaire (JAQ). Requests for adding or replacing “permanent” staff may require completion of a JAQ depending on the job description status. A JAQ is a comprehensive tool used to identify critical details about a position and to provide guidance for proper classification and valuation of a position. Please contact HR, they will send you the JAQ and answer any questions you may have when using this tool.

Note: Typically staff positions that are 15 hours or less, temporary or on-call, a job description is not required, unless the hiring department wishes to advertise.

Current job description available – The job description will be emailed to you for review. If modifications are made you will need to email the job description to HR for review. HR will return final draft of revised job description to you.
Current job description not available – A job analysis questionnaire will need to be completed in consultation with existing personnel as appropriate. You will send the completed questionnaire to HR for creation of a job description. HR will work with you to finalize details of the job description and email the final version when complete.

3. JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS

The university has typically adopted the practice of posting all open regular (“permanent”) positions for a minimum of 5 business days. If the department is restructuring or promoting an employee in their department a job announcement is not posted. There may be times you already have a candidate in mind, but posting these positions demonstrates to our campus community that we value their skills and want to see them grow. This message is compromised if we only post positions when we have not managed to find a suitable candidate without doing so. In addition a qualified applicant of interest may unexpectedly apply. Upon request HR will also post temporary or on-call positions, but this is not an expectation.

Should the department wish to advertise, a job description would need to be created. (See section 2)

When a completed PRF is received, HR will create a job announcement using you information provided on the job description. The job announcement will be sent to the hiring department for review before it’s posted.

4. EMPLOYMENT APPLICATIONS

HR will screen applications received and communicate any concerns to you. Applications will be forwarded to you for consideration.

Internal applicants – All prospective candidates who are currently employed by the University should complete an Internal Employment Application. This application details information about the employee’s current position, reasons for interest in the job, and qualifications. A résumé can be attached to this application.

External applicants – All prospective candidates not already employed by the University are required to complete an online Walla Walla University External Application for Employment. It is a “best practice” to have a completed application on hand prior to beginning the interview process and will be required for conducting a background investigation prior to hire. The application collects information from the applicant that far exceeds what is typically provided in a résumé. When communicating with a prospective candidate it is important to direct them to the HR website where they can complete the online application and conveniently attach their résumé as desired or expected. All staff employment applications are first received in HR.

5. INTERVIEWING

A good hiring decision requires good preparation and good communication. In return for the effort you are much more likely to see a strong correlation between what you are seeking and what you find. You will select candidates you wish to interview. The purpose of conducting interviews is to help you identify the best applicants for a particular job. Your goal is to hire the person who is most prepared for the duties of the position, will fit best with your department’s needs, and is most capable of satisfying job performance expectations.
It is recommended that you provide a copy of the current job description to all prospective candidates in advance of conducting an interview. This allows the candidate to better understand the job expectations, including any essential responsibilities he/she is expected to perform with or without accommodation.

**Preparing for the interview** – An interview can be an effective tool if used properly. A structured interview that follows a more standardized process (ex. core questions asked of all candidates and time allowed) will produce more meaningful comparative information than an unstructured interview. An unstructured interview makes it much more difficult to accurately compare candidates because of the variability associated with each interaction. A structured interview does not limit flexibility for you; it simply involves a core standard being applied to all applicants interviewed. There will naturally be some variability in each interview based on the uniqueness of each candidate. For example, in addition to core questions asked of all candidates, you will likely ask additional questions that are different for each candidate based upon how he/she responds to core questions.

1. **Review the list of interview question subject areas to avoid.** Generally, you are likely aware of what types of questions should not be asked, but a quick review of this list will be a helpful reminder for you. Be sure to avoid personal (and illegal) questions that you may be tempted to ask in an effort to get to know the candidate.

2. **If a candidate volunteers information that falls into one topic areas to avoid,** this does not give you permission to further explore the subject. The recommendation is to indicate that you don’t need this information and that it has no affect on your hiring decision. You should never write down (document) any “illegal subject” statements whether they are made voluntarily or not. Notes taken during job interviews may be used as evidence in a discrimination lawsuit.

3. **Develop a list of interview questions in advance based upon the job requirements** (a good resource would be a current job description). Use of behavioral interview questions (“Tell me about a time when...”, “give me a specific example of...”, “Please describe your level of involvement in...”) is a good predictor of future performance. This approach is based on the premise that a person will generally behave in the future as they have in similar types of situations in the past. Using behavioral based questions will help you avoid making potentially erroneous assumptions about a candidate based on unexplored or unverified information. Asking well thought-out questions will more likely result in a level understanding about the candidate needed to meaningfully judge suitability for the position.

4. Be prepared for the candidate. Prior to the interview, review the application (and cover letter and résumé if provided), and any other relevant materials. Highlight some points of interest that can serve as icebreaker questions, as well as substantive questions. Identify anything that is unclear that you want the candidate to explain.

**Conducting the interview** – An interview is often a stressful and high pressure situation for a candidate. If you are able to help the candidate feel comfortable this will help ensure a friendly exchange of comments and allow communication to develop freely to build mutual confidence. Through this exchange you and the candidate are able to more fully understand needs and expectations. This is the level of engagement needed for informed decisions to be made.

1. **Make the candidate feel welcome from the start of the interview.** Greet the candidate with a smile and a handshake. Introduce yourself and any others who are participating in the interview along with the roles served. Have a couple of non-threatening statements
or questions prepared as an ice-breaker. For example you could talk about the weather or if they had any trouble finding the building. Do NOT ask or talk about something personal that might reveal information you do not need and should not have.

2. **Communicate the agenda.** Inform the candidate of what is going to occur during the interview session. For example you could tell the candidate you will be asking a series of questions and plan to take notes. In addition you could encourage the candidate to ask questions along the way. With an understanding of how the interview will be structured the candidate is better able to relax and concentrate on questions and answers.

3. **Describe the position and work environment.** It is important that the candidate understand position responsibilities, performance expectations, culture, and what it takes to be successful in the position, department, and organization. The more detail you provide, including challenges of the position, the better perspective the candidate will have.

It is important for you to listen, probe, and evaluate information the candidate provides that can predict their future performance. Allow the candidate to summarize his/her strengths and ask questions about the position. Asking well thought out questions shows good preparation for the interview and can give you great insight into candidate motivation. Questions that are focused too heavily on the wrong elements of the job may be an indicator that the candidate is interested in the position for the wrong reasons and may not be a good fit.

**Concluding the interview** – At the conclusion of the interview thank the candidate and outline what the next steps will be and offer an approximate timeline by which a decision will be made. Inform the candidate that WWU conducts background investigations on candidates who accept an offer of employment.

This is also a good opportunity to **confirm references** provided and contact information. You can also ask for names of other possible references such as co-workers, customers, other supervisors, and vendors/suppliers.

**Interview question subject areas to avoid** – Listed below is subject matter you should avoid when asking any question in an interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>What to avoid</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age discrimination</td>
<td>Questions that may give an indication of how old the candidate is. For example: What year did you graduate from college?</td>
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<tr>
<td>National origin</td>
<td>Questions related to the candidate’s ancestry or native language. For example: What kind of accent is that?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Questions that force a candidate to reveal his/her national origin. For example: Are you a citizen of another country?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family status, pregnancy</td>
<td>Questions that relate to marital or family status, including questions about the candidate’s spouse. For example: Are you planning on starting a family any time soon?</td>
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### Name
Questions about a candidate’s name to determine whether the candidate has ever changed his/her name, to determine nationality, or determine marital status. For example: What are the origins of your name? Is that your maiden name or married name?

### Language
Questions that may reveal an candidate’s national origin or ancestry. For example: Is English your primary language?

### Organizations
Questions that reveal clubs, social fraternities, lodges, or similar organizations to which the candidate belongs that might reveal protected class status. For example: To which organizations outside of work do you belong?

### Health and physical condition
Questions not directly related to the ability to perform the essential functions of the job and that are not asked of all candidates. For example: Are those prescription glasses you are wearing? What is your height and weight? Are you healthy?

### Military Background
Questions that relate to the type or condition of military discharge, experience in any military organization other than the United States (may reveal national origin) or requests to review discharge papers. For example: If you weren’t in the US military, were you ever in the military anywhere else?

### Photographs
Requesting the candidate submit a photograph as part of an application, or any time before hiring.

### Residence
Questions about the names or relationships of person with whom the candidate resides, or whether the candidate owns or rents his residence. For example: Do you live on your own, or with someone?

### Gender or sexual preference
Questions about the candidate’s gender or sexual preference. For example: Do you have a domestic partner?

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### 6. MAKING A SELECTION

To make a selection the following details need to be finalized to ensure you are making the most informed decision and are able to communicate important details to the candidate.

**Reference checks** – This can be a frustrating experience, but it is a vital step in the hiring process. This is your opportunity to validate what you have seen and heard from a candidate. Contact HR for further assistance.

1. Verify information provided by the candidate in the hiring process (dates of employment, reason for leaving, position responsibilities, level of performance, etc).
2. Ask probing questions:
   a. Would you rehire?
   b. Eligible for rehire?
   c. Is there a special agreement just for this employee or company policy preventing you from giving a reference?
   d. Why can’t you give me any information?
   e. Is there anyone who can give me information?
   f. Did employment end voluntarily or involuntarily?
   g. Did the employee violate any rules?
   h. Did the employee leave for performance-related reasons?
   i. This person isn’t going to be hired if I can’t get a reference. Isn’t there anything you can tell me?
   j. Off the record...
   k. Okay. Let’s not talk about job performance. You know him. What is he like? Can you give me your perspective?
   l. Were there communication concerns?
   m. Were there attendance concerns?
   n. Do you think this person would be a good (job title)?
   o. If you were me, would hire this person?
   p. If you had the opportunity to rehire this person, would you?
   q. Can you tell me what his/her job duties were?
   r. Is there something I should know, but that you hesitate to tell me?

Information collected in the reference checking process should not be shared with the candidate. This is for your information only and is intended to help you in making an informed hiring decision. Sharing of this information can create legal pitfalls related to defamation claims against you and the former employer.

**Pay rate** – The wage offered must fit within the level of pay the position is assigned to. For hourly employees this will be specific grade with a defined range. The hourly rate offered to an employee depends on several factors including, but not limited to, budget, market conditions, internal equity, etc. See the “Non-Exempt (Hourly) Employee Pay Policy” found at the Compensation link on the HR website. For salaried employees the rate of pay will be a specific remuneration percentage (note: offers to salaried employees can be at a lesser remuneration percentage than the predecessor depending on experience and your discretion as the supervisor). For a detailed listing of non-exempt and exempt pay rates see the comprehensive pay rates posted on the Compensation web page.

**Offer of employment** – Consultation with the HR department and approval of offer details (ex. Pay rate) is required before making an offer of employment, including implied verbal commitments. After approval from the HR department you will make a verbal offer of employment including pay rate. It is important to clearly communicate the offer is conditional upon a satisfactory reference and background investigation process.

**Background Investigation Policy and Procedure** for further details related to employment offers, located on the HR website, supervisor resources (hiring tools)
When an offer of employment is accepted – When a candidate has accepted a conditional offer of employment please contact Human Resources, HR will initiate the Choosing Candidate Form. This form is used to document candidates interviewed and hired during the hiring process. You are responsible for contacting each of the candidates interviewed, preferably by phone, to inform him/her of the decision. A recommended strategy is to indicate that the decision was difficult, thank the candidate for his/her time, and offer well wishes for future endeavors. HR will communicate with each of the applicants who were not interviewed.

Upon receipt of the Choosing Candidate Form, HR will send a written conditional offer of employment to the candidate (an offer letter). Included in this letter is information that states, “You will be sent an email to your email address listed on your employment application, from Employment Screening Resources (ESR) with instructions for filling out information to have the Background Check done. Please submit this information ASAP or no later than 7 days of receipt or the request will expire.”

7. PREPARING FOR A NEW EMPLOYEE

Employment forms – Once the background investigation is complete and the candidate is cleared to start, HR will contact the hiring department to coordinate a start date. Once a start date is confirmed, HR will contact the new employee so they come prepared for completing the legally required forms (I-9, w-4, etc.) A new employee should not begin work until cleared by HR.

Departmental orientation – When a new employee begins work it is important that they feel welcome and are adequately prepared for supervisory expectations. Listed below are recommended considerations for the first week of employment.

1. Personally introduce the new employee to departmental staff and other key people on campus that he/she will work with regularly or should know.
2. Location of restrooms and break room.
3. Attendance expectations – schedule, time off requesting, etc.
4. Acceptable attire for the department. Casual Friday’s?
5. Check with the new employee at the end of the first day and throughout the first week to see how he/she is adjusting.
6. Explain any other unique expectations or details that are important for the employee know.
7. Supervisor and employee to sign job description and return to HR for employee file.