

NORTHERN IRELAND PRACTICE AND EDUCATION COUNCIL FOR  
NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

**APPLICATION**  
**and**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDELINES**  
*for Nurses and Midwives*





## APPLICATION and INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

### Guide to Completing an Application Form

Completing an application form accurately is very important because the information you include will be used by a short-listing panel to check if you have the essential qualifications and experience required for the job. Failure to demonstrate clearly on your application form that you meet the essential criteria (and desirable criteria, if used) will result in you not being shortlisted. Below are some points to guide you when completing an application form:

- Most jobs in the NI Health Service organisations are advertised online at <http://www.hscrecruit.com/>. You must be registered on the website to complete your online application. Registration is easy. Click on the tab to create an account, and follow the instructions. (Please note web address correct at time of print).
- Note the closing date and time for receipt of completed applications. Late applications will not be accepted.
- Note the requirement to declare any specific holiday arrangements that you may have, although you should be aware that the panel is not obliged to facilitate an applicant if these clash with critical dates in the selection process.
- Complete each section of the form accurately, as requested, using the instructions provided:
  - If you are applying for a post within your current organisation, do not assume that the panel will know you and your experience. The panel can only use the information stated on the application form to complete any part of the selection process. You must therefore complete all sections of the form as failure to do so may result in your application not being short-listed.
  - Within your employment history section explain any breaks in your periods of employment.
  - Include an accurate absence record; the panel may have access to your absence record during the recruitment process. Any discrepancies in your record and information provided by referees will delay the safeguarding checks, if you are appointed. It is vital therefore that your absence record is completed accurately.
  - Be sure to declare any criminal convictions, even if you believe them to be irrelevant; when applying for a job in Health and Social Care (HSC), no convictions are considered spent; the employer will decide whether or not they are relevant to the post.



## Guide to Completing an Application Form cont'd

- If you are submitting an application form by hand remember to check if you are asked to complete the application form in black ink or typescript. If a hand written submission is permitted, make sure it is legible.
- Read the essential criteria and carefully map out how you meet them, providing evidence and/or examples.
- Read the desirable criteria and complete the same exercise:
  - Ensure that all the information you include is accurate, as it is illegal to make false declarations: falsifying your qualifications and/or experience may result in an offer of employment being withdrawn or your employment being terminated, if you have already started. Remember that all your qualifications and experience are checked.
- For nursing and midwifery posts particularly, complete your professional registration details including:
  - part of the NMC Register on which you are registered and the subsection or specialist field of practice where relevant
  - your PIN number and expiry date.
- If one of the essential criterion includes specific experience within a particular specialty, be sure to enter the area(s) in which you have experience, rather than the ward or department names. Always be specific about your dates relating to experience/employment.
- Read the job description and note the key responsibilities required. You may wish to highlight, in the additional information sections how your experience has enabled you to address the key responsibilities.
- Include the contact details of the referees as requested:
  - it is good manners to ask your referees if they would be willing to give you a reference before submitting your application.
  - you must include your current line manager as one of your referees.
- Ensure that you gain the approval of your line manager, if you are applying for a secondment opportunity.
- We encourage all applicants to complete the Equality Monitoring section, to allow us to comply with our statutory responsibilities.



## Guide to Completing an Application Form cont'd

- Sign and date your application form, if completing by hand.
- Ask a trusted friend or colleague to read over a draft of your application form, to check for mistakes before you submit it.
- Keep a copy of your completed application form. You may need to review it in preparation for interview and it may be of some use in the future. You can continue to access the information on your completed application form for 1 year at <http://www.hscrecruit.com/> To retain a copy for longer you can also create your own electronic portfolio and save the information at <https://www.nipecdf.org>
- Submit online or post your completed application form in good time to ensure that it arrives before the closing date.  
<http://www.hscrecruit.com/> will send you email confirmation of receipt of your application form. If your application is posted or delivered by hand, it is useful to ask for a receipt as proof of date and time of submission.

## Guide to Preparing for Interview



Success at interview depends on careful preparation. There are many ways in which you can prepare for your interview; the key, however, is to stay focused and not learn lots of new information. The panel will want to assess how you apply your knowledge and experience to the demands of the new job. Listed below are some things you can do before the interview that will help you make the experience a positive one.

- Has the employer identified someone you can talk to about the job?
  - if so, do this
  - if not, contact the employer and ask if there is someone you can talk to.
- Read the job description and person specification carefully:
  - for HSC Trust posts ask Human Resources if there is a KSF outline for the job.
- List the main responsibilities and skills required to do from the job description and personnel specification.
- List the relevant skills and experience you have:
  - Using the list you have made, give examples to demonstrate how you have successfully completed relevant tasks or applied relevant skills or knowledge. Sometimes experiences outside of work can provide useful evidence to the panel. When considering examples, you may find it helpful to follow the 'STAR' or 'SBO' model. The 'SBO' model is useful for more senior posts.

### **'STAR' Model**

**SITUATION** – What was the situation you were in? What was your role? What responsibilities did you have?

**TASK** – What was your unique role in this task/situation? What were your objectives/ aims? What were the risks in the situation? What did you personally contribute to the task?



## Guide to Preparing for Interview cont'd

**ACTION** – What did you do to complete the task? What behaviours did you display in completing the task? What did you personally do? What problems did you encounter? How did you overcome them?

**RESULTS** – What was the outcome? Did you consider the outcome a success? If so, can you identify the actions that contributed to the success? If not, what would you do differently next time? (Please note that it is not necessarily a bad thing to admit during an interview where your actions failed. Panel members are aware that not everything in work always turns out as planned. What they will want to know is what you learned from this experience and how this has contributed to your development).

### **'SBO' Model**

**SITUATION** – What was the situation you were in? What was your role? What responsibilities did you have?

**BEHAVIOUR** – What did you do or say? Be specific and give important details. Paint a word picture so the employer can completely understand the scenario and your thought process.

**OUTCOME** – What was the result of your actions or behaviour?

- Think about what else you could do as part of your preparation:
  - reading
  - research
- Some interviews are based on a particular competency framework e.g. NHS Leadership Framework  
<http://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/discover/leadership-framework/>

## Guide to Preparing for Interview cont'd

- Using the essential criteria for the job, consider possible/potential question areas and think of the information you would include in your answer.
- Ask a colleague to conduct a mock interview with you.
- Allow yourself adequate time to prepare for the interview.



## Guide to Interviews

Interviews make most people nervous, but success depends on careful preparation. If you are particularly nervous about attending interviews, the following exercise may help you: on a piece of paper list the things that make you anxious about interviews. Think about things which you might view as a “worst case scenario”. After you have done this, think about how you might control each of these fears. In most cases, you can take control of your anxiety by preparing thoroughly or taking time out to relax.

Members of the interview panel are trained to help you perform well at interview. The Chairperson will introduce you to the other panel members, explain how the interview will run and the order in which each member will ask their questions. Here are some points that may help you to perform well:

- Have a good night’s rest. Do not stay up late cramming new information.
- Dress to feel professional, confident and comfortable.
- Know where the interview is taking place and leave enough time for your journey.
- A good guide is to arrive approximately 15 minutes before the time of your appointment; this gives you time to refresh and relax.
- Not all panels are, prepared for or, expect candidates to shake hands - avoid doing this unless initiated by the panel; this is not a common practice in HSC Trust interviews.
- Listen carefully to the questions being asked.
- If you did not understand a question, ask for clarification:
  - Stay focused on the questions.
  - If unsure of the question, ask the panel if you can come back to it.
  - You may find it helpful to use the ‘STAR’ or ‘SBO’ models described on pages 4 and 5. This logical thought process will take you through your answer. The really valuable evidence for the panel comes from the information provided in the ACTION and RESULTS or OUTCOMES stages. Be sure to demonstrate to the panel **what your unique contribution was.**





## Guide to Interviews cont'd

- Maintain good eye contact with the person who asked the question:
  - Be careful of your body language and posture. Sit upright. Do not fidget, cross your legs or fold your arms.
- Remember it is usual for panel members to take notes while you are speaking. Do not allow this to put you off.
- Speak clearly and confidently, portray a positive but balanced attitude.
- Interview panels tend to invite you to ask questions at the end of the interview. Do this only if you have a well thought out question.
- Do not attempt to interview the panel.
- Know your absence record accurately. Panels may have a print-out of your absence, even if you are from another organisation, so be truthful.
- It is advisable to bring evidence of your registration details and/or qualifications in case the panel members wish to see them, especially if they are part of the essential criteria.

## After your Interview

- Note the questions that you were asked; this will help you when you receive feedback.
- If successful, congratulations!
- If unsuccessful, it is normal to feel disappointed; ask for feedback from the panel and reflect on what you learn about your performance.
- Remember to keep looking for other opportunities; do not give up; view the interview as a learning experience.



## Guide to Post Interview – Reflection

During the process of application and preparation for interview, you revise existing knowledge and learn new material. This is valuable learning and could be recorded in your portfolio. Following are some questions to help you reflect on your experience:

- What attracted you to this job?
- What skills and experience did you feel you had for this job?
- What preparation did you make for the interview?
- What new information did you learn during your preparation?
- How did you feel you answered the interview questions?
- How did you feel when you learned the outcome of the interview?
- What did you learn from your interview feedback?
- What would you do differently for your next interview?
- What have you learned about yourself through this experience?

Record your reflection in your online portfolio at [www.nipecdf.org](http://www.nipecdf.org) for future reference.



## Guide to Presentations

Presentations are often included as part of the interview process. You may be given a title beforehand (a seen presentation) or when you arrive for interview (an unseen presentation). You will know this in advance of your interview. The purpose of a presentation is to assess how well you arrange and communicate information. Here are some points that you may find helpful when preparing for, and giving, presentations.

### Preparing your Presentation

- research your subject as much as possible
- set out the main points you want to put across
- style your presentation to suit your audience
- maximum of five key points per page or slide
- use a mixture of words and pictures; this helps a mixed audience hear and see your message
- do not overuse animation in your presentation
- balance your presentation between slides and talking
- make a note of the things you want to say to accompany each slide, using whatever method works for you
- do not have too many slides
- remember your time is limited
- know your technology.



## Guide to Presentations cont'd

### Giving your presentation

- dress to feel professional, confident and comfortable
- have a drink of water at hand
- introduce yourself
- give the audience an overview of what your presentation is about and how long it should take
- speak clearly
- find the level of moving around that you are comfortable with; do not roam
- face the audience; do not turn to read the screen
- aim to summarise the information on the screen
- keep your notes at hand; know what you need to say to each slide
- be able to expand on points that are on the slide, rather than reading them out
- have a copy of your slides for your audience
- invite questions at the end
- complete within the time limit given.

## Guide to Assessment Centres



1. An Assessment Centre is a process, not a place. Assessment Centres are the most valid predictor of future job performance that employers can use during a recruitment process. They are, however, now mainly used for the recruitment to the most senior posts, e.g. Director Level. An Assessment Centre, by definition, involves the use of a set of exercises designed to assess a range of behaviours relevant to the job.

This is a way for organisations to find out how you might behave in certain work scenarios. Commonly, at an Assessment Centre you will participate in a number of exercises (role play, written exercise, group discussion, for example) and you will be assessed against a number of behaviours related to the post you are applying for. The behaviours you display throughout the exercises will be observed and assessed by more than one assessor and you will be given a score for each behaviour observed. The total score will contribute to your overall assessment in the recruitment process.

Generally, Assessment Centres are used in one of two ways: either to provide a percentage of the overall recruitment score (combined with the interview score), or as a short-listing tool for interview. Below are some examples of the most common exercises you may be required to participate in, during an Assessment Centre.

### **In-tray Exercise**

In-tray exercises normally consist of a number of job-related tasks to which you must provide a written response within a designated period of time. Generally, you are asked to assume the position you are applying for and may be given a scenario in which you have arrived for your first day, only to find that you have a number of urgent matters to deal with. Competence is assessed, based on the responses you have made to each of the tasks. It is important that you indicate how you would deal with certain situations - for example, whether you would send an e-mail or speak face-to-face. The person administering the exercise will clarify the instructions for completing the specific test you are to be given.



## **Guide to Assessment Centres cont'd**

### **Group Exercise, Discussion and Role Play**

In Group Exercises and Discussions candidates work collaboratively with others to solve a set problem. Generally, the group is given a goal to achieve within a set period of time. All members of the group will either be given the same basic information or they will be given specific and individual briefs as to what they should achieve. You are assessed during the exercise on your behaviour in this context.

In Role Play situations, you may be assigned a specific role to play on a one-to-one basis with an actor. You will be assessed during this process by an assessor. Examples of role play exercises might include conducting a disciplinary interview, speaking to someone about their work performance or absence.

In both cases, you should listen to the instructions for the exercise and ask questions if you do not understand what is being asked of you.

### **Case Study**

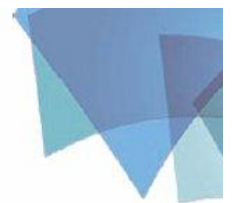
In Case Study exercises, you can be presented with a scenario for which you, either independently or as part of a group, make recommendations in a report and/or presentation.

The scenarios can often contain large amounts of factual information, some of which may be ambiguous or contradictory. You are being tested on your ability to analyse information, to think clearly and logically, to exercise judgement and to communicate either in writing or verbally.

### **Interview**

Some Assessment Centres are designed to include a one-to-one interview or a panel interview. This may be used to probe some topics arising from the initial interview. This stage of the interview process will be treated independently; do not, therefore, assume that your interviewer is familiar with the answers you gave at an earlier stage.

## Guide to Assessment Centres cont'd



### **Presentation**

You may be asked to prepare a short talk for presentation to the other candidates and/or the assessors. This may be previously prepared or could be unseen, that is, you are given a topic and a period of time to prepare it. The assessors will want to know that you can structure and communicate information effectively. For further detail, see pages 9 and 10.

Visit <https://www.nipecdf.org> to register and create your own confidential online Portfolio.

Visit [www.nipec.hscni.net](http://www.nipec.hscni.net) resource section to view other helpful resources.



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