

Known Applicants *and* Conflicts of Interest



Stage	Best Practices
<p>Before Reviewing Applications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee members should disclose their relationship with any applicants they <i>know</i> or with whom their relationship may pose a <i>conflict of interest</i>. A conflict of interest would be any relationship described in OSU’s P&T guidelines (see faculty handbook on OSU’s website) and OSU’s Consensual Relationship policy (see Office of Equity and Inclusion website). A conflict of interest may also exist if a committee member is serving as a reference for an applicant. • Committee members with a <i>conflict of interest</i> should consider stepping down from the committee unless their content expertise is essential to the search process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Even the appearance of favoritism can make it difficult for the successful applicant to be accepted and can damage their chance of success.</i> • Committee members should refrain from providing personal knowledge of an applicant’s strengths or weaknesses until after the initial application review. If a committee member knows of an egregious problem or other significant consideration which they believe should be considered sooner, they may bring it up directly with the search chair, search advocate, or hiring manager.
<p>Application Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider this the “paper stage” and focus on discussing only the materials provided by applicants. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Everyone has a story, but committee members only know the stories of a few. Keep the application review as equitable as possible for all applicants.</i> • If known information must be shared (or is accidentally shared) for one or more applicants, discuss how to obtain similar information for other candidates still under consideration before the next round of screening decisions.
<p>Interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without sharing specific information about known candidates, committee members may suggest interview questions to explore related qualifications or performance skills that are relevant to the job. • Once interviews are complete, information about known applicants can be appropriately shared. Consider these guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Share factual information, not judgments or feelings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>“She was often late to meetings” vs. “She was lazy and disorganized.”</i> ○ If the information about an applicant comes from someone else, consider the reliability of the source. ○ Consider whether the information is relevant to the job for which you are hiring. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>“His driving is dangerous”</i> is not necessarily problematic for a job in which driving is not required. ○ Be careful of jumping to conclusions or making assumptions. Ask yourself whether information leads to conclusions or questions which require follow up. ○ Track what new information you are learning about known applicants that you do not know about others. Plan how to gather similar information for unknown applicants; reference checking may be a good option.
<p>Reference Checking</p>	<p>In addition to any questions you may already have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For known applicants: Make sure to ask questions of references that may confirm or deny the hypotheses you have made based on the input of committee members who may know the applicant. • For unknown applicants: Fill in gaps where you have less information about unknown applicants than known by asking intentional questions of references.