

# PRACTICAL TIPS FOR CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS WITH CANDIDATES FOR A POSITION

This document is intended for the use of senior staff and in fact anyone who directly participates in conducting interviews with candidates for open positions at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences, P.R.I..

The particular way in which the interview is conducted and questions posed to the applicant will always to some extent vary due to the differences between research teams in the institution and the type of position that is open. There are, however, some recommendations which apply universally and keeping them in mind could be helpful. This document deals only with those that may be not universally known and those that could easily be omitted but should be asked. A detailed description and recommendations pertaining to the process of selection procedure can be found in a document called A Handbook of Recommended Procedures for Hiring, Onboarding, and Adaptation of Employees of The Institute of Philosophy.

## RECOMMENDED STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVIEW:

<b>Introduction</b> – welcoming the candidate, introducing the institution, content of the meeting	5 min
<b>Discussion of the CV</b> – ascertaining the motivation, competencies, experiences, ambitions, etc. of the candidate.	10–15 min
<b>Introducing the position</b> – space for questions from the candidate	10–15 min
<b>Conditions of the employment</b> – salary, possible start, etc.	5 min
<b>Conclusion</b> – information about further steps of the selection procedure, thanks and parting from the candidate	5 min

In case of any comments or questions, do not hesitate to contact you HR team.

## PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW:

- ❖ It is useful if members of the selection committee at least in a broad outlines **decide on their ‘roles’** and agreed on the **content and time structure** of the interview. That will help make sure that the interview is perceived as professional and clearly organised.

- ❖ It is advisable to reserve **sufficient time** for the interview. A hurried interview can leave candidates with mixed feelings and influence the amount of relevant information which we may wish to acquire from or provide to the candidates.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ It is recommended that the number and composition<sup>2</sup> of members of the **selection committee** corresponds to the position that is being filled. In particular, it is advised that selection committees consist of three to five persons (at the most). It is also desirable that at least one member of the selection committee be female. Additionally, it is recommended that selection committees include not only internal members (employees of the Institute of Philosophy) but also external ones (persons not working at the institute).
- ❖ It is important not to forget to offer the candidate a **glass of water**.

### THE INTERVIEW:

- ❖ It is a good idea to enable candidates to **adapt** to the interview situation. We can alleviate their initial nervousness by using the first five minutes to introduce the institution and to acquaint them with the structure of the interview (both the content and time allotted to each part).
- ❖ Do not let yourself be guided by the **first impression**. Make sure to realise whether you find the candidate pleasant or not and be aware of it. In case you find the candidate pleasant, you may have the tendency to overestimate their qualities, while in the opposite case, your level of uncertainty regarding the candidate may increase and you may tend to underestimate them.
- ❖ In case you are used to **taking notes** (using paper, notebook, mobile...), we recommend that you tell the candidate that this is what you are doing. Otherwise, candidates may feel that their performance failed to capture your attention and members of the committee are using the time to do other things.
- ❖ **Behavioural approach** to conducting interviews is a method based on the assumption that people have a tendency to repeat their behaviour, attitudes, and working habits. It is thus highly likely that candidates will behave in ways similar to how they acted in similar situations before. Use therefore open types of questions and ask about concrete situations and experiences of the candidates.

#### Examples of questions:

- *What caught your attention about the advertised position? What do you expect from working at the Institute of Philosophy?*
- *Which of your previous experiences are most relevant for the position you are applying to?*
- *What do you find most satisfying about your work; what do you find the most meaningful part of it?*

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<sup>1</sup> If, however, it quickly turns out in the course of the interview that the candidate is not suitable for the position, it makes no sense to insist on the pre-agreed schedule and it may be a good idea to shorten the interview.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on recommended rules pertaining to the composition of selection committees, see A Handbook of Recommended Procedures for Hiring, Onboarding, and Adaptation of Employees of The Institute of Philosophy.

- *In what areas do you feel strong, which of your skills and abilities would you like to offer the institute?*
  - *What practical factors helped you in the past to achieve the best work results?*
  - *How can your colleagues tell that you are feeling stressed? How do you relax?*
  - *Can you describe a situation when you found certain problems at work demotivating? What did you do about it? What did you take away from that situation for yourself?*
  - *How did you collaborate with others within the work team? What suits you best, what does not? Do you have any experience with misunderstandings for instance with a colleague or your superior? How did you approach that problem?*
  - *What can frustrate you during your work? Did you have to deal with such situation in the past, eventually how did you approach it?*
  - *What was the most difficult decision you had to take in recent years? What was difficult about it? How did it turn out?*
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- ❖ It is important to **avoid the ‘forbidden questions’**, such as questions about age, children, personal and family status, health<sup>3</sup>, political sympathies, religious beliefs, etc.
  - ❖ It is good to speak, in the final part of the interview, about **the salary**. It is best to first ask candidates about their expectations and requirements (especially if the salary is not part of the position’s advertisement). The selection committee can then note whether the candidate’s expectations are realistic or out of step with actual possibilities of the institute.
  - ❖ It is important to mention the **conditions of cooperation**, that is, the type and duration of employment, expected start date, whether position is part-time or full-time, trial period, and employee benefits.
  - ❖ **Give the candidates space to ask** what they are interested in. Reserve sufficient time for this.
  - ❖ Inform candidates about the **subsequent steps** to in the selection procedure, that is, what stage is the process at now and when it should be completed. Inform candidates about when they should expect to be informed about the outcome of the interview, i.e. about being offered the position or not. It is also good to ask whether a candidate has some deadline by which he/she needs to decide, whether the candidate is currently participating in other selection procedures, etc.

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<sup>3</sup> Employer has no right to ask about employee’s state of health with the exception of information about employee’s fitness to work in a particular position. But even so, any health complications that may prevent the employee to carry out his/her work are addressed by the employee directly with the physician (as part of the mandatory initial health examination) and not with the employer.



### AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

- ❖ It is a good idea to **postpone evaluation** of the candidate until the following day, so as to get some distance from the first impression. That way, one is better able to appreciate the facts and compare among the candidates.
- ❖ When selecting the final candidate, we recommend that committee members rank the candidates according to their final preferences. First, they should address the best candidate with an official **offer of a position**. With respect to candidates who passed the selection procedure and could, in case the top candidate turns down the offer, fill the advertised position, we recommend that the committee wait with contacting them with feedback.
- ❖ If possible, try to make the **feedback** to candidates as concrete as possible.