

# **INTERVIEW** STANDARDS

STANDARDS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF APTITUDE INTERVIEWS

2<sup>nd</sup> completely revised version 2021

FORUM ASSESSMENT

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**Note:** The task force wanted to avoid a wording that favours gender typing in these standards. Hence, they were worded in a gender and diversity-appropriate style, wherever possible. Naturally, we were not always successful; in some cases, we did not use gender-neutral wording or had to use several gender forms in order to keep things simple and improve readability. We hope you will understand and wish to expressly point out that persons of any gender are always and equally meant.



# FORUM ASSESSMENT E. V.

Forum Assessment e. V. is an association of HR experts in the corporate, science, consulting and public service sectors as well as other organisations. The association was founded in 1977 under the name of "Arbeitskreis Assessment Center e. V." and its initial aim was to professionalise and further develop the AC method. Over the years that followed it gradually adopted a much broader thematic focus in its work. Today, the association offers a forum for sharing, using and optimising scientific findings as well as practical experience in the fields of assessment, learning and development.

#### AIMS OF FORUM ASSESSMENT E. V.

- Within the thematic spectrum of **assessment**, **learning and development** the non-profit association offers a forum for sharing experiences and learning with colleagues.
- In project groups, the members analyse the latest concepts and procedures, follow new trends or approaches and develop or optimise methods as well as viable solutions.
- The association creates practice-centred quality standards and authors scientific papers to improve the quality of HR work.
- Moreover, Forum Assessment promotes young scientists and practitioners and embraces their ideas.

As part of Forum Assessment's commitment to quality in HR work, the association's members already published a first version of their German assessment centre standards in 1992. These standards of the assessment centre method are now available in a third revised version (AC Standards, 2016) and form the basis of Forum Assessment's further standards as well as the second version of the Interview Standards presented here. An English language translation of the AC standards is also available (2016). Further standards exist for the fields of aptitude diagnostics in top management (2016), coaching (2008) and HR development (2004). All standards are available for download on Forum Assessment's website www.forum-assessment.de free of charge.

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The Interview Standards are cited as follows:

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# FORUM ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW STANDARDS

#### **INTERVIEW STANDARDS**

A first version of the Forum Assessment Interview Standards was published in 2008, probably making it the first ever systematic compilation of quality characteristics for aptitude interviews. The interview standards provide answers to the following questions:

- What needs to be considered when developing and conducting aptitude interviews?
- How can the quality of offers for conducting interviews be evaluated in corporate practice so as to recognise unqualified offers?
- What quality requirements should I, as a decisionmaker or user, set for the implementation of aptitude interviews?
- What approaches exist for a practice-related optimisation of aptitude interviews?

The second updated and completely revised version, which you are now reading, was produced by a Forum Assessment working group.

The wording of the second version of the Interview Standards is expressly based on the general requirements for aptitude testing procedures as formulated within the framework of DIN 33430 (2016) and ISO 10667 (2011), as well as on the third version of the AC Standards developed by Forum Assessment. The purpose of the Interview Standards is to apply the requirements developed in these sources to the special needs and conditions for the use of aptitude interviews as well as to supplement them with procedure-specific quality characteristics. The wording of the individual standards -1. clarification of objectives, 2. analysis of tasks and requirements and 8. evaluation is closely based on the current version of the AC standards, since they deal with relevant process steps across various aptitude testing procedures.

#### **KEY NEW FEATURES**

Compared to the first version of the Interview Standards, this revised version comprises the following key new features:

- Sharpened understanding of the aptitude interview as a procedure to capture diverse fields of characteristics with different methodological approaches
- Roles, responsibilities and qualification requirements for the main persons involved (e.g. responsible aptitude diagnostician, interviewer, assessor, supervisor, process observer) are considered in a differentiated manner
- Requirement to strive equally for aptitude testing relevance and significance of the results as well as for a high quality of measurement and accuracy in obtaining them
- Specific, practice-centred recommendations for a feasible **evaluation of the procedure** in the development and application of interview concepts
- Consideration of more extensive legal requirements and obligations (e.g. with regard to data protection and gender equality)
- Practical benefits due to **considerably expanded methodological information** with specific examples and explanations of common quality-degrading practices
- Integration of new developments due to technological influences as well as expectations in the field of diversity

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# INTRODUCTION

### APTITUDE INTERVIEW

By **aptitude interview** we mean a structured conversation-based (interactive) procedure for potential and aptitude diagnostics in the field of personnel selection or development questions, designed on the basis of scientific findings as well as practical experience.

In practice, such interviews are conducted in many different ways. Their design depends, among other things, on the range of aptitude testing characteristics that are being assessed, the target group, the testing questions and the organisational framework conditions. The different types of design partly come with their own specific methodological challenges as well as advantages and disadvantages.

For example, the **number of interviewers** (one or more persons as an individual or panel interview) can vary, as can the **number of interview sequences** (multiple interview sections in one or more interviews). Interviews can be conducted "face-to-face" or "remotely" as a technology-mediated **interview** (e.g. video or telephone conference). In this context, perception or observation of the interview itself can take place **synchronously or asynchronously** with its **execution** (e.g. in the case of computerised or recorded video interviews). The standards formulated here apply to all of these modes of execution.

Obtaining question-induced responses of the interviewees serves as the basis of aptitude interviews. In terms of content, **different fields of characteristics** (traits, behaviour and results) are considered. In addition, **different methodological approaches** (e.g. diverse questioning techniques such as situational or biographical questions, observations of behaviour, self-descriptions or realistic job information) are often used in designing interviews. This diversity and variability of interview concepts enables the use of a wider range of criteria. However, despite all the diversity of possible applications and designs, the interview also has its limitations regarding the characteristics that can be measured. In this respect, multi-method procedures such as the assessment centre are potentially superior. Depending on the requirements relevant for the individual case, it may therefore be necessary to supplement an interview by other methods (e.g. tests, role play) or to use a different core method (e.g. a group or individual AC).

#### STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVIEW STANDARDS

In total, the current version comprises eight individual standards that focus on the typical process steps of the development and execution of aptitude testing procedures. The substance of each standard is initially summarised in one key sentence.

The essential aspects of the standard are then described in more detail under the heading "What this is about". This is followed by specific instructions on "Implementation" of the standard. Finally, under the heading "Common quality-degrading practices" you will find practices that are frequently observed and that can impair the validity of the interview or violate the respective standard.

Standard 1	Clarification of objectives
Standard 2	Analysis of tasks and requirements
Standard 3	Interview concept
Standard 4	Qualifications of persons involved in the procedure
Standard 5	Execution
Standard 6	Recording, assessment and determination of results
Standard 7	Documentation and communication of results
Standard 8	Evaluation

The **Annex** contains a **Glossary** explaining key terms. You will also find **Literature Recommendations** there.



# STANDARD 1 CLARIFICATION OF OBJECTIVES

Before developing and implementing an aptitude interview, the objectives and general conditions as well as the possible consequences for the participants and other stakeholders must be bindingly determined, agreed and communicated.

# WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

Determining the motives, objectives, general conditions and consequences for participants by means of a clarification of objectives is of major benefit - both for internal and external clients and participants. In this context, it is vital to identify the relevant stakeholders and to integrate them into the clarification of objectives and general conditions as well as the design of the process. By this means and a comprehensive analysis and consideration of the interview context (e.g. filling a vacancy or newly created job, etc.), one can increase the acceptance of the measure and achieve an implementation appropriate to the situation at hand. By taking account of interconnected relationships with existing instruments (e.g. existing competency models or job descriptions), an effective integration of the interview into existing HR processes and instruments can be ensured. Transparent communication of the reached agreements ensures that all persons involved use and interpret the results of the interview constructively and enhances their acceptance.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

- Objectives are clarified with the relevant stakeholders (from within the organisation) and with co-determination bodies (e.g. works council) being involved at an early stage. The context of the interview (e.g. restructuring) is disclosed and included in the considerations.
- The business environment (e.g. growth, tight labour market) is clarified between stakeholders and external or internal contractors (interviewers).
- The corporate **objectives or intended benefits** are clarified in advance, e.g. specific recruitment, establishing a pool of high-potential employees, selection of participants for HR development programmes or the retention of important staff members.
- For planning, implementation and further supervision of the process, one person is nominated as the "**responsible aptitude diagnostician**".
- Roles and responsibilities of the persons involved (i.e. clients, responsible aptitude diagnostician, (co-) interviewers, assessors, supervisors, observers) in the overall process and in the interview itself are clearly defined.

- The relevant **general data on objectives, resources, budget,** as well as on interview design (e.g. face-toface or video interview) and the time horizon (milestones) of implementation are agreed.
- Upstream instruments for nomination are defined (e.g. personnel conferences, self-nomination, application documents) and specified after the analysis of tasks and requirements. The selection of interviewees is based on the results of the analysis of tasks and requirements as well as on the instruments derived from this for an objective pre-selection.
- Onboarding measures or development modules following the interview are planned in advance and are ideally components of a holistic selection and HR development process. Their integration dovetailing with other instruments (e.g. an existing competence management and career planning system) is examined and included in the considerations.
- The **process** in which the interview is embedded is **openly communicated** to all stakeholders in advance. This applies, in particular, to how the results are to be used and interpreted and how the (possible) consequences are pointed out to the participants.

The results of the **clarification of objectives** as well as the agreed process are **documented in** adequate detail and thus made accessible for evaluation. The documentation is handed over to the persons involved, hence ensuring sustainability and commitment.

 In particular, the use of checklists for this process stage ensures the quality, necessary depth and binding nature of the clarification of objectives.

- An interview is developed or implemented on an ad hoc basis. Objectives are only clarified rudimentarily or not at all.
- The roles of individual persons involved in the overall process are unclear or relevant stakeholders are not integrated into the process (e.g. the role of the superior is not clarified).
- An interview is conducted although it is not the optimum instrument, e.g. if behaviour is to be the focus of the assessment. The lower expense compared to an (individual) assessment centre is the decisive factor for the decision in favour of an interview. Benefit aspects take a back seat to cost aspects.
- Objectives and framework conditions are not sufficiently clearly agreed or communicated in advance between the contractor as well as the client and stakeholders. The resulting delays jeopardise the success of the process or cause extra costs.



# STANDARD 2 ANALYSIS OF TASKS AND REQUIREMENTS

A valid aptitude assessment can only reasonably be constructed on the basis of a precise analysis of the specific requirements.

# WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

The interview (usually) serves to assess how well a person is matched to a desired position or various possible jobs. Therefore, prior to personalised diagnostics, an analysis of the tasks and requirements related to the target function(s) needs to be conducted. This analysis results in the definition of a requirement profile that summarises the success-critical aspects of the job(s). The collected detailed information describes the target function(s) and is an indispensable basis for the subsequent steps of the interview construction process.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

- The point of reference for the analysis is/are one or multiple predefined target function(s) within the organisation.
- The tasks analysis is the necessary first step for integrating aptitude-relevant task aspects and work situations. It is therefore the basis for the second step, the requirements analysis. This serves to identify the personal characteristics (knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies and others) required for success in the job.
- In the tasks analysis, the activities or task aspects and success-critical situations that characterise the target function(s) are first determined. The expectations of people (superiors, customers, employees, etc.) who share a professional context with the holder of the target function are taken into account.
- In order to cover as many relevant aspects as possible in the subsequent requirements analysis, a targeted combination of analytical methods (e.g. interviews, standardised surveys or workshops) is applied, with different conceptual approaches and perspectives. The commonly used methods are the experience-guided intuitive method (based, for example, on expert assessments), the work-analytical empirical method (using partially or fully standardised instruments) and the person-centred empirical method (via the evaluation of statistical correlations).
- Persons are involved who know the existing requirement level (e.g. job holders) or who define norms for the target level (superiors, HR decision-makers, etc.). The relevant information is collected by experienced persons who are trained in the application of the analysis methods (e.g. the responsible aptitude diagnosticians).

- Depending on the objective of the interview (selection, potential analysis, HR development), the definition of requirements will be either more specific and job/organisation-centred (selection) or more global and personalised (potential analysis and development).
- The analysis will cover current and predictable future requirements of the target function(s).
- Defined competency models which are used across the organisation are reviewed with regard to their applicability for the target function and made more specific for the individual job.
- General potential indicators that are relevant for all positions (e.g. cognitive abilities, personality traits) are taken into account by default.
- The compiled requirements are described with specific operationalisations and with suitable behaviour examples.
- The derived job requirements must be as homogeneous and one-dimensional as possible. They must exhibit only slight overlapping on the behavioural level and are described in specific terms.

- A specific task and requirements analysis is not performed. Existing requirement profiles are applied without further validation.
- Requirement catalogues or general skill lists of other organisations or consulting firms are used without checking their validity.
- Exclusive use of methods that one-sidedly favour certain aptitude testing approaches (e.g. only trait-based analyses are used for selecting test procedures).
- Collection of requirements that focus either only on the past or future (e.g. only "visions of top-level decision makers" without considering the day-to-day requirements of the target function).
- Collection of general designations of characteristics/ criteria ("headings") without sufficient specification of the contents.
- Non-distinctive requirements are chosen for the requirement profiles (e.g. "cooperation" alongside "empathy") or different aspects are combined under one heading (e.g. "customer orientation and selling skills").
- The sample of informants is too small or not sufficiently qualified and thus does not allow for a balanced view of the target position.
- Specialist knowledge does not receive enough consideration ("that's something s/he can still learn") or receives too much consideration ("the head of department has to be the leading expert").



# STANDARD 3 INTERVIEW CONCEPT

The interview concept aims to create an interview strategy and combination of methodological approaches that is optimal for the respective purpose. The procedure must be developed according to the requirements of the target position and designed in such a way that it achieves objective and reproducible results (reliability) with a high validity.

### WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

The **aim** of the concept of an aptitude interview is to optimise the informative value for the questions determined in the clarification of objectives.

The **first starting point** for this is to design the contents and conversational style of the interview in such a way that answers and behavioural observations are of the **greatest** possible **use** (relevance) with regard to the questions. To this end, it must be ensured that the characteristics identified as significant in the task and requirements analysis are assessed in the interview. In this context, it is necessary to consider which combination of methodological approaches as well as which procedure, basic attitude and strategy are particularly suitable for capturing the relevant characteristics.

The **second starting point** is to ensure in the design of the interview that the **quality of measurement** of the characteristics is high, i.e. that the procedure delivers reliable as well as objective (low-bias) results and enables a later evaluation. In this context, a highly comparable implementation is of major importance.

In addition to the informative value of the interview, **sec-ondary objectives** such as its personnel marketing impacts and acceptance must also be taken into account in the interview concept.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

- Requirements-based design Based on the specific questions and the requirements and task contents determined for this purpose, it must be established what information is to be obtained or which characteristics are to be collected (e.g. information on qualifications, knowledge, experience or track record, motivational factors, potential indicators, behavioural characteristics or competencies, cultural background and preferences).
- Aptitude diagnostic focus When determining the information and characteristics to be collected in the interview, critical consideration must be given to how broad the questions or how large the number of aspects to be covered can be in order to measure them with sufficient accuracy. Possibly, priorities will need to be set.
- Where necessary, combination with other instruments

   For requirement aspects that can be measured more reliably or economically in other ways (e.g. by intelligence and performance tests or personality questionnaires),

the interview should be supplemented by the most suitable instruments in each case in order to achieve an optimum aptitude testing process.

- Interview design For the information or characteristics that are to be collected, it is necessary to examine and determine which methodological approach best serves this purpose. Possible approaches include career analysis, biographical or situational questions, behavioural observation, targeted behavioural stimuli (e.g. critical follow-up questions) or realistic job information.
- Benefit-optimised interview strategy In order to obtain valuable aptitude diagnostic insight as well as the relevant secondary goals, a suitable attitude (e.g. appreciative interview at eye level vs. interrogation) and an (insight-promoting) strategy for conducting the interview must be developed (e.g. establishing ego involvement, integrating team members).
- Interview guidelines In order to ensure the comparability and quality of interview execution, a binding plan must be created with a sensible sequence of interview sections, the methodological approaches to be applied and questions related to the requirements, as well as a time structure (cf. also standard 5). In doing so, logical requirements as well as the pursued interview strategy have to be taken into account.
- Rules for conducting the interview Comprehensive measures to ensure a high quality of measurement for the interview (i.e. producing objective and reliable results) must also be established (in particular, multiple interviewers, collection of information separate from assessment, sufficient exploration time for each aspect, recording, strict use of the guidelines, uniform use of media).
- Defined structured assessment process A binding, structured process covering all (pre-defined) aspects of the interview is to be established for recording, assessment as well as determination and documentation of the results. This process should integrate adequate measures to ensure bias-free results (see standards 6 and 7).
- Planned evaluation process The concept should specify which items or data are to be documented for evaluation purposes.

- Adopting an indiscriminate interview style (without a specific concept) or using widely used questionnaires that provoke rehearsed responses.
- One-sided focus of interview concept (e.g. structure) on measurement optimisation and lack of effort to make responses and observations meaningful.
- Unrealistic timelines for breadth of aptitude diagnostic focus (e.g. comprehensive aptitude assessment for candidates with professional experience in 30 minutes).
- No consideration for how the manner of execution is perceived by the participants (e.g. lack of appreciation) and whether this is intended.



# STANDARD 4 QUALIFICATION OF PERSONS INVOLVED

Sufficiently qualified, trained and well-prepared persons involved in the procedure ensure insightful and exact aptitude assessments and can conduct interviews in a (socially) adequate manner as well as represent the organisation in a positive light.

# WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

A high-quality and goal-oriented execution of the interview places high demands on the interviewers' competence as well as on other persons who may be involved in the procedure. The theoretical and practical qualifications of these persons must therefore meet certain requirements and they must be prepared for interviewing, observing, evaluating and, if necessary, conducting feedback discussions through suitable measures. The quality of execution by the different persons involved must then be reviewed regularly by means of individual monitoring. Any deficiencies identified in the execution of interviews must be remedied by appropriate measures.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The **persons involved in conducting** aptitude interviews (especially interviewers, co-interviewers and assessors) must meet the following basic **qualification requirements**:

- Knowledge of the most important interview types and their execution requirements
- Knowledge regarding the professional performance of roles as interview participants, e.g. as (co-)interviewers, responsible aptitude diagnosticians, assessors, recorders or representatives of interest groups
- Knowledge of quality assurance rules for the use of interview guidelines as well as observation, recording and rating/assessment procedures
- Knowledge of relevant interview and questioning techniques as well as question types (e.g. biographical and situational questions)
- Knowledge of what legal requirements need to be met as well as what questions are admissible
- Knowledge of useful strategies, conversation techniques and structuring variants for feedback discussions
- Knowledge of common self-representation strategies of interviewees as well as of how stereotypes or other judgment or perception distortions influence judgments and approaches to help avoid resulting errors

Each **responsible aptitude diagnostician** or **interviewer** involved in development and implementation must (additionally) have the following expertise and qualifications:

- Knowledge of the most important interview types, their construction principles, goals, possibilities, limitations, implementation conditions and designs as well as alternative aptitude testing instruments
- Knowledge of the influence of diversity aspects (e.g. cultural background, gender) on behaviour and how they relate to the requirements
- Knowledge and experience of the creation and handling of interview guidelines, recording, assessment and evaluation procedures
- Knowledge of the relevant legal regulations for aptitude testing procedures (e.g. data protection, equality, co-determination, personality rights)
- Knowledge of statistical-methodological procedures for the assessment, selection, utility estimation and evaluation of aptitude testing procedures

Before **conducting an interview**, all persons involved must be **familiarised with the specific procedure** and prepared for their tasks by appropriate training measures. Specifically, they should

- be informed about the target position, its requirements and the questions and objectives of the procedure,
- be familiarised with the relevant interview concept, their role, their tasks, the recording and rating/assessment system as well as the rules for conducting interviews by the responsible aptitude diagnosticians,
- have practised the use of interview guidelines (or similar guidelines) or the observation, recording and rating/assessment of an interview in suitable training measures,
- experience quality assurance themselves by means of the monitoring of individual interview execution and feedback on task completion, and should receive refresher training as needed.

- No qualifications, no preparation or training of interviewers, "I've already conducted so many interviews."
- Training courses or interviewer training without practical exercises or simulations with feedback
- Preparation only by means of general interviewer training without instructions on the interview concept to be used
- No compliance or inconsistent compliance with the existing interview concept
- Lack of knowledge or insight into the requirements of the specific target position(s)
- Lack of reflection on the quality of execution



# STANDARD 5 EXECUTION

During execution, the specifications of the interview concept are consistently implemented with the help of suitable interview techniques in order to ensure a target-oriented procedure.

# WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

Professional execution in accordance with the concept of the procedure delivers insightful results and enables the achievement of the interview goals. It also ensures that the results are as objective as possible and that interviewees are treated fairly. In addition, it is a sign of respect for the interviewees and the time they have invested. The important factors are a process that is transparent for all persons involved, a disruption-free environment and a professional interview style. However, a consistent implementation of the interview concept is of major importance. Only in this way can comparable results be achieved.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

#### Preparation of a (specific) interview

- It must be determined who will be responsible for conducting the interview, with at least two persons having to be involved on the interviewer's side (second set of eyes, shared burden of recording and reflecting on the procedure).
- The interviewers compare their level of information in advance and clarify questions regarding the procedure and distribution of roles (conducting the interview, taking notes, responsibility for parts of the interview and decisions regarding the course of the interview, procedure in the case of uncertainty, agreement on who may ask probing questions and when).
- The interviewers prepare for the subject-matter of the interview and are familiar with the target position(s) as well as the relevant information on the interviewees (e.g. the application documents).
- It is then also agreed what participant-specific questions or follow-up questions will be important and which behavioural stimuli will be used.
- It is established how special interview situations are to be handled (e.g. with participants with disabilities).
- Sufficient time for the interview and a disruption-free process are ensured.

#### Start of interview

- The interviewers create a suitable setting (e.g. dialogue in an appreciative atmosphere), take cultural aspects into account and introduce all persons involved with their functions in the company as well as their roles in the interview.
- The interviewees are informed about the goals, contents, procedure and time frame of the interview as well as the intended recording.
- It is made clear how the decision will be made and that this can only be done meaningfully after the assessment has been completed.

#### **Collection of information**

- The interviewers use the questionnaire according to the specified procedure and make a record according to the defined standards.
- By naming the individual sections of the interview and the topics to be covered, the interviewers support the transparency of the interview process.
- In accordance with the interview guideline, questions are asked about unclear information in the application documents, as well as about motives, background, qualifications and experience with the subject matter.
- Relevant situations are explored by means of complete behaviour examples until a coherent picture (of the situation/task, action and results) emerges (biographical questions).
- Previously defined and detailed of situations can be used to find out how interviewees will act in relevant situations (situational questions).
- The questions refer to experienced behaviour in a professional context; other areas of life are only referred to if no other information is available and they clearly relate to the requirements.

#### Information of the interviewees

- The interviewers report specifically and in detail about the tasks and requirements of the target function providing realistic information about the job.
- They encourage interviewees to ask questions and give them enough space to do so.

#### **Conclusion of interview**

- The persons involved discuss how and when the results will be communicated and what will happen next. In this context, one should inquire about possible restrictions, such as time pressure on interviewees to make a decision.
- The interviewers ensure that the conversation ends on a positive note and ask the interviewees whether they were able to demonstrate their strengths sufficiently.

#### After the interview

• The interviewers do not discuss what they have heard or experienced until the recording and individual ratings have been completed (cf. standard 6).

- The interviewers read (application) documents during the interview (possibly for the first time).
- Interviewers ask superficial follow-up questions or get lost in details.
- The interviewers talk too much (while collecting information).
- Interviewers use unsuitable questions (e.g. too complex, suggestive or rhetorical questions).
- Interviewers make hints about the result or promises before ratings are completed ("I don't think it would be going too far to say right now that...").
- Long phases of the interview are like a chat with associative spontaneous questions.



# STANDARD 6 RECORDING, ASSESSMENT AND DETERMINATION OF RESULTS

On the basis of careful recording of the interview, the collected information is assessed in a systematic, requirement-based manner and condensed into a result.

# WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

In order to achieve the most reliable and meaningful results possible, it is essential to use a rule-based (documented) procedure for recording, observation and assessment. The steps from recording to determination of results should be dovetailed and performed in line with requirements. Determining the procedure is an integral part of the interview concept.

The comprehensive recording of interview contents and behavioural observations serves as the basis for generating results as well as a possible evaluation. In the assessment, the recorded data is systematically assigned to the requirements and condensed to deliver results according to defined rules.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

#### Recording (during the course of the interview)

- A procedure documented in the interview concept specifies how and to what extent answers and statements as well as behavioural observations made during the interview are to be recorded by the persons involved.
- The defined procedure supports recording by appropriate tools such as observation and recording sheets (with interview sections, topics, checklists, interview questions). However, there should be no scoring, rating or interpretation during the interview (separation between observation and assessment).
- In the course of the interview, all relevant information (questions, answers, central statements as well as relevant behavioural observations) are recorded in writing. Audio or video recording can be used instead or additionally.
- All persons involved in determining the results (assessors) should record the contents of the conversation, behavioural observations and the course of the interview and use this for their own assessments; it may be useful to share this burden among the interviewers.

#### Assessment (post-interview)

- Immediately after conducting the interview, the assessors assign the collected information to the predefined assessment criteria, combining similar information into one criterion.
- Information that cannot be clearly assigned at first is checked for its direct relevance for the requirements and – if not relevant – discarded. In addition, the information is checked for possible contradictions.
- If the information was not documented according to the requirements, the assessors will separately assign their notes to the assessment criteria. In the case of contradictory information, it is checked which

sources are more reliable or which conclusions can be drawn from them. If sufficient information is available, the extent to which the various criteria are met is assessed and the overall personal result is then determined (in accordance with the rules laid down in the assessment system).

 Pre-defined scaling aids (such as behaviour-anchored scales or descriptions of levels) can help with the assessment.

#### **Determination of results**

- The procedure for determining the results is based on a clearly pre-defined assessment process for individual criteria and the overall result. This process must define which information is to be included in the assessments and in what way, whether minimum levels are required for individual criteria and whether individual results are weighted differently or can balance out one another.
- First, the assessments or ratings of the assessors for the different criteria are compared.
- If there are relevant differences between the assessments, one should first compare the collected information and its assignment to the criteria and check the robustness of the individual data.
- Later, if still necessary, different interpretations and assessment differences should be discussed and compliance with the assessment rules should be checked.
- On this basis, the assessors agree on assessments for the individual criteria and on an overall result. This is done in accordance with the predefined rules for the determination of results and, where applicable, including additionally obtained results, e. g. from tests.
- Subsequently, additional measures or decision recommendations are formulated where necessary.

- No or insufficient recording takes place, so that assessments are made on the basis of memories.
- Assessments are already made during recording.
- Body language signals of the interviewees are ignored, misinterpreted or overinterpreted.
- A comparison of the assessments by the assessors only takes place with regard to the ratings of the requirement criteria and/or the overall result, without discussing at least strongly deviating assessments.
- The overall assessment of the interviewees is determined before (and without) a systematic assessment of the individual aspects ("we have a clear impression").
- The assessment is not rule-based or assessment rules are changed spontaneously.
- Assessment rules are adopted "blindly" or used "for years" without questioning their applicability to the current procedure.



# STANDARD 7 DOCUMENTATION AND COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS

The results of the interview must be documented in accordance with operational requirements as well as legal regulations and communicated to the various persons involved in an adequate manner. The interviewees, in particular, are entitled to appreciative and respectful feedback.

### WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

In order to make the results of an aptitude interview usable and to comply with the various existing legal requirements (e.g. German Equal Treatment Act – AGG, EU-GDPR) and information obligations (e.g. German Employee Representation Act – BetrVG), they must be documented and stored in an adequate manner. The results must be communicated to the persons involved according to the information needs of their roles. How and to what extent results are documented and communicated depends on the occasion and purpose of the procedure (e.g. personnel selection or HR development), the target group of the procedure (e.g. employees of the organisation or external candidates) and the addressees (interviewees, clients, stakeholders or other relevant HR functions). It should be noted that the communication of results is of major importance for acceptance of the procedure.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **Documentation of results**

- The results are documented according to the organisation-specific needs determined in the clarification of objectives as well as the standards and contents derived from this and defined in the interview concept (cf. standards 3 and 6). Rules for storage, accessibility and dissemination must be observed.
- Typical contents of the result documentation include central data of the interviewees, date of execution, questions, elements of and persons involved in the procedure, rating of central requirement criteria as well as an overall result and, where applicable, recommended measures.
- Documentation requirements are determined by operational needs (e.g. documentation of qualification requirements), legal restrictions (e.g. data protection) and information obligations (e.g. Employee Representation Act – involvement of employee representatives) and efforts to ensure traceability and transparency.
- The responsible aptitude diagnostician (alternatively an interviewer) is responsible for compliance with the requirements for result documentation. This also includes the protection of confidential data (access rights, retention periods) as well as the destruction or erasure of records and results.

#### Communication of results in the organisation

 The responsible aptitude diagnostician (alternatively an interviewer) ensures that the results are made available to the persons involved in accordance with the information needs of their roles and makes the documentation available to them, if they are entitled to it.

- In addition, s/he acts transparently and in a serviceoriented manner (e.g. offering advice) towards the client to achieve acceptance, ensuring that the goals of the interview (personnel selection or HR development) are met in the specific individual case.
- The responsible aptitude diagnostician (alternatively an interviewer) ensures that all persons involved are aware of the need for confidential handling of the interviewees' data and the results of the procedure and intervenes in the event of violations.

#### Communication of results to the interviewees

- The interviewees receive at least one piece of information about the result of the procedure in a timely manner either verbally or in writing in a way that promotes acceptance (clear, appreciative).
- If the interviewees are staff members of the organisation, and especially if the results are also used for HR development purposes, feedback on the contents should be provided in addition to communicating the results.
- Feedback on the contents comprises strengths and weaknesses (in relation to the requirements) as well as possibly development recommendations and measures; the interviewee's viewpoint should be considered.
- Feedback on the contents is based exclusively on information that was collected in the interview and possibly via supplementary diagnostic procedures (e.g. tests) and is relevant for the questions.
- Feedback discussions are supported by suitable materials (e.g. guidelines, requirements profile, etc.). They are tailored to the specific individual case.

- Information on the results is provided after a long delay or deadlines for this are not met.
- Interviewees are deliberately misled or appeased by platitudes or false flattery.
- Feedback on the results is provided by persons who were not involved in the interview, and interviewers are not available to answer questions.
- Treatment of interviewees varies greatly or they receive very different information.
- Feedback on contents is not descriptive or consists of blanket statements ("you lack social skills") or doubtful interpretations that cannot be substantiated.
- Confidential information, e.g. about the performance of other interviewees (in comparison), is leaked with feedback on results.



# STANDARD 8 EVALUATION

Regular evaluations are a natural, integral part of using aptitude interviews.

# WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

The validity and quality of aptitude testing processes are not static. They can hardly be optimised from scratch at the development stage. In addition, their specific execution has a decisive influence. Only an on-going review and optimisation during the application of an interview concept as part of a constant improvement process can ensure their validity and quality. Firstly, the quality of execution must be evaluated in each individual case of application for this purpose. Secondly, the evaluation must focus on functionality and successful empirical evidence of the procedure concept (summative evaluation).

# IMPLEMENTATION

#### Evaluation of the interview concept

- Even the adaptation of existing interview concepts or a new development for a single interview should be checked for plausibility and practically tested on the basis of relevant knowledge and experience.
- In particular, it is necessary to examine the inclusion of central requirement criteria, the suitability of methodological approaches, the interview strategy, the quality and usability of questionnaires and checklists, the effectiveness of behavioural stimuli for behaviour activation, the scoring procedure, the time frame in general as well as for individual blocks.
- In addition, one should review whether individual requirement criteria can be collected more effectively (more reliably or more economically) with other supplementary instruments, such as tests.
- If a fundamentally new aptitude interview is to be developed, its concept should (additionally) be checked in theory and practice by an experienced aptitude diagnostician. This applies in particular if it is to be used recurrently.
- If the interview concept is to be used for larger target groups and/or by different interviewers, the functionality of the interview concept (see above) must be tested in trial runs.

#### Quality assurance of interview execution

- After each interview or each application of an interview concept, the quality of its actual execution by the interview team should be evaluated.
- In this context, compliance with the defined rules, the coverage of all relevant requirement characteristics in the interview, the effectiveness of the interview strategy as well as the used questions and interaction within the interview team should be considered.

- For the purpose of quality assurance and further development of interview techniques, the interviewers involved should give feedback to each other on particularly effective procedures and approaches for improvement.
- It is also advisable to ask for feedback from the interviewees on their experience of the procedure.

#### Empirical (internal/external) benchmarking

- Particularly for interview concepts used over a long period of time or for larger target groups, an empirical benchmarking-style review of aptitude diagnostic validity as well as the effectiveness of the interview regarding the pursued secondary goals (e.g. personnel marketing) should be aimed for.
- Within the framework of the empirical evaluation of the procedure, one should, in particular, examine its prognostic or predictive validity regarding potential and aptitude statements of the procedure as well as, if possible, the correct assessment of individual aptitude criteria (construct validity).
- In addition, fairness and acceptability as well as the utility and economic value of the interview can also be the subject of an empirical evaluation.
- With regard to further secondary objectives of using the procedure, the functionality of using the interview in the selection process, the integration or satisfaction of specialist departments or internal clients and the impact of the interview setting (e.g. on corporate culture) or the personnel marketing effect can be useful contents of the evaluation.

- Narrow definition of evaluation that refers only to elaborate, extensive empirical studies, for which there is often no time, so that quality control is completely omitted.
- A gradual loss of commitment and willingness to learn due to increasing routines and experience leads to a poorer execution and results quality.
- Disregard for secondary interview objectives, leading, for example, to lacking customer orientation towards interviewees or internal clients.
- Central quality criteria, such as predictive validity or other important aspects such as fairness and utility of the procedure, are not empirically reviewed even after a long term and high frequency of applications.







# GLOSSARY

- Adverse impact Describes the unintentional discrimination of a group (e.g. an ethnic group or gender) in personnel selection processes. As an indicator, US jurisdiction uses an 80% rule, according to which adverse impact exists if the success rates of one group are less than 4/5 of the success rates of the other participants.
- Aptitude testing Measuring and assessing the aptitude of a candidate with the aim of predicting the probability of successful performance of a specific job or task.
- Assessors Persons involved in aptitude interviews whose task is to observe the interviewees and contribute to determining the results without intervening actively.
- Assessment or rating scale Scale for the numerical assessment of characteristics or criteria. The levels or scale values should be described by behaviour-related definitions (=BARS, Behaviour Anchored Rating Scale) to achieve reliable, accurate assessments.
- Assessment Center (AC) An AC is a multi-method aptitude testing procedure for potential and aptitude assessments in personnel selection or HR development procedures. A central constituent element of each AC is the use of simulations (e.g. group tasks, presentations or role playing) in which several assessors determine aptitude in behavioural observations. These behaviour simulations are supplemented by tests and questionnaires as well as aptitude interviews.
- Behaviour-anchored operationalisations The job requirements and the different levels of the assessment scale (see assessment or rating scale) used for a certain characteristic of an aptitude-diagnostic procedure are defined in the form of concrete behaviour descriptions and/or examples.
- Behavioural simulation (syn. work simulation, exercise) Procedural element in which behaviour is assessed by at least two assessors (e.g. role play, presentation, group discussion, case study). Expressing intended behaviour would not be considered behavioural simulation IT support opens up the possibility to conduct and score behavioural simulations in a different location ("remotely") or at another time ("asynchronously").
- Behavioural stimuli (syn. behavioural provocation)

   Planned behaviour of an interviewer or role player with a pre-defined quality and intensity in situational exercises with the aim of simulating a requirement situation typical of the job (such as criticism or inquiries of a critical nature) and making the response to this visible (cf. trait activation).

- **DIN 33430** German industrial standard that describes quality criteria and standards for job-related aptitude testing and their application. Similar to the ISO 10667, the DIN 33430 is designed as a process standard that not only refers to requirements or quality characteristics of individual procedures, but covers the entire aptitude testing process from the clarification of objectives to documentation and evaluation of the procedure.
- Evaluation (formative, summative)
   – Review and validation of the quality and usability of an aptitude testing procedure from various perspectives, e.g. normative for compliance with specifications; intra-individual for reviewing the functionality and effectiveness of procedure design; benchmark-orientated for determining and comparing quality parameters.
- Fairness An aptitude interview can be regarded as fair if all candidates are given equal conditions regardless of age, sex, nationality and thus have equal opportunities to achieve a certain result, unless this is prevented by objective requirements (e.g. physical requirements) (see also objectivity).
- Interviewer Person with theoretical knowledge in the field of aptitude diagnostics and practical training in conducting interviews, who is entrusted with executing aptitude interviews.
- Interview guideline A structuring aid used to ensure comparability of interviews. Interview guidelines typically contain a practical sequence of interview sections, their methodological approaches as well as lists of topics or questions, checklists and a timeframe. They take account of logical or practical requirements (e.g. ask for expectations of future tasks before explaining the details of the future job) as well as the pursued interviewed strategy.
- Job requirements (syn. observation characteristics or assessment criteria) – Terms describing requirements or personality traits or competencies used to answer aptitude testing questions.
- Multi-method Multi-method procedures use multiple different methodological approaches (e.g. interview, behaviour observation, self-description, test procedures) in order to achieve higher validity.
- Multimodal The trimodal approach to aptitude testing distinguishes between three different fields of characteristics (modalities) that are suitable data sources for gaining aptitude-related insights. These fields of characteristics are "traits", "behaviour" and "results". Specific



methods are suitable for assessing each of these modalities (e.g. tests, simulations and biographical questions).

- Objectivity The results of an aptitude interview are objective if they are not influenced by the interviewers and execution. We distinguish between objectivity of execution, of evaluation and of interpretation. Objectivity also means that all candidates have similar conditions and that nobody is disadvantaged or preferred (see also Fairness).
- One-dimensional requirement criteria To obtain reliable results, it should be ensured that the considered job requirements are viewed separately, i.e. their definition should be restricted to one (independent) aspect (e.g. not: "persuasiveness and assertiveness").
- Operationalisation Determines in which way a (job requirement) characteristic (e.g. ability to deal with conflicts) is to be made observable and measurable. Apart from the definition of the characteristic, a description of the manifestation of the various level degrees is important. Behavioural anchors are often used for this purpose.
- Participant (depending on the objective of the aptitude testing procedure, syn. candidate, applicant or interviewee) – The person who is assessed in an aptitude testing procedure, e.g. an interview.
- Persons involved in the procedure Persons in a variety of roles, functions and responsibilities may be involved in the implementation of aptitude interviews. Important involved persons include (co-)interviewers, responsible aptitude diagnosticians, assessors, recorders, decision makers, process observers or representatives of interest groups.
- **Potential analysis** This is about forecasts whether it is possible for persons (candidates) to acquire the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAOs) necessary for the successful performance of a job or task over a mostly medium-term period of 1 to 3 years.
- Predictive accuracy (similar to prognostic/predictive validity) Measure of the validity of an aptitude testing procedure (e.g. aptitude interviews) to predict job aptitude and success criteria (cf. also Validity).
- **Procedural elements** (syn. exercises, tasks, modules) – Individual components or elements of an aptitude testing procedure (e.g. interview), e.g. biographical analysis, mini-role play, situational questions, realistic job description.
- Psychometric criteria The quality of aptitude testing procedures is assessed with the help of now widely accepted psychometric criteria. These are divided into main quality criteria (objectivity, reliability

and validity) and secondary quality criteria (in particular utility and economy, fairness and acceptance).

- Psychometric test Standardised psychometric procedural element which measures, for example, certain performance criteria or personality traits and complies with the requirements of DIN 33430 for "Job related proficiency assessment".
- Qualitative data integration (syn. holistic/clinical combination of information) The results of individual assessment criteria and the overall result of an aptitude interview (procedure) are determined on the basis of qualitative sub-results (e.g. observation notes) obtained in the course of an experience-based assessment process as well as a content-based discussion of the assessors.
- Quantitative data integration (syn. mechanical or statistical combination of information) – The results of certain assessment criteria and additionally the overall result of an aptitude interview (procedure) are determined on the basis of ratings and quantitative sub-results, with the help of predefined rules, e.g. mathematically by means of (weighted) average values or cut-off values.
- Questionnaire Standardised, psychometric procedural element which usually includes self-descriptions of personality aspects and complies with the requirements of DIN 33430 for psychometric questionnaires and tests.
- Reliability Level of consistency, repeatability, or accuracy of measuring the aptitude criteria and job requirements evaluated in an aptitude testing procedure. It examines, for example, the extent to which different interviewers come to the same results or whether candidates are assessed in the same way when they participate repeatedly.
- Requirements analysis Examination of a workplace from the perspective of the people working there to determine the aptitude characteristics relevant for success: A combination of different methodological approaches should be used for the analysis, with three approaches in particular being commonly used: the experience-guided intuitive method, the work-analytical empirical method and the person-centred empirical method.
- Requirement profile Listing and description of those characteristics (knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics – KSAOs) that are necessary or required for the successful performance of a job.
- Responsible aptitude diagnostician Person responsible for the design and use of aptitude testing instruments and processes, who has relevant theoretical qualifications and practical experience.



- Stakeholders Persons whose requirements and views relating to the execution of an aptitude interview are relevant due to their position as a client, decision maker, disseminator, opinion leader or representative of an interest group within or outside the organisation.
- Task analysis Examination and description of the tasks of a job including specific activities with the aim of obtaining information, e.g. for the development of simulation-oriented aptitude testing procedure elements or for necessary experiences or competences.
- **Trait activation** Targeted use of behavioural stimuli to prompt reaction to certain relevant requirements visible, e.g. using suitable biographical questions about behaviour in a team situation in order to assess team skills.
- Validity Appropriateness of inferences made and actions taken on the basis of the results of aptitude testing procedures, e.g. relating to the prognosis of professional aptitude and development potential (prognostic validity, e.g. successful performance of leadership position) as well as the assessment of characteristics or criteria to be measured in the respective procedure (criterion validity, e.g. powers of persuasion).
- Work analysis Within the framework of a work analysis, tasks (cf. also task analysis), information on activities as well as work equipment and conditions are reviewed systematically. The determination of qualification requirements (requirements analysis) for personnel selection and HR development is another typical field of application.



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