

How Well Matched Is The Applicant With The Apprenticeship And The Workplace?

Interviews are a valuable way of assessing a candidate's fit with the apprenticeship and the work environment. Interview questions can build an understanding of what the applicant is good at, what they like and what their interests are.

Consider the applicant's answers in the context of the main features of the workplace, management style and workplace culture.

Possible questions might be:

- Describe a work task you have done in the past that you feel you did well or enjoyed, and explain why.
- (if relevant) Think about your experiences in a school-based apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship or similar program. What did you like? What didn't you like?
- What was your favourite teacher/supervisor/coach like? What was it that you liked about them?
- What was your least favourite teacher/supervisor/coach like? What didn't you like about them?
- What are you good at and what do you enjoy doing?
- What did you enjoy most at school? (consider the relevance of the applicant's favourite subjects to the skills needed in the apprenticeship e.g. maths for electrical trades)
- What do you think is most important in an employer and workplace and why? (if needed you could use prompts to find out if the applicant prefers structure and routine or flexibility, what they really like or dislike in a boss).
- How do you like to learn? (if needed you could prompt the applicant to understand if they prefer group or solitary learning, if they are visual or aural learners, and then consider how well the workplace caters to different learning styles)

Other approaches to find out how well matched the applicant is with a particular apprenticeship option include:

- Asking for work samples or evidence of school achievement
- Setting a supervised practical task and assessing their performance
- Paying attention to the applicant's body language, presentation, communication skills and attitude during the interview. Are they enthusiastic? What do they get excited about or appear to enjoy talking about?

Interviews are also an opportunity to assess whether a potential apprentice is likely to get along with their supervisor and/or employer. The opportunity lies not just in the questions you ask (see examples above), but in how you set up the interview.

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Panel-style interviews

Consider holding a final interview with up to three interviewers, one of whom is the person who will be directly responsible for the apprentice. This will allow for an objective assessment of how well the applicant is likely to fit with the workplace culture and the management style of the supervisor, as well as a “gut feel” as to how well the applicant and the supervisor are likely to get along.

Create an environment that will help the applicant relax and feel comfortable

Interviews can be nerve-wracking! Make sure applicants are comfortable with the recruitment process by letting them know what will be involved, who will be interviewing them, and allowing time for an informal chat, or conversation starters, at the beginning and end of the interview. This will allow the applicant to relax and feel comfortable, and help you develop a better sense of how well the applicant will fit with the work environment and supervisor.