



Guide to Serving on The SACC Tutor Selection Committee

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Introduction

The Tutor Selection Committee interviews all qualified tutor applicants and provides detailed input to the supervisory staff about each candidate's strengths, weaknesses, and overall suitability for the job. The committee is meant to achieve two important goals. First, it allows current staff to play a meaningful role in the selection of new tutors. Second, it provides prospective tutors a chance to meet and interact with current staff.

Who Can Serve on the Tutor Selection Committee?

Any current SACC tutor with Level One tutor certification or higher and at least one full semester of service on the staff can serve on the committee.

Why Be On the Committee?

Committee service benefits you in four ways: First, it looks great on a resume. It demonstrates that you play a role in the center beyond just your basic job description as a tutor. Second, it helps to build your interpersonal, leadership, and critical thinking skills, and it's great practice for future interviews whether you're the interviewer or the interviewee. Third, it's a chance to have substantial input in the selection of future staff members. Last but not least, you will be paid for time spent on committee service.

The Panel Interview

Purpose of the Panel Interview

The central activity of the selection committee is the panel interview. Committee members take turns asking the candidate a variety of questions to determine his or her potential as a tutor. The committee may also ask the candidate to participate in a role-play to determine if the candidate has good instincts and would work well with our students. The interview also provides the candidate a great opportunity to find out what it's like to be a SACC tutor from people who are already doing the job. In addition, the panel interview is an opportunity for current and future staff members to get to know each other better.

Before the Interview

The selection committee will hold a planning meeting a few days before the start of interviews in order to accomplish the tasks detailed below. Every member of the committee should receive and familiarize themselves with this “Guide to Serving on the Tutor Selection Committee” prior to the planning meeting. To ensure that everything goes smoothly on the interview days, tutors who do not attend the planning meeting may not participate in interviews.

Choose a Facilitator: The first step is for the group to select a facilitator from among its members. This person will lead the rest of the meeting, communicate the committee’s plans to the director, and facilitate the interview process on the interview days. If a single facilitator cannot cover all of the interviews, you may wish to choose two.

Develop Interview Questions: Next, with the help of the facilitator, the committee members will come up with a list of questions to ask each candidate. 6-8 questions is a good number if you also plan to do a role-play. The center director will need to approve the questions in advance to make sure they are consistent with CUNY policies and state/federal employment law and do not duplicate any of the questions asked in the supervisory portion of the interview process. You may want to develop 8-10 questions in total just in case the director has to eliminate one or two of them.

Decide About a Role-Play: You may want to include a short role-play with the candidate playing the role of the tutor, so you can see how they might interact with students in a session. If you choose to include a role-play, you should rehearse it a little and decide in advance who will be playing the role of the student(s) in each interview. Some examples might include a group session with one quiet student and one dominant student, or a session where the student comes completely unprepared, or a session where the student just wants to complain about the instructor. Remember, these are only candidates, and they have not been trained. You’re looking for good instincts and good interpersonal skills, not necessarily perfect techniques at this point.

Discuss how candidates will be rated. The committee should decide on a process to gather members’ feedback on the candidate after each interview and communicate that feedback succinctly to the supervisory team. For example, you may decide to rate each candidate on a scale of 1-5, either with a single score for their overall strength, or with separate scores for the role-play portion and their responses to your questions. It is extremely important that your rating system be employed the same way for each candidate, consistently across all interviews on all interview days.

Practice with a Mock Interview: To make sure the interviews will flow smoothly and identify and fix unforeseen issues, the committee should conduct at least one complete mock interview for practice. It may be helpful to ask someone who is not part of the committee, such as a member of the front desk staff, to serve as the candidate for the mock interview.

Please see “Facilitator Responsibilities” below for a list of things the facilitator needs to email to the supervisory staff at the conclusion of the planning meeting.

Conducting the Interview

Follow this format for each interview:

1. The facilitator welcomes the candidate and invites the other panel members to introduce themselves (name, subjects you tutor, how long you've worked here, etc.).
2. The facilitator explains the interview format to the candidate and facilitates as the panel asks its questions. A role-play exercise is usually also included. It is very important that every candidate be treated exactly the same way. They should each be asked exactly the same list of questions, and the scenario for the role-play should be the same. It's okay to ask a follow-up question if a candidate doesn't give an adequate response to a question, but your list of main questions should be the same for each interview.
3. Next, the facilitator invites the candidate to ask any questions he/she may have. If the candidate doesn't have any questions, you may want to take turns describing what you find to be the most challenging and rewarding about working here, what to expect in the first few weeks, etc.
4. Finally, the panel thanks the candidate for coming, and the first part of the interview concludes.
5. When the interview is over, the facilitator walks the candidate to the next room where he/she will meet with the center leadership team for the second half of the interview.

You are encouraged to take notes during each interview. You will be asked to submit your notes to the supervisory team at the end of each interview day.

After the Interview

Following each interview, you should discuss your impressions of the candidate and rate them according to the scale you chose in your planning meeting. You may wish to rank the candidates in order of strength after you rate them. After you finish discussing the last morning candidate, please go promptly to lunch and return on time to discuss the morning candidates with the supervisory team before afternoon interviews begin. At the end of the interview day, the committee will meet with the leadership team to share impressions of each candidate.

Developing Interview Questions

The point of each question should be to find out something about the candidate that will help you to know if he or she would make a good tutor. Before you start thinking of questions, you may want to brainstorm as a group about what it's like to work here and what qualities make a good tutor.

Questions you cannot ask

Federal law dictates that interview questions must be designed to gather information about the candidate's ability to do the job. You cannot ask anything personal that is not directly job-related. For example, you cannot ask questions about the candidate's age, race, country of origin, religion, or sexual orientation. You also cannot ask if the candidate is married, has children, or has a medical condition or disability. After you develop your list of questions, you must submit the list to the Director for approval.

Tips for developing questions for the panel interview

Hypothetical situations:

Think of something that happens on the job and ask how the person would handle it. Some examples might include:

- “Often we have to tutor more than one person at a time, and sometimes one student tries to dominate the session. How would you make sure each student got an equal amount of attention?”
- “No matter how well you know a particular subject, there will always be a student who comes up with a question you don’t know the answer to. What would you do?”
- “What would you do if a student asked for help with an assignment she was going to turn in for a grade?”

Ask for Examples:

Think of the qualities that make a good tutor, such as being on time, having good communication skills, keeping accurate records, and being able to work with students who are different from you. Ask for examples of how the candidate has demonstrated these qualities in the past. Some examples might include:

- “Tell us about a time when you had to work closely with someone very different from yourself—maybe much older or younger, or from a different culture. It could be at a previous job, but it could also be on a group project for a class, on a sports team, or any other type of setting. What happened? What did you learn from that experience?”
- “In this job, you have to be patient. Can you give us an example of a situation you were in that demanded a lot of patience? How did you handle it? What was the result?”

Role Play:

Role play can be a valuable component of the interview process. If you choose to include a role-play in your interview format, the scenario should be the same for every candidate. The only part that will differ from candidate to candidate is the academic subject. You should pick some topics from each area in advance. Don’t pick the hardest or most obscure thing in a particular course. At this stage, you are not looking for content knowledge. However, if there seems to be a lack of basic knowledge about the subject it should be included in the feedback/evaluation. In observing the scenario, tutors should rate overall performance, keeping in mind that these are candidates and they have not yet been trained.

Facilitator Responsibilities

Planning Meeting

1. Lead the planning meeting. Keep the meeting on track and ensure that the meeting goals are met.
2. Go over the guidelines to follow during interviews and make sure everyone knows what is expected of them.
3. Lead a discussion to develop a group consensus about what you will be looking for in a candidate and what interview questions you want to ask. Help the group finalize its list of interview questions.
4. Facilitate at least one mock interview during the planning meeting.
5. Develop a schedule of interview coverage showing which committee members will be present at which interviews. We'll tell you as much about the candidates as we can so you can try to have math tutors interview math candidates, language tutors interview language candidates, etc. Don't overload the interviews—no interview should have more than about 5-6 tutors present. You may wish to have a group of tutors assigned to each full day, or you may wish to have a “morning crew” and an “afternoon crew” for the interview days. Whatever works for the group is fine, as long as there is adequate coverage for each interview.
6. As soon as the meeting ends, type up the schedule of interview coverage, a description of the role-play, and a list of the interview questions and email it to the director. Copy the center coordinators and the entire committee so everyone has the same information.

Interview Days

1. Greet each interviewee in the waiting area and explain the two-part interview process.
2. Escort interviewee into the first interview room and facilitate the first interview. If someone is very late or is a no-show, let the supervisory staff know.
3. After the committee finishes with each candidate, escort the candidate to the next part (the supervisory interview). It's a good idea to knock on the door before opening it just in case we're still discussing the previous candidate.
4. Facilitate the discussion and rating of the candidate after each interview. Calculate an average rating for each candidate.
5. Maintain order and make sure interviews are conducted with professionalism.

Planning Meeting and Interview Do's and Don'ts

Do

- Be on time to the planning meeting and all your assigned interview times.
- Read all emails pertaining to the meeting/interviews.
- Follow the directions of the facilitator.
- Treat each candidate the same way.
- Be succinct in sharing your thoughts about a candidate. We need everyone to participate in the discussion, so please be respectful of the contributions of others and avoid dominating the conversation.

- Be fair and objective when rating candidates. If there is a candidate about whom you think you cannot be objective (e.g. a very close friend or someone with whom you do not get along), it's best to avoid being part of their interview.
- Dress appropriately. Jeans are okay, as long as you are neatly dressed.
- Silence your cell phone and put it away during interviews.

Don't

- Don't be late.
- Don't argue or talk over anyone, especially during discussion time. Everyone needs a turn to speak.
- Do not open the interview room door while an interview is in session.
- Don't have your phone out while a candidate is in the room.
- Don't discuss any candidate with others who were not part of the interview. Interviews are confidential.

Good luck, and have fun!