

# Using The MI Competency Framework In Recruitment And Selection

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## The recruitment process

A recruitment process is about establishing whether there is a match between an individual and the requirements of a particular job before they are placed in it. In the recruitment process you want to try to establish:

- what it is the applicant can do
- whether they can do it in your MI centre/organisation
- how they would go about doing it

The competencies in the MI framework can be used to help the recruitment process. By their nature, they will place more emphasis on how candidates are likely to behave and therefore should be seen as one part of the overall process (see Step 2).

We will now outline how you can use the MI competency framework to help with recruitment. There are three steps to work through when using the framework:

STEP 1 - identifying which competencies to look for

STEP 2 - using competencies in the recruitment process

STEP 3 - making a decision based on the evidence you have gathered

We will now describe each of the steps in turn. It may help to refer to the case study at the back of this section which works through each of the steps using a specific example. You can find more case studies contributed by MI pharmacists at [Link](#)

If you require further advice and support, your Human Resources department should be able to help.

## STEP 1 Which competencies to look for

When recruiting you need to strike a balance between assessing every possible factor that may affect a candidate's performance and the resources (e.g. time, people, money) you have available for the recruitment process.

A good way of reducing the time and effort needed to develop and manage the recruitment process is to identify the competencies which are essential for effective performance and look for behaviours which underlie these competencies.

You can do this using the approach highlighted in the box on the next page. You may want to think about doing this with the existing post holder because he or she should have the most realistic view of the job.

Once the essential (and desirable) competencies have been identified, the next step is to look at the behavioural statements that underpin each competency in the framework. Interviewers should ensure that they understand what each of the statements mean in practice. For example,

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the statements should not be interpreted to mean that only someone already in the job could exhibit those behaviours.

### **Identifying essential competencies**

1. list the most important job tasks required of the post holder
2. list the competencies required to do these tasks
3. rank them in terms of how important they are for completing the tasks
4. consider whether individuals will be able to develop quickly to an acceptable level in some of the competencies once in the job. If so, these could be left out of the selection process
5. the remaining competencies should be the essential ones
6. to ensure they are essential ask: *if an applicant achieved an unacceptable score on this competency but scored highly on every other one, would you still want to consider him/her for the post?*
7. If the answer is yes, the competency may not be essential. If you want to leave it in the selection process think of it as desirable and use it to distinguish between candidates who scored equally well on all essential competencies.

So, using the level 1 competency of 'Building relationships with enquirers' the sort of behaviours you would expect the candidate to be able to demonstrate are:

- is polite and helpful
- develops a rapport with users of the service
- inspires confidence in enquirers by actively listening
- uses questioning effectively to establish and understand the query
- assesses the enquirer's level of understanding of the clinical and professional issues around their enquiry
- understands the needs and priorities of enquirers, explains when the query will be answered

## **STEP 2 Using the competencies**

Not all assessment methods you will use in the recruitment process are competency based as highlighted earlier, looking for competencies is only one part of the process. The table below gives examples of other sorts of information you may be looking for at different stages in the recruitment process.

<b>Assessment method</b>	<b>Candidate information being assessed</b>
References	previous history, perceptions of others
CV	previous experience, qualifications
Interview	previous experience, knowledge, attitudes, aspirations
Work sample	job tasks, performance standards

So, for example, qualifications and experience (e.g. from the CV) may be used to screen out candidates before assessing potential job performance (e.g. in a work sample).

Assessment methods used should be relevant to the post you are trying to fill and provide consistent measurements. Ideally, any assessment method you haven't used before should be tested to ensure it is relevant to what you are looking for in the role and that it is a reliable way of testing.

Typically recruiting to fill an MI post involves inviting applications (via an advertisement) and then interviewing selected candidates in a single interview. There are three ways in which you can incorporate competencies into this typical process:

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- In the application form
- Direct questioning in the interview
- A simulation run during the interview

### Application form

If you want to begin looking at competencies early on in the recruitment process then you can incorporate them very easily into the application process by providing a list of open format questions for the candidate to submit written answers to. Typically, you will ask the applicants to give one or two examples for each question posed. Refer to the case study at the back of the section for some examples of how these questions might be phrased.

Using competency-based questions in the application process can allow you to identify any areas of concern and explore these areas in the subsequent interview.

### Interview

As with all interviews, the use of competency-based questions relies on those interviewing to use questioning effectively. Given this, a competency-based interview can be as good, or as bad, as any other sort of interview because much depends on the skill of the interviewer. Here are some general hints about using competency based questions:

- the interview should have a clear structure, with questions to ask for each competency but the questions shouldn't be followed slavishly
- the interviewer should probe the interviewee to:
  - get further evidence for the competency if necessary
  - establish whether evidence of the competency being given is at the **same level as that required for the post**
- competencies tested in interview should be compatible with the interview process (e.g. testing lateral thinking may be more suitable in for example a written assessment exercise)

Examples of the sort of questions you may want to ask are included in the case study at the back of this section.

### Simulations

A simulation is not the same as giving a candidate a scenario and asking them how they would deal with it. A simulation requires a candidate to actually respond to a particular situation. This is therefore a very powerful method of establishing how a candidate might actually behave (interview nerves aside) rather than them describing what they might do. A simulation is particularly useful for testing those competencies which are more interactive, for example interacting with enquirers over the telephone.

If you are using a simulation, it should be based on what the candidate will actually be required to do in the job. If well designed, a simulation should be able to test out several different competencies.

The case study includes an example of the sort of simulation you could easily run in a interview setting.

### STEP 3 Making a decision

In order to evaluate all the competency based evidence you have gathered throughout the process you need to have clear guidelines in place. These guidelines should be decided before the evaluation process begins. It is important to test any guidelines to ensure that they provide an effective and fair way of deciding between candidates.

These guidelines should cover how to turn the evidence you have gathered into a rating for the candidate and then how to turn candidates' ratings into an accept or reject decision.

#### Turning evidence into ratings

All the evidence that you have on candidates' competencies will be in the form of written notes, either answers from the candidates (produced in open-format questions from an application) or from the interviewers from their observations of the candidate.

Interviewers need to read through the evidence, independently of each other, and look for behavioural indicators which support (or undermine) each of the competencies being looked for. Once this has been done, the quality and volume of the indicators is converted into a competency rating. One example how this might be done is shown in the table below; your Human Resources department may also have ranking systems that you can use.

Rating	Evidence
5. outstanding	Multiple examples of all behaviours with no negative examples
4. good	
3. acceptable	Examples of most important behaviours with no negative examples and no important omissions
2. marginal	
1. unacceptable	Multiple negative examples of behaviours with no positive examples and/or important omissions
In this example level 2 and 4 are unassigned to make ranking easier and to avoid splitting rankings (e.g. 3/4 or 3.5)	

#### Making a decision

Once each competency has a score attached to it, the next stage is to turn this into an accept/reject decision. How this is done will depend on the nature of the post, the number of candidates, the job market etc.

The box below gives an example of how a decision might be made based on the candidates performance against the competencies.

Reject	applicants rated 1 on any competency or 2 on more than two of the competencies
Reserve candidate	If any of the competencies are rated 2
Recommended	All competencies rated 3 or above
Highly recommended	All competencies ranked 4 or 5

#### Acknowledgements and additional reading

Whiddett S, Hollyforde S. The Competencies Handbook. London. Institute of Personnel and Development, 1999

## Recruitment and Selection: Case Study

**JOB PROFILE:** The post is for a C-grade MI pharmacist in a large teaching hospital staffed full time by a D-grade pharmacist, with B grade pharmacists and pre-registration students rotating into the unit.

**MAIN ACTIVITIES:** supervision of basic grade pharmacists and pre-registration students. Assisting the MI manger to implement the regional MI strategy, deputising for the MI manager and managing the day-to-day running (query answering) of the service.

### COMPETENCIES CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL

The competency framework was used to identify the following essential competencies. The recruitment process will identify the extent to which candidates have these competencies.

Competency area	Competency	Level
DELIVERING THE MI SERVICE	Delivering the work.	level 1: delivers own work to time
	Ensuring quality.	level 1: ensures quality in own work
WORKING WITH PEOPLE	Working in MI	level 1: is a committed member of the MI team
	Building relationships with enquirers	level 1: develops relationships with enquirers, inspires confidence in the service
WORKING WITH INFORMATION	Communicating information	level 1: communicates information effectively and articulately
SEEING THE WIDER CONTEXT	Develops and shares specialist knowledge and skills	level1: keeps up to date with current practice
	Professional issues	level 1: works within professional and organisational standards
	Risk management	level 1: understands and manages risk on an individual level

### QUESTIONS INCLUDED WITH THE APPLICATION FORM

QUESTION	COMPETENCY BEING TESTED
Describe how you manage your weekly workload, the issues that you typically have to deal with and how you deal with them.	Delivering the work Level 1
Give some examples of where you have developed your own practice, knowledge and skills. How and why did you decide to pursue this? What was the outcome?	Developing and sharing specialist knowledge and skills Level 1
Describe what measures you put into your own practice in order to minimise risk.	Risk management Level 1
Testing written communication by asking these questions at the application phase.	Communicates information effectively and articulately Level 1

## RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION: Case Study (continued)

### QUESTIONS ASKED IN THE INTERVIEW

QUESTION SCHEDULE	COMPETENCY BEING TESTED FOR
<p><b>Give an example of how you have developed your working relationships in your current team.</b></p> <p>What issues did you have to deal with?                      How did you deal with them?                      What outcome were you hoping for?                      What was the outcome?                      What contribution did others make to the outcome?</p>	<p><b>WORKING IN MI: level 1</b></p>
<p><b>Describe a situation you have been in where you felt that you were at the limit of your knowledge and skill</b></p> <p>What did you do?                      How did you identify that you were outside or reaching your limits?                      What was the outcome?                      What did you learn from it?</p>	<p><b>PROFESSIONAL ISSUES: level 1</b></p>

### SIMULATION USED IN THE INTERVIEW

The simulation involves the candidate and one of the interviewers role playing an enquirer telephoning for information. Both the candidate and interviewer turn their chairs around so neither can see the other, this creates a similar environment to a telephone conversation. The candidate is given something to write on whilst taking the call. The other interviewers record their observations of how the candidate performed against the competencies being looked for.

The interviewer role playing the enquirer has a script of the information that they can provide on questioning by the candidate. In order to ensure the simulation is effective, it should be tested with existing staff of the same level.

#### Opening question.

A woman (or her husband) telephones to ask whether she should be taking x and y medicines whilst trying to become pregnant.

#### Background divulged on questioning

In fact, the woman has been taking these medicines for 6 months already and has just found out that she is pregnant. Her doctor has told her there is no problem but she wants to double check this because she is concerned.

The competencies that the candidate should exhibit are the level 1 competencies of:

Building relationships with enquirers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ is polite and helpful</li> <li>▪ develops a rapport with users of the service</li> <li>▪ inspires confidence in enquirers by actively listening</li> <li>▪ uses questioning effectively to establish and understand the query</li> <li>▪ assesses the enquirer's level of understanding of the clinical and professional issues around their enquiry</li> <li>▪ understands the needs and priorities of enquirers, explains when the query will be answered</li> </ul>
Communicating information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ takes responsibility for getting the message across accurately</li> <li>▪ ensures clarity in all communication</li> <li>▪ communicates effectively in verbal, electronic and written form</li> <li>▪ supports any recommendations with evidence</li> <li>▪ chooses the most appropriate form of communication for each situation</li> </ul>
Works within professional and organisational standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ knows professional and personal limitations, seeks advice when necessary</li> <li>▪ works within the professional code of ethics and UKMI code of practice</li> <li>▪ maintains confidentiality and understands the issues surrounding it</li> <li>▪ develops an awareness of the legal issues affecting the practice of MI</li> <li>▪ demonstrates sensitive, compassionate, empathic use of information in patient-centred care</li> </ul>