

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Officer Accessions, Evaluations, and Promotions

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with 10 U.S.C. § 1162 or 14 U.S.C. § 281 if it is determined I am not eligible for a secret security clearance.”

1.B.8. Interviewing Procedures for Officer Recruiting Programs

1.B.8.a. General

OCS and the various direct commission programs are important sources of Coast Guard officers. Various selection boards evaluate applicants' qualifications to determine those best qualified for a particular program. To do so properly, they must have adequate information. An important source is the interview, often the only significant personal contact with the applicant reported by a Coast Guard official. As such, the interview provides important subjective input on the applicant's poise, leadership potential, ability to communicate, motivation for service in the Coast Guard, etc. On the basis of this subjective report and other, more objective measures, the Coast Guard selects candidates. The accuracy of the selection process directly reflects the quality and uniformity of interviews. Consequently, effective interviewing procedures and careful attention to completing the Officer Programs Applicant Assessment, Form CG-5527, are extremely important to both the Coast Guard and the applicant. Article 1.B.9. of this Manual contains guidelines for interviewing for officer programs.

1.B.8.b. Requirements

(1) Composition of Interview Boards.

- (a) Commanding officers shall convene interview boards at places within their jurisdiction. Boards shall consist of three officers, except when necessary to interview an applicant at a location geographically remote from a larger Coast Guard facility. In such cases, a two-member board is authorized.
- (b) The board's senior member shall be a lieutenant commander or above. Other members should have the rank of ensign or higher with more than one year of Coast Guard service. Interview board members for chief warrant officer applicants shall be lieutenant commanders or higher. All members must be equal or senior to the grade for which they are considering the applicant.
- (c) Interview boards should be composed with applicant and program in mind. Thus, when interviewing for OCS, the board should contain, if practical, an OCS graduate; for a direct commission program, a specialist in the same field; for a Reserve commission, at least one Reserve officer. A board interviewing female or minority applicants should contain, if practical, a female or respective minority member. A board considering licensed officers in the Merchant Marine or Maritime Academy graduates should include, if practical, one officer with merchant marine safety experience.
- (d) When practical, two board members should be Regular Coast Guard officers.

When a two-member board is authorized one must be a Regular officer.

- (e) Since an unbiased, independent contribution is essential, officers in direct personal or professional contact with the applicant may not be members of that individual's interview board. Coast Guard members' immediate supervisors and commanding officers may not be board members because they provide input through the commanding officer's endorsement.
- (2) Interview Board Report. The interview board completes an Officer Programs Applicant Assessment, Form CG-5527, for each applicant. Board members should prepare this form jointly, with all board members reaching a consensus. Do not show applicants the completed forms from the interview. Submit these sheets with the cover sheet, signed by the senior board member, to the recruiter or educational services officer and provide this information:
- (a) The name of the program,
 - (b) The applicant's name,
 - (c) The names and duty stations of the interview board members, and
 - (d) Date or dates when members interviewed the applicant.
- (3) Applicant Recommendation. The interview board must state the applicant's suitability for commissioning in the program(s) in question in the first sentence of the "Overall Impression of Candidate" box of the Applicant Assessment form in this wording: "(applicant name) is recommended for (program name)," or "(applicant name) is NOT recommended for (program name)," for example: "Mary Jones is recommended for Officer Candidate School;" or "Ralph Jones is NOT recommended for the Direct Commission Aviation program." In addition, include applicable comments in the "Overall Impression of the Candidate" box.
- (4) Other Evaluation. The local recruiter or other persons who process an applicant often are a valuable source of information. When they have sufficient personal contact with an applicant to provide an accurate evaluation, they should complete an Officer Programs Applicant Assessment form and attach it to the board report, marking it clearly with the words, "NOT A MEMBER OF THE INTERVIEW BOARD." This supplements the usual interview board requirement; the recruiter should use it only when fully satisfied the appraisal is complete and accurate.
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1.B.9. Officer Programs Interviewing Guidelines

1.B.9.a. The Objective

The interview's primary purpose is to evaluate the applicant as a prospective Coast Guard officer. In many cases, the Report of Interview is the most valuable portion of an

application and a determining factor in selections for officer programs. The primary object interviewers must keep in mind is their written evaluation usually is the only evidence of the applicant's personal attributes and thus plays a very important part in the selection process. Therefore, it is essential during the interview for interviewers to obtain adequate information and accurately transpose it on the Officer Programs Applicant Assessment form. It also is necessary to attain some degree of uniformity in the Report of Interview since officers of very different backgrounds and experience and varying interviewing proficiency conduct the interviews. An interview board could consist of a captain with marine inspection experience, an Academy lieutenant, and a recent OCS graduate. Their common bond, of course, is all are Coast Guard officers. Consider separately any specialty, such as aviation, although if the board can determine information about that specialty, it certainly is valuable.

1.B.9.b. The Interview

- (1) Environment. The formality of the three officer board may cause the applicant some uneasiness or stress. His or her response to that situation is a valuable part of the interview. However, interviewers will be able to get a more accurate view of the applicant's true personality if a "threatening" environment does not exist. Create an environment which will permit the applicant to relax, so he or she will communicate freely.
- (2) Conversation Flow. Avoid the question and answer approach. Applicants tend to give what they think is the expected answer to a question. Try to conduct the interview as a free-flowing conversation. The member with the most interviewing expertise or experience should direct the interview with a minimum of comments and questions, as appropriate, from the others.
- (3) Chronology. Follow a predetermined interview plan. A chronological sequence, like the one below, is recommended but can be modified as necessary to conform to program requirements and the individual applicant. Included in each section are examples of questions that tend to draw the desired response from the applicant. Do not use the list of questions as a script.
 - (a) Introduction. Explain the primary purpose of the interview is to develop some knowledge of the applicant's interest and ideas. Briefly explain the intended sequence, so the applicant understands the major portion of the interview will obtain those facts, ideas, qualifications, and experiences not available in the other application materials submitted. Explain you intend to reserve time at the end to answer any questions.
 - (b) Personal Life and Home Environment. Review this aspect of the applicant's life, discussing parental guidance and childhood, to provide insight into present and future situations.

[1] What are your recreational and leisure-time interests?

- [2] Do you now belong to any social, civic, or professional clubs and associations?
 - [3] Do you hold office in any of these?
 - [4] If you had more time, in what activities would you like to participate?
 - [5] In general, how would you describe yourself?
 - [6] What do you believe are your outstanding qualities?
 - [7] What do you believe are some of your shortcomings?
 - [8] In which areas would you like to develop yourself?
 - [9] What traits or qualities do you most admire in your immediate supervisor?
 - [10] What has contributed to your career success up to now?
 - [11] What disappointments, setbacks, or failures have you had in your life?
 - [12] What kinds of situations or circumstances make you feel tense or nervous?
 - [13] What were some of the major problems or decisions you have had to make up to now?
 - [14] If you had to do it all over again, what changes would you make in your life and career?
- (c) High School. Attempt to determine what the applicant did, and why, during these formative years.
- [1] In what types of extra-curricular activities did you participate?
 - [2] How did you spend your summers while in high school?
 - [3] Did you hold any class or club offices?
- (d) College or Other Advanced Study. Try to find out the reasons the applicant chose a certain major, how he or she spent extra time, reasons for good or bad grades, and how college experience has contributed to his or her overall life experience.
- [1] Why did you choose the particular college you attended?
 - [2] What determined your choice of major?

- [3] How would you describe your academic achievement?
- [4] How did you decide to become [insert career: an accountant, a sales representative, etc.]?
- [5] How did you spend your summers while in college? Did you hold any class or club offices?
- [6] Have you had any additional training or education since graduating from college?
- [7] How do you think college contributed to your development?

(e) Employment. The other portions of the application provide only minimal information about work experience. The interview is the only opportunity to find out why the applicant took a certain job, reasons he or she quit, and attitudes toward the job, employer, and company.

- [1] Can you describe your present responsibilities and duties?
- [2] What were some things you particularly enjoyed when you worked for [insert employer name]?
- [3] What did you enjoy less?
- [4] Looking back at the time spent with [insert employer name], what do you think you have gained from your association?
- [5] What were your reasons for leaving [insert employer name]? How would you describe your [present/past] supervisor?
- [6] What were some of the problems you encountered on your job and how did you solve them?
- [7] In what way has your present job prepared you for greater responsibilities?
- [8] As you see it, what would be some advantages to you if you joined the Coast Guard?
- [9] What disadvantages might there be?

(f) Military Experience. This portion may be the most difficult for some applicants, particularly those who are presently in the Coast Guard or who have extensive prior service because this type of person knows the “system” and it is difficult to distinguish one from another. Interview reports of in-Service applicants tend to summarize applicants’ assignments and experience, be favorable, and lack

information valuable in evaluating the individual. What is desired is a look at why they entered and left their Service, why they were able to make rate in such a short time or why it took them so long, why they feel they received their evaluation marks, attitudes about the Service, supervisors, and subordinates, ideas on drug and alcohol problems, racial attitudes, etc., and how past military experience can serve them in the future.

- [1] Can you describe your present responsibilities and duties?
- [2] In the past, for what things have your supervisors complimented you?
- [3] What did you and your superior disagree about?
- [4] How has your present job prepared you for greater responsibilities?

(g) Present Situation and Future Ambitions and Goals. What in the applicant's present situation needs changing and how can he or she accomplish it in this program? Does the applicant have a plan to achieve a certain goal? If so, what are the reasons for his or her objectives, and are they realistic? Do not downgrade an applicant only because he or she is unsure of his or her future goals. Many can contribute a great deal to the Service during one tour of duty. On the other hand, one who claims to desire a Coast Guard career may say so because he or she thinks it is a desired response. Interviewers should not ask, "Do you want to make a career of the Coast Guard?"

- [1] In what way does a job with the Coast Guard meet your career goals and objectives?
- [2] If you joined the Coast Guard, where do you think you could make your best contribution?
- [3] What are your long-term goals and objectives?
- [4] In considering joining the Coast Guard, what are some of the factors you took into account?
- [5] What aspects of a job are important to you?
- [6] What would you want in your next job you are not getting now?
- [7] Are there any additional aspects of your qualifications we have not covered which would be relevant to the position we are discussing?

(4) Pointers. Ask if the applicant has questions or if anything else needs to be added. This is particularly important for civilian applicants to avoid any later misconceptions. Emphasize the Coast Guard's military posture. While maintaining a

favorable image, answer questions honestly and avoid any possibility the applicant might believe selection is assured, assignment will be to a desired area or type of work, etc. Remember applicants sometimes hear only what they want to hear and sometimes are unintentionally misled. Don't get trapped into being interviewed by the applicant; make him or her do the talking.

- (a) Don't ask antagonizing questions.
 - (b) Don't ask questions with one-word or -phrase answers.
 - (c) Don't ask questions that have "right" answers.
 - (d) Don't jump to conclusions on the basis of initial impressions or inadequate information.
 - (e) Don't accept a partial response to a question.
 - (f) Don't go off on a tangent. Stay with your intended interview plan.
 - (g) Don't concentrate on shortcomings.
- (5) Conclusion. After the interview, the board members are to complete an Officer Programs Applicant Assessment form in accordance with Article 1.B.8. of this Manual.
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