

Video conference or skype interviews are a convenient communication method for candidates who are based out of town. They can generally be arranged within a short time frame with minimal cost.

The University has dedicated video conference rooms in Dunedin, Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. The Information Technology Services video conference technicians can advise on options as well as provide support on the day. You can contact them on email av.conf@otago.ac.nz.

This factsheet includes some tips to achieving a comfortable and successful meeting and avoiding any awkward moments.

Preparation – setting up the video conference

Arranging a suitable time

When organising the interview, consider any time differences. Take into account the candidate's time zone – they may politely accept a 6.00am interview time – but are unlikely to perform at their best and could be disadvantaged.

Arrange for the panel to arrive at least ten minutes prior to the interview time. This gives you the opportunity to ensure the set up is appropriate and everyone is settled, with their paperwork/interview questions in good time. As a rule, video conferences start promptly, as candidates will generally have arrived early and be ready to start.

Skype

Some candidates may have Skype; software that enables individuals and organisations to make free video and voice calls. If so, this will remove the necessity to book a local video conference facility and means the candidate could interview from home. Whilst convenient for the candidate and cost effective, there can be technical issues resulting in a poor quality interview. If you are considering using Skype, it is advisable to test the connection quality prior to the interview. The ITS video conference technicians are available to assist, and advise on the suitability of Skype.

Reimbursing candidate expenses

The candidate may need to book a suitable facility at their end. It is appropriate for the Department to reimburse any associated costs or ideally to request direct charging to the University. For reimbursement, ask the candidate to provide the invoice and receipt for the facility.

Conducting the Interview

Introductions

Take a few moments to cover pleasantries, introduce the panel and ensure the candidate can see and hear all the panel members.

If you are using the video-conferencing facilities, the ITS technician will initiate the link and set up the actual transmission. The technician will make any necessary adjustments to the equipment.

During the interview

Behave as if the candidate was in the room, the same communication principles apply:

- ✘ Make eye contact with the candidate – albeit via the camera. Be aware that over the course of a panel interview, there can be a tendency to lose eye contact with the candidate and focus more on fellow panel members, thereby appearing disinterested in the candidate.
- ✘ When the candidate is talking, focus on them as if they were in the room, using eye contact and other non-verbal prompts to keep the conversations flowing.
- ✘ Be aware of your body language. Panel members may feel more self-conscious than usual, as they will see themselves on the screen – try to focus on the candidate and resist the temptation to observe the panel on screen.
- ✘ Smile! A friendly expression goes a long way to building rapport.
- ✘ Cover the same interview questions as for face to face interviews – allowing time for the candidate to ask questions.

There are some differences to be aware of:

- ✘ Speak clearly and be definite about finishing your sentences. In a video-conference situation, confusion can occur more easily.
- ✘ Don't tap or click pens as the microphone picks these sounds up very sharply.
- ✘ Unless absolutely necessary avoid moving the microphone, as it makes a rather unpleasant noise on the other side.

After the Video Conference Interview

Ensure the video conference connection is completely switched off before making any post interview comments. Unguarded comments can undermine an otherwise successful interview.