Officer Interview (OI)
Resource Guide

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# Table of Contents

I  What is the purpose of the Officer Interview (OI) ................................................. 3  
II  What is a Structured Interview? ........................................................................ 3  
III  Development of the Officer Interview (OI) ..................................................... 3  
III  Why is the Officer Interview (OI) important? ................................................. 4  
IV  Why are you (the interviewer) important? ...................................................... 4  
V  What is the purpose of the Officer Interview (OI) Resource Guide .................. 4  
VI  Preparing for the Interview ............................................................................. 5  
VII  Conducting the Interview ............................................................................. 5  
VIII  Evaluating the Candidate’s Responses ....................................................... 7  
IX  After the Interview ......................................................................................... 8  
X  Appendix A: Officer Interview (OI) Form .................................................... 9
What is the purpose of the Officer Interview (OI)?

The Officer Interview (OI) is the face-to-face assessment method used to determine a candidate’s potential as an Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) midshipman and a future naval officer. The NROTC interview serves as the only occasion during the application and selection process that the Officer Development Directorate at Naval Service Training Command (NSTC/OD) obtains direct personal contact with the candidate. The OI provides valuable candidate information that supplements other data that is used in the selection process (e.g., SAT scores, High School GPA, Extracurricular Activities, Physical Fitness, etc.). This interview process is equally valuable for the candidates as it provides them an opportunity to speak with a Naval Officer prior to making the decision to accept a scholarship (if offered).

What is a structured interview?

A structured interview is the standardized process whereby asking all candidates the same questions, in the same order and manner, derives responses that can be accurately compared against responses from other interviews in a consistent and reliable manner. Structured interviews are often used to make hiring decisions by inquiring about a candidate’s behavior based on past experiences (behavioral questions) and proposed hypothetical situations (projective questions). Research shows that structured interviews are twice as effective as unstructured interviews in predicting job performance.

Benefits of using structured interview format include:

- Helps to minimize interviewer created biases that creep in as a result of “favorite questions” and idiosyncratic interviewing style.
- Increases the reliability within and between interviews conducted by multiple officers.
- Increases the validity of interview data for making high stakes decisions.

The Officer Interview (OI) is based on this structured interview format and ensures that all candidates applying for the NROTC scholarship are evaluated solely on their responses to a common set of questions applicable to the program.

Development of the Officer Interview (OI)

The Officer Development Directorate at Naval Service Training Command (NSTC(OD)), the Navy Personnel Research, Studies and Technology (NPRST) command, and a selection of naval officers across the NROTC (Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps) domain were involved in the development of the performance competencies, creation of the behavioral and situational questions, and scaling and establishment of benchmarks.
Why is the Officer Interview (OI) important?

The strength of our officer corps is vital to the success of our Navy/Marine Corps. Therefore, we need to select the best/most competitive candidate at the onset with the right set of performance traits that will predict success as a midshipman and officer in the naval service. The OI ensures that we assess a candidate’s suitability for an NROTC scholarship beyond just supporting documents such as their application, transcripts and standardized test scores. We cannot overemphasize the importance of getting the selection process right from the first moment an applicant indicates an interest and meets with you, and the OI helps us get there.

Why are you (the interviewer) important?

By representing the NROTC program and conducting the interview, you serve as the “eyes and ears” of the NROTC Continuous National Selection Board (CNSB) and as mentioned above, your interview represents the only time during this vital selection process where a representative of the NROTC program has direct personal contact with the candidate. Moreover from the candidate’s perspective, you represent the Navy to them, and as such, play an influential role as they ask questions, learn about service to their country and continuously assess whether the Navy is right for them.

What is the purpose of this Officer Interview (OI) Resource Guide?

The purpose of this resource guide is to inform you on the importance of this program and provide you with an in-depth description on how to conduct the officer interview (OI). This guide describes how to prepare and conduct the interview, evaluate the candidate based upon a series of performance competencies, provide supporting justification for those ratings, and offer strategies (“do’s and don’ts”) for conducting an effective interview. Most importantly, this guide is designed to ensure that all interviews conducted nationwide are standardized so that each applicant is evaluated on a comparable basis. This assures consistency in the interview experience and minimizes potential unintended variations in responses.

1 Standardized in this context refers to the fact that all candidates are asked the same questions in the same order. It is recognized that interviewers have individual personal styles that may facilitate candidate comfort and engagement with the process. Within reason, individual interview style can be positive; however, deviations from the interview questions and/or content is strongly discouraged.
Preparing for the Interview

Interview Setting

- Interviews should be held in a quiet, private place free from distractions and interruptions.
- Site distractions that differ from interview-to-interview could contribute to potential inconsistencies in responses.
- By creating a comfortable environment, the candidate will be at ease during the interview process and may elicit more accurate, complete and genuine responses.

Prep Work

- Prior to the interview, you should have read and reviewed the following materials: the candidate’s application file, this OI Resource Guide, and the OI form (Appendix A). However, DON’T review the candidate’s transcripts, other evaluator’s comments (teacher, coach, and counselor) and applicant essays.
- It is very important for you, the interviewer, to be familiar with the interview questions and make self-notes regarding process flow. Your comfort level with the interview protocol and questions will contribute to a more consistent experience between interviews.
- Ensure that enough time is allotted for the interview, including response time. Plan for a uniform “base time” for the interviews that are consistent for all candidates. Most interviews should take approximately 30-45 minutes; thus, a planning factor of one hour may be appropriate.
- In reviewing the candidate’s application file, note any discrepancies found on the section provided at the beginning of the OI form.

Two-Way Evaluation

- It is important to recognize that candidates are evaluating you, as a representative of the US Navy, as you are evaluating them.
- Always present a friendly, cordial and professional manner.
- Be organized and prepared for every interview!
- If on active duty or in the reserves, be in uniform.

Conducting the Interview

Candidate’s Arrival

- Greet the candidate and initiate introductions.
- Be friendly and respectful. This helps diffuse nervousness and allows you to establish a professional rapport with the candidate.
- Explain the interview process and answer any questions the candidate may have.
- Inform the candidate that notes will be taken during the interview.
Formal Interview

- Follow the format outlined in the OI and cover all the pertinent topics.
- Start the interview and ask questions in a clear manner that is understandable to the candidate.
- In reviewing the candidate’s application file, ask the applicant to clarify and explain any inconsistencies in the application form.
- Ask ONLY the assigned questions and in the specified order.
- Apply the “20/80 Rule” to interviews: Spend 20% of the time asking the questions and the rest listening. Let the candidate speak while you take detailed notes.
- Listen carefully to the candidate’s responses and only intervene when necessary for clarification purposes.

Interviewer Style

- Be aware of your non-verbal communication (body movements, facial expressions, and tone of voice) and its impact on the candidate.
- Respect the candidate’s pace and do not feel uncomfortable with pauses or silences. Give them time to reflect on the question and gather their thoughts for the answer.
- Don’t hesitate to intervene in instances when the candidate goes off topic but avoid leading them to the desired response. Maintaining focus on the question at hand is important in order to remain within time constraints.
- Remain objective and fair throughout the entire interview process.

Take Notes

- Take detailed notes and focus only on observable behaviors and responses of candidates. By taking detailed notes, the interviewer’s evaluation of candidates will be consistent and provide justification for objective ratings.
- Focus on facts rather than judgments or opinions.
- Do not record the interview. Audio recording is not authorized.

Wrap-Up

- Once the formal interview is concluded, take the opportunity to ask the candidate if he/she has any questions.
- Ask the candidate to keep the details of the interview confidential.
- Inform them that their assigned recruiter will explain the next steps in the NROTC scholarship process.
- Thank the candidate for considering a career in the Navy.
Evaluating the Candidate’s Responses

**Do’s**

- Stick to the format and flow of the interview form as provided.
- Remain consistent from interview to interview.
- Focus on only one performance competency at a time and rate the candidate’s responses for each question/category independently.
- Base your ratings only on observable behaviors and responses.
- Once the individual ratings are completed for each of the 5 competencies, rate the “overall suitability” category. This category is based on your overall impression of the candidate versus an average of all competencies.

**Don’ts**

- Deviate from the format and flow of the interview questions.
  - Deviation contributes to unreliability in interview ratings between interviewers, which in turn results in ratings that are of limited value to the NROTC Selection Boards. Additionally, unreliability in interview ratings is the major cause of low interview validity (i.e., interview ratings NOT predicting success indicators).

**Don’ts: Common Errors Made by Interviewers That Could Contribute to an Inaccurate Assessment**

- **First impressions**: Allowing the first impression of a candidate to cloud the rating of the candidate as you proceed through the interview. This could result in highly similar ratings across all criteria (competencies).
- **Recency Effect**: Tendency to let the last response to the final question affect the overall rating of the candidate.
- **Halo Effect**: Tendency for the interviewer to rate all aspects of performance based on the observance of one trait.
- **Candidate-order effect**: Tendency of an interviewer to allow the performance of previously interviewed candidates to impact the rating of subsequent candidates. The impact can be positive or negative. However, it has a greater degree of influence on average candidates.
- **Leniency effect**: Tendency for an interviewer to rate candidates consistently high.
- **Stringency effect**: Tendency for an interviewer to rate candidates consistently low.
- **Central tendency effect**: Tendency for an interviewer to avoid high or low ratings and generally rate candidates to the middle of the scale.
- **Similar-to-me effect**: Tendency to favorably judge candidates who are similar to the interviewer. Results in non-job related factors and personal bias/prejudice influencing ratings.
After the Interview

- Review the interview form and double-check your notes and ratings to ensure consistency and overall accuracy based on the interview you conducted. This is the most important aspect of the interview – getting it right before you transmit your signal on this candidate’s suitability as a potential future midshipman and officer in the naval service.
- Enter the ratings and comments from your notes.
- Conduct a final check of your entries and check for errors.
- Click “Submit” when ready and when prompted, print a copy of the interview form if desired.
Appendix A

NROTC Officer Interview (OI) Form

Applicant’s Name: ____________________________

Date: _____________________

Name of Interviewer: First: ____________________ MI:_________   Last:___________

Approximate number of NROTC interviews conducted: This cycle: _________        Total:_______

Phone number of Interviewer: __________________

Designator: _______ Rate/Rank: ___________ Unit: __________

I have reviewed the Officer Interview reference guide: ___________ (initials)

Prior to conducting the interview, review the candidate’s application and comment on any discrepancies found that may be relevant to the Scholarship Selection Board. Ask the applicant to clarify and explain any inconsistencies in the application form.

Comments:
**Instructions**

The performance competencies that are included below have been vetted through Naval Officer SME’s using an iterative process. The focus was to identify areas that are known to contribute significantly to success as an NROTC midshipman and as a Naval Officer.

Please keep in mind that when evaluating the candidate on each performance competency that it is important to separate information gathered from other items or general impressions from the information obtained solely for the competency in question. In other words, when rating *Propensity to Serve* (the first performance competency) use only information collected during the response to that question to evaluate the candidate’s Propensity to Serve. Performance competencies include: a) *Propensity to Serve*, b) *Embracing a Healthy Lifestyle*, c) *Communication*, d) *Teamwork/Interpersonal Relations*, and e) *Judgment/Decision-making*.

A final category, *Overall Suitability*, is included to provide the interview’s assessment of the candidate’s likelihood of performing successfully as an undergraduate NROTC midshipman and a future Naval Officer. The judgment for rating this category should be based on all of the information available to the interviewer as a result of the interview process. Utilize the information gathered and the ratings provided for the individual performance competencies to inform the *Overall Suitability* rating; however do not simply use the arithmetic average of these categories.
Performance Competency 1: Propensity to Serve

**Definition:**
Short term competency: NROTC program motivation  
Long term competency: Naval Officer

Strong desire to serve in the Navy (including NROTC unit), embraces obligation to serve the country, realistic understanding of military service and has definite interest in considering a Naval career.

**Lead Questions:**
Q1: Provide examples of activities in which you have been involved that have developed your desire or ability to serve in the military.

Q2: If you receive an NROTC scholarship, what warfare specialty or mission area are you interested in pursuing, and why? What would you do if you are assigned to a community that is not your preference?

Q3: If for some reason you were not selected for the NROTC scholarship, what is your backup plan? Explain your thought process?

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<tr>
<th>Below Expectations</th>
<th>Meets Expectations</th>
<th>Exceeds Expectations</th>
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</table>
| • Only wants to serve in one specific community.  
  • Not willing to consider other paths to commission  
  • Self-serving motivation for the scholarship.  
  • Only wants a commission if it fits their plan.  
  • Concerned with what the Navy can do for them and not vice versa. |
| • Passionate about a specific community however, would consider alternate paths to commission.  
  • Only willing to serve in some communities but not others.  
  • Under appropriate circumstances, willing to subordinate personal interests. |
| • Passionate about a specific community however, has a willingness to pursue alternate paths to a commission.  
  • Willing to serve where needed.  
  • Applying for a NROTC scholarship for the purpose of serving country. |

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**Specific Reasons for Ratings:**


Performance Competency 2: Embracing a Healthy Lifestyle

Definition:
Adopts a culture of physical fitness, healthy nutritional habits, and mental well-being.

Lead Questions:
Q1: Other than organized varsity, intramural or club sports, describe how you maintain and improve your physical fitness. Do you have a regular physical fitness routine? Why or why not is physical fitness a priority for you?

Q2: Tell me about your diet and how it relates to your current physical fitness level.

Q3: Can you describe a very stressful event in your life, how you dealt with it, and what you learned about yourself that could help you in a similar situation in the future?

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<th>Below Expectations</th>
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<th>Exceeds Expectations</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Does not participate in regular physical activity.</td>
<td>• Engages in physical activities infrequently.</td>
<td>• Regularly participates in physical activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Healthy eating is not a priority.</td>
<td>• Tries to eat healthy meals when convenient.</td>
<td>• Strictly abides to healthy diet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does not have methods for dealing with stress.</td>
<td>• Is able to deal with stress sometimes but not others.</td>
<td>• Has methods for dealing with stress that provide positive outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does not engage in physical activity.</td>
<td>• Is involved in school sports but strictly motivated by coach.</td>
<td>• Involved in many aspects of daily/weekly physical activities that are not formal high school sports.</td>
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Specific Reasons for Ratings:
Performance Competency 3: Communications

Definition:
Conveys information clearly and effectively, demonstrates active listening skills, and response to questions indicates active participation in the conversation.

Lead Questions:
Q1: Can you tell me about a time when miscommunication caused a problem for you, how you fixed the issue, and what you learned from the experience?

Q2: We have all met people that we would describe as “poor communicators.” Of those people you have met that fall into this category, can you describe several of their characteristics that made them “poor communicators” in your opinion?

Q3: If someone had a problem and wanted to talk to you about it, what would you do to demonstrate that you are receptive and actively engaged in the conversation?

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<tr>
<td>• Does not understand that miscommunication can cause problems.</td>
<td>• Understands that miscommunication can cause problems.</td>
<td>• Engages in effective communication skills which involve active listening, engagement, and interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unable to effectively answer questions.</td>
<td>• Able to communicate adequately.</td>
<td>• Able to communicate specific details and examples, elaborate well, and provide a mature response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inability to organize thoughts and answer questions directly.</td>
<td>• Able to organize thoughts and respond to questions.</td>
<td>• Strong ability to organize thoughts and respond thoughtfully.</td>
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Specific Reasons for Ratings:
Performance Competency 4: Teamwork/ Interpersonal Relations

Definition:
How the individual functions in a group setting, putting the group’s goals ahead of one’s personal goals, and ability to assume different roles (leader versus follower) depending on the context.

Lead Questions:
Q1: Describe a situation in your life in which you were placed in a leadership position on short notice. How did you handle leading the group? What challenges did you face and what did this experience teach you?

Q2: Describe how you have been an effective follower in a group setting, and how that impacted your role as a leader?

Q3: Give me an example of when you have been asked to sacrifice your personal success and gratification in order to serve a larger group or organizational goal. Why did you make the choice you did? What were the results or consequences of your decision?

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<tr>
<td>• Reluctance to lead, follow, or do both if required.</td>
<td>• Indicates willingness to lead, follow, or do both if required.</td>
<td>• Is proactive and willing to lead, follow, or do both if required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Puts self before the team.</td>
<td>• Willing to be a part of a team.</td>
<td>• Always considers team’s needs before self.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Always valuing self over others.</td>
<td>• In instances where there is group consensus, demonstrates a tendency to agree with group goals.</td>
<td>• Willing to sacrifice individual success to achieve group goals.</td>
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Specific Reasons for Ratings:
Performance Competency 5: Judgment/ Decision-making

Definition:
Approach used to work through problems, weighing potential courses of action and considering potential solutions and consequences, and ability to make a decision.

Lead Questions:
Q1: Can you tell us about a situation when you had to make a difficult decision or judgment call, what considerations you made, and what that taught you about your ability to make decisions?

Q2: Describe a situation in which you had to make a challenging decision that negatively impacted another person or group. What was the basis of your decision, and describe in detail how you formulated and evaluated the pros and cons of the impacts of the decision? Do you still believe you made the right decision, and describe why or why not?

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<td>• Uncomfortable to seek help in making decisions, even in situations where it would be beneficial.</td>
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<td>• Makes impacting decisions on scant or irrelevant information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Makes decisions without considering the consequences.</td>
<td>• Will seek help if required.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Uses information only if it’s readily available.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Does not consider all the consequences before making a decision.</td>
<td>• Comfortable seeking help in making decisions.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses as much information as possible before making decision.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Indicates a willingness to accept the known (and unanticipated) consequences of taking actions or making a decision.</td>
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Specific Reasons for Ratings:
Overall Suitability

Assess the candidate’s suitability for the NROTC program and potential as a Naval Officer. Rate this category based on overall impressions of the interview. **DO NOT** simply take the average of the other performance categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do Not Recommend</th>
<th>Recommend</th>
<th>Strongly Recommend</th>
<th>Highest Recommendation</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Does not meet program minimum requirements</td>
<td>• Has potential to be a successful midshipman</td>
<td>• Has potential to be a successful midshipman and officer</td>
<td>• Great potential to excel as midshipman and officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do not recommend for NROTC scholarship</td>
<td>• Consider for NROTC scholarship</td>
<td>• Strongly recommend for NROTC scholarship</td>
<td>• Has highest recommendation to receive NROTC scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Of all applicants interviewed BOTTOM 25%</td>
<td>• Of all applicants interviewed AVERAGE 50%</td>
<td>• Of all applicants interviewed TOP 40%</td>
<td>• Of all applicants interviewed TOP 25%</td>
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Specific Reasons for Ratings:
Other: Comment on any other relevant topics of interest to the NROTC Selection Board, particularly anything that makes this candidate’s situation/application different or stand out from other applicants. If none, enter N/A.

Comments: