

Structured Oral Board Examinations (Process and Hints)

What is an oral board examination?

- An examination consisting of a set of standard questions that all candidates are asked and respond to in the presence of a rating panel consisting of subject matter experts. The examination is timed.
- An oral board exam IS NOT the job interview. It is the civil service examination and is used to develop the list of candidates who will move on to the interview process. Candidates do not need to bring a resume to the oral exam. Resumes will be requested at the time of the interview process.

Why are oral board examinations used?

- Used for positions requiring a lot of interpersonal contacts and require effective verbal communication skills.
- Used to test specific knowledge, problem solving, analytical skills and oral communication skills (depending on the specific position)
- Requires an applicant to organize their thoughts and express them verbally.
- An extremely valid measurement tool.

What is the process for an oral board exam?

- Eligible candidates are invited to participate in the exam and are scheduled for a time slot.
- Candidates should arrive 15 minutes prior to their scheduled time.
- Candidates will be provided an introduction by an exam proctor in the Bureau of Human Resources Services (BHRS). Since this is an exam, all personal materials will be taken from candidates and stored during the exam.
- Candidates will receive the names of the oral board members and be given the opportunity to request removal of an oral board member to ensure objectivity in the scoring process.
- Prior to meeting with the oral board, candidates will be given ample time to review the oral board examination questions and to take notes, which may be referenced during the oral exam.
- Candidates will then be taken into the oral board exam room and introduced to the three-member panel of subject matter experts.
- The panel will begin recording the oral board exam as required by statutes.
- The panel will begin asking the pre-reviewed exam questions.
- Using their notes as a reference, candidates respond to the questions in a complete manner.
- Candidates' responses to the questions (and overall oral communication skills) will be scored independently by each oral board member according to pre-established, structured rating criteria.
- The panel is NOT allowed to provide feedback or ask follow up questions since this is an examination process and not an interview.
- Candidates should monitor their own time in order not to go beyond their allotted time.
- At the conclusion of the examination, candidates are thanked for their participation and they turn in their notes to their exam proctor in BHRS. Any materials held by the exam proctor will be returned to candidates.
- Candidates are free to leave and will be notified by BHRS of their exam results when the entire exam process is complete.
- Top candidates will be referred and contacted for the interview process.

Strategies for taking oral board exams:

- Review the job announcement in advance of the exam to learn about the essential knowledge, skills and abilities required for the position. The exam questions will be based on the information in the job announcement.
- Dress in appropriate attire. Standard business office attire is recommended.
- Use the preparation time to review the questions and organize your thoughts. Take notes or develop an outline to follow for your response.
- Speak in a manner so you are easily understood.
- Maintain good eye contact with the panel members.
- Answer the questions completely and succinctly. Don't ramble. Don't read verbatim from notes.
- Project an attitude of relaxation and confidence during the exam.