



# Guidance for representatives of the Australian Public Service Commissioner in Senior Executive Service Selection Panels

The Senior Executive Service (SES) provides Australian Public Service (APS)-wide strategic leadership of the highest quality that contributes to an effective and cohesive APS. A high performing public service requires that the best and brightest individuals from diverse backgrounds are recruited, including those who may bring with them valuable private sector experience. The APS needs a strong talent pool of employees with broad and readily transferable skills in the leadership group in order to deploy staff flexibly in response to government priorities.

The [SES: HR practitioner's guide](#) sets out requirements relating to SES staffing including recruitment.

The Australian Public Service Commissioner or a representative of the Commissioner must participate as a full member on all SES selection processes. The Commissioner's representative plays an important role in ensuring that SES selection processes uphold [merit](#), as defined in section 10A of the [Public Service Act 1999](#) (the PS Act) and meet relevant requirements in Part 3 of the [Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2016](#) (the Directions). The application of merit strengthens public trust and confidence in the APS.

Decisions relating to engagement or promotion are based on merit if:

- all eligible members of the community are given a reasonable opportunity to apply;
- an assessment is made of the relative suitability of applicants, using a competitive selection process;
- the assessment is based on the relationship between the candidates work-related qualities and the qualities genuinely required to perform the relevant duties;
- the assessment focuses on the relative capacity of candidates to achieve outcomes related to the relevant duties; and
- the assessment is the primary consideration in making the employment decision.

## As the Commissioner's representative, you must participate in the shortlisting and selection of candidates:

**Shortlisting:** Where an executive search firm is used to assist with shortlisting, the selection panel, including the Commissioner's representative, must consciously and carefully endorse the shortlisting. The reasons why applicants were not part of the shortlist must be recorded in the selection report.

**Assessments:** The method of assessment should suit the circumstances. It is customary, but not compulsory, to hold interviews. The panel, including the Commissioner's representative, may decide that interviews are not required if, on the basis of written applications and referees reports, the panel clearly identifies a stand-out applicant. Where interviews are held, only those in contention need to be assessed. It is not necessary to interview all applicants. Interview questions should be framed around the requirements of the role and applicants given fair opportunity to state their claims. Referee reports should be obtained for applicants in contention. Generally it would be appropriate to seek a reference from each applicant's direct supervisor.

**Agreeing and signing the selection report:** The selection report should be kept as brief as possible while substantiating the panel's recommendations. It should include:

- outcomes of the shortlisting processes;
- individual assessments of all applicants shortlisted and assessed—these need not be lengthy;
- a comparative assessment of applicants in contention;
- if relevant, the establishment of a merit pool/list that clearly defines the relative suitability of applicants; and
- where applicants are equally rated, e.g. as highly suitable, the report should justify why an applicant was preferred for a vacancy over others with the same rating.

**Part of the Commissioner's representative's role is to test the views of the other panel members. This ensures that employment decisions take into account the wider skills and capabilities expected of SES employees across the whole of the APS and are not focussed only on the requirements of the advertised job.**

It is also important to help the panel to make decisions in a timely manner. Talented individuals can be lost to other job offers if the selection process is unnecessarily delayed.

At the conclusion of the selection process, you must certify that the process complied with the requirements of the PS Act and the Directions before the agency can proceed with promotion or engagement action. A certificate is attached for your use. A copy of your completed and signed certificate should be included with the full selection report provided to the delegate. For selection processes resulting in the engagement or promotion to SES Band 2 and Band 3 positions, this information will be provided to the APS Commissioner for endorsement.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the selection process you should discuss these first with the panel and/or the delegate. You can also discuss any concerns with the Australian Public Service Commission at [employmentpolicy@apsc.gov.au](mailto:employmentpolicy@apsc.gov.au) or on (02) 6202 3857.