

VISA PAK ISSUE 495 — 28 JANUARY 2022

RECORDING AND DOCUMENTING PHONE INTERVIEWS

Phone interviews can be important when making decisions which are consistent with the principles of fairness and natural justice. As interviews can be relied on in decision-making, it is important for accurate and clear records of them to be kept as part of the decision record, and to be made available where requested by an applicant or their representative. There are a number of ways that a record of an interview can be made.

Interview records discussed here are separate from records of short phone calls made to request or confirm information with applicants or employers.

Interview summaries

Staff should always retain records of interviews that are undertaken during the assessment of applications. These records are usually in the form of succinct written interview summaries. Interview summaries resulting from phone interviews conducted by staff should accurately record pertinent information obtained during the interview.

The summary should be accurate to ensure a complete decision record is maintained. Specific details of an answer given by an interviewee are required to ensure that there is enough detail to rely on when making a decision.

It is not sufficient to record in the summary that someone's responses "were not satisfactory" or "were vague."

A person reading the interview summary should be able to identify all relevant issues or risk mitigations resulting from the interview.

All summaries should also record:

- the date
- time
- length of the phone interview

Summaries should be saved in AMS notes within one working day of the interview.

Ezispak

MBIE provides a 24/7 telephone and video interpretation service in over 180 languages including Te Reo Māori, using ezispak. If ezispak is used for an interview, an accurate and succinct summary of the interview must still be added to AMS notes. In addition to the above,

the summary should record that ezispeak has been used, and what language the interview was undertaken in.

Verbatim and audio interview recordings

There is generally no requirement to audio record or to retain a verbatim record of phone interviews. However, an audio or verbatim record may be considered appropriate and the decision to maintain this type of decision record should be determined on a case-by-case basis. Where an interview is recorded, the person being interviewed should be informed of this before the recording begins.

When deciding if a verbatim or audio record is necessary staff should consider:

- The issue or questions that the staff member is attempting to address through a phone interview;
- What information the staff member will be requiring from the people/person the staff member is considering interviewing that would address this issue or questions;
- Whether the information could potentially change the outcome of an application, and whether it is necessary in order for a decision to be made.

If staff are considering retaining a verbatim record or an audio record of an interview, staff may wish to speak with a Technical Advisor or a Verification Officer first.

Please note that as per IAC 17-01, if an audio record is retained, a summary of the interview must still be added to AMS notes. Any verbatim record retained of the interview should also be copied to the AMS notes of the application.

Arranging the interview

Please note that as per IAC 16-02 and Visa Pak 457, if an applicant has a lawyer or licensed immigration adviser (LIA), then they should be contacted prior to an interview taking place. If you are undertaking general verification functions, IAC 16-02 explains when you may contact the applicant directly.

Undertaking the interview

If staff require any assistance to undertake a phone interview, including any questions relating to the process for retaining an audio record and what technology is available, a Technical Advisor or a Verification Officer should be consulted.