



The Early-Careers Hiring Toolkit

A practical guide for firms hiring new talent into financial planning

Use this toolkit to move from preparation, to interviewing, to decision-making. It is designed to help firms attract new talent into the profession, assess potential properly and compare candidates fairly.

How to use this toolkit

Section 1 helps you check whether your role, advert, process and support are ready before you go to market.

Section 2 gives you behavioural interview questions to assess potential, not just prior exposure.

Section 3 gives you a simple scoring matrix and candidate comparison sheet so decisions are more consistent.

Section 1. Are you ready to hire?

Before you advertise a role, make sure the basics are clear. A weak brief and a vague process will narrow your market before the first application arrives.

Area	Checklist item	RAG	Next action
Role design	We can explain why this role exists and what problem it solves.	G / A / R	
	We know what is essential on day one and what can be taught.	G / A / R	
	We can describe what success should look like after 90 days.	G / A / R	
	We can explain where this role could progress over time.	G / A / R	
Attraction	The role title is clear and would make sense to someone outside the sector.	G / A / R	
	The advert is written in plain English rather than internal jargon.	G / A / R	
	The advert explains what the person will actually do.	G / A / R	
	Salary, location and working pattern are clear where possible.	G / A / R	
Process	We can explain every stage of the process from application to offer.	G / A / R	
	The process is short enough to keep early-career candidates engaged.	G / A / R	
	Interviewers are aligned on what good looks like.	G / A / R	
	We have a plan for communication and feedback at each stage.	G / A / R	
Support	We have capacity to onboard and support someone new to the industry.	G / A / R	
	A manager or buddy can help the person learn the role quickly.	G / A / R	
	We can explain training, systems and development support clearly.	G / A / R	
Inclusion	We have removed unnecessary barriers, such as unrealistic experience asks.	G / A / R	
	Candidates know how to request adjustments if needed.	G / A / R	
	The process is designed to assess potential, not just polish.	G / A / R	

Quick read: Mostly green means your process is helping you attract talent. Mostly amber means friction exists. Mostly red means candidates are likely dropping away before interview or offer.

Section 2. How to assess potential

The goal of an early-careers interview is not to find someone fully formed. It is to assess whether they show the behaviours, motivation and learning capacity to grow into the role.

Curiosity

What to assess: Asks thoughtful questions, wants to understand how things work, shows real interest in learning.

Interview Questions	Your Notes
Q1. Tell me about a time you had to learn something new quickly. How did you go about it?	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
Q2. What is something you have gone out of your way to learn recently, and why?	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
Q3. When you do not understand something at work or in study, what do you usually do next?	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
<p>✓ Strong signs: <i>Asks clear questions, explains how they learned, shows initiative.</i></p>	<p>⚠ Watch-outs: <i>Passive approach, waits to be told, vague examples.</i></p>

Overall impression — Curiosity

Communication

What to assess: Explains clearly, listens well and can adapt their message to different people.

Interview Questions	Your Notes
Q1. Tell me about a time you had to explain something clearly to someone else.	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
Q2. Give me an example of a time a misunderstanding happened. What did you do?	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
Q3. How do you make sure you have understood instructions properly?	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
<p>✓ Strong signs: <i>Clear structure, self-awareness, good listening habits.</i></p>	<p>⚠ Watch-outs: <i>Rambling, blame, little reflection.</i></p>

Overall impression — Communication

Learning agility

What to assess: Can absorb feedback, adjust quickly and improve after mistakes.

Interview Questions	Your Notes
Q1. Tell me about a time you made a mistake. What happened next?	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
Q2. Describe a piece of feedback that helped you improve. What did you change?	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
Q3. When things change quickly, how do you usually respond?	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
<p>✓ Strong signs: <i>Ownership, reflection, action.</i></p>	<p>⚠ Watchouts: <i>Defensive answers, no learning point, avoidance.</i></p>

Overall impression — Learning agility

Accountability

What to assess: Takes responsibility, follows through and keeps others informed.

Interview Questions	Your Notes
Q1. Tell me about a time you had to take ownership of a task or problem.	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
Q2. Describe a time you had competing priorities. How did you manage them?	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
Q3. Have you ever missed a deadline or target? What did you do?	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
✓ Strong signs: <i>Proactive communication, honest ownership, practical organisation.</i>	⚠ Watch-outs: <i>Excuses, low awareness, no recovery plan.</i>

Overall impression — Accountability

Values fit

What to assess: Shows care, professionalism and alignment with the standards the firm wants to build.

Interview Questions	Your Notes
Q1. What matters most to you in the way a team works together?	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
Q2. Tell me about a time you helped someone or improved an experience for them.	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
Q3. What kind of environment helps you do your best work?	<i>Candidate notes:</i>
✓ Strong signs: <i>Thoughtful answers, respect for others, genuine motivation.</i>	⚠ Watch-outs: <i>Purely transactional interest, little care for client or team impact.</i>

Overall impression — Values fit

Section 3. How to score candidates fairly

Use the same scorecard for each candidate. That makes comparisons clearer and reduces the temptation to overvalue confidence, familiarity, or first impressions.

Candidate scorecard

Criteria	Weight	Score (1–5)	Weighted score	Evidence / notes
Curiosity / motivation	20%			
Communication	20%			
Learning agility	20%			
Accountability / organisation	20%			
Values fit / professionalism	20%			
Overall recommendation	Strong yes / Yes / Hold / No			

Score guide

Score	Meaning	What it usually looks like
1	Weak evidence	Very limited evidence, unclear examples, or clear concerns.
2	Below expected level	Some signs, but not enough consistency or depth.
3	Acceptable	Solid baseline evidence, though not especially strong.
4	Strong	Clear and relevant evidence, good reflection, strong fit.
5	Exceptional	Consistent and convincing evidence, stands out across the process.

Candidate comparison sheet

Candidate name	Stage	Total score	Strengths	Risks	Decision / next step
	Applied / 1st / Final				
	Applied / 1st / Final				
	Applied / 1st / Final				
	Applied / 1st / Final				

Decision tip: write the evidence before you agree the decision. It is much easier to stay consistent when the notes come first and the verdict comes second.

Final reminder

A better early-careers hiring process is not about making things softer. It is about being clearer on what matters, removing unnecessary barriers and assessing people in a way that is fair, useful and repeatable.

When firms prepare properly, ask better questions and score consistently, they are far more likely to spot people who can grow into the profession rather than just people who already know the language of it.

30-day implementation plan

Use this simple plan to move from good intentions to a process the business can actually use.

Week	Focus	Actions
Week 1	Role and advert	Define what success looks like after 90 days. Remove unnecessary experience barriers. Rewrite the advert in plain English.
Week 2	Process design	Map the stages, timings, owners and communication points. Decide how candidates can request adjustments.
Week 3	Interview setup	Choose the traits to assess. Agree the interview questions. Align interviewers on what strong evidence looks like.
Week 4	Scoring and review	Use the same scorecard for each candidate. Compare evidence, not gut feel. Record what to improve for the next hire.

Final tip: if the role, process, and interview criteria only make sense to people already in financial planning, you are narrowing the talent pool before the search has even started.