

Interviews – Preparation and Performance

Interviews are a key element in any application process. Having made a written application, either by CV or application form, an employer will select the candidates who best fit the identified criteria for the post. These are the people who move to the next stage where an interview is most likely.

Why Interviews?

- a) so that the employer can:
 - collect information which cannot be supplied by an application form or CV
 - fill in some of the inevitable gaps
 - see what you are like as a person
 - find the right person for the job
- b) so that you can:
 - expand on and elaborate on things you wrote on your CV or application form
 - give additional examples
 - demonstrate you have what it takes to do the job
 - decide if the job/company is right for you

Types of Interview

Technical – if the job requires technical skills you can expect to be asked about specific knowledge including projects, placements and work experience. Be prepared for hypothetical questions and practical exercises such as interpreting a diagram or deciphering a computer programming code. Thorough preparation is needed. Not all technical interviews will be conducted face to face, some might be conducted over the telephone or by Skype.

Telephone/Video – This is used in the early stages of an application to screen candidates but they can occur at any point. The use of Skype is making this more common. The questions are more likely to focus more on your general competences and skill. Your aim is to try to show your enthusiasm and commitment in a short conversation. Prepare yourself well before hand, speak clearly and ensure you take the call where there will be no interruptions.

Strengths-based interviews – A new style of graduate interview which focuses on what you enjoy doing as a way of assessing your personal attributes. For this type of

interview, you will need to consider the academic achievements and activities that you included on your CV. Assess what you most enjoyed and what you took pride in. Interviewers will be seeking to identify your abilities, such as working with others and analysing problems.

Competency- based interview- Increasingly, companies choose to employ a competency based interview approach. These are also known as skills-based, behavioural criteria or structured interviews and work on the principle that: past performance is the best predictor of future performance. Competency based interviews are where the interviewers have clearly identified the skills required to carry out the job for which you are applying and will ask specific questions about the skills involved.

The aims of a competency based interview are:

- to obtain information about how you have previously demonstrated the key competencies for the post through specific questions, and
- to explore the examples further to obtain a clear understanding of the situation, what you did, your contribution and the outcome.

At the end of the interview

Generally, most interviews will end with the employer asking you if you have any questions. It is not essential that you ask any questions but it's an opportunity to make an impression. You may want to find out about a particular project you are interested in, the team you will be working with, if successful, feedback on performance or opportunities for professional development.

Further Resources

Useful Websites

<http://careers.theguardian.com/interview-help> Useful interview tips

<http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips>

<http://www.jobsite.co.uk/bemyinterviewer/>

http://www.prospects.ac.uk/interview_tips.htm

<https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice>

For further advice and guidance contact the Employability & Careers Hub on each campus. Alternatively visit <https://employability.ulster.ac.uk/> where you can view additional resources or book consultations with our Employability Advisers.



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