



How to Succeed at: Interviews

Sample questions for a candidate seeking a job or work experience

Motivation and enthusiasm

- What aspects of this position interest you?
- What steps have you taken to find out more about us?
- What are the main challenges facing our sector?

Current studies

- Why did you choose to study xxxxx?
- What have you enjoyed about your course? Why?
- What have you learnt on your course, which could be relevant to this position?
- Outside of your studies, what else do you enjoy doing?

Work / voluntary experience

- Which aspects of your previous work experience have you enjoyed and why?
- What work experience do you have that you feel is relevant to this position? Why?

About you

- Tell me about yourself.
- How would your friends describe you? (*ie, what are your strengths*)
- What do you think will be the main challenges of the position?
- What skills do you have which would help you in this position?
- Describe a time when you have had to deal with a setback.

Careers choice

- Where would you like to see yourself in five years time?

Testing questions

- Describe a project or activity which you have planned and taken through to a conclusion. What was your objective, what did you do and what was the outcome?
- Give an example of when you have worked in a team. What was your role and what did you contribute to the team's performance?
- Describe a situation where you have had to manage your time to achieve your goals. How did you achieve this?
- Describe a difficult problem you have solved. What was the problem? How did you analyse and solve it? What did you learn from the experience?
- Describe a time when you have led by example.
- If you were in charge of our organisation, what changes would you make?

Your questions

- Are there any questions you wish to ask us?

Sample questions for a candidate applying for a course

Motivation and enthusiasm

- Why have you applied for this course?
- Why have you applied to us?
- What do you know about our academic department? Have you spoken to anyone here? What did you find out that interested you?
- What would you like to achieve from this course?
- What are your future career plans?
- What have you read in the news recently, related to the subject you wish to study?
- Describe what you think would be a typical day in your life as a student.

Your current studies

- What are your greatest strengths?
- Describe something that you learnt recently.
- What do you enjoy about your current studies?
- Tell me about a piece of work that you are most proud of?
- What else do you enjoy doing apart from academic work?

Your skills and experience

- What skills do you think you need to be successful on this course?
- What do you think will be the main challenges of this course?
- What support do you think you will need to help you get started on this course?
- What have you done that you are most proud of? Why was it significant?

If you are applying for a vocational course

- Which aspects of your work experience have you enjoyed and why?
- What work experience do you have that you feel will be relevant to this course?

Your questions

- Are there any questions you wish to ask us?

Sample questions for a candidate applying for a postgraduate course or research

Motivation and enthusiasm

- Why have you applied for this PG course / PhD?
- Why have you applied to this institution?
- What steps have you taken to ensure this course or PhD is a good career move?
- What would you like to achieve academically and personally during this PG course / PhD? Do you think this is realistic?
- What are your future plans?

Current University studies

- What interests you most about your current degree studies?
- Tell me about your undergraduate project work. How might this be relevant to the PG course / PhD?
- What do you enjoy doing outside your studies? How might this be useful to you during your PG studies / PhD?

Understanding the nature of the course / PhD

- Describe what you think would be a typical day in your life as a student / researcher at this University.
- What do you know about our academic department? Have you spoken to anyone here? What did you find out that interested you?

Your skills and experience

- What qualities do you think you will need to be successful in completing this course / PhD?
- What study / research / transferable skills can you bring? What other experience and knowledge do you have that you think will be useful?
- What support do you think you will need to help you get started on this course / PhD?
- What are your 3 key achievements to date?

For PhD or research based Masters courses

- What are your research interests? Why do these interest you?
- What do you think are the key current issues in this area of research? What is your opinion?
- If you were given £40,000 research funding for your PhD, how would you spend it? Is £40,000 enough? How would you go about sourcing more funding?
- Have you ever been in a situation where things haven't gone to plan and your hard work has seemed pointless at the time? How did you handle this?

For vocational courses – eg a teacher training course

- Why exactly do you want to be a teacher? Why that age group? Why that subject?
- What qualities do you think make a good teacher? Why do you feel you have these?
- How do you ensure you respect and include people of all backgrounds as you go about your daily life?
- One of your pupils says that learning your subject is a waste of time. How would you respond?
- Describe an example of good professional practice that you have observed in a school.
- What do you think about the National Curriculum?

Your questions

- Are there any questions you wish to ask us?