



## Interviews

Interviews have a dual purpose. They offer you the opportunity to personally convince employers that your skills, experience, interests and potential make you the most appropriate candidate for the role. In turn, the employer has the opportunity to assess the suitability of your capabilities, experience and fit against the selection criteria for the position.

Interviews provide an opportunity for you to convince the employer that you want the job, you have the ability to do it and you'll fit in with the culture of the organisation. To do this, you need to understand what you have to offer and how this relates to the job and the organisation.

In addition, an interview is as much about your making a choice about the organisation as it is about the organisation making a choice about you.

It's important to recognise that an interview is an opportunity for a productive discussion. Employers are very busy people, and you wouldn't be asked to an interview if your skills weren't thought to be promising. While interviews may be challenging they are generally not an attempt to trip you up.

Some organisations choose the successful applicant after just one interview; others require two, or even a series of interviews. Even a short, initial phone call to an employer or recruitment agency creates a first impression so treat any interaction with an employer or recruitment agency as an interview, and plan and behave accordingly!

Although you may encounter several types of interviews, the sort of questions you could be asked may be similar. Many, but not all interviews are structured i.e. all candidates are asked the same questions to ensure that interviews are as objective as possible. You may, however, find that some interviews are somewhat unstructured – a bit like a 'chat'. Interview types you may encounter are described below.

### One-to-one interviews

In many cases, your interview will be conducted by just one person, particularly if you're applying to a small or medium-size organisation. These interviews

are usually conducted face to face; however, long-distance interviews are occasionally conducted by videoconference or telephone.

With only one interviewer, one-to-one interviews are relatively inexpensive for the organisation, easier to organise and often more relaxed than panel interviews. One-to-one interviews can be either structured, with a set order of questions, or unstructured.

In an unstructured interview the interviewer may ask various questions about you and your interests to assess your possible fit with the organisation. An unstructured interview may seem quite relaxed, but take care that you don't share information you wouldn't be prepared to mention in a formal job interview. This is especially important if the interviewer suggests conducting the interview in a café. This is not a social situation.

Be courteous and professional, as you would in a more traditional interview situation. The outcome of one-to-one interviews may rely on just one person's assessment and experience, so you sometimes need to attend a second interview with either a different person, or with the first interviewer and another staff member. You could also be asked to attend a function to meet other staff. Remember that this is also an interview, so act accordingly.

### Telephone Interviews

These may be short screening exercises used by employers and recruitment agencies to make up shortlists for interview. Some long-distance selection interviews are also conducted by telephone.

Because you can't see or smile at the interviewer, shake hands or in general assist your communication through body language, telephone interviews can sometimes be daunting. You can still make a good first impression. Prepare for the interview by reading the job advertisement carefully, noting the key criteria and how you meet them. This will give you a good idea of the sort of questions you could be asked. Have your written application and the job description beside you in case you need to refer to these.

Make sure you're in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Turn off any background music or the TV. Even though the interviewer can't see you, wear something that makes you feel like a professional. If you dress a bit more formally you're more likely to feel the part and perform effectively. If you wear your pyjamas you may interview less formally too.

When being interviewed by phone, be professional. Listen carefully, speak slowly and clearly, and try to sound confident and enthusiastic. Imagine that the person's in the room with you and that you're speaking directly to him or her.

Ask for information to be repeated if you don't hear properly, and seek confirmation of the meaning of questions if needed. Make sure you repeat names, phone numbers and directions to confirm you have the correct information. Don't eat, drink, chew gum or work on the computer while on the phone. Greet the interviewer courteously, and thank him or her at the end of the interview.

Phone interviews may be pre-arranged by the employer to occur at a mutually agreed time. Employers prefer to speak with you on a land line rather than a mobile. If you receive a job-related phone call at a time and place not conducive to conversation, courteously arrange with the caller to speak at an agreed time.

## Behavioural interviews

Behavioural interviews can take place in various contexts; in one-to-one interviews, panel interviews and in assessment centres.

Behavioural interviewing is a common technique amongst graduate recruiters and other employers, who ask questions based on the role's selection criteria and request specific examples of your demonstration of relevant attributes to predict how you'd perform in the advertised job.

For further information see the handout **Behavioural Interviews**.

## Panel interviews

It's likely that you'll encounter panel interviews for the Public Service, graduate recruitment programs and for positions in health, welfare, professional associations and educational institutions.

These interviews are structured, and it's usual for each applicant to be asked the same questions.

While the prospect of a panel interview might seem daunting, handling the interview is easier if you can find out the panel members' names and job titles before the interview. You can then refer to interviewers by name, have time to consider the recruitment process from their perspective and prepare questions to ask based on their various job titles.

See the handout **Interview Practice** for the types of questions you could ask.

Avoid imitating a spectator at a tennis match when answering questions. Don't turn your head back and forth to look at various panel members. When asked a question, look mainly at the questioner but also give eye contact to the others to include them in your answer.

Panel interviews are also easier if you remember that questions are based on selection criteria and information you may already have given in your job application.

Panels may include a community member and staff members from other departments in the organisation. Don't worry if one (or more) of the panel members doesn't speak. That person's task may be to ensure equity in recruitment or to take notes.

## Group interviews/assessment centres

At an assessment centre groups of job applicants complete a strategic set of tasks in a simulated business environment.

For further information see the handout **Assessment Centres**.

## Case study interviews

Most management consulting firms that recruit graduates conduct case study interviews, which can also be used as assessment centre exercises by other industries.

Case study interviews outline a business problem and candidates are required to work through the case in a logical manner to come up with recommendations for solving the problem.

For further information see the handout **Case Study Interviews**.