

JOB INTERVIEWS EXPLAINED

PREPARATION

Preparing for an interview in advance can make the difference between an average interview experience or one in which you shine.

Basics

- Know your CV and cover letter inside and out.
- In order to be punctual, try out the journey beforehand.
- Know what clothes to wear and have them cleaned and ironed ready.
- Know who you are meeting and where you should go.

The Company

- Commercial awareness is important. Do a bit of research – it could go a long way to impressing the interview panel.
- Be clear and knowledgeable on the role that you're applying for.
- Have an awareness of the company history.
- Understand the wider market in which the company operates.
- Understand your interviewer's role in the company.
- Check out the company's LinkedIn profile.

Practice makes perfect

- Using the person specification, try to come up with some potential questions.
- Ask a friend or family member to act as the interviewer.

CareerHub+ Resources

CareerHub+ has a Company Directory under its 'Explore' tab essex.careercentre.me/Members

Interview360 for free instant interview feedback essex.careercentre.me/Interview360

TYPES OF INTERVIEW

Pre-recorded Interviews

Pre-recorded interviews usually take place early to mid-way through the recruitment process. The candidate will be faced with several questions which they will have to answer whilst being recorded – usually within a set amount of time. Unlike live interviews, you will be speaking into a camera with no interviewer present. It is important that you are dressed professionally, are in an environment that is quiet and distraction free, and that you are calm and confident. Turn off all notifications on your computer or device and make sure you are sat in front of a plain background. It is a good idea to practice beforehand, so start recording yourself answering questions and then re-watch yourself to see how you look and sound. This can also help to make you feel more comfortable on camera.

Online Interviews

These types of interviews are usually conducted through Teams or Zoom, and with the interviewer present. As with any interview, come well prepared and dress smartly. Ensure you have a good, reliable internet connection and are away from any potential distractions. If you do not have access to reliable IT equipment, please visit the University Library to enquire about loaning a laptop for free. Additionally, you can also book a secure and quiet pod on campus to do your interview in peace and quiet.

Book a study pod – library.essex.ac.uk/bookastudyspace
Laptop Loans – library.essex.ac.uk/laptop

In-person Interviews

In the final stages of the recruitment process an employer may want to see you face to face for an interview. This could be with one person, two people or a whole panel! This is your chance to make a great first impression. Body language is an important part of effective communication – so ensure you are positive, professional, and polite. After a question has been asked, allow yourself time to pause, gather your thoughts, and think of a well-constructed response. Don't be afraid to ask the interviewer to repeat the question if you need more time.

Other Interview Resources

- brightnetwork.co.uk/graduate-career-advice/telephone-video-interviews/how-to-answer/competency-questions/
- prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/strength-based-interviews

STAR TECHNIQUE

The STAR technique is a great method of giving the interview panel detailed and meaningful answers for competency-based questions.

Situation – set the scene or context for the example that you're using.

Task – state what was required of you.

Action – here give a concrete example of what you did to solve the task

Result – what was the outcome of the situation and what did you learn from the experience?

Example

If an interview panel asked you to describe a time when you demonstrated great leadership skills you could use the **STAR** technique to give the following answer:

'In my previous role, I was part of a busy role that had to produce a batch of financial reports every month to very tight deadlines. The work was shared amongst the team.

A new person had recently joined the team and I noticed that he was struggling to cope with his work. There was a risk that the reports would not be completed in time; he needed some support.

I had an informal chat with him and asked how he was settling into the role. He said that he had difficulty using the IT system, so I offered to train him.

He accepted my offer, and after a week of training he was completing the work to the same standard as the rest of the team. In fact, by his next performance appraisal, he was exceeding his targets. Ultimately, he was not the only one to benefit from the experience – it was also incredibly valuable to me, as I learned just how much I enjoy training others, and I have been doing it ever since'.

When preparing to respond with the STAR technique

- Reflect on everything you've already done: studies, paid work, volunteering, self-employment, sports, arts activities, societies, groups, languages, challenges, fundraising, activism, music, travel, etc.
- Think about how much you've grown and developed as a person in the last few years – what have you learnt about yourself?
- Use family and friends to help you identify strengths, achievements, values, and qualities – sometimes it's difficult to pinpoint these on your own.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Whilst you will have spent time planning your responses to the interview panel questions, don't forget that you will have the chance to ask them questions. Don't underestimate this stage of the interview process. This is your chance to demonstrate that you have researched the role and company, and that you are enthusiastic and curious about the role. It's advisable to come up with some questions just in case any are answered during the process of the interview.

Stay away from questions for which the answers can easily be found with a quick internet search.

Examples of these questions are:

- when was the company founded?
- what is the salary for this position?
- how much holiday will I be permitted?

Examples of good questions

- What are the three most important skills needed to excel in this position?
- How could I impress you in the first three months?
- What do you enjoy about your job?

FURTHER SUPPORT

For more information, advice, and support with job interviews, email careersinfo@essex.ac.uk or visit careerhub.essex.ac.uk to book an event or 1–1 appointment.