

# Interviewing

While the resume gets you the interview, it's the interview that gets you the job! It's so important to be prepared, including by researching the company and the individual(s) you're meeting with, anticipating and practicing questions, and preparing questions to ask during your interview. There are many ways the Department of Career Development can help you get ready for your interview:

- Interview Practice (Mock Interviews)
- Make an appointment with a career counselor to do a mock interview
- Mock Interviews include case behavioral interviews

## Prepare to be Your Best

Employers are impressed by candidates who have researched their organization, analyzed the job description and express positive energy and enthusiasm for the job. Take the following steps to increase your interview IQ:

### Research the individual(s) you're meeting with

Companies will often give you the names of the individual(s) you're meeting with, but if they don't, it's completely appropriate to ask "with whom will I be meeting?" Look at the company bio and LinkedIn profile, as well as Google, anyone you're meeting with so that you know their background and can ask questions that show you're well informed.

### Research the organization

Learn as much as you can before the interview. Visit their website to understand their products/services, the volume of business, competitors, culture, and other key information. Search for news articles or other publications about the organization.

Use Google, Business Week, LinkedIn and Twitter. If anyone at your network works at the organization, you'll want to speak to them to get first-hand information.

### Research the job

In addition to researching the individual(s) you're meeting with and the company, you need to understand as much as you can about the job itself. Analyze the job description and match your experiences, skills and interests to the job. It's also important to have a good idea of a salary range for the position in case that comes up during your interview, but also so that you can better negotiate when you have an offer. Consider speaking to professionals in the field to find out what the typical entry-level salary for the field is.

## **Know yourself**

Now that you have completed your research on the interviewer(s), company, job, and salary, you need to focus on yourself. Why are you interested in this position? How do your experiences and qualifications fit the requirements of the job? Be able to discuss your strengths and weaknesses, your educational background and work experiences, and your goals and values. Write down your accomplishments and prepare concrete examples as evidence.

## **Practice!**

Read the job description thoroughly. Prepare answers to potential questions in advance. Be sure to connect your skills with their specific requirements. Practice your answers with a friend or counselor in the Department of Career Services.

## **Make a list of questions to ask**

The questions you ask indicate your level of interest in the organization and your preparation for the interview. If you don't have any questions to ask, most employers will think you're not really interested in the job. Don't ask questions that could easily be answered through your own research. Instead, ask questions that demonstrate a genuine interest in, and understanding of, the organization and the position. You should have at least 10 questions prepared.

## **Examples:**

- What are some of the qualities that will make the person in this position successful?
- Can you describe a typical day or week for the person in this position?
- What will the biggest challenges be for the person in this job?
- Could you tell me about the people with whom I will be working directly?
- What are the challenges currently facing the department/organization?
- How will the person in this position be evaluated?
- What are the opportunities for professional development?
- What are the next steps in this process?
- When may I expect to hear from you regarding my candidacy?

## **Types of Interview Questions**

There are typically two types of interview questions. **Common interview questions** are those that are (almost) always asked and are typically designed to learn more about you, and how you're a good fit for the position and the company; in other words, why the company should hire you. As compared to common interview questions, **behavioral interview questions** are often more focused and are looking at how you've behaved in past situations as a way to gauge how you might respond in a similar, future situation. While interviews often focus on common and behavioral questions, you may also encounter interview questions (perhaps framed as a behavioral question) that are designed to probe a perceived weakness or shortcoming. Finally, and depending on your field, you may encounter a **case interview**.

### **Common Interview Questions:**

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position?
- Where do you see yourself after graduation?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- Can you describe one or two of your most important accomplishments?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Why should I hire you?
- What do you hope to gain from this position?
- List three things your former supervisor/co-workers would say about you.

### **Behavioral Interview Questions:**

- Tell me about a time you took a leadership role?
- Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your manager or a co-worker?
- Tell me about a time when you failed/missed a deadline?

### **Perceived Weakness/Shortcoming Questions**

Be prepared for the questions you hope no one asks because they usually touch on a perceived weakness or shortcoming in your application that an employer will want to ask you about. Your answers to these questions should focus on addressing the issue in a truthful, albeit matter-of-fact way, and then turning it back to a positive.

**For example, your GPA meets their hiring criteria, but your transcript shows some low grades during freshman year:**

*“While my grades weren’t as high as I would have hoped during my freshman year, as you can see from my transcript, I have significantly improved since that time while also taking on a research project with a Professor and increasing my responsibility in campus organizations.”*

**Perhaps you meet the job description’s required qualifications and some of the desired qualifications, but you don’t yet have a few of the skills and experiences they’re looking for:**

*“While I haven’t yet had the opportunity to develop and facilitate a training program for students in regards to mock interviews, I have had the opportunity to advise students individually on their resumes and cover letters, and I also assisted my supervisor in facilitating community job fairs, and based on those experiences, I believe that I could effectively take on this role.”*

**Maybe you have a gap in your resume:**

*“That’s correct, I didn’t work in 2015. I had been a part-time student, and decided to go full-time to finish sooner, so I wasn’t working.”*

**Or maybe you were laid off for non-performance reasons:**

*“I was one of 100 people laid off last September when ABC Inc. went through a major downsizing.”*

**Perhaps you were fired:**

*“I just didn’t fit into the organization. Finally, my supervisor and I decided it was best for me to leave. This was difficult, but it showed me the importance of finding a good match for my next position.”*

These examples show straightforward answers that reflect well on you, demonstrate that you are resilient and that you have learned from any mistakes or setbacks.

# Etiquette for the Interview

**Arrive early** Arrive 15 minutes early so you have time to find the specific office or suite and settle in. **Dress appropriately** Dress for success! It's best to dress more conservatively rather than risk being under-dressed. **Be polite** your interview starts the moment you walk through the door, so be polite and courteous to everyone, and remember to turn your cell phone off.

## Thank You Notes (samples)

Employers expect to hear from you and will wonder about your interest in the position and your professionalism if they don't receive one. You should send a thank you note within 24 hours after the interview to each person you interviewed with. It's best to send the thank you note by email, and then follow with a handwritten note by regular mail. Make sure your note is targeted and thoughtful – take the opportunity to reiterate your enthusiasm and/or to clarify something you don't think you answered well.

## Responding To the Job Offer

Your first step after being given a verbal job offer is to thank the employer for the offer and express your enthusiasm. Then, ask when you can expect to receive a written offer, and when they need to hear back from you with an answer. It's best not to accept the offer on the spot, as that prevents you from following up with other employers you may have interviewed with, but not yet heard from, and also doesn't give you the opportunity to review the written terms of the offer to try to negotiate your salary and/or other terms. After receiving the offer letter with salary and benefits information, you should ask any questions, negotiate, and/or accept the offer!