

Interviews: Frequently Asked Questions

1 Research

1.1 What is your research about?

Prepare a 3 minutes answer. Avoid technicalities and be sufficiently intuitive to be understood by a “generic interviewer”.

1.2 Why is it an interesting topic?

Give some motivations without entering details, and never say: because my supervisor thinks it is interesting.

1.3 What does motivate your research?

Have in mind a list of the stylised facts, empirical evidence, theoretical issues (depending on the nature of your topic), puzzles and the intuition from which your work arose. Stress what your work sheds some light on.

1.4 What is the original contribution of your research?

Give a short description of what was missing or what could have been improved in the specific part of the literature in which your work can be included. Do underline the importance of what you have done (without exaggerating!)

1.5 What are the strengths and the weaknesses of your paper(s)?

Use this question to show that you are aware of strong assumptions (if any), incomplete data or whatever you think is missing in your paper(s), and try to explain how (if feasible) you might be able to overcome these problems in future research. Again, do underline the importance of what you have done, and careful not to over-emphasise the problems with your papers!

1.6 (For theory papers) What are the policy implications of your paper(s)?

Be cautious: policy implications make sense only if your results are robust...

1.7 (For theory papers) What are the empirical predictions of your paper(s)?

1.8 (For empirical papers) Which theory is behind your work?

Have in mind a model or a reference which contains as a testable implication what you are estimating.

1.9 How can you extend your results?

Be careful not to give the impression that what you have done is incomplete.

1.10 Where do you expect to publish your paper(s)?

Shoot reasonably high, show that you know where it is more likely that paper(s) like yours are published.

1.11 Have you already sent your paper(s) to a journal? If yes, which one(s)?

Forget to have sent paper(s) if rejected.

1.12 What do you plan to work on next?

Show that you have a research agenda, not too narrow, but not too vague either

1.13 What are your other fields of interest?

1.14 Who are the researchers you consider more interesting in your field?

1.15 If you had to invite three people for a seminar, whom would you invite?

This two questions should be used to show that you know who is doing interesting work in your field of research (go beyond your thesis advisors!).

2 Teaching

2.1 What is your teaching experience?

Both at graduate and at undergraduate level.

2.2 If you have taught, how were the feedbacks of the class?

You might mention the grades you received with the evaluation forms.

2.3 If given the possibility to choose, which course(s) would you teach?

A pair of “compulsory” courses, and a pair of “optional” courses, the latter which mainly focus on your research (either at undergraduate or graduate level).

2.4 Which textbooks would you adopt?

A well-known textbook is recommended for a compulsory course, while a reading list could be acceptable for an optional course, although students prefer textbooks.

2.5 What would it be a rough syllabus of this course?

List only the main (three-four) arguments you would cover, being prepared to answer in more depth if asked.

2.6 Do you like teaching?

Of course...

3 Institutions

look at the web page and be informed about the institution(s) before going to the interview(s)

3.1 Why are you interested in coming here?

Answer in such a way to emphasize your knowledge of that university/institution

3.2 Which one would it be the first choice among the institutions you have applied for?

(careful, tricky question...)

3.3 Would you accept our offer if you are made one?

Show you have a strong interest in that place, but you have also applied for jobs elsewhere, i.e. do not say you are interested only in that place.

3.4 If here, who are the people you expect to interact with?

For each university you got interviews have in mind a short list of people who do research in topics sufficiently close to yours to be potential co-authors.

3.5 Which contribution would you expect to give to this department?

First of all good publications, willingness to teach, participation in seminars and interaction with other members of the department. Also paying attention to the organization of the department (i.e. administrative duties) should be appreciated, even though less important for junior positions.

4 Personal

4.1 Are you (and your family) willing to move to another country and learn a different language?

A positive answer is preferred. Commuting to meet your family is seen as inconvenient for your productivity. Moreover, commuting does not show commitment to the place and it is a signal of an unstable situation (you could suddenly decide to accept another position to join your family).

4.2 What is your expected career path?

Show that you are confident to get tenure at the end of the period.

4.3 Where do you expect to move next?

If getting tenure, you would stay...

Common concluding question:

5.1 Do you have any question for us?

Possible questions concern

- *research facilities and funds*
- *computing facilities*
- *funds to invite co-authors or to visit them*
- *possibility to concentrate the teaching load*
- *ask about salary only if talking to the head of department or to the recruiting officer, but usually it is them who approach the issue first.*
- *NEVER ask either at the interview or later “how did I go?” and the like: you do not want to appear too anxious. However, you might be asked when they will take their decisions.*