

Mock interviews - Some guidelines for preparation

This is a short fact sheet designed to provide you with ideas on how best to prepare for your interview. It is not an exhaustive list but will provide you with a way to plan how to structure your interview responses.

Types of questions

Obviously questions will vary according to the role that you are applying for. However, the panel will be particularly interested in your area of research, your subject knowledge as well as your skills and motivation. Generally, however, questions fall under three main headings:

- research interests
- teaching skills
- course content

Possible questions – Research interests:

- Tell us about your research.
- Can you describe the value of your work to individual's who are from a non-academic background?
- Who are the other scholars in your field and how does your work compare to theirs?
- What ideas do you have for further funding for your research and what are the potential sources of funding?
- What are you working on currently (now that you have finished your doctoral research)?
- What plans do you have for publishing your work to date?
- What is your research plan for the next three years?
- How do you see your research fitting in with the Department?

Tips for preparation:

Try and pitch your answer to the audience you are addressing.

Have a short and long descriptive piece prepared which explains your research to both experts and non-experts.

Make sure you know about others working in your field and how your work fits in.

Think about the limitations of your research and how you might tackle a challenging question about this area.

Think about the future for your research.

Possible questions - Teaching skills:

- What is your teaching philosophy?
- What experience have you had to date?
- What innovative teaching methods have you used?
- What teaching skills and techniques have you used over the past years?
- How do you see technological advances impacting on teaching?
- How do you think you might teach large groups of students in lectures most effectively?
- You have experience of teaching groups of 15 - what might you do differently if you had to teach a group of 70 students?
- Would you use different teaching styles with postgraduates compared to undergraduates?
- What are your views about teaching assessment?
- Do you see the prime purpose of your role to do research or to teach?
- How have you managed the pressures of teaching and research? Why do you especially want to work here?
- How do you see yourself contributing to our Department?

Tips for preparation:

Think critically about your experience of teaching different groups.

Make sure you have researched different teaching methods.

If you are lacking teaching experience, make sure you have a certain idea of the teaching method(s) you would apply and how you would approach different teaching situations.

See what emphasis the particular institution puts on teaching and research.

Has the institution been involved with any new type of teaching or assessments?

Do your research on the institution so that you can give a well-considered answer on why you want to work there - they are very likely to ask you that question.

Possible questions - Course content:

- What courses are you particularly interested in teaching?
- Which areas of your subject are you particularly strong on?
- What courses would you not want to teach on and why?
- What changes might you make to the current undergraduate programme?
- How would you market a new course to ensure maximum participation?
- Where do you see the potential for new course development?
- How could we develop the Masters programme?
- If we were organising a special symposium or mini conference on your topic, whom could you personally invite?

Tips for preparation:

Make sure you know the range and scope of courses on offer.

Do your research on the institution and department specifically - how does the department fit into the whole?

How popular are the courses? Think about how the take up could be improved.

Be prepared to talk about several courses after you have sized up the institution's needs.

Do your research on the department in order to anticipate their needs.

Be prepared to talk about an innovative course or two that you think the Department might really go for - something new that will incorporate your expertise.

Try and demonstrate that you are active in your field by referring to any networking you may have done.

After the interview

Make some notes about the mock interview and review your own performance. This will be helpful to you when you come to go for a further interview.