PG Essentials: Interviews and other types of assessment

Elizabeth Wilkinson
Careers Consultant (Postgraduates)
Interviews & other types of assessment

- Preparation
- Their questions to you
- Your questions to them
- Practical points
- How you present yourself
- Other types of assessment
Preparing for Interviews

Where’s your evidence?

- Catalogue your achievements
  - Can’t always assume they realise the value of your qualifications or academic experience
- Review the skills & knowledge they demonstrate
- Practice explaining them to someone who wasn’t there when you did them
Catalogue your skills & achievements

Headings:
• Skills

Sub branches:
• Achievements

Or

Headings:
• Achievements

Sub branches:
• Skills
Tell me about yourself …

- Assume you are being interviewed either for
  - a specific type of job in which you are interested
  - or an academic job or PhD in your field

- Give a 1 minute answer to the person next to you
Testing Your Motivation

• Why did you study … ?
  – Looking for passion, enthusiasm - and ability to communicate about your subject

• Why do you want this type of work?
• Why do you want to work for this employer?
  – Looking for passion, enthusiasm … and evidence of research
  – Show how what they say is important to them is aligned with what you value & can bring to them
Strengths-based interviews

Who are you really? What motivates you?
- What energises / engages you?
- What are your preferences?
- What do you choose to do?
- How do you feel about things?

(More in “Interviews: Beyond the basics”)
Convince me …

- Behavioural/competency interviewing
  - Having done something in the past is the best predictor of whether you could do it in the future
- “How” vs “what”
  - How you did things is often as important to an employer as what you did
Behavioural/Competency Questions

• Give me an example of …
  – … the most effective team effort / collaboration you’ve been part of
  – … when you’ve had to persevere to achieve a difficult objective
  – … where you have developed an innovative approach to something at work

• **Situation, Task, Actions, Result, (Reflection)**
Forensic Interviewing

- Level 1 - ask the question
  *(Give me an example of an effective collaboration…)*
- Level 2 - ask for evidence *(how did it come about etc)*
- Level 3 – personalise *(what was your role?)*
- Level 4 – generalise
  *(what do you think makes an effective collaboration?)*
- Level 5 – challenge
  *(but what about? ie something you haven’t mentioned)*
- Level 6 - ask for more *(give me another example)*
The Art of the Spin Doctor

• Need to present a positive interpretation of your life – even the bad bits
  – What are your weaknesses?
  – Why did you fail that exam / repeat that year / leave that job …?
  – What’s the worst … part of your masters/PhD or person you’ve dealt with?

• Think of what you learnt, how you would do things differently, how you persevered through adversity
Your Chance to Shine

Need to find the right balance

- What are your strengths?
- How has doing research/a postgraduate degree prepared you for this job?
- Why should we take you?
- Is there anything else we haven’t covered which you would like to raise?
Other Questions

• Will you be a good investment?
  – Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?
  – What ideas do you have for further research?
  – What are potential sources of funding?
  – Which other jobs have you applied for?

• Other questions which worry you?
Your Questions

Do ask questions
– about your future in the organisation
– for academics - their research!
– highlighting the benefits you could bring

Don’t ask questions
– about salary, car parking, pensions …
– which are answered in their recruitment literature / website
– about page 43 of the annual report
Practical Points

• Plan
  – Where do you have to go?
  – How do you plan to get there?

• Check
  – Who will you see?
  – What will they put you through?!?

• Practice

www.graduatesfirst.com/employers
Presentation

• First impressions are crucial
  – Punctual, unflustered, neat appearance
  – Firm handshake - no bone-crushers or limp lettuces
    – 😊 SMILE

• Eye contact
• Positive body language
• Look confident and interested
What else can they put you through?!

- Aptitude tests – verbal, numerical, logical
- Situational judgement tests
- Personality tests
- Game based assessments

Support - [www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/psychometric](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/psychometric)
- Two resources – both need UoM login to create own account
- Graduates First – practice tests, personality profile, potential interview questions and more …
- Profiling for success – personality profile, learning styles and career interests inventory
What else can they put you through?!

- Case study interviews
- Assessment centres
  - Group exercises & discussions
  - Presentations
  - In-tray/inbox exercises
- Graduates First – case study, in-tray, presentations, group discussion info – including what assessors are looking for
Careers Service Support

When you have an interview coming up

• **Book an interview simulation**
  – Give us much notice as possible
  – Upload to CareersLink a copy of your application AND details of the job for which you will be interviewed, at least a day in advance
  – We’ll prepare questions to suit

• **More support for interviews and assessment**