

Preparation Checklist

To avoid being overwhelmed when preparing for upcoming interviews this tips sheet summarises some crucial information as outlined in "Ace that Interview!"

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW:

Research:

- The **company** – goals, visions, structure, staff, challenges, competitors;
- The **position** – accountabilities, expectations, challenges;
- **You** – relevant experience and skills for the role, know your resume back to front.

Confirm:

- Time and location of the interview;
- Clarify the names and positions of the people who will be interviewing you;
- Interview type (i.e. panel / one on one), and whether anything else is expected or required (assessment tests);
- Expected length of the interview.

Prepare:

- A variety of responses and work examples suitable for behavioural questions;
- Questions to ask the interviewer (approximately 10-15);
- Interview portfolio – including your resume, supporting documents (in original form but with copies), samples of your work (assignments, reports), references, certificates and awards;
- Responses to answer general / more difficult questions;
- Appropriate and clean clothing ready the day before.

Tip:

Draw two columns on a piece of paper. List all of the job accountabilities on the left hand side and on the right list relevant experience and examples to demonstrate your ability to fulfil these requirements.

Practice:

- Role playing with a family member or friend;
- State your answers out loud and ensure you are able to speak without stumbling or mumbling;
- You may benefit from some interview coaching.

24 hours before the interview:

- Review your notes;
- Re-familiarise yourself with the location;
- Double check your clothing and portfolio are ready to go;
- Get sufficient sleep and rest.

Day of the Interview:

- Allow yourself plenty of time for preparation and travel to avoid being late;
- Aim to arrive 10 minutes or so before the interview time and try to relax;
- Check you have all of your material, including the contact number should you need to ring and advise you may be delayed (i.e. unexpected traffic jam).

DURING THE INTERVIEW:

Introduction:

The initial few minutes generally incorporates an ice breaker and an opportunity for you to develop a rapport with the interviewer.

- Remember your rapport building skills;
- Shake hands (firm, but not too hard);
- Follow their lead and remember to mirror and match their style as discreetly as possible;
- Repeat interviewers' names at introductions;
- Smile, be pleasant and try to appear relaxed;

Questioning/Information Exchange:

The interviewer will be investigating and analysing what you have to offer.

- Minimise clutter during the interview and try not to fidget;
- Maintain eye contact - with a panel, use eye contact with each member from time to time, particularly with the person who asked the question;
- Listen carefully to information supplied - ask for clarification if needed;
- Let the interviewer guide the questioning - don't dominate or talk too much;
- Market your knowledge and skills - much of the interview will involve you 'selling' your skills and trying to match their needs;
- Give clear concise answers with a definite closure to each answer;
- Answer questions by moving from a general response to specific examples;

Questioning/Information Exchange – cont

- Listen carefully to questions and try not to get caught up with irrelevancies;
- Initiate questions of your own as you become comfortable - you may want to clarify issues as they come up;
- Don't be afraid of silence, it's OK to take time to think about your responses;
- It's OK to not know the answer to a question - don't try to bluff your way through - you may come seriously unstuck;
- Never comment negatively about yourself, your degree, your university, a lecturer, a former employer (you never know when someone is personally known to an interviewer or if they are alumni of the university);
- Ask your prepared questions - have them written if necessary - questions should not be esoteric or clever, but rather straight forward;
- Be confident and positive about your experience and skills;
- Continue to position your skills in support of the organisation's needs;
- Demonstrate your fit with their organisation;
- Confirm your commitment, enthusiasm and motivation;
- Learn as much as you can about the company/position so that you have enough information to make an informed decision if successful in moving to a second interview.

Closing:

- Try to convey interest and enthusiasm as the interview winds up;
- Make sure you understand the next step in the selection process;
- At wind up, thank the interviewer(s) for their time and make a final expression of interest.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

- Note questions asked in your interview journal and application notes (for future reference);
- Reflect on your answers and successes;
- Could you have provided a better answer?
- Did you find any questions particularly difficult?
- If you haven't heard after the specified time you could call and ask about the status of your application;
- If successful, ask for confirmation in writing, including start date, salary, conditions, and respond in writing with enthusiasm;

- If unsuccessful, ask for feedback. For instance you may ask, "Do you have any suggestions or feedback regarding my approach or attitude?" "Do you have any advice on how I could improve my interview skills?"
- Write to express thanks for the interviewer's time and opportunity to interview with the organisation: you never know what may transpire in the future.

WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR:

Remember that the qualities and abilities employers are looking for in a potential employee will depend on their organisation and job requirements. These may include:

- A confident and positive attitude;
- Motivation and ambition;
- Realistic expectations;
- Hard work and commitment;
- Willingness to work and to accept constructive criticism;
- High work standards;
- Adaptability to change and workplace advancement;
- Sound communication and interpersonal skills;
- Initiative / creative problem solving / foresight;
- Decision making;
- Autonomy and independence;
- Teamwork;
- Analytical ability and good judgement;
- Planning and organisational skills;
- Persuasiveness;
- Attention to detail;
- Leadership qualities and/or potential;
- Broad knowledge;
- Work experience.

Here's to your success!!

