

**Gwasanaeth Gyrfaoedd a Chyflogadwyedd  
Careers & Employability Service**

**01248 38 2071**

**[careersopps@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:careersopps@bangor.ac.uk)**

**[www.bangor.ac.uk/careers](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/careers)**

# Interview Skills



**This leaflet is available in alternative formats on request**

# **INTERVIEW SKILLS**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Congratulations, you have an interview! You have done well to get this far – you are 90% of the way to getting that job. The employer wants to meet you to find out more about you, to see if you will fit in the organisation, whether you are committed and motivated and to find out more about your skills and achievements.

Now you need to prepare for the interview, because if you fail to prepare, you are preparing to fail. Whoever makes the best impression at the interview gets the job!

## **PREPARE FOR YOUR INTERVIEW**

What was in your CV or application form which interested the employer? Those being interviewed probably have similar skills and achievements, so you need to show that you are the right match. You need to check the company website and look at any company literature (if there is any) to find out as much as you can about the organisation.

Remind yourself what you put on your application form/CV.

A valuable tool you need to prepare is a statement about yourself so you can answer the key question which is often asked – ‘Why are you applying for this job?’. So practice talking about yourself by preparing a ‘Career Statement’. Can you list two or three things you are good at? Can you list two or three skills and combine them all into a sentence or two?

Make sure you know exactly where the interview is taking place. The building may have several floors so you need to allow time to get to the right floor. Plan your route – how long will it take to get there? You need to allow time for problems with transport, parking, bad weather etc.

Do you know who will be interviewing you? This is not essential but it may give you some idea about their focus.

If you have a disability and are concerned about whether or not to disclose it at this stage, go to the SKILL website ([www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)) where you will find advice on this issue. If, however, you will require appropriate adjustments to be made during your interview e.g. the services of an interpreter or someone to meet you at the entrance, then you must inform the employer of this beforehand.

## **DRESS FOR SUCCESS**

You also need to prepare what you are going to wear in advance. What you wear does not have to be new, but it does have to be clean and neat. Dress smartly in an outfit which is comfortable to wear and fits. It is probably preferable to wear a suit of a dark, plain colour and men should wear a tie. Women can wear a skirt or smart trousers with a coordinating jacket. Your shoes should be comfortable and clean. Your hair should be neat and remember to keep any jewellery to a minimum. Your visual

appearance is very important and you want to make the right impression. Looking good will also boost your confidence.

## **BEFORE THE INTERVIEW**

Take a copy of your application form/CV with you in a folder, a pen and paper and the interview contact number, just in case you are delayed and need to contact them.

Make sure you arrive in plenty of time, but not too early. About 10 minutes is perfect as this gives you time to freshen up, calm yourself, perhaps with deep breathing exercises and to take the opportunity to get a 'feel' of the place. Remember your interview starts the moment you enter the building and anyone you speak to may feed back to the interviewer.

Be pleasant to the receptionist and take time when waiting for your interview to note what is happening around you. You should have turned off your mobile phone by now. Can you get a feel of the atmosphere of the company? Your interview is not just about the company finding out about you – it is a two-way process as you should also be finding out about what it would be like to work there.

When you are called in for your interview take a deep breath and be C A L M. This is it!!

## **DURING THE INTERVIEW**

Give a firm but gentle handshake when you meet your interviewer(s), sit when invited to do so, make direct eye contact and remember to **smile**. From the moment you meet, your communication with the interviewer forms part of the decision-making as to whether to recruit you; in fact most decisions are made within the first **three** minutes! So, you need to be aware of both your verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

### **Verbal communication**

- Show genuine interest in the position
- Listen and answer the questions asked
- Never argue a point
- If you do not understand or hear a question, ask for it to be repeated
- Do not interrupt

### **Non-verbal communication**

Appearance and mannerisms are VERY important – think of body language and facial expressions

- Put your feet squarely on the floor or cross your legs at the ankle
- Put anything you are carrying on the floor
- Rest your hands in your lap
- Nod your head to show you are listening
- Do not fidget
- Be serious but do not forget to smile

## **TYPES OF INTERVIEW**

There are several types of interview which you should be aware of. Often, the company will tell you what to expect but here are some examples and you will probably experience one or more of these at some point in your career.

**One-to-one** - Probably easiest to cope with as it is less threatening

- Probably easier to build rapport with the interviewer
- Could be one of a series of interviews as different specialists take turns to assess you
- Likely to be quite specific and focused as the interviewer could be directly involved in your future work

**Panel** - Probably more challenging than one-to-one

- Could involve facing between three to six interviewers
- Popular with large organisations

**Group** - Consists of several applicants answering questions either individually or as part of the group

- Could be given a topic to discuss as a group
- Could be asked to make a presentation either as a group or individually

**Competency based**

- Increasingly used by organisations which look at key skills and qualities such as communication, problem solving and team work
- Questions based on providing examples of how you possess these skills and competencies
- Could involve detailed and persistent questioning – be prepared to be challenged

**Assessment centre** (see separate handout from [www.bangor.ac.uk/careers](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/careers))

- Multi-disciplinary method of assessing applicants
- Could involve up to two days of intensive interviewing, testing and exercises
- Could expect to experience all the above types of interview

## **TYPICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Tell me about yourself
- Why have you applied for this job?
- Why have you applied to this company?
- What evidence can you offer that demonstrates you have the skills we are seeking?
- Can you give me an example of a problem you have solved?
- Why did you choose your particular degree?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Where do you see yourself in five years time?
- What do you do in your leisure time?

Many books have been written giving ideas on how to answer these and hundreds more interview questions (see sources of information at end). Your confidence in answering them comes from your preparation. Your career statement will be a strong support to you here as well as any examples you have thought about which you could use as evidence.

You do not have to rush an answer – take a second to think about what you are going to say. If you are asked something about which you have no knowledge, be honest and say so.

You should also prepare some questions you want to ask the interviewer. This will demonstrate that you are interested in working for them and that you have been actively listening throughout the interview process. Here are some examples:

- In what ways will the duties of the post change or develop in the next two to three years?
- Who will I be responsible to?
- What is the training philosophy of the company?
- How will my success be measured?
- What happens next?

### **AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

- Thank the interviewer and shake hands
- Remember that the interview does not finish until you have left the building
- If you have not heard from the company after the agreed time, contact them to find out if they have had time to make a decision.

### **INTERVIEW CHECKLIST**

#### **DO**

- Remember that first appearances count – how you dress and act
- Smile, make eye contact and acknowledge all members of an interview panel
- Shake hands in a firm but gentle way, not crushingly strong
- Wait to be asked to sit down
- Make sure you sit correctly and comfortably before starting
- Show interest
- Answer the question asked
- Keep positive at all times

#### **DO NOT**

- Be late
- Fidget or look at your watch
- Argue
- Put anything on the interviewer's desk
- Say anything negative
- Appear indifferent
- Appear aggressive or act in a superior way – nobody likes this!
- Show too much interest in money and holidays

## **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Download other job-seeking skills resources from [www.bangor.ac.uk/careers](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/careers)

The following reference books/DVDs are available in our Careers Resource Room in the Careers & Employability Service, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Neuadd Rathbone:

- "Great Answers to Tough Interview Questions" by M J Yate
- "Best Answers to the 201 Most Frequently Asked Interview Questions", Matthew J. DeLuca
- "Selection Success in One", AGCAS DVD
- "Making an impact: the graduate job interview" AGCAS DVD

Also visit:

[www.prospects.ac.uk/links/interviews](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/interviews)

[www.gowales.co.uk](http://www.gowales.co.uk)

[www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

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