



Successful Interviews

Congratulations! Your application has been successful and you've been invited to interview. This means that the employer already thinks that you might be the right person for the job and the company. The interview gives the employer the opportunity to find out more about you. It also gives you the chance to ensure that both the job and the employer are right for you.

First interviews are usually about discussing your application and how it relates to the job. Make sure you're prepared for this and have examples that expand the information you've already given the employer. Keep a copy of your CV or application so that you remember what you've written.

Types of Interview

Traditional Interview

These interviews focus on your life to date and topics such as your education and work experience. They may also include some motivational questions to assess your knowledge of the company and to test whether you've done your research on the job and company.

Competency Based Interview

Competency based interviews are designed to get you to give evidence of your skills relating to the job description and person specification. Competency based questions often start with the following phrases:

- Give me an example of a time when...
- Describe a situation where you...

Answers will be assessed on how well you demonstrate job related skills and knowledge. Consequently it is important to analyse the question and provide a focused, detailed answer.

A useful way to structure your answers is to use the STAR acronym. This provides information on the: Situation (10%) Task (20%) Action (50%) Result (20%).

Telephone Interview

Telephone interviews are often used as the first step in selecting suitable candidates. There are two main types:

- **Unannounced:** If you have submitted an application then you may be called by an employer unannounced. If this happens and it really isn't a convenient

time or your location is totally unsuitable ask the employer or the employer's agent if you can rearrange.

- **Pre-arranged:** The employer normally contacts you with a pre-arranged interview time. This gives you the chance to prepare. This normally takes the form of a structured interview with the employer or their agent. Occasionally, the process is automated and you may be asked to select different options using the telephone keypad.

Practical Advice:

- Listen to the question asked.
- Choose an environment where you can't be disturbed.
- Make sure your phone is fit for purpose, sometimes a land line is better.
- Have a copy of your CV/Application form by the phone.
- Have brief notes and information about the company to hand.

Technical Interview

The aim of a technical interview is to test your general technical ability and how well you explain technical concepts. You may be asked to talk about your final year project or apply your technical background to something you are not familiar with. The employer is interested in how you approach technical processes and how you apply technical principles.

You may be given the opportunity to use sketches to demonstrate your point.

Portfolio Interview

This type of interview is mainly used for arts and media and communications roles. It will involve you bringing a portfolio of your work to the interview and the questions will be based around your work.

Case Study Interview

This can take the form of a hypothetical scenario. You will be assessed on how you identify the key issues, how you analyse the issue and how you are able to formulate your thoughts and present your argument.

Values Based Interview

A values based interview (VBI) is a type of structured interview which is particularly focused on understanding an applicant's values. They are commonly used in health and social care, public sector and charity sector recruitment. Questions may be similar to those asked in other types of interview in that they may be competency based or situational based, asking applicants to provide examples of behaviour they have previously demonstrated or to explain how they would respond to a particular situation. The difference in a values based interview is that follow up questions will be asked to probe and challenge the interviewee to expand on their answers to elicit a stronger insight into their personal values, learning and reflection. The probing questions that follow a lead question in a VBI focus on how and why an applicant makes particular choices in the workplace, providing insight into the reasons and drivers for their behaviour.

Strengths based Interviews

Strengths based interviews focus on what candidates enjoy doing rather than what they are able to do. The theory behind strength based interviews is that everyone has natural strengths that they were born with. By identifying your strengths and matching yourself to the role you will enjoy it more, thereby performing better and being able to rapidly learn new information.

Interviewers will seek to assess your personal attributes, identify your strengths and look for genuine pride in what you do. They tend to ask questions relatively quickly in order to get a genuine response, which means you'll probably be asked more questions than in a more traditional competency based interview. While you can't change the fundamentals of what you enjoy, you can prepare for the interview by thinking about how your strengths fit with the organisation's culture and the job requirements.

Video Interview

There are two main types of video interview; one-way video interviews and two-way video interviews. The questions asked in video interviews will be similar to those asked in other types of interview. The main difference with video interviews is additional preparation beforehand to ensure that the interview process runs smoothly.

One way interviews:

A one-way video interview is when an employer sends text-based interview questions to candidates who then record video answers and submit them back to the employer.

The employer creates the questions and watches the video responses in their own time, while the candidate answers the questions at their convenience. Candidates can record their responses via webcam or mobile application.

Two-way interviews:

Two-way interviews are live interviews in which an employer and candidate connect face to face via webcam.

Find an appropriate place to make the call where you won't be disturbed. Remove any distractions from the background and dress as you would for a face to face interview.

Check that your internet connection is stable. Dropped calls are understandable, but they distract from the interview and reflect poorly on your ability to plan ahead.

Think about suitable lighting to remove shadows so that the employer can see your face clearly.

Ideally use a dedicated microphone and test it out. Try to find somewhere away from any background noise, a quiet room by yourself is ideal.

Have your CV, application form and any other supporting documents available to hand so you can reference them easily without having to search for them during the interview.

Hybrid interview

Some interviews can be a combination of one or more of the above types of interview.

Before the Interview

Research

What do you know about the company and job? Revisit the information you read while preparing your application, research company websites/ brochures, person specification and the job description carefully. Demonstrating knowledge of the employer/job shows interest, motivation and research skills.

Prepare

What do you know about yourself? In completing the application form or a CV you will already have identified your skills, attributes and experience that make you suitable for the job. Recruiters may ask you to expand upon these areas at interview - revisit your application, remind yourself of the facts and think ahead about what additional detail you can add at interview.

Anticipate questions you will be asked.

In addition to typical interview questions (see examples), you may be asked additional questions (competency based, technical or scenario based). You can prepare by considering current sector developments and the job role - typical issues that arise and how you would deal with such situations. Remember you may already have had exposure to these issues through your course. If you use good personal examples from different areas of your life (work, study, leisure, hobbies) it can strengthen your interview performance. Many candidates find it helpful to bullet point an answer on paper and then verbally flesh out the main points in advance of the interview.

Prepare your own questions.

At the end of the interview you may be asked if you have any questions. This is your final opportunity to give a positive impression. You should ask questions which demonstrate a genuine interest in the job or organisation, for example a question regarding staff development opportunities. You may wish to ask for clarification of information given at interview but be careful not to ask a question that has already been answered by the company either in their literature or an information session. Don't ask a question just for the sake of it. You should not ask questions about salary. These can be dealt with later in the recruitment process.

Practice answering interview questions

Write down some questions and get a friend to interview you. It is very useful to 'hear' yourself talking through the answer as opposed to just rehearsing it in your own mind. Doing so enables you to gauge whether your answer is too long or too brief and how fluid (well structured) your approach is to answering interview questions. Additionally, professional advice and constructive feedback is available by booking a practice interview with a careers adviser.

During the Interview

- Be yourself but make sure that you present a positive, friendly professional image. Try to appear open and approachable, by smiling, when appropriate. Interviewers know you are nervous and will make allowances for this.
- Listen carefully to the question, don't try to answer a question that you haven't understood. Ask for clarification.
- Speak clearly make sure your answers are relevant. Be specific and keep to the point.
- Be positive and diplomatic at all times. Whether this is in response to an interview question probing limited experience, for example: 'I see that there is not much information technology on your course'. A positive response would be to use the 'no, but' technique. 'No, but I have completed the university ICT skill modules and am confident in using all aspects of Microsoft Office.' Or in response to a challenging question, for example "which aspect of your course did you like least?. It's best to be truthful - if you liked all of your course say so but if there were areas you enjoyed less, acknowledge this but be positive about what you gained from the subject or experience
- Be aware of body language and maintain appropriate eye contact.

After the Interview

As soon as possible after the interview, write down the interview questions you were asked while you remember them. Think about what you have learned from the interview experience, and try to assess your performance.

- If you think you answered a difficult question particularly well, write down what you said for future reference.
- Were there any questions which you found difficult or weren't expecting? If so, try preparing answers or looking for extra evidence for future interviews.
- Did you feel you created the right impression? Did you feel adequately prepared? If not, what could you do about it?

Successful: Proceed to Second Interview or Assessment Centre

You can contact the Careers Centre to find out about graduate level selection tests or other methods of selection such as group work exercises. You may also be asked to give a presentation.

Successful: Job Offer

Congratulations! It is important that you evaluate realistically the implications of accepting or declining a job offer, and clarify practical issues re start dates and employment conditions. If you are in the fortunate position of having several offers to choose from, or having one offer and other applications on-going, you may be unsure and need time to consider.

However, as a general rule:

If you are made a job offer by phone, thank the employer making the offer and let them know how pleased you are but ask them for time (overnight, the weekend, within the week) to think it over and advise them of your decision. Try to respond as soon as possible, most employers will be happy to give you a short time to consider their offer but will be keen to know as quickly as possible in order that they can inform other candidates. Discuss the matter with a Careers Adviser. Having made a decision it is important to advise the employer as soon as possible. You would normally advise the employer verbally and follow this up with a letter.

If you have received an offer, but are still being interviewed for other positions: Contact the employer offering the job straight away, thanking them for their offer and ask for extra time. Many employers will allow a reasonable time extension to consider their offer but will be keen to know as quickly as possible in order that they can inform other candidates. However, some employers may not be able to offer this and you will then have to examine the options and decide whether to accept the firm offer or take a risk.

Unsuccessful:

If you have not been successful this time it might be a good idea to ask the employer for feedback as this will help you in your future interview preparation. Employers aren't obliged to give you feedback but it's worth trying. You may also want to discuss your interview technique or book a practice interview with a Careers Adviser.

Examples of interview questions

Different employers will adopt different interview formats and questions. These are just some of the types of questions you may be asked. Use them as a starting point to your own preparation.

You may also want to think of some

additional questions you might be asked and practice answering them.

General interview questions

- Tell me why you chose your programme of study? Has it lived up to your expectations?
- Tell me about your dissertation? Why did you choose that subject? What challenges did your research bring? With hindsight what changes if any would you make?
- Why should we consider you in preference to other candidates?
- What do you consider to be your main strengths and weaknesses?
- What skills have you gained from your work experience?
- Tell us about your placement. What did you learn? What did you enjoy most?
- Can you give me an example of recent developments within your profession (or this industry) that you believe are significant and what do you think its impact will be?
- What do you think your development needs are in your first year in post?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?

Competency based interview questions

Teamwork:

- Describe a situation where you were successful in getting people to work together effectively.
- Describe a situation in which you were a member (not a leader) of a team, and a conflict arose within the team. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you successfully worked as a member of a team.
- Give an example of a difficult or sensitive situation that required effective communication.

Problem solving and decision making:

- Describe a situation where you had to analyse a problem and generate the solution.

Customer focus:

- Give an example of how you provided service to a customer beyond their expectations. How did you identify the need? How did you respond?
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a customer service issue.

Time management:

- This is a busy work environment – give an example of working in a similar situation; how did you manage your workload?

Adaptability:

- Tell me about a time when you changed your priorities to meet others' expectations.
- Describe a time when you altered your own behaviour to fit the situation.
- Tell me about a time when you had to change your point of view or plans to take into account new information or changing priorities.

Commercial awareness:

- What do you know about our organisation?
- Why do you wish to enter the _____ industry?
- What are the challenges facing our profession/industry at this time?
- What changes have there been in our industry recently?
- Who are our competitors? What are the differences between them and us?
- Who are our clients?
- How do you keep up to date with what is going on in business?
- What story in the business press has interested you most recently?
- What was our share price this morning?
- What is the current Bank of England base rate?
- How many euros would you get today in exchange for £10?
- What is the FTSE 100? Did the FTSE go up or down yesterday?

Values Based Questions:

- What excites you about working in this sector?
- Why does this appeal to you?
- What have you done to find out about working in this sector?
- What is the most surprising thing that you've learned?
- What challenges do you think there would be?
- What rewards do you think there would be?
- What parts do you think you would most enjoy?
- What interests you about our organisation in particular? Why?
- How did you become aware of us?
- How do we compare to other organisations you have applied to?
- What research have you done into the role?
- Which parts of the role do you think you would enjoy the most?
- Please give an example of a situation where you've spoken up because you had concerns. What was the outcome? How did you feel about making a stand and about the outcome? What did you learn from this about yourself?
- Can you give an example of where your understanding of what another person may be going through has helped you to develop your compassion for that person?
- Tell me about a situation where it was important that you worked as part of a team. Why was this important? What was your exact role in the team? What was the result of having a team approach?
- Tell me about a time when you have "gone the extra mile" at work. What was the task? What was the outcome?

Strengths based questions:

- What energises you?
- What makes a good day for you?
- What are your greatest strengths?
When do you use them at their best?
Are there situations in which you overuse these strengths? How can you capitalise on your strengths more?
- In your life, what have you done that you are most proud of? What made it significant to you and what did you learn from the experience?
- What gets done on your 'to do' list?
What never gets done?
- Do you prefer to start a task or finish a task?
- What do you do when you find a task boring?
- Have you ever done something differently the second time round?
- Do you prefer detail or the bigger picture?
- How do you handle working with someone you don't like?
- When would your friends and family say you are happiest?

Summary:

When preparing for interviews you have to anticipate the questions you are most likely to be asked. Think carefully about how best to present your skills and experience and give yourself plenty of time to think about your responses. Do not underestimate the amount of time needed for this as preparation is one of the most important elements of success!

You should:

- Research, prepare and practice.
- Consider arranging a practice interview through the Careers Service.
- Dress smartly and comfortably.
- Arrive on time, with the correct information.
- Be pleasant, polite and smile.
- Be confident, positive and honest about yourself.

Advice and guidance

Our professionally qualified Careers Advisers can help with your career planning and study options, including advice on job search, CVs and applications, interviews, selection tests and assessment centres. We offer a number of ways to speak to a Careers Adviser:

Careers clinic (15 minutes): ideal for quick questions or a brief review your CV or application. Please bring a paper copy of your CV, letter or application with you.

Book a Careers Clinic session online at the Careers website

Careers appointment (45 minutes): for more in depth discussions on career planning and review of your CV, covering letter, applications and for individual coaching sessions. Please bring a paper copy of your CV, letter or application with you. Please go to the Careers website for details of how to book.

Practice Interview (45 minutes): these give you the chance to practice your interview skills and receive feedback to help you prepare for forthcoming interviews. When making your appointment, you will be asked to email us a copy of your application or CV in advance at least three working days before your practice interview. Please book as well in advance as possible. Please go to the Careers website for details of how to book.

Resources and further information
You'll find lots of useful information on the Careers website



Contact us:
Careers Centre
Campus Life Lounge, George Moore Building
W: gcu.ac.uk/careers
Blog: gcu-careers.wordpress.com
Facebook: [GlasgowCaledonianUniversityCareersService](https://www.facebook.com/GlasgowCaledonianUniversityCareersService)
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