

Interviews and assessments

Your future matters.
Do something about it

NOW



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General Note

A lot of the information and advice we provide is based on common sense and may appear obvious or even trivial. However, evidence shows that many job applicants, even very bright and otherwise capable ones, frequently make elementary mistakes which could be avoided by following exactly those simple pieces of advice. This booklet should educate and act as an aide memoire.

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Interviews

This booklet provides information about how to prepare for interviews, enabling you to perform to the best of your ability.

If you have been offered an interview – well done! You have presented yourself effectively on paper and now you have to do the same in person.

How to prepare

Research the job.

It's important to know as much as possible about the job for which you're being interviewed. Research the role, the organisation and, if possible, speak to people already doing the type of work you are interested in. Good preparation will also help you to know if this is the right job for you.

You will also be expected to know about the sector and business context the organisation is operating within. Look on their websites, read what the press say about them and find information at the The Business Library, situated on the second floor of the Norfolk & Norwich Millennium Library. It may also be helpful to have a general knowledge of current affairs.

You will find further information on how to develop your commercial awareness on our website, via your school Blackboard site, or visit the careers centre.

If you have applied for postgraduate study or a research position, look at the university department's website. Find out about the staff, key research interests, publications, ratings and awards.

Before your interview

Make sure you know:

- How long your interview will be.
- What the format is and if there will be any tests or group exercises.
- Who will be interviewing you?
- Whether you need to take anything with you.
- How to get there.

Interviews

At the interview

What to wear

Look smart for your interview, but you also need to feel comfortable so that you can relax. Wear something business like and professional. If you wear a suit you can always take the jacket off if you feel overdressed. Decide what to wear well in advance; try it on and make sure it's clean.

What to take

- The invitation to interview letter with the address and phone number of the company or person you are meeting.
- A map or directions.
- A copy of your CV and application form.
- A list of key points you want to make and any questions you want to ask.

How to make a good impression

First impressions count. Make sure you arrive on time. If you are delayed contact the interviewer as soon as possible to explain. Arriving early will give you time to think about the points you want to make, relax and avoid any last minute panic. Remember that everyone you meet may be asked for their impressions of you.

Non-verbal communication

Be aware of your body language; try to relax and hold an open and upright posture with a friendly expression. Make eye contact. If there is more than one interviewer, respond mainly to whoever has asked the question but include the others from time to time. Remember to smile.

Nerves

It's normal to be nervous especially if you haven't had any interviews before. The best way to be confident in an interview is by being thoroughly prepared. Interviewers know that candidates will be nervous so they may try and put you at your ease by asking fairly straightforward questions to begin with based on your past experience. They want you to relax and present yourself in the best possible light.

There are also a number of other things that can help you relax:

- Arrange a practice interview with a careers adviser, or go through some typical questions and answers with a friend.
- Breathing exercises may help you relax. Breathe in for a count of four, hold your breath for a count of four and breathe out for a count of six.
- Find a book or CD you like on relaxation techniques.
- You can prepare yourself physically by getting a good night's sleep the night before your interview, eating something light beforehand and drinking plenty of water to stay hydrated.
- Thinking about a previous occasion when you have performed well may help put you in a positive frame of mind.





Interviews

Types of interview

Organisations use different types of interview so find out which type you will have. Will it be with one person or a panel of two or more interviewers? Will it be individual or with a group of candidates?

Telephone interviews

These are increasingly being used as a first stage to screen suitable candidates. Remember the employer wants to find out the same information as they would face-to-face, so your preparation needs to be just as thorough. Take the call for somewhere quiet where you are not likely to be interrupted. Check the signal and battery on your mobile. Have your application, CV and any notes, pen and paper to hand. Be aware that there may be more than one person listening i.e. a conference call.

Structured interviews

A standard set of questions are asked of all candidates to ensure that everyone is measured on the same scale.

Formal and informal interviews

Some interviews may be very formal, while others will feel more like a chat about you and your interests. Be aware that you are still being assessed, however informal the discussion may seem.

Competency or criteria based interviews

The interviewer is looking for evidence of your skills relevant to the job. Look at the job description, person specification and advertisement and brainstorm examples and evidence you can use.

Technical interviews

Questions will be asked which test your technical ability and knowledge in line with the requirements of the job. Don't worry if you feel out of your depth - the employer may be looking at the way you approach the problem rather than for a 'correct' answer.

Academic interviews

Used for further study or research positions. You are likely to be questioned on your academic history, research skills and motivation.

Interviews

Common interview questions

Employers expect a structured answer, and the acronym **CARL** can help you do this:

- C** Context – gives a brief background to your answer.
- A** Action – explain what action you personally took in the situation.
- R** Result – for example gaining a high score for a presentation, getting positive feedback, winning an award or achieving a target.
- L** Learning – if relevant show what you learned from this experience.

University

- What motivated you to study this subject?
- What did you most enjoy about your University course?
- Could you give an example of a time during your University study where you had to respond to and overcome a challenge?
- What did you learn from the experience?
- Describe a presentation you have given. What went well? What would you do differently?

Matching you to the job

- What do you think you could bring to this job that others would not?
- What has motivated you to want to work in this job area?
- What have been your main achievements and why?
- What are the key things you are looking for in a job and why?
- What are your career goals in the medium and long term?

Personal

- How would your friends describe you?
- What would you describe as your main weaknesses?
- Could you give an example of a time when you have had to overcome a difficult situation and how you coped?
- What motivates you to succeed?
- What has been your greatest disappointment?
- How did you respond to this?



Competencies

These will vary depending on the job you have applied for.

- Could you give an example of a time where you have had to work as part of a team and what role you took?
- What do you think are the challenges of working in a team?
- How would you define good communication skills?
- Describe a time when you have worked under pressure.
- Tell us how you might demonstrate creativity if you took this post.
- Tell us of a time when you had to respond quickly to a situation and take appropriate action.

If you don't understand the question you can ask for it to be repeated or for clarification.

Think especially about questions you may find hard and prepare a suitable answer. Be as honest as you can, without being defensive or blaming others. Try and turn any negatives into positives, put any problems into the past and emphasise what you have learned for the future. For example, if they asked "What is your greatest weakness?" you could answer that you tend to be a bit of a perfectionist, but this means you check everything very carefully and maintain a high standard of work.

Your questions

Remember that an interview is a two-way conversation, so be prepared to ask relevant questions.

- You may want to ask when you are likely to hear the outcome of the interview process.
- You could ask the interviewers for their experiences of working in the organisation; what roles they've held, what they like about it, how they see things changing in the future.
- You could add anything which you feel supports your application but you haven't had an opportunity to cover.

Show enthusiasm and make it clear that you want the job.

Interviews

Selection exercises

There are all sorts of ways employers try to find the right person to do the job and fit in with their organisation.

Portfolio

Employers within the arts, games and media industries may ask you to take a portfolio of your work, a website or a game you've developed and have a discussion about it.

Case studies

You will be given a business case and be asked to make recommendations either individually or in a group. You will be scored on how well you identify the key issues, whether you can back up your arguments with evidence and how you present your findings. They are looking for common-sense and a basic understanding of how businesses work rather than in-depth knowledge.

Role plays

Used to determine how you would react in a particular situation, how resourceful you are in developing ideas, problem-solving and communication.

In-tray exercises

You will be given an in-tray or electronic inbox full of documentation, emails, memos, telephone messages, reports and correspondence, and information about the organisation. You must prioritise the work, make decisions about how to proceed and recommend actions. They aim to test how you deal with information within a time limit. You may be asked to justify the decisions you've made.

Group exercises

In most jobs you have to work with or alongside other people so it is crucial for employers to see how you interact with others. There may be a practical task or a group discussion. You need to follow the instructions carefully and keep to time. Assessors may be looking for good ideas, but it is also important to demonstrate that you can listen to other people, include everyone in the task and build upon other participants' contributions.

Assessment centres

These can last one or two days and comprise a series of elements designed to identify suitable candidates. Some organisations feel they are the most accurate and objective way to recruit since candidates are marked against set criteria by several assessors who may be employed by a specialist agency rather than the employing organisation.

Typically there will be information sessions, which provide more detail about the organisation and the jobs available, tests, exercises, presentations, interviews and social events.

Find out as much as you can about the format so you'll know what to expect and can prepare effectively in the same way as you would for a standard interview.

Psychometric tests

Psychometric tests may be used in recruitment and selection to measure ability or aptitude and to discover the way you typically act or prefer to behave. Tests will usually be formal and timed, and taken either online or by filling in a printed answer sheet. They take the form of multiple choice questions. You will be given full instructions before you start the test and there will be some example questions to try, with no time limit. You may be asked to take a test in any of the following, depending on the job role:

- Verbal reasoning, analysis and word sort.
- Numerical reasoning, analysis and sequence.
- Diagrammatic and spatial reasoning including your sense of logic.
- Specific tests including for computer programming, data checking or mechanics.

If you have special requirements, it is advisable to declare this before the test, as the organisation may be able to make reasonable adjustments, allow you extra time or grade your results more appropriately.

Key points to remember

- Pay careful attention to the instructions.
- Ask for clarification if something is unclear.
- If you get stuck on a question, move on and come back to it later if you have time (although be aware that often you cannot go backwards in an online test).
- Be aware that some tests penalise for wrong answers.
- In most tests you are not expected to complete all of the questions.

Practice tests

Some large employers may provide practice tests. However, we run some each month at the careers centre for a nominal fee to cover costs. For more information and to book a place go to our website or contact us. Practice tests are also available on-line at the following websites:

- Aptitude Tests online, www.aptitudetestsonline.co.uk
- Numerical Reasoning, www.numerical-reasoning.com
- Psychometric Advantage, www.psychometricadvantage.co.uk
- Psychometric Success, www.psychometric-success.com
- SHLDirect.com, www.shldirect.com
- Morrisby, www.morrisby.com

Interviews

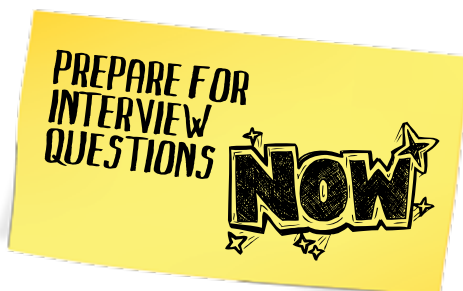
Other things to consider

Disability

If you have a disability, check the physical access to the premises and let the employer know in advance if you need any additional support or equipment. If you do not need any special arrangements, it may or may not be appropriate to disclose your disability to your prospective interviewer before or at the interview. For help and advice on when and how to disclose a disability, you can talk to a careers adviser or contact the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities (SKILL www.skill.org.uk). There is also information at www.prospects.ac.uk.

Extra help from Careers & Employability

If you are not immediately successful at interview, don't be despondent. There are resources available to help you develop effective interview techniques and improve your confidence. Careers & Employability's Information Room houses reference books and a DVD on interviews and assessments. You can arrange a practice interview, aptitude tests, and individual guidance appointments. See our contact details on the back of this booklet. Each school has a Jobs and Careers website on Blackboard where you will find information on interviews and useful links.





Interviews

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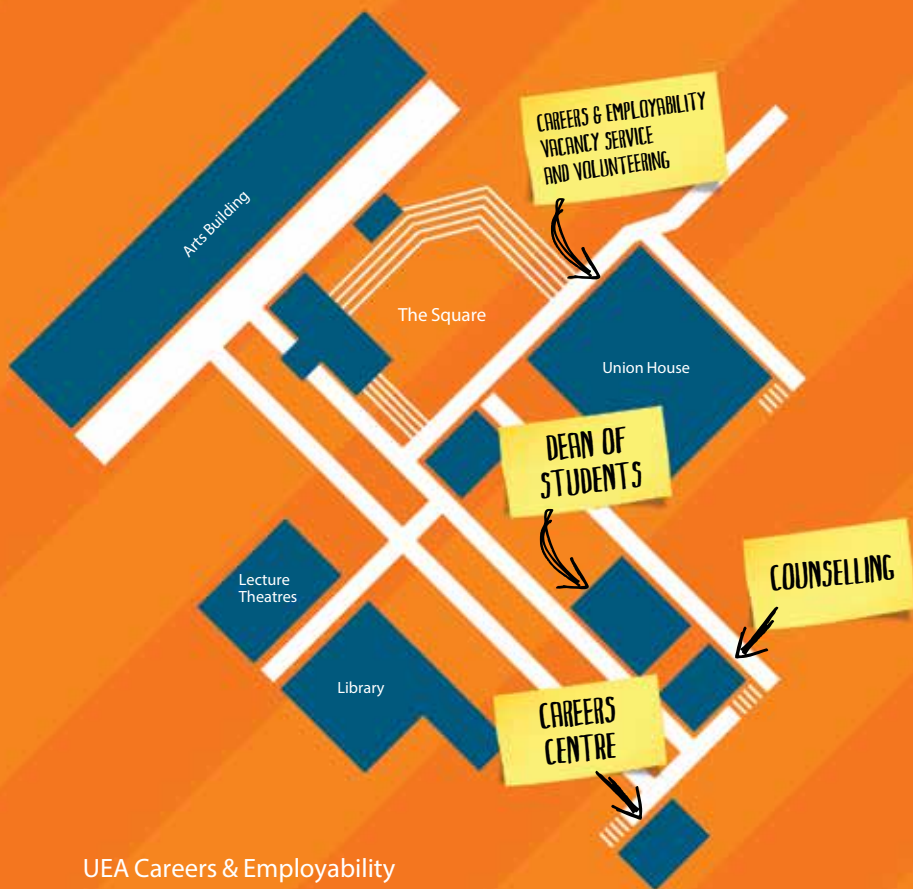
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How to find UEA Careers & Employability



UEA Careers & Employability
Visit our job shop on the square.

t: 01603 593276 / 592803

e: employability@uea.ac.uk

w: www.employability.uea.ac.uk

Opening hours: Mon-Fri.10:00-16:00, (Wed 10:15-16:00)

Careers & Employability
University of East Anglia, Norwich Research Park,
Norwich NR4 7TJ

Useful websites

uea.ac.uk/careers

Get your graduate career off to a solid start via UEA's careers portal.

employability.uea.ac.uk

UEA's student job shop. Soon to include graduate-level jobs and alumni contacts.

uea.ac.uk/volunteers

Enhance your community, your life, and your CV with volunteering activities.

www.gradsnorfolk.co.uk

For graduates who want to find the right starting point - but who would ideally like to stay in Norfolk.

www.gradseast.org.uk

Graduate vacancies and work experience across the East of England.

www.prospects.ac.uk

The national website for graduate-level vacancies, advice and online careers services.

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