

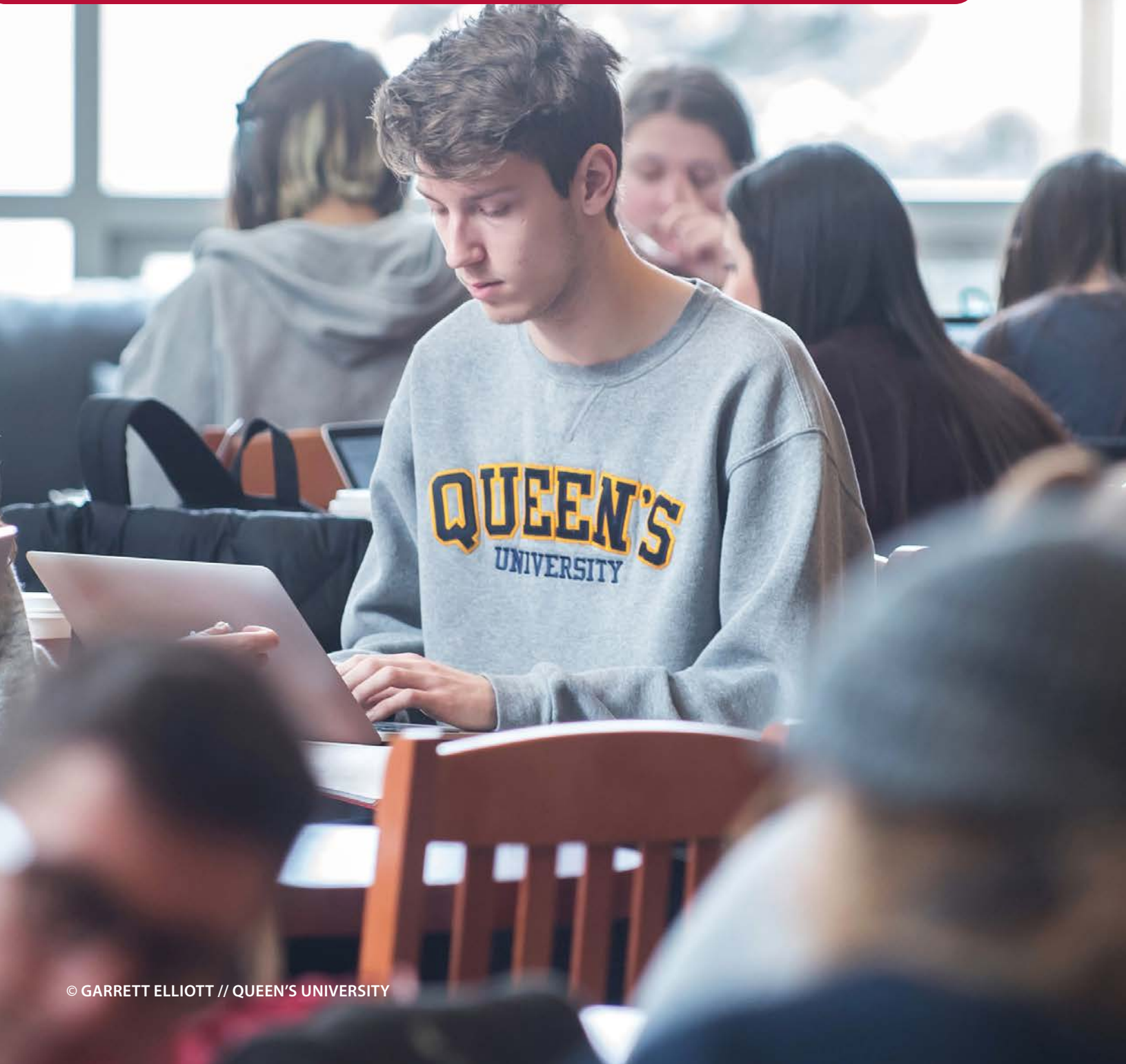
QUEEN'S BEST INTERVIEWS 2020-21



JOB INTERVIEWS DURING COVID-19

Interviews are frequently conducted remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the interviewer and the candidate meet over the phone or through a video-chat platform. We have offered specific tips for conducting remote interviews, as well as an example of a video interview so you can understand what to expect.

As well, the pictures in this magazine represent the activities students often partake in during their time at Queen's University. While you might still be doing some of these things, this year will look different. You might be wearing a mask, or practicing physical distancing. However, these photos continue to capture the kinds of experiences you might speak about in a job interview.



Welcome to Queen's Best Interviews: 2020/21

Wondering how to do your best in an interview? We have compiled these strategies and sample responses from actual student experiences (edited to be anonymous) to help you focus your time and effort when prepping for your best interviews!

Each section is identified with two or three icons in the upper right corner of the page— use these to find interviews from students with experiences similar to yours, but do not hesitate to consider other ones as well. You may find a strategy useful, even if you cannot relate to a student's specific experience.

Although these interviews may be some “best” examples, no interview is perfect. As you develop your own best interview style, you can use these examples to inspire ideas and options, and then determine the best way to tell your own unique story. Best of luck in your interview preparation and job search! For more information on interview techniques, job-search tips, workshops, career advising and much more, contact us at Career Services!



Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge Queen's is situated on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territory. We are grateful to be able to live, learn, and play on these lands.

Thank you to the individuals who shared their interview experiences and expertise to create sample responses based on real student experiences for the benefit of Queen's students. Thank you also to all those who have contributed to the editing and design of this magazine and its previous editions, including staff and student staff at Career Services. A particular thank you to Claudia Rupnik, Jenny Lee Northey, and Miguel Hahn for their leadership.

And a heartfelt thanks to the employer and educator advertisers whose support helps make this publication available to Queen's students.



STUDENT AFFAIRS
CAREER SERVICES

HAVING GREAT INTERVIEWS: 4 KEY IDEAS

Many people think of an interview as a test, though it is more helpful to think of it as a conversation. Interviews run both ways: they allow employers to further assess the skills, experiences, and expectations you would bring to the role, and they allow you to evaluate whether the position and organization align with your interests, values, and goals.



1

BE PREPARED

Research the organization and the position ahead of time to help you answer questions about why you want to work there. Assess how you would answer common questions to present your case for why you are a good fit for the job. While you cannot prepare for every possible question, understanding your skills and mapping out practice answers can help you to be better prepared.

2

BE SPECIFIC

The most powerful answers include specific details rather than just general statements. Illustrate your points with specific examples of when you have demonstrated the relevant quality, skill, or attitude. This step helps the interviewer to see concrete evidence of what you have accomplished and predict what you might be capable of in the future.

3

BE PROFESSIONAL

While what you say is important, how you say it also has an impact. Consider what impression you want to make with your appearance, communication (both verbal and non-verbal), and tone.

4

BE YOURSELF

Present your best professional self in an interview, but remember not to lose yourself in the process. Interviews are also about connecting as human beings, which requires that both parties be somewhat authentic and vulnerable to establish a connection.



Want more practice communicating your skills ahead of an interview? Learn to define your unique skills and experiences at a Career Services "Owning Your Strengths" workshop.

Learn more at careers.queensu.ca



PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

Though you cannot anticipate every aspect of an interview, there are many ways to set yourself up for success.

- **Research the role and the organization** so you know something about the opportunity and why it interests you. Visit the organization's website to learn details about the work and build a list of questions you have for the interviewer(s).
- **Assess your skills.** Reflecting on past experiences prepares you to explain what skills you have developed and how. Gain greater clarity and confidence in defining your skills by reviewing the Queen's Skills Cards or the Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills document.
- **Prepare "real" answers, not "right" answers.** Avoid vague answers and generic statements by telling succinct and vivid stories that provide evidence of your skills.
- **Practice** on your own, but also with friends and family members to see how others interpret your responses.
- **Be aware of your body language** throughout the interview to appear more confident and comfortable.
- **Plan what you are going to wear,** assessing the norms of the workplace and your preferences for presenting yourself. Usually, dress more formally for the interview than you would for work on a regular day.
- **Review the cover letter and resume you submitted** and bring extra copies to the interview, as well as a list of your references with contact information.
- **Use your Career Services.** See a career counsellor to improve your answers, complete a mock interview, and get feedback on your interview skills and personalized strategies for success.

PREPARING FOR REMOTE INTERVIEWS:

Set-up:

- Test your audio and video clarity, as well as your internet connection.
- Familiarize yourself with the functions of the communication platform being used for the interview.
- Ensure your surroundings and background are clean and professional. Consider a virtual background (an option available in many platforms).
- Position your camera to be angled slightly down at your eyes for optimal visuals.

Confirm logistics, including who will initiate the call and when it will occur. Turn off or mute your devices and ensure you will not have other interruptions. Dress as professionally as you would for an in-person interview.



Clubs and
Activities



Skills From
Academics



2nd or 3rd
Year

IN-PERSON INTERVIEW

This student is targeting a summer position in a marketing environment after their third-year of study.

Interviewer: "Hello, welcome to our office. Nice to meet you. Looks like you found the place okay?"

Candidate: "I did—your instructions were very clear. Nice to meet you too, thanks for having me!"

Exchange greetings and brief small talk

I: "Please take a seat. I'll dive right in with the first question. If you'd like to skip a question and come back to it, let us know and we can move on to the next one. Are you ready to get started?"

C: "Yes, thank you."

I: "Great. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?"

C: "I'm from Montreal and French is my first language, but I'm currently completing my third year in a Bachelor of Commerce at Queen's University.

When I started university, I wasn't entirely certain what kind of career I wanted to pursue after graduation. After taking an introductory marketing course in first year, I became really interested in the strategies and methods used to develop marketing campaigns and have shifted my education towards this area of study. My interest has led me to engage in marketing projects with local organizations. As you'd have seen on my resume, I currently volunteer as the Social Media Coordinator for the Queen's International Affairs Association and I work part-time at Common Ground Coffeehouse.

Something I've learned that's really important to me in my work is understanding how every member of an organization is involved in achieving goals that seem to be part of just one department. For example, at Common Ground, I'm a service

YOUR ARRIVAL

Plan to arrive 15-20 minutes early. This effort shows you are organized and respectful of the interviewer and allows you to get settled with a calm and prepared interview mindset. Be respectful and professional towards everyone you meet—beyond simple courtesy, you never know the influence of each interaction.

INTRODUCTION

Make a strong first impression in the first few minutes of the interview. As the interviewer approaches, stand up to greet them with confident, enthusiastic remarks. Be sure to smile and make eye contact. Usually, the interviewer will make small talk with you as you both walk to the interview room, or as you get settled. If there are other interviewers present, the interviewer should also introduce them to you; if not, take the initiative to greet and introduce yourself to each person.

staff member who often works the cash register. Over time, I've come to see how I still play a role in the branding and marketing of the coffee shop because I work directly with our customers to reinforce the friendly, accessible brand that Common Ground maintains. As a result, part of my current approach to marketing is making sure the entire team is informed on projects and has the opportunity to provide input because they might have a different perspective given their role in the organization."

I: "Okay, what interests you about this position?"

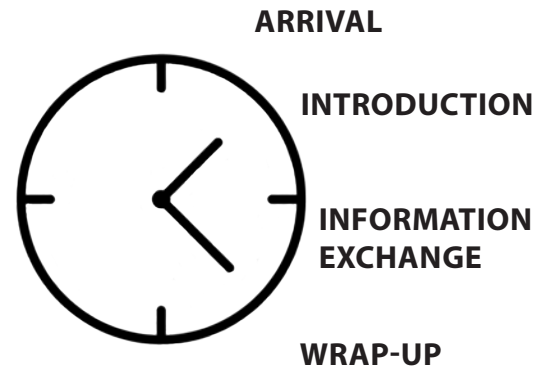
C: "I'm interested in this position because I think your organization is always taking steps to reflect the most current marketing tools and strategies, and I'm eager to work in an environment that's so forward-thinking and growth-oriented."

The job description indicated the individual in this role would be responsible for advancing the social media aspect of various marketing campaigns by using newer and more popular platforms like TikTok and Snapchat to reach a younger demographic. In my position at the Queen's International Affairs Association, I'm responsible for creating original marketing materials to attract university students to various events the association is planning. While we primarily use Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for marketing, we recently made the transition to TikTok and Snapchat because we found them to be the most direct way of reaching first-year students.

There were definitely bumps in figuring out the best way to adapt our campaigns to these platforms, but through that experience I've developed a framework for using them in a professional and engaging capacity that presents a consistent brand to our target audience. I'd be able to bring the skills I developed in my previous role to this new position to facilitate the transition to the new platforms. And I'd be looking to build off my current base of knowledge by adapting my TikTok and Snapchat marketing plan towards the specific needs and goals of the organization."

I: "Tell me about a time when you had to manage a number of small projects at the same time as one larger project. What did you do?"

C: "As a full-time university student, I'm often in a position of balancing different projects. During the school year, I usually have one large presentation due at the end of the semester that requires work to be done in smaller stages over a number of weeks. Because I'm also working a part-time job during the school year and volunteering on the side, I need to stay organized to make sure I'm keeping up with my commitments



INFORMATION EXCHANGE

This stage is the focus of the interview, where you make the case for why you are the best candidate for the role. You will likely be asked about your experiences, skills, education, and interest in the position. It is important to also pay attention to your non-verbal communication, including your facial and body language, tone of voice, eye contact, and gestures.

and my daily course work, while also completing the smaller tasks within the final presentation. At the beginning of my semester, I like to fill in my planner so I can see what each week will look like and then I make changes as I get more information about other deadlines or shifts I have to work. Every week, I make a smaller to-do list with my tasks organized by priority. It's important for me to stay organized and be flexible in order to balance different projects."

I: "If you were assigned a number of small projects and you didn't think you would be able to complete all of them by the deadline, what would you do?"

C: "While I would always try my best to stay organized and on schedule, sometimes things don't go as planned because a certain project required more time than anticipated or I'm waiting on information from someone else in order to complete a task. In these situations, my experience has taught me that communication is critical. I'd re-evaluate my to-do list and identify what tasks I don't think I could accomplish by the deadline, and then I'd contact the relevant parties—my co-workers or my supervisor—to let them know and ask if there's a possibility of pushing the deadline or getting some assistance. By reaching out, I'd be able to determine if it's a high priority, or if I can move that item to the next day and focus on other projects in the moment."

I: "That was our last question. Before we finish the interview, do you have any questions for us?"

C: "Yes, could you tell me more about the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?"

I: "Absolutely, this role would require you to provide assistance to staff throughout the office on a number of projects..."

C: "Great, thank you."

I: "Do you have any other questions?"

C: "No, thank you—that was very helpful."

I: "Okay, thank you for coming in today. We will let you know about the job by Wednesday evening."

C: "Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing back from you!"

Exchange salutations

WRAP-UP

At the end of the interview, it is common practice for the interviewer to ask whether you have questions. Prepare questions ahead of time about the organization to learn whether this opportunity suits your goals. It is also appropriate to inquire further about the next steps of the interview process. To conclude, express your appreciation for the interview opportunity, restate your interest, and offer another handshake.





Technical
Experience



International
Experience



New
Graduate

REMOTE INTERVIEW

This student is targeting a full-time job in production at a multimedia company after finishing their undergraduate degree. The interview is happening over a video-chat platform.

Interviewer: "Hello, welcome to the interview. Before we get started, I just want to confirm that both the audio and video components are working—they're working on our end."

Candidate: "Hi, thank you. The audio and video are working fine for me."

I: "Let me know if that changes at all throughout the interview."

Exchange greetings and brief small talk

I: "If the audio cuts out and you can't hear part of a question, I'm happy to repeat it, or if you'd like to skip a question and come back to it, let us know and we can move on to the next one. Are you ready to get started?"

C: "Yes, I am. Thank you"

I: "Great. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?"

C: "I've just graduated from a four-year program in Film Studies at Queen's University, where I developed my production and post-production skills and my community building and collaboration skills. I'm from a rural community in the U.K and I've spent my summers back home working at a local farm. I started working as a farmhand, but over the years I became very involved in outreach projects that helped to build a farm-to-table network in surrounding communities. During the school year, I volunteered with a campus organization called Queen's Backing Action on Climate Change, first as the Communications and Outreach Coordinator

and then, this past year, as the vice-president of the organization. I was able to plan and execute a number of different events, ranging from climate marches to workshops. In these positions, I was able to pursue my interests in videography by using my technical skills to capture the events and engage with a wide ranging audience. In my role on the farm and my role in climate change activism, I also came to appreciate the work that goes into developing and maintaining local connections in a community and to better understand the value of professionally capturing local stories and current events."

I: "What qualifications will make you successful in this position?"

C: "Through coursework and hands-on experiences, I've managed to develop my production and post-production skills across a range of media formats. For my senior thesis, I wrote, directed, and edited a short film that went on to be featured in a circuit of short film festivals. I've provided access to that project in my application, as part of my portfolio. I believe my past experiences working in team settings, both as a farmhand and as a team member of Queen's Backing Action on Climate Change, have helped to prepare me for working in very collaborative settings, like being part of a production team. In addition, in both of these roles, I was able to develop my liaison and mediation skills through being the primary contact on numerous projects for community and campus partners—I realize as a production assistant I'd have the chance to wear many hats and, having done so in previous positions, I'm confident in my flexibility and adaptability."

I: "Tell us about a time when you had to deal with an unexpected situation while you were in a position of leadership."

C: "When I took over the role of vice-president at Queen's Backing Action on Climate Change, I found out our finances had been poorly managed in previous years and, initially, we believed we wouldn't be able to move ahead with many of the events and workshops we'd planned for the year. However, this curveball gave us the opportunity to partner with a diverse variety of campus and community partners to present the events we'd planned. As vice-president, it was my responsibility to establish a new agenda to ensure our team still achieved its goals. This new agenda included reimagining volunteer roles as we refocused much of our energy on fundraising and outreach initiatives. As a leader, this difficult transition period instilled the importance of providing guidance for other team members, in the form of regular constructive and positive feedback, and encouraging internal cohesion through frequent communication."

I: "Can you tell us about your creative process using a recent example?"

C: "Absolutely—overall, my creative process is collaborative and structured. In my portfolio, I also included a link to a documentary I directed and produced as a personal project with a few classmates from my program. After the provincial government had announced the Student Choice Initiative that called many essential services on campus into question, we came up with the idea of investigating some of these services to see what they actually contribute to the student experience. The first step was conducting a full brainstorming stage—I called the team into a meeting where each member was able to share ideas for any stage of the production process, whether it be related to content, the logistical side of production, or our target audience. I like to have as many team members in on this meeting as possible to collect a wide range of perspectives and determine our community connections at this early stage. Then, I narrowed down our vision in a shared document, decided who would be filling each role on the project, and created a timeline of action items. Organization is really key to my creative process because structure is important when turning an idea into a tangible project. Typically, once I've

completed a draft of the project that I'm comfortable with, I like to share it with a few key collaborators because I find it helpful to get another set of eyes on my work. In the case of this documentary, I hosted a little viewing party with a few other classmates who were able to provide critical feedback on the content and presentation. Through this process, the documentary became particularly strong because I was able to incorporate new perspectives and ideas to strengthen its overall argument."

I: "That was the last question we have for you today. Before we finish up, do you have any questions for us?"

C: "Yeah, are you able to talk more about the daily breakdown of short-term and long-term projects in this position?"

I: "This role has a good balance of short-term and long-term projects, as well as some daily tasks you'd have to complete... "

C: "I'm also wondering what your favourite part of working for this team is?"

I: "I've worked here for over 5 years and, in that time, I've watched our team grow and take on newer and more ambitious projects to connect with our audience... Do you have any other questions about the position or the organization?"

C: "No, those are all of my questions for now."

I: "Ok, thank you for meeting with us this afternoon. We will be in contact through email about the position by the end of the day on Thursday."

C: "Thank you for your time. Please let me know if you have any follow-up questions, I'm happy to send over any information you might need. Enjoy the rest of your day."

TYPES OF QUESTIONS AND RESPONSE STRATEGIES

Industry sectors and organizations will vary in what types of interview questions they ask. By tailoring your responses to the position for which you are interviewing, you can effectively demonstrate your qualifications as a candidate and your interest in the position and the organization.

The following pages will describe common types of questions and recommend strategies you can use to prepare responses for a live interview. These categories include:

- **Tell Me About Yourself (P. 18-19)**
- **General Questions (P. 20-23)**
- **Behavioural Questions (P. 24-27)**
- **Situational Questions (P. 28-31)**
- **Technical Questions (P. 34-37)**
- **Challenging Questions (P. 38-39)**
- **Questions to Ask the Interviewer (P. 40-41)**



Check out the side boxes on each page to learn more about the particular strategies used in each interview response.

For further support when preparing for interviews, please attend a workshop or book a Career Consultation appointment.

It is also helpful to consider whether your interview will require a specialized approach, such as:


CASE INTERVIEWS

This approach, predominantly used by consulting companies, presents you with a case study of a company facing an issue. You are expected to answer questions about this situation and to provide overall recommendations for the company. Sample exercises are readily available on many consulting companies' websites.

MULTIPLE MINI INTERVIEWS (MMIS)

This timed-circuit approach to interviews is made up of short, independent assessments of an applicant's soft skills, such as interpersonal skills and ethical and moral judgement. This format is predominantly used by medical, dental, pharmacy, and veterinary schools.

To prepare for these particular types of interviews, it is recommended that you book a Career Consultation appointment to discuss strategies with a career counsellor.



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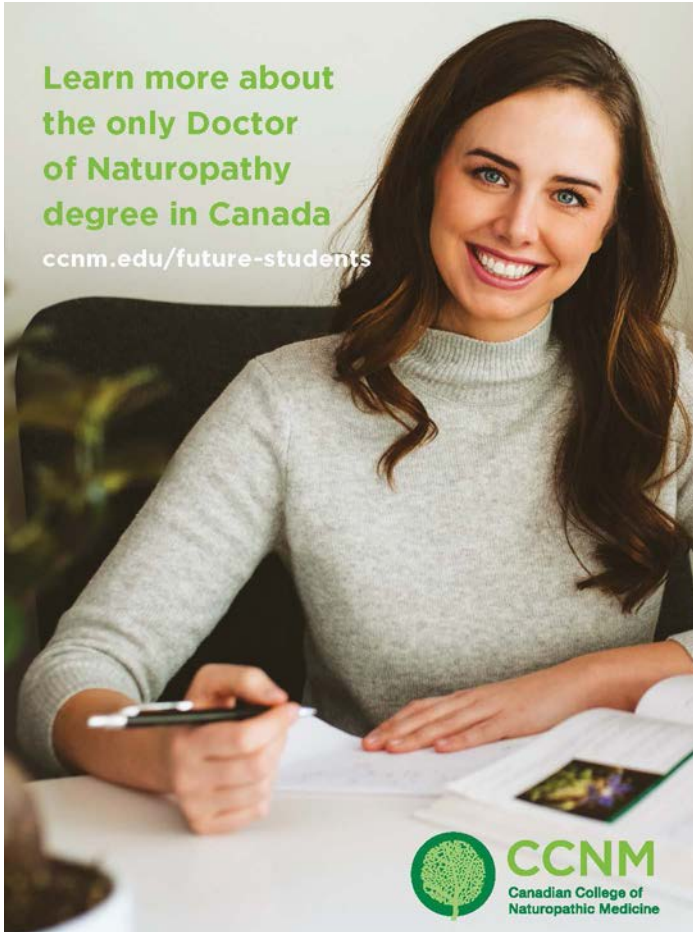
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2020-2021

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Q Your Future

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Clubs and
Activities



Technical
Experience



New
Graduate

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

This question helps the interviewer to learn more about who you are, so use the opportunity to highlight your experiences, skills, and interests most relevant to the position.

INTERVIEWER: “CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF?”

CHRONOLOGICAL APPROACH

Candidate (for a community health clinic position):

“I always knew I wanted to work in a healthcare setting that focuses on empowering individuals in their decision-making by providing services and resources in a non-judgemental way. Last year, I was a part of the Orientation Week Commission under the Alma Mater Society which worked with the Student Experience Office to provide further diversity and inclusion training to all orientation leaders to help foster a safe, inclusive, and accessible environment for incoming students. I’ve also volunteered with the Sexual Health Resource Centre, supporting students and Kingston community members in the areas of sex and sexual health. Though not always easy, it’s really important to me to be able to create safe spaces that acknowledge and respond to the impact of social inequities. I’m looking forward to continuing to grow in knowledge and best practices and to work alongside other healthcare providers.”

*This nursing student uses a **succinct narrative of some recent career experiences**, sharing only the details from their experience and resume that make their response targeted.*

Candidate (for a data analytics position):

“I’ve just completed my fourth year of applied mathematics and engineering at Queen’s. When I was considering engineering programs, I decided to move from BC to pursue my studies in Ontario, as I enjoy taking risks and immersing myself in new environments. I’ve really tried challenging myself in all areas of my life. After first year, I joined the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves and I’ve spent my summers as a soldier, completing boot camp and various military courses. At Queen’s, I improved my leadership skills by being an engineering orientation leader, where I mentored 30 first year engineering students. After my second year, I did an international internship as a backend software engineer at a fin-tech start-up in the Philippines. This experience was when I really came to understand data science. As I spent more time working alongside the data science team, I became fascinated with how they were able to digest large sets of data and create relevant correlations. I’m excited to apply for this role because I see the important connections between data analytics and client relations—using concrete numbers and trends to tell stories is powerful.”

*This engineering student connects their most impactful educational and professional experiences to their interest in the position, tailoring **their answer to the role and organization** by concluding with a direct connection to the role they are applying for.*



Research
Experience



Previous
Employment



Graduate
Student

PERSONAL QUALITIES APPROACH

Candidate (for a green technologies position):

"Three words I'd use to describe myself that are most relevant to this position are curious, entrepreneurial, and communicator. In my last four years at Queen's, I've sought to broaden my studies in Chemistry to find a focus for my interest in global environmental issues, including being part of student clubs related to advocacy around climate change and taking elective courses in environmental studies to extend my knowledge. I also went to DDQIC's workshops around design thinking which helped me to collaborate with other like-minded people from other disciplines, sparking new realizations for me about how my graduate research in Chemistry could be applied beyond the lab and academia. Last year, I also participated in the Queen's Startup Runway Incubation Program that provides support for individuals interested in technology entrepreneurship, which has helped to hone my business skills and enabled me to become familiar with the pipeline to bring research through to commercialization. I've also honed my technical communication by participating in lecture competitions, as well as being a TA for a few undergraduate chemistry courses. I'm really excited to be applying for this role as it perfectly blends my technical skills and passion."

*This international grad student **prepared three points ahead of the interview** so they can confidently provide examples from their life experience to demonstrate their personal qualities.*

Candidate (for a QUIP communications internship):

"Over the last couple of years, I've made an effort to be more thoughtful, open-minded, and confident with my professional choices. As an English student who wants to work in communications after graduation, I've tried to work in positions with very different responsibilities to better understand where my skillset and interest are best applied—I started by working as a student-journalist at The Queen's Journal in my second and third year at university to get a feel for the journalism industry. Then, I took a course in creative writing in third year that concluded with the professor publishing an anthology of the students' work. I was also able to get my stories published in a couple of independent literary magazines. It's taken a lot of confidence in my own abilities to jump at these new and different opportunities, as well as a willingness to adapt my skills and learn from each environment. Being able to write professionally requires a high tolerance for receiving criticism, so I've used these experiences to become more secure in my abilities and accepting of feedback. Now, I'm interested in this internship because it offers an additional opportunity to learn about possible career options in communications."

*This liberal arts student uses their past work experience to demonstrate their attitude towards the job by **focusing on specific examples** to provide evidence for the characteristics they've listed.*



Previous
Employment



New
Graduate



Graduate
Student

GENERAL QUESTIONS

General questions allow the interviewer(s) to get to know your interest in the position you are applying for and your motivation for working at their organization. These questions are also a way for them to assess how your values and attitude align with their organizational culture.

INTERVIEWER: “WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK HERE?”

Candidate:

“I’ve developed my ability to actively listen to customers through my work experience with different organizations. I’m ready to apply that expertise with an organization committed to its employees and consistently ranked as one of the city’s best places to work. I love working with people, and I’m particularly excited that this role will allow me to use my bilingualism to work with clients. Something that really impressed me was how your five-year plan focuses on capacity-building, including various ways of empowering those who are receiving support and services to be part of the conversation. I look forward to being part of a team that brings people and resources together in a dignified, hope-giving way in order to strengthen the community.”


*This political studies student is explaining their interest in the position by detailing the connection between their previous work experience and the current opportunity. They **focus on the skills and experience they bring to the role and the organization** and their enthusiasm for the specific role.*

INTERVIEWER: “WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DO YOU BELIEVE WILL MAKE YOU SUCCESSFUL IN THIS POSITION?”

Candidate:

“As someone who’s passionate about innovation and seeks to find better ways to do work, I appreciate how your school board is forward-focused. I was really impressed by how quickly you were able to transition your operations to a remote setting during COVID-19, taking full advantage of the latest video platforms to meet with students in a setting that’s traditionally always been in-person. Offering lessons over Zoom is challenging, but this board really met that challenge head-on and started offering remote lessons in the first week after physical classrooms were closed. When I began looking for a new position, I purposefully sought out school boards that are committed to integrity and innovation, and this one ranks at the top of that list. I also believe my strong background in primary education aligns with the core responsibilities of this role.”

*This education student demonstrates their qualifications for the position by connecting their personal qualities to the school board’s culture and work environment. They **use information about the organization and the responsibilities and skills from the job description** to guide their response.*



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Previous Employment International Experience 2nd or 3rd Year

GENERAL QUESTIONS

INTERVIEWER: “WHAT KIND OF ENVIRONMENT DO YOU WORK BEST IN?”

Candidate:

“I believe collaboration leads to better ideas. I prefer a setting where a range of perspectives is welcomed and everyone’s input is taken into consideration. In past roles, I have appreciated regular team meetings that allow ideas, challenges, and concerns to be addressed and provide regular feedback. I also like an open-door policy that makes it easy to check in with other team members, managers, and staff who might bring fresh perspectives to a project, or have other areas of expertise. In my previous summer job at the start-up, this approach helped to maintain a nurturing culture where people were encouraged to innovate, even beyond the scope of their role. And I believe that helped us win our first-place award from Startup Canada last year.”

*This science student explains their ideal work environment by **using positive framing** to reflect on what they have enjoyed about the physical location and culture of their previous employers.*

CONSIDERING THE ETHICS OF A QUESTION

Consider the appropriateness of questions asked in an interview, and what kind of information you share in these situations. Questions regarding age, sexual orientation, religion, marital and family status, race, place of origin, ethnic origin, disability, and financial situation can, in many cases, violate Canada’s Human Rights Act.

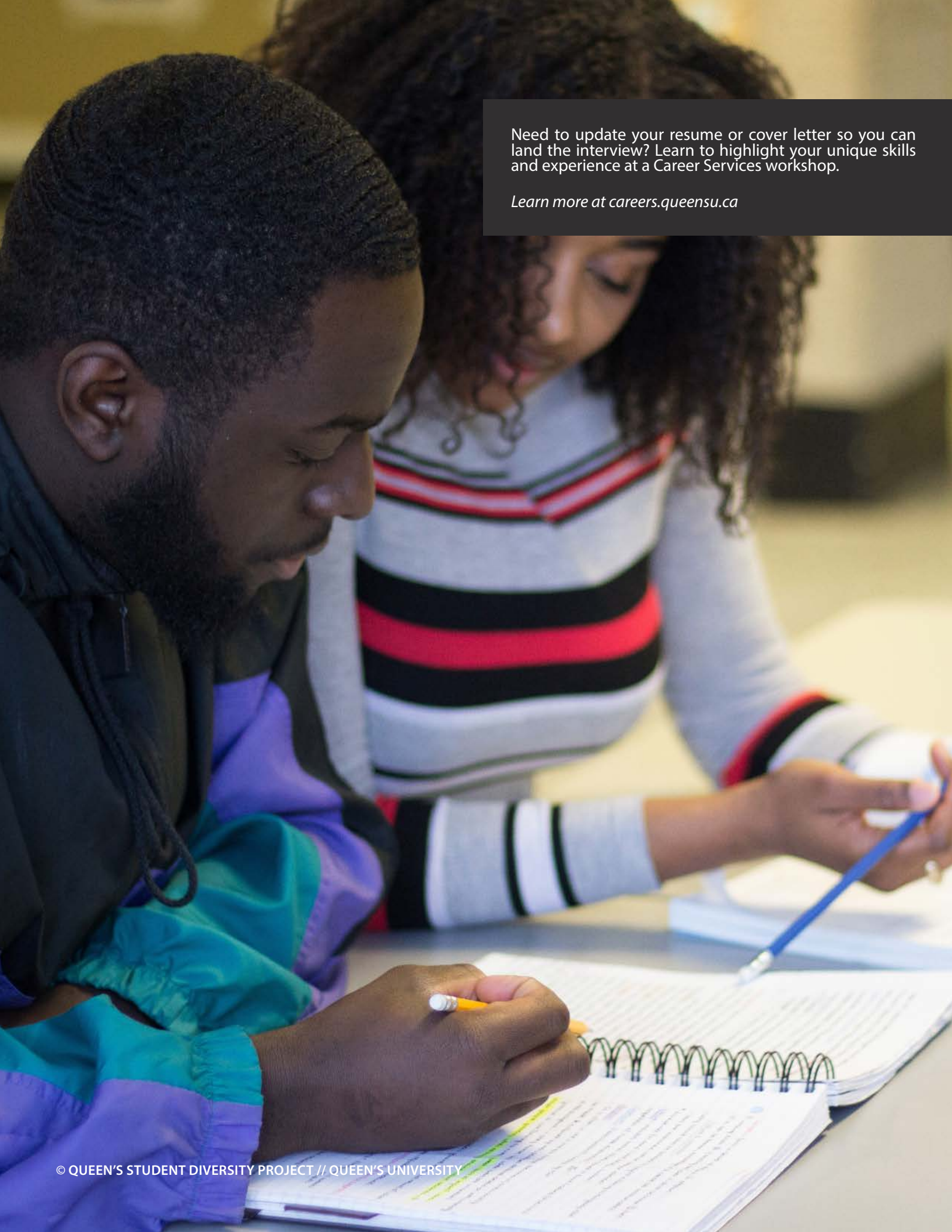
INTERVIEWER: “I NOTICED YOU HAVE AN ACCENT—WHERE ARE YOU FROM?”

Candidate:

“I have an accent because I speak a couple of languages. I’m fluent in Japanese, French, and English. This has shaped my career path because of my multilingualism and cross-cultural understanding. In my internship after third year, I helped to successfully facilitate discussions around branch expansion with the company’s offices in Tokyo and Montreal.”

*In this situation, the student could have chosen to decline answering and addressed their discomfort in sharing personal information. Instead, they **redirect the focus of the conversation to their relevant experience and skills.***

Each situation has its own complexities, and different people will choose to respond in different ways. To clarify your own strategies for responding to questions requesting personal information, we recommend booking a Career Consultation appointment for tailored support.

A photograph of two students, a man and a woman, sitting at a desk and studying. The man in the foreground is wearing a black jacket over a purple and teal shirt, holding a yellow pencil, and looking down at a spiral-bound notebook. The woman behind him is wearing a grey sweater with red and black horizontal stripes, holding a blue pen, and also looking down at a notebook. The background is softly blurred.

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Clubs and
Activities



First Year



2nd or 3rd
Year

BEHAVIOURAL QUESTIONS

Behavioural questions reveal evidence of past behaviours and experiences, indicating whether you have the skills and experience for the role for which you are interviewing. Notice how each of these students uses the S-T-A-R formula (see side panel) to structure their response.

INTERVIEWER: “CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU HAD TO LEAD PEOPLE THROUGH A CHALLENGE?”

Candidate:

“Earlier this year, I was the co-chair of a club that faced a last-minute venue cancellation for an upcoming event. On top of finding a new venue, reviewing our budget, and revising our communications, the initial venue refused to refund our deposit. After speaking with my co-chair, I called a meeting with the events committee to organize our action plan. Through discussion, I arranged that the assistant events manager would be responsible for working through the issues with the vendor. Together, we came up with a process: they’d meet with the venue manager, and then follow-up with me to determine what had happened. The assistant discovered there’d been a miscommunication between the club and the venue at the initial signing of the contract, and was able to get 90% of the deposit back. Because of the new process I’d developed for the events committee, the rest of the team was able to focus on adapting the event to the new space so we could proceed as planned.”

This arts student uses an extracurricular experience to discuss their leadership style. They start by summarizing the key points of the situation and then focus on the resolution.

Candidate:

“I was the lead for a group participating in the Queen’s Innovation Centre Summer Initiative Pitch Competition last year. This opportunity was a major endeavour because we were working to secure additional funding from investors for our business. Things were going well, until our head of communications fell ill and wasn’t able to finish the presentation design. I immediately called a team meeting to see how we could redistribute the workload in order to maintain our project schedule. By offloading some of my responsibilities to those with similar skills, I cleared time to construct complex macros in Excel showcasing key data and took the lead with finishing up the presentation slides for our pitch. Although it was already a jam-packed week, I was able to steer the team to cover the extra responsibilities. In the process, I got smarter about prioritizing the truly important needs around our presentation and motivating the rest of the team through this challenging time. We placed in the third place category, alongside two other teams, and received \$10,000 in funding.”

This science student selects a specific moment they demonstrated leadership for their response. They identify both their individual and collaborative responsibilities within the situation to show where they stepped up.



THE S-T-A-R FORMULA

A great framework for answering interview questions.

Situation

Briefly describe a specific situation you were in, including the context and the individuals involved.

Task/Tactics

Describe your responsibility in that situation. Convey your rationale, including your thought process and the options considered.

Actions

Outline the steps that were taken to complete the task or overcome the challenge. It is important to focus on your individual contribution even in a collaborative setting– e.g. “I did ABC,” instead of “we did ABC.”

Results

Explain the tangible outcomes generated by your actions. Consider emphasizing what you accomplished, both qualitatively and quantitatively, or what you learned from this situation.



Previous
Employment



QUIP



Technical
Experience

BEHAVIOURAL QUESTIONS

INTERVIEWER: “CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU HAD A CONFLICT WITH A CO-WORKER AND HOW YOU HANDLED THAT?”

Candidate:

“During my QUIP internship last year, I experienced a conflict with another intern because of a miscommunication. At first, they blamed me for the issues, but I wanted to address the conflict with a calm frame of mind, so I took some time to think about what had happened. The next day, I booked a meeting with my colleague to discuss it. In the meeting, I listened to their perspective before respectfully explaining my own understanding of what had happened, instead of trying to assert my ideas above theirs. In conversation, it became clear there were mistakes on both sides and we were able to have a productive dialogue about our work styles and how, in the future, we could collaborate more effectively to avoid another miscommunication. We left the conversation with a clear image of what happened and we were able to continue working together without any problems for the rest of our time at the organization.”


*This arts student explains their conflict resolution style by **describing the situation and what role they played in sorting through the disagreement.** They refrain from speaking negatively about other individuals involved in the conflict.*

INTERVIEWER: “CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU HAD TO MANAGE A PROJECT? WHAT DID YOU DO ENSURE THAT THE PROJECT WAS SUCCESSFUL?”

Candidate:

“After my second year of university, I worked as a summer student at an engineering consulting firm in Toronto. While I was there, I volunteered to lead a project in which I was responsible for using a stand-alone 3D camera to create a virtual map of the office’s interior. The purpose was to test the camera’s capabilities to ensure it would perform as expected before using it on the site of an ongoing project. To accomplish the task, I had to undergo special training to handle the camera safely. I also worked with the project teams to understand what capabilities they wanted to test. I created a map for the camera’s placements that would ensure full and even coverage of all necessary areas, took the scans, and used a special software application to combine the scans together into a virtual environment. It wasn’t initially successful however, after receiving some feedback from colleagues and making some tweaks and modifications, I was able to use the 3D camera to create the desired map. I shared my experience and learning with the project lead, who could then successfully use it on the project site.”

*This engineering student explains their project management style by speaking about the purpose of the project and the steps they took to complete it. They **use a specific example and include the outcome** of the project.*



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Previous
Employment



2nd or 3rd
Year



New
Graduate

SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS

Situational questions allow the interviewer to see how you address an issue, including your thought process and what you consider important to assess.

INTERVIEWER: “HOW WOULD YOU HANDLE BEING FACED WITH AN AGGRESSIVE CUSTOMER?”

Candidate:

“I think it’s very important to stay calm and to listen carefully to the customer’s complaints if they are dissatisfied with our service. In this situation, I’d take the customer aside so we could speak about their concerns in a quiet space without interruptions. I’d be empathetic and solution-focused, striving to focus on the options available within my power to remedy the problem. As we got closer to the root of their concerns, I’d see what I could do for them in the moment to help, or I’d point them towards other resources they might be able to access. On one hand, I want to ensure the customer feels heard, but I’d also want to make sure I didn’t overpromise anything. If it became a situation where the customer is still dissatisfied, or if the situation escalates into harassment, I’d then ask my supervising manager to help with the situation.”

*This computing student discusses their reaction to the stressful situation, but **focuses on the steps taken to de-escalate the conflict.***

INTERVIEWER: “HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND IF YOU WITNESSED A CO-WORKER DOING SOMETHING THAT VIOLATES COMPANY POLICY?”

Candidate:

“First, I’d make sure I fully understand what happened, and then I’d document it for reference. I’d reflect on the different options for action, as well as how my actions would affect that co-worker. Something I might do is to have a direct and honest conversation with the co-worker first, to confirm whether what I saw was actually how I interpreted it. But this may depend on what the violation was in the first place and whether, in certain situations, I feel comfortable confronting the individual. I believe it’s crucial to follow official channels and guidelines for reporting violations of company policy, so I’d share the information with my manager for appropriate follow-up. This ensures the policy violation doesn’t continue and the situation can be handled properly by a manager and/or by the HR department from that point forward.”

*This MBA student **aligns their own values and morals with the protocol of the organization** to demonstrate how they would handle an ethical dilemma in the workplace. They share their thoughts for each aspect of the situation to provide insights to their reasoning.*



THE C.H.I.L.L.S. FRAMEWORK

A great framework for answering situational questions.

Clarify

Ask questions to clarify the scope of the problem posed.

Hone in

State your assumptions.

Issues

Explain any ethical, technical, or business challenges that you see presented.

List

Write and/or talk through the steps of the various solutions you envision.

Look

Explain possible outcomes from those options, including advantages and disadvantages.

Select

Decide and explain which course of action you will take.



Previous
Employment



2nd or 3rd
Year



Graduate
Student

SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS

INTERVIEWER: “WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE ASSIGNED TO A PROJECT WITH A COLLEAGUE WHO SEEMS TO WORK DIFFERENTLY THAN YOU?”

Candidate:

“Having worked in many different kinds of teams before, my experience is that communication and work style have a huge influence on the success of a project. I’d start by observing how my colleague follows-up and communicates with others to learn how our styles differ. For example, I tend to pursue consultation with my coworkers on projects as a way of including multiple perspectives in my work, but I’ve often worked with others who prioritize efficiency over inclusivity in their work. After identifying the differences in our approaches, I think it would be helpful to have an open conversation regarding what I’d observed and how we can find common ground in order to make the collaboration process smoother. This approach also ensures we’re on the same page in terms of how we’re measuring progress, meeting deadlines, and communicating with each other as well as with our clients, while minimizing frustration and misunderstanding.”


*This graduate student **backs up** their response with examples of past work experience, while acknowledging different points of view.*

INTERVIEWER: “WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE ASKED TO PERFORM A TASK YOU’VE NEVER DONE BEFORE?”

Candidate:

“I think my approach to tackling a new task would vary depending on the nature of the task—for example, if there was a safety element related to the task, I’d explain to my supervisor that I’d never done it before, make sure I’d completed all the necessary training, and ask for a demonstration. In the past, I’ve worked in my city’s Parks and Facilities department and we needed to drive different types of trucks for the job. I’d never driven a truck before starting that contract, so I made sure my supervisor was aware of my experience level and slowly learned how to use trucks safely to move tools and supplies between job sites. However, in other cases that are not safety-related, I’d ask for all the necessary information and then use my experiences and skills to begin. I would loop my supervisor back into the process for feedback at regular intervals, and ask questions as they arise. When I’m learning something new, it’s important to prioritize communication and use the resources available to me to ensure the learning process is as smooth as it can be.”

*This engineering student **states** their assumptions about the situation before using examples to illustrate how they would approach it.*



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²According to the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) and institutionally reported data.

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QUIP



Technical
Experience



Skills From
Academics

TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

Technical questions test for specific knowledge that is related to the role and organization. Some companies may require applicants to complete an in-person or online technical test alongside an application package prior to the interview.

INTERVIEWER: “DESCRIBE A RECENT EXAMPLE OF A PROCESS IMPROVEMENT YOU HAVE MADE. WHY DID YOU SEE THE NEED TO MAKE A CHANGE?”

Candidate:

“On my internship last year, I was given the task of leading an investigation about why moisture was a difficult property to control on a gypsum processing line. The processing line was typically getting 5% yield loss each week due to moisture being out of spec. The operators controlling the line were aware of certain controls they could change that would influence moisture such as feed rate, spray water flow, and temperature. But, over the years, different operators had different preferences as to how they liked running the process and there were many differences of opinion on the best way to control moisture.

To tackle this problem, I applied something I’d learned in my engineering studies by designing a controlled experiment. I worked with operators to go through various process conditions where we would systematically control different variables like feed rate and temperature, and measure the effect they had on the moisture of the gypsum. After running the tests and analyzing the data in Excel, we found a set of optimal conditions to run the process to control moisture.

We updated the standard operating procedures and created a report that was shared with the operators so they knew why we suggested the changes. Some of the operators were skeptical because they believed their way was best. But after several weeks of running the gypsum process under the new conditions, the data was clear. We reduced the yield loss from out of spec moisture from around 5% to less than 0.5% each week. We estimated the improvement saved the company about \$60,000/year. It was a great success, and I was commended by my manager for my ability to carry out the process despite the pushback.”

*This engineering student references core concepts and theories learned during their studies to **demonstrate the knowledge behind their practical experience in the field.** They also made sure to identify the specific problem and walk through how they found a solution.*

INTERVIEWER: “DRAW A RISING – EDGE D FLIP FLOP, TRUTH TABLE, AND ITS TIMING DIAGRAM. THEN, WRITE VERILOG CODE TO CREATE THE FLIP FLOP.”

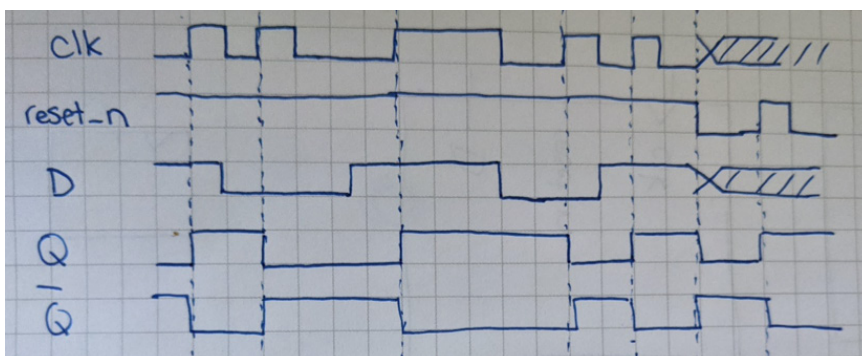
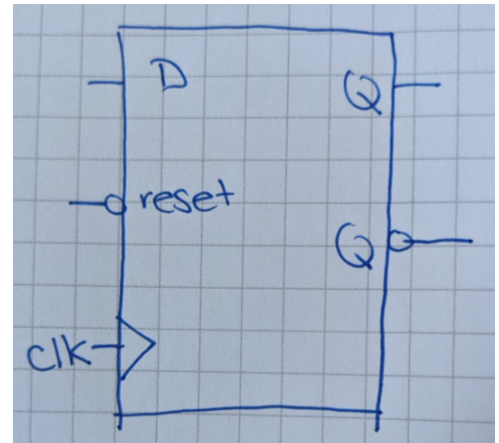
Candidate:

“I’m starting by drawing the flip flop, including the clock (clk) cycle, the asynchronous reset (reset_n), the Q output, and the D input. Then, I’m going to highlight that the D latch is the input into the flop, Q latch is the output out of the flop and the clock is the timing element of the flip flop. Note that, an asynchronous reset may also be included, and helps to set the flip flop’s value back to a specific state. The final flip flop looks like this...

The reset is negatively triggered, so I’ve put a “NOT” on it, and the output is either 1 (HIGH, Q) or 0 (LOW, and not Q). Now, I’m drawing the truth table...

While the clock isn’t necessary, it demonstrates the asynchronous reset is separate from the clock.

Next, I’m showing that the asynchronous reset can still create an output, even without a clock signal, and therefore no input signal. When asynchronous reset is high and there’s no clock signal, then the Q output will be the value of the asynchronous reset, and not the D input. The Q_n is going to be the opposite of Q, since it is the negative Q. D will only be triggered when a clock exists. When the clock is high, then the Q will take on the D signal only at every LOW to HIGH clock transition.



Now, I’m drawing the timing diagram of the D flip flop, with the clock at the top. Then, for each beginning of a clock cycle, I’m drawing a dotted line straight down to ensure the cycles all line up. Start with reset_n being HIGH, and only set it to LOW further along to show that Q will follow the asynchronous reset value, and D and clk can be anything. D doesn’t need to be aligned with Q and can change whenever, but Q will only change on the rising edge of a clock cycle.

Finally, I'm writing the code. First, I'm creating the module and naming it accordingly, with the pins being D, the clock, and the Q. For example:

```
rising_edge_d_ff(D, clk, Q);
```

The input and output pins are in the parentheses. Some of them are inputs and some of them are outputs:

```
input D;
input clk;
output Q;
```

Next, I'm adding the condition at which the flip flop changes.

```
always @(posedge clk)
```

I used the positive edge, since whenever the clock is going positive, this statement occurs. If you were asking for a falling edge, I'd just need to change the `posedge` to be `negedge` instead. Then, I'm adding the statement within the flip flop, followed by ending the always loop, and the module.

```
begin
Q <= D;
end
endmodule
```

One final add-on is the use of an asynchronous reset. The use of the asynchronous reset puts the circuit in a specific state, without an active clock, and reduces the latency of the circuit. For such an addition, a couple of components must be added.

First, an input for the asynchronous reset signal must be added. I usually call it `reset_n`.

```
rising_edge_d_ff(D, clk, Q, reset_n);
```

Next, the input must be added.

```
input reset_n;
```

Next, the always statement should include both the clk and the `reset_n`.

```
always @(posedge clk or reset_n)
```

Finally, I add the if statement that is setting the output to be the reset value. Usually, the value is set to 0 (or LOW), but can sometimes also be set to 1 (or HIGH).

```
begin
if (reset_n == 1'b0)
Q <= 1'b0;
else
Q <= D;
end
endmodule
```

The final code should be something along these lines:

```
rising_edge_d_ff(D, clk, Q, reset_n);
input D;
input clk;
output Q;
input reset_n;
always @(posedge clk or reset_n)
begin
if (reset_n == 1'b0)
Q <= 1'b0;
else
Q <= D;
end
endmodule."
```

*This computing student **works through the given question step-by-step** to demonstrate their coding competency to the interviewer. They are **narrating their answer out loud** to explain their thought process and acknowledging anything about which they are uncertain.*

If you will be writing code in an interview, it can be helpful to practice physically writing code on paper ahead of the interview to adapt your process to the space constraints. It may also help to practice with a friend so you have experience solving the problem while simultaneously explaining it out loud to someone else.





Previous
Employment



2nd or 3rd
Year



New
Graduate

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Questions about failures, conflicts, or weaknesses can feel more challenging to answer; however, everyone has made mistakes. Interviewers ask these questions to better understand your thought and decision-making processes, self-awareness, and values. Focus on providing specific examples and explaining how these experiences have helped you to grow. Demonstrate how you ensure that any weaknesses will not impact your future work.

INTERVIEWER: “CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT A WEAKNESS YOU HAVE AND HOW YOU HAVE MANAGED IT?”

Candidate:

“In the past, I’ve struggled with my organizational skills, especially when I have a heavy workload. I’ve learned how to prioritize projects and use my Outlook calendar to map out short-term and long-term milestones so I don’t feel as overwhelmed. I also learned some work strategies such as ‘deep work’ blocking so I’m not distracted, and tracking my time spent on tasks so I can realistically estimate how much time various components of a project might take. I’ve also implemented some constructive feedback from previous supervisors whom I’d approached for support around this, so this no longer impacts my productivity.”

*This concurrent education student picks **a specific weakness they work to manage**, instead of pretending they do not have any weaknesses.*

Candidate:

“One thing I have struggled with is voicing my opinions when I’m starting a new role. For me, I know observing the work flow in the office is my way of learning about the environment, the processes for completing tasks and projects, and my coworkers’ different work styles. But I also know this tendency to take a backseat in the early days limits my impact and makes me come across as less engaged than I am. My hesitancy was pointed out to me by my previous supervisor as a point of improvement, so it’s something I’ve been actively working on by keeping it in mind. When I’m asked for my opinion, I make an extra effort to share my thoughts and concerns, and I regularly go out of my way to ask for clarification when I’m uncertain to push myself out of my comfort zone.”

*This nursing student picks **a weakness that no longer interferes with their work**, explaining the challenges associated with it and the steps they are taking to overcome it.*



Skills From
Academics



First Year



Graduate
Student

INTERVIEWER: “TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN SOMETHING YOU DID OR WERE A PART OF WAS UNSUCCESSFUL.”

Candidate:

“I really struggled with the content in one of the prerequisite math courses I took last year, and I quickly fell behind. It was my first semester of university and I was unfamiliar with the supports available to me, so I ended up failing the midterm. I was always good at high school math and it’s a subject I’m very interested in, so this was very discouraging for me. However, I went to my professor for support and she was really helpful in providing suggestions on how I could improve going forward. In the second half of the course, I intentionally went to office hours to ask questions, set up a study plan with a friend, and made sure I had time to complete the homework each week. If I didn’t understand something, I made sure to get clarification in a timely manner that allowed me to do well on assignments and tests. This plan really helped to set me up for success, and I managed to pass the course with a strong grade.”

*This science student starts their response by **explaining the situation and what they found challenging about it**. They are honest about the setback, but they focus on what they learned through the experience.*

INTERVIEWER: “WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU DID NOT LIKE ABOUT A PREVIOUS POSITION?”

Candidate:

“When I was completing my PhD, I was also a teaching assistant for a few first year courses. I led weekly tutorials where students would complete activities to reinforce lecture materials. Many of the activities I was expected to lead were developed a number of years ago by the department when the course was first launched. I felt students didn’t entirely relate to them, so the tutorials were becoming less effective than they could have been. After inquiring about the possibility of swapping the old activities for some new ideas I had, the department shared they’d be prioritizing consistency for the time being but appreciated my feedback. They took a note of my suggestions and I continued with the planned activities. I understood and respected the department’s rationale for maintaining the curriculum, but the experience taught me that I enjoy working in spaces with more room for innovation and creativity—which has strongly guided my post-graduation job search.”

*This graduate student focused on a specific aspect of their previous position that made it more challenging to achieve success and explained what they learned by managing the situation. They **refrain from talking negatively about the experience**, while demonstrating their concerns about it.*

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

The last question asked in most interviews is “Do you have any questions for us?” Prepare by thinking ahead about what you might want to ask. Your questions allow you to get information that will help you assess whether this opportunity is what you want. Your questions also contribute to the impression you make on the interviewer(s) by revealing your priorities.

It is usually recommended to avoid asking questions related to salary, benefits, and personal topics until an offer has been extended to you. As well, try not to ask questions you could have answered yourself through a quick Google search.

INTERVIEWER: “THOSE WERE ALL OF OUR QUESTIONS FOR YOU TODAY—DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS FOR US?”

Candidate:

- “What are the challenges of this position?”
- “Who would I be working with and reporting to?”
- “How would you describe the organization’s culture?”
- “What are the organization’s top priorities this year, and how does the role contribute?”
- “What type of skills enable employees to be successful here?”
- “What kind of professional development opportunities are provided to employees in the organization?”
- “Can you tell me what a typical day in this job would be like?”
- “What changes would you like to see made over the next year by the person who takes this job?”

*These students **ask open-ended questions to learn further details about the position and the organization.** This approach allows them to better understand the expectations of a successful candidate and demonstrates their interest in the role and a future with the organization.*

WHAT ABOUT SALARY & NEGOTIATION?

Be prepared in case your interviewer asks about your salary expectations. Research the market rate for similar work in the area, keeping in mind that salary is affected by your skill level and qualifications, as well as by other factors like the local cost of living and labour market demand.

For further support on the topic of salary negotiation, we recommend the following resources:

- LinkedIn Learning courses:
 - **Negotiating Your Job Offer**
 - **Negotiating Your Salary**
- Labour market surveys from professional associations
- Websites like Glassdoor.com for company reviews and salary ranges submitted by current and past employees

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Skills From
Academics



Clubs and
Activities



New
Graduate

DISCLOSURE

There may be times during your interview processes where you need to decide whether or not—and if so, when—to disclose personal information to an employer. Students often wonder if they want to disclose information related to disability, identity, political activity, or religious activity, and when would be most effective if they do. During an interview, you may want to disclose some aspect of your identity...

- **To identify as part of an equity-seeking group.** If an employer is recruiting candidates from equity-seeking groups, disclosing may help your application and increase the likelihood you receive an interview. This is often a sign the organization is open and supportive of disclosures.
- **To demonstrate relevant knowledge and experience.** If the position involves working within a specific community, you may want to disclose that you are member of that community, and any experiences you have from living, volunteering, or working in that community.
- **To acquire accommodations.** If you require an accommodation, you will need to disclose what type of accommodation you need (but you do not need to disclose any health information). This does not necessarily need to happen in an interview. You can wait to get a job offer, and then discuss what accommodation(s) you require.
- **To lead and shape the narrative.** You are the best person to inform an interviewer about who you are. Initiating the discussion on your terms can help you to feel more empowered, while dispelling misinformation and representing your needs.

INTERVIEWER: “CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF?”

Candidate:

“This contract involves working in an emergency housing facility for young people to coordinate resource workshops and presentations. I’m interested in finding solutions for social inequities because my family struggled financially for most of my life. We depended on the local food bank and I experienced homelessness for about six months when I was a teenager. I’m sharing this information because I’ve spent the last four years trying to advance the resources I’ve personally depended on for success. I used my education to learn more about the structure of social inequities, while volunteering at the student-run food bank. Having experienced food insecurity before, I often had a unique perspective to offer on operations. I believe I can bring my academic background and personal experience with homelessness to this job to create effective support systems for young people in need.”

This student chooses to disclose their personal information because of how it demonstrates relevant knowledge and experience for the position they are interviewing for.

Decisions about disclosure are very personal and each person needs to build an approach that works for them. For further details on this topic, please refer to the Disclosure and Accommodation tipsheet on the Career Services website, located on the “Tipsheets” webpage.



Previous
Employment



Clubs and
Activities



2nd or 3rd
Year

TARGETING YOUR ANSWERS

It is important to reflect on the specific context of the interview so you are able to target your responses to the micro-skills, knowledge, demographics, jargon, and environmental factors that differ between positions and organizations. You can target your response by choosing what to highlight in each interview.

In this example, a psychology student is applying for two summer jobs. Both positions are related to their degree and work experiences, but in different ways. Notice how they adapt their response to one question.

INTERVIEWER: “CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU HAD TO USE HIGH LEVEL COMMUNICATION SKILLS?”

Response A - Research Assistant

“While I’ve had lots of chances to develop my communication skills in summer camps and tutoring, the experience I want to tell you about is when I worked on a lesson for Science Quest. I’d developed a presentation about the psychology of perception to teach to a class of Grade 9 students. I thought it was exciting; however, when I started presenting they all just stared at me with blank eyes. I made it through the presentation, but I realized I needed to do something different next time. At the end, a few students wrote ‘less talking more doing’ on their feedback forms. After talking to my colleagues and getting some input, I decided to break up the way I was communicating and have more variety. Instead of just having a lot of words on my slides, I added more graphs, charts, images, videos, and, most importantly, activities and discussion to get the students involved in a hands-on way and to see things for themselves. When I ran the class the following week, it was a totally different story. I realized how important it is to understand my audience and vary my methods of communication to keep their interest and convey complex concepts in an engaging and informative manner. I’m confident this experience will help me in running the orientation sessions about how research participants can complete their activities.”

Response B - Summer Camp Counsellor

“Last year, I had the opportunity to work with the Partners in Education (PIE) program through Pathways to Education where I was partnered up with a high school student in the North end of Kingston to help them with their math homework. They were really struggling with some of the geometry questions, saying their brain ‘just didn’t work that way’ and they wanted to give up. I tried explaining the concepts over and over again, but they were just getting more upset, so we took a break. I asked them instead about what kinds of things they liked doing outside of the classroom and found out they were really into baking—which I am, too. Then, it hit me. I decided to try switching it to a lesson about cooking—but secretly still about geometry—and it worked. With the new examples, they were able to see things more concretely and smiled and said ‘I can do this!’ It was satisfying to see how proud they were, but it was also a valuable lesson for me to remember who my audience is, and to think about their needs and perspectives when trying to get my message across. I really think this experience will be helpful when I’m working with children with special needs, as I now pay attention to each person’s unique situation and needs.”



AFTER AN INTERVIEW

When the interview is finished, reflect on the experience and turn your attention towards the next steps.

ASSESS THE EXPERIENCE

Make notes about how you think your interview went. Write down the questions you answered well, and those you found more challenging. Consider what you would like to improve for the next time you meet with an employer.

FOLLOW UP

Send the interviewers a brief thank you note for the opportunity to learn more about the organization and to interview for the position. Depending on your situation, either confirm your interest in the job or withdraw from the hiring process in writing.

CONSIDER THE OFFER

You are looking to find a position consistent with your values, strengths, and goals. When you receive an offer, read it over and discuss it with friends, family, a career counsellor, or (in some cases) a lawyer to decide if it is what you want. Respond in writing to indicate whether you are accepting or declining the offer, and complete any actions you were asked to take as a condition. Once you have accepted an offer, even verbally, employers will consider it a binding commitment. Avoid going back on your word, as accepting an offer and then rejecting it afterwards can damage your reputation and pose an inconvenience to employers.

SAMPLE THANK YOU NOTE

Open the note with a personalized greeting and then focus on showing appreciation for the interviewers' time during the interview. Mention something specific you enjoyed learning about, or that you discussed in the interview. Finally, reaffirm your interest in the position and show enthusiasm for the next steps of the interview process by reiterating your openness to be contacted. Adjust the tone of the thank you note to reflect your writing style, situation, and industry.

Hello _____,

Thank you again for your time in interviewing me for the position of _____ with (organization). I enjoyed our conversation, and it was a pleasure to learn more about the (Job Title) position and the team. It sounds like an exciting opportunity, and I am eager to contribute my skills and experience, particularly in (project area/any aspect of the role that was discussed).

I look forward to further discussing this opportunity with you, and hearing about the next steps in the interview process. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide additional information about my fit for this role.

Sincerely,

For professional mental health support, consider accessing additional resources offered by Student Wellness Services.

Learn more at www.queensu.ca/studentwellness



MANAGING INTERVIEW STRESS AND ANXIETY

Getting invited to an interview is something to celebrate. However, the time before and during interviews can also be stressful. These are some actions you can take to reduce your stress and mentally prepare yourself for the experience.

HAVE A GROWTH MINDSET

Remind yourself of your strengths and experiences to reinforce an optimistic outlook about the opportunity. Develop a growth mindset by focusing on how you will grow and learn through the experience. The challenge of an interview is an opportunity for you to improve your skills and learn more about your strengths and weaknesses.

CHANNEL YOUR ENERGY

When you are experiencing anxiety about an interview, channel your energy into an action to relieve some of the tension you are experiencing.

FOCUS ON YOUR PHYSICAL SELF

Reduce stress by taking time to rest and relax. Depending on what works for you, this time can be spent engaging with a book or a movie that makes you laugh, participating in a meditation or deep breathing activity, or exercising.

PRACTICE AND PREPARE

Preparing for the interview will help you feel more confident and comfortable during the actual interview. You may want to reach out to family or friends to practice with, or just for general support. Remember that no interview is perfect, so aim to do your best rather than expect perfection. Set focused, realistic goals for yourself.

MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

S = Stop

Stop what you are doing: Press the pause button on your thoughts and actions.

T = Take

Take a few deep breaths to centre yourself and bring yourself fully into the present moment.

O = Observe

Observe what is going on with your body, emotions, and mind. This assessment can include the physical sensations and the feelings you are experiencing, as well as the assumptions you are making.

P = Proceed

Proceed with whatever activity you were doing when you began the exercise, making a conscious, intentional choice to incorporate what you just learned.

