Interview Skills

Excel Staff Development Program
Careers Day

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Careers Advisor for researchers
11th March 2024

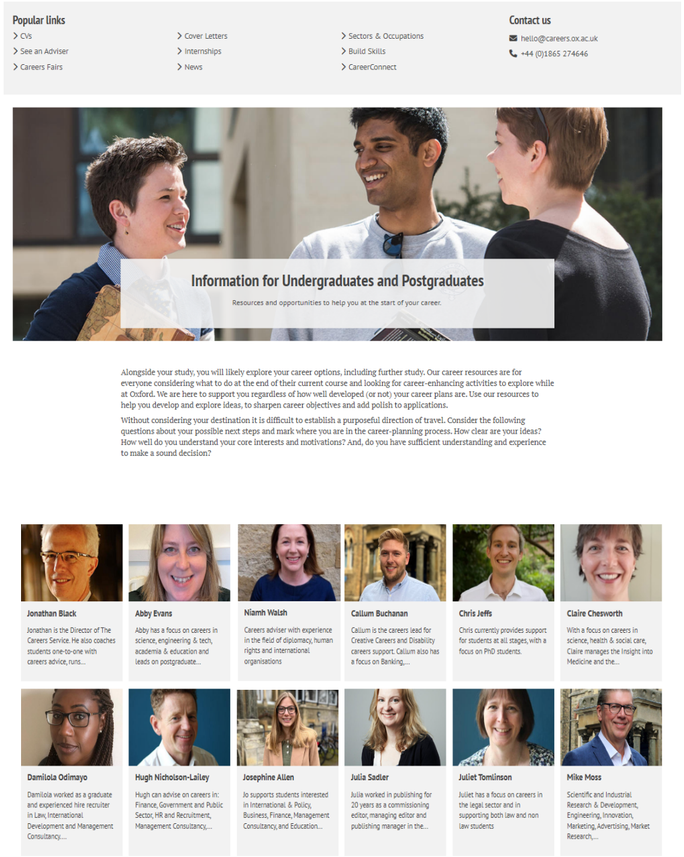
Plan for the session

1. Welcome and signposting
2. Preparing for an interview
3. Types of interview questions
4. Frameworks for structuring answers to interview questions
5. Tips for managing your nerves
6. Open the floor for questions
7. Wrap up

www.careers.ox.ac.uk

Careers Support at Oxford

Students -SSO



All Staff

Careers Club Launching 20th March

this series will include monthly online and face to face sessions to further 'Inspire and Equip Professional Services Staff to Develop their Careers' plus a new area of the POD website dedicated to career development. We expect to support some 600 staff through these sessions per year.

Register for the launch

Fixed Term Research Staff

Dr Susan Black

Dr Anne Wolfes

Interviews

Congratulations, you have been invited to interview!

Employer:
1. Can you do the job?
- *technical skills and competencies*
2. Will you do the job?
- *knowledge, interest, motivation*
3. Do you fit the culture of the organisation?
-*personality, values, attitudes*

You:
1. Can you do the job?
- *scope and responsibilities*
2. Will you do the job?
- *room to grow and develop*
3. Do you fit the culture of the organisation?
-*Environment in which you will thrive*

Effective interview preparation

It is important to do your research and prepare interview question responses so you can:

Make a good first impression

Answer questions effectively

- Respond to selector’s criteria
- Present skills and experience effectively

Reduce your nerves…be more confident to

- Cope with unpredictable questions
- Cope with increasingly probing questions

Effective interview preparation

What to expect from the interview process and format

Research the organisation/department/team

Research the role

Research the interviewers

Know your CV and cover letter

Effective interview preparation

What to expect from the interview process and format

- First round short interview (telephone/online)
- panel interview
- presentation
- task
- lunch/informal meetings with colleagues and other applicants
- online or in person

Effective interview preparation

Research the organisation/department/team

- What do I know about this company?
- What attracts me to this company?
- Who are their competitors?
- What is happening in the sector?

Effective interview preparation

Research the role

-Revisit the job description and criteria
- Utilise LinkedIn to study the career pathways of people in similar roles
- What do I know about this type of work?
- What attracts me to this type of work?
- What relevant work experience have I done?
- What kind of training/additional skills am I hoping to gain?

Effective interview preparation

Research the interviewers

- If you are given the names of the interviewers and panel
- Find their roles/profiles on the company website/LinkedIn

Effective interview preparation

Know your CV and cover letter

- Why am I a suitable candidate and what evidence do I have of this?
- What have I gained from my academic/employment/extra-curricular activities?
- What are my ambitions?
- What was my best/worst decision, my greatest achievement?
- What are my main strengths and weaknesses?

Likely Question Topics

Be prepared to talk about your experience relating to:

- The mission, goals and values of the organisation
- What the role demands
- How your research and life experience/skills equip you for it
- Your skills, competencies and aptitudes
- Your vision for your contribution to the organisation
- Your personal career goals

Interview Process

Range of styles and format

Interviewers core interests:
Can you do the job? Will you do the job? Do you fit the culture of the organisation?

- Your experience relevant to any/all their KPIs
  - Do your research beforehand; be ‘commercially aware’
  - Prepare memorable examples to illustrate your competencies
- Whether they can work with you
  - Think about how you want to come across, and how to achieve this

Standard questions for all candidates and score-sheet for all panel

Types of Interview Questions

- Technical questions
- Motivation based questions

- Competency based (situational) questions
- Behavioral questions

- Strength based interviews
- Case study interviews

Interview Questions

Technical questions

- Role specific questions that test your knowledge
- Be prepared to answer simple questions well

Motivation based questions

- Why do you want to work here?
- What does success look like to you?
- What interests you about this work?

Competency-based Questions

Competency interview questions are asked to assess the specific skills and knowledge a candidate possesses that are relevant for the job

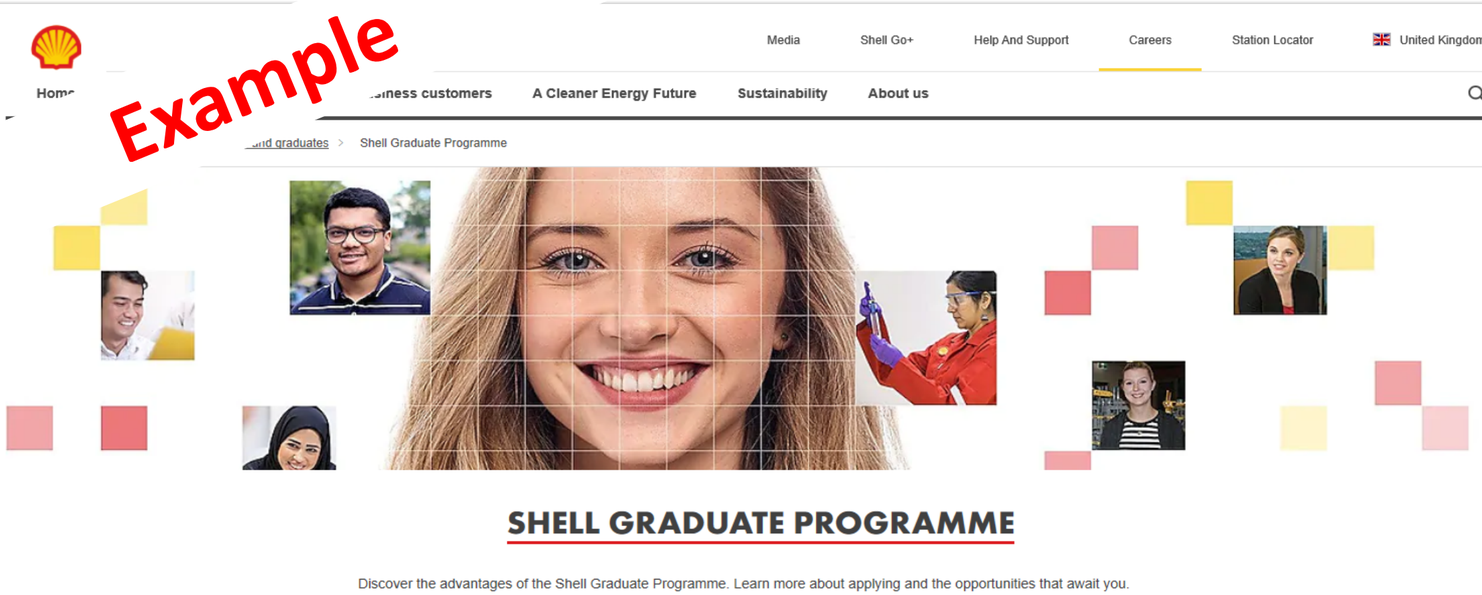
Often start with

‘Tell me about a time when..’

‘Describe a time when’

If you review the essential criteria, it is usually easy to determine competency-based questions for each of the criteria

Competency-based



Capacity

How well you absorb information, analyse problems, make fact-based decisions and propose innovative solutions.

Achievement

How well you get things done, for example your drive, resilience, self-confidence and organizational skills.

Relationships

How well you work in teams, communicate and respect others.

Behavioral Questions

Behavioral questions have no right or wrong answers.

The interviewer is looking for examples from your experience which will demonstrate your working style and personal attributes.

Might also start with

‘Tell me about a time when..’

‘Describe a time when’

“**How** do you manage multiple conflicting deadlines?”

Strengths Based Interviews

Strengths-based questions

Recruiters use them as they are harder to have prepared answers:

- Do you prefer starting or finishing?
- Are you a leader?
- Do you think it’s important that others think your work is of a high quality?
- Do obstacles distract you from working towards a goal?
- What type of people do you prefer working with?
- When are you at your best?

Case study interviews

Example

Client Background

Our client is FashionCo, a player in the women's fashion market. It's been in the industry for a long time, but has experienced declining revenues each year for the past five years.

FashionCo wants to understand:

- What is causing this decline?
- What can the organization do to drive revenue?

FashionCo will have a management meeting at the end of the week, and the CEO wants a recommendation from Bain on how to proceed.

What can they do to drive revenue?

‘Tell me about yourself’

Dealing with the introduction question

Prepare your ‘Elevator Pitch’ 2-3 mins that creates a narrative around your career journey that is specific to the role you are interviewing for.

Past *be selective, what is relevant*

Present *focusing on elements you are doing now relevant to the new role*

Future *should be related to the new role*

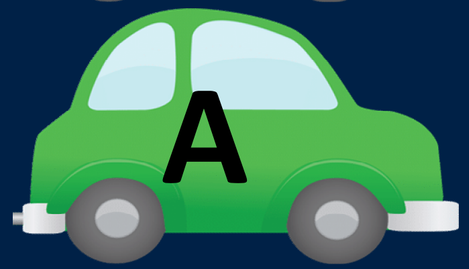
Situation

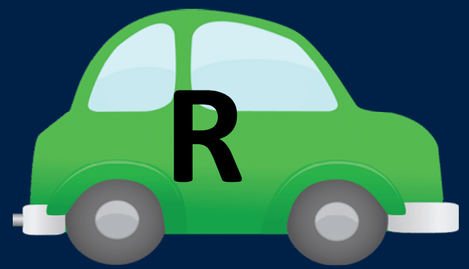
Task/Context

Action

Result

Learning





Provide them with evidence - STAR

Situation:
During my internship last summer, I was responsible for managing various events.

Task:
I noticed that attendance at these events had dropped by 30% over the past 3 years and wanted to do something to improve these numbers.

Action:
I designed new promotional materials to go out to local businesses and the community. I also included a rating sheet to collect feedback on our events and organised internal round table discussions to raise awareness of the issue with our employees.

Result:
We used some of the wonderful ideas we received from the community, made our internal systems more efficient and visible and raised attendance by 18% the first year.

Provide them with evidence – CAR(L)

Context:

You first NOT project first, only give as much context as is needed to understand the situation

Action:

What **you** did, be specific

Result:

What was the outcome of your actions, this complete the example, and gives you a cue to STOP talking

Learning:

Where appropriate it can be very impactful to have some reflection on what you learned from the example, this is particularly strong where the outcome may not be positive

Handling interview questions

Listen carefully to the question
Seek clarification if necessary
Rehearse a phrase to ‘buy time’ when needed

Have evidence to support claims and be specific
Talk about your personal contributions to projects

Be prepared to be challenged/provide follow up context

Interview Craft

You want to build rapport with the panel

Interviews can be formulaic, to avoid that and stand out take opportunities to ask questions of the interviewer where relevant

“I would do ABC, I’d be interested to hear, how do you manage situations like that here?”

“I have used XYZ, what type of systems are used routinely here?”

Dealing with nerves

Be prepared
Practice interviews are invaluable

First Impressions Count

- Smile, confident handshake & body language
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Answer the question!
  - Be succinct, but avoid yes/no answers
- Be interested and enthusiastic
- Leave positively: thank the interviewer

Your Questions

- Avoid asking questions that you may already have been told about in the recruitment materials or are obvious on website
- Recognise that questions give away how much you know
- Good questions to ask are those related to professional development opportunities and research support

- If you have had all your questions answered, say so
- Leave questions about start date/salary and similar details util after you have been offered the job.

After the Interview

Review your performance critically

Make some notes and ask for feedback

Don’t get discouraged