

ASK us about...



Job Prospects

Tips for making a positive first impression

- Dress appropriately. It is a good idea to use deodorant, but try not to use any overpowering scents.
- Greet your interviewer(s) with a firm handshake.
- Take a few seconds to get comfortable in your chair. Sit with your back straight, and head up; this not only makes you look professional, but also will help you to breathe comfortably.
- Look at your interviewer, and think about the position of your body - it will create an impression of confidence and attentiveness if you are facing the person who is questioning you.

After the interview

- Make a list of the questions you were asked
- Review what you felt went well, and what did not go so well
- Ask yourself "Do I want the job if it is offered to me?"

If you were unsuccessful, **ask for feedback**. This is vital as it is the only true way to find out what you can improve for next time

Remember...

After you have sent off your application to a company you need to return any calls they may make to you regarding arranging the interview. You may change your mind and decide not to attend but you must let them know.

Remain professional at all times; within certain industries, you may encounter the same people or companies again.

Remember...

Going for interview can be a daunting process, but preparation is the key. Remember that this is your chance to not only impress a potential employer, but also to find out more about the organisation and the industry.

When answering questions, give clear and concise answers and support them with relevant examples. Before your interview, practice speaking at a steady pace in a clear voice and try not to talk too fast. Deep breathing exercises before the interview can help steady any nerves.

If you want help in preparing for interview, why not have a look at some of the resources listed on the front page? Also remember that Student Services are here to help you: if you would like to speak to a Careers Consultant to help you prepare for interview, then just get in touch (contact details are listed on the front page).

Finally, remember that being selected for interview shows that you have impressed the employer with your application. You now need to build on that positive impression—therefore good preparation and personal performance are crucial.

Don't forget to take...

- A copy of your CV or application form, and the letter inviting you to interview.
- Your presentation, if you have been asked to give one, stored in the appropriate format.
- Any other documents and information you have been asked to take along.
- A reminder note of the information you want to bring to the employers attention e.g. work experience, skills, evidence of your suitability for the post, company information etc.
- Directions to the interview location and the name of the person you are due to meet.

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T: 0121 331 5588
www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services

Interviews

Interviews allow employers to see you in person and check whether you match up to your application. They want to know if you can do the job, adapt to the working environment and how you'll relate to other employees. The better prepared you are, the more fluently you will be able to talk about yourself and any relevant issues at the interview.

Preparation is crucial

It is vital to spend some time before the interview to make sure that you are ready. The following simple steps may help you:

1. **Research** the job role and the organisation thoroughly. Make sure you understand what the role involves by reading the job description and person specification. During the interview the employer will try to establish whether you have the skills required to do the job. They will also want to know that you are interested and motivated by the opportunity so make sure you've found out as much as possible about what the company does.
2. **Look over your application form or CV** to remind yourself what you have told them about your skills and abilities. What evidence can you give that highlights your suitability for the role? Think about your main qualifications for the post and your reasons for applying. Think about the likely questions they will ask or areas they may want to know more about). Pay particular attention to weaker areas and think about how you can present these in a positive way.
3. **Plan your journey**; check the bus or train times, and check for any problems on the roads. Store the employer's contact number in your mobile in case of any problems on the day.
4. **At the interview**, will you be expected to take any tests or deliver a presentation? Check what software they use and whether you will be able to load your presentation from a USB stick.
5. **Make sure your outfit** is appropriate but comfortable. Check over your interview outfit the day before to avoid any last minute problems.

Need more help? Just ASK!

Call in for initial advice at a Help Zone "Drop In" in Student Services, who will refer you to a career specialist if required:-

- City North Campus, First Floor Baker Building
- City Centre Campus, Gosta Green, Room G27
- City South Campus, Second Floor Seacole Building
- Millennium Point: Ask at Reception

Telephone 0121 3315588 or visit our web pages for dates and times of Drop Ins and services at other sites.

Careers and Job Prospects websites:

- <https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/careers>
- www.bcu.ac.uk/alumni/careers

Online e-guidance service:

- www.bcu.ac.uk/askus

Social Media:

- Facebook: [BCUemploymentzone](https://www.facebook.com/BCUemploymentzone)
- Twitter: [@employmentzone](https://twitter.com/employmentzone)

View our full range of leaflets online:
<https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/careers> >> Quick Link >> Handouts

Careers and Job Prospects, August 2011

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Types of interviews

Whilst the basic principles are the same, interviews may follow different formats. The employer should tell you what to expect but if they don't, ring them and try to find out. If you can't, you need to be prepared for anything.

- **Telephone interviews:** Often used by an employer at the screening stage. Make sure you are well prepared when they ring you. Have your CV or application form and any notes to hand and make sure you are somewhere quiet and not likely to be disturbed. If possible use a landline rather than a mobile, you will not have problems with the signal and it is not likely to run out of battery!
- **Face to face, single interviewer:** The most common style for a first interview when the employer is checking your suitability for the position. If you are successful, you may then be asked to attend a more demanding interview, possibly at an Assessment Centre.
- **Face to face, two interviewers:** a typical approach where there is a need for a specialist to ask about technical or scientific areas of the job and there is a need to probe more deeply.
- **Panel interviews:** these are usually used at the final interview stage and are likely to consist of four or five people from different areas of the company.
- **Group interviews:** several candidates are present and will be asked questions in turn. A group discussion may be encouraged and you may be asked to ask and answer questions from the other candidates.
- **Sequential interviews:** there are several interviews in turn, with a different interviewer each time. Each interviewer is likely to ask questions that test a different set of competencies. Make sure you are consistent with your answers as the interviewers will confer with each other to decide who to appoint.

Further resources:

- www.nextstep.direct.gov.uk/gettingajob/applicationsandinterviews - Interview Top Tips
- www.prospects.ac.uk/interview_tips - Graduate Prospects' guide to Applications and Interviews
- **Going for Interviews** – Special Interest Booklet available from the Student Services library
- **Making an Impact: The Graduate Job Interview** - AGCAS DVD (available on iCity)
- **Interview Preparation Workshops** – see the Careers and Job Prospects iCity pages for up to date information or ask at Student Services reception, City North, City Centre (Gosta Green) and City South campuses
- There are a number of books, handouts and DVDs available from Student Services at City North campus, and upon request at other campuses.

All candidates are asked more or less the same questions. The organisation determines the selection criteria based on the roles they are recruiting for and then, in an interview, examines whether or not you have evidence of possessing these.

(Recruitment Manager, The Cooperative Group)

First impressions count

Remember, the interview starts the minute you walk into the building!

You may be assessed on your behaviour while you wait; think about your interaction with other candidates, your interest in the tour of the premises, the interest you show in any presentation you are given about the company, your behaviour over lunch etc.

Stay positive throughout the time you are there and make sure you find out what **you** want to know about the organisation. This is your opportunity to ask questions and to make sure the organisation and position are right for you.

Do you know what the job involves?

Prepare some questions to ask at the end of the interview that demonstrate your interest and knowledge. Do not ask about pay or holiday entitlement - it is not appropriate at this stage.

Possible questions to ask:

- What kind of training is provided for new staff?
- Will I have a mentor to support me during my induction period?
- Are there targets? What sort? How often are they reviewed?
- How will my performance in the workplace be assessed?

Have a think about the type of job you are applying for, and also remember to check the job description; there will be many other questions that you could ask!

Typical interview questions

Interview questions are designed to find out if you are the best person for the job. **Give examples of things you have done** whenever possible to back up your answers. Examples can come from your academic, working or leisure interests. Try and use different examples each time so you are not repeating yourself.

Questions may be competency/capability based or scenario based. Very occasionally interviewers may ask seemingly irrelevant questions to see how you react under pressure, for example, "Which character from a book would you like to be?" Or "What would you do with a brick?" If this happens, **do not panic**. Interviewers are not looking for a right or wrong answer, they are more concerned about how you behave and whether you can stay calm under pressure.

Examples of questions:

- **Why have you applied to us?**
Talk about the employer and what attracts you to the company. Be specific: reputation, training, ethos, nature of the work - employers are wary of generalisations
- **Why should we offer you this position?**
Match the required skills for the role with your relevant skills and experience. Be specific and give examples of things you have done to back up your answers whenever possible
- **Tell me about yourself**
Give relevant information about your skills, achievements and experiences. Don't waffle and try to stick to criteria that matches the job description
- **What is your greatest achievement?**
This is your chance to reveal a lot about your personality and what motivates you. Talk about something that emphasises the positive aspects of your character and demonstrates the skills you have that are relevant to the job.
- **What is your greatest weakness?**
Choose something that you can turn into a strength by showing what you are doing to overcome it
- **What are your long term goals?**
Emphasise your willingness and motivation to carry on learning within the company
- **How would you feel about managing people older and more experienced than you?**
Give examples of any previous experience you have of doing this (this can be from any aspect of your life)
- **You are doing ... when ... happens, what would you do next? How would you handle ... if ... happened?**
In these scenario based questions there is unlikely to be a right or wrong answer. The interviewer is looking to understand your thought processes and if you can back up any statements you might make. Think of the position you are applying for and the types of scenarios you may encounter; this will help you think about the kinds of questions they may ask.

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