

# Practice Interview Questions

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You may find it helpful to practice answering some possible interview questions. The following list gives you some examples but this is by no means an exhaustive list! It is also a good idea to practice out loud to yourself or to your friends / family just to get used to explaining things clearly.

More information on interview techniques, how to prepare and other useful tips can be found in the UCL Careers Service.

## General warm up questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you choose this particular degree?
- Why did you choose to study at UCL?
- What are your key strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Tell me something about yourself that I wouldn't know from reading your application.
- What have you gained from your previous experiences that would make you useful to us?

## Motivation for the job

- Why do you want to work for us?
- Why do you want this job / internship?
- What do you think you will be doing day to day if you get this position?
- What do you think will be the main challenge of this job/internship?
- What made you choose this particular area instead of the others?
- What are your career plans?
- What do you know about our organisation?
- Who are our competitors?
- Are there things that our competitors are doing that we should be worried about?
- What differentiates us from our competitors?
- Who else have you applied to?

## Commercial awareness

- Tell me about a recent business news story that you found interesting. Why?
- What impact does this story have on our business?
- What do you think will be the most important issues facing this sector in the next five years?
- What would you do if you were the chief executive of this company to deal with those challenges?
- What other business / finance etc stories are you interested in at the moment?
- Where do you get your business / finance / other information from?

- Give me an example of a time when you have made a positive contribution to an organization you were working for.

## Team work and interpersonal skills

- Think about a time when you worked as part of a team, tell me about what you enjoyed most.
- Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. Why was this person difficult? How did you handle them?
- What qualities do you have that make you an effective team member? Can you give me examples?
- Can you describe a situation where you have had to resolve a conflict within a team?
- Please describe a situation in which you had to demonstrate sensitivity and tact.
- When you were doing X, what role did you play in the team?

## Prioritising and organising

- Recall a time when you had to complete a complex project. What steps did you take to prepare for and finish the project? How happy were you with the outcome? What would you have done differently if given the chance?
- Describe a situation in which a number of things to be done at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?
- Can you provide a recent example of when you were under stress and how you coped?
- How do you balance your academic obligations and your non-academic interests?
- Give me an example of when you have had to work to a very demanding deadline. How did you go about it?

## Problem solving, analysis and creativity

- Describe a difficult problem you had to deal with. How did you approach it?
- Can you give me an example of a situation in which you have had to analyse complex information in order to make a decision? How did you approach it?
- Can you give an example of when you have had to make recommendations about something based on your analysis of information?
- Describe a time when you came up with a creative solution to a problem.
- Describe a time when you have had to overcome several obstacles in order to achieve something.
- Tell me about a time when your first solution did not resolve an issue. What did you do?

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## Decision making and judgement

- Give me an example of a time you had to make an important decision on your own. How did you make it? How does it affect you today?
- Can you give me an example of a complex decision you have had to make and how you went about it?
- What is the riskiest decision you have ever made? How did you make it?

## Drive and determination

- Tell me about a difficult situation when it was desirable for you to keep a positive attitude. What did you do?
- Describe a task that you completed that you didn't enjoy. How did you motivate yourself?
- Give an example of a situation in which you had to demonstrate determination in order to succeed.

## Adaptability and initiative

- Can you give an example of a situation when you have had to adapt to an unexpected change?
- Tell me about a time when you improved something using your own initiative.
- Tell me about a time when you have used your free time to gain new skills or knowledge in order to be better at something.

## Communication and negotiation

- Tell me about a time when you demonstrated good written / oral communication skills.
- When was the last time you had to use your negotiation skills to get what you wanted?
- Tell me about when you have persuaded someone to change their mind about something.

## Leadership

- How do you get the best out of people? Can you give me an example?
- Describe a situation in which you took responsibility for achieving something.
- What skills have you developed that will make you a good leader?
- Tell me about a time when you found it necessary to make an unpopular decision?
- Tell me about the best and the worst people you have worked for. What lessons about leadership have you gained from those experiences?

## Professionalism and diligence

- What does professionalism mean to you? Can you give me an example of when you put it into practice?
- Can you think of an example that demonstrates your commitment to integrity and honesty?
- Tell me about something you have done in which it was important to pay attention to detail over a long period. How did you maintain your accuracy?

## Personality and interests

- Tell me about a situation that really tested your patience? What did you do?
- What was the last book you read for pleasure? Tell me why you think I should read it.

## Critical reasoning brain-teasers

- What is the best shape for a manhole cover? Why?
- How many hairs are there on a dog?
- How many table tennis balls will fit into a 747 aeroplane?

## PhD: academic and non-academic Qs

- What is your contribution to your research group?
- What would you change about your PhD?
- How successful has your PhD been?
- Why did you decide to do a PhD?
- How would you describe your relationship with your supervisor?
- Convince me that your academic achievements are relevant to this job (if the job is not an academic role)
- How have you managed your research?
- Describe a research problem. How would you deal with this in the future?
- How would you supervise a postgraduate researcher?
- If you were starting your PhD today what would you do differently?
- Who are the key researchers in your field? (follow up) How does your work compare to theirs?
- In this institution we are keen to develop collaborations between departments. What opportunities for multi-disciplinary work does your research have?
- The University is keen to serve the wider community and economy. Does your planned research have any benefits in these areas?
- After this fellowship, where do you envisage finding future funding from?
- What support would you expect from the institution? (i.e. training, research networks, help with funding applications)