

Graduate Employment Series

The Graduate Employment Series comprises four booklets designed to help you with your graduate job search: *Job Search Strategies*, *Resumes / CVs*, *Applications / Selection Criteria* and *Job Interviews*.

As well as reading these booklets, we also recommend you attend Graduate Employment Series seminars to maximise your chances in today's competitive job market.

Job interviews

This booklet deals with job interviews. It provides background information, suggestions and resources for preparing for interviews, interview performance, and reviewing your performance. If you take the suggestions on board, utilise the available resources and practice the required skills, they can give you a competitive edge in your graduate job search.

Tips for your graduate job search

It's a competitive world out there with many graduate seeking employment. Keep these tips in mind:

- Employers won't come to you. Take a proactive approach.
- Know your strengths and how to market them to employers.
- Employers value skills gained from university, casual and volunteer work, and life in general.
- Researching organisations will help you make good applications and find a job that suits you.
- Most jobs are never advertised. You need to explore a range of job search strategies.
- Learn job searching skills and increase your chances of finding a satisfying graduate job.
- Use LinkedIn as a Job Search and Networking tool to find alumni and graduates within an organization.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR GRADUATE JOB SEARCH!

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Setting the scene - The purpose of interviews

Congratulations! Being selected for an interview means the first part of your job application has been successful. You are one of a few candidates (perhaps only four or five) shortlisted for the position on the basis of your written application. The employer believes you may have the skills and qualifications for the job.

The interview stage of the application process is critical in determining who gets the job, so you must maximise your chances.

Depending on the organisation, the position and the selection process, interviews can vary from an informal 20-minute chat to an hour's in-depth discussion.

The desired outcome of most interviews is clear. The employer wants to find the best person for the job, and you want to ensure that's you! Job interviews have two purposes for both you and the employer.

The employer wants to:

- assess your personal qualities, specific work-related skills and working style to determine if you are the best candidate for the position, and
- market the organisation to you.

You want to:

- market yourself to the employer; and
- assess the organisation to decide if you want to work there.

Preparation is the key to effective interview performance. Employers report that many candidates don't prepare adequately and don't appreciate their own talents. Doing your research and knowing your strengths puts you ahead of the game. An interview is an opportunity to showcase your skills and market yourself effectively, so you need to ensure you are intimately acquainted with your 'product package' - you!

But I'm nervous! Job interviews can be stressful, but controlling your part of the process by preparing well can minimise nervousness. The extra adrenalin can even help you produce an impressive performance.

You may not be offered the first graduate position you apply for, but thorough preparation and focussed practice before the interview, and thoughtful reflection afterwards, will enhance your interview skills.

No employer wants to know only what you have in common with everyone else. He or she wants to know what makes you unique and individual.
Richard Bolles

Employers' objectives

During the interview, employers also assess whether you will 'fit' with the organisational culture.

Employers use interviews to determine which candidate/s best meet the job's requirements or selection criteria.

For graduate positions, this usually involves finding out about some or all of the following:

Your personal qualities

Your attitude, temperament, maturity, adaptability, enthusiasm, motivation, values, integrity, flexibility, assertiveness, etc.

- **Your social and interpersonal skills**

Your confidence, self-esteem, sense of humour, ability to get along with others, and how effectively and pleasantly you present to others.

- **Your communication skills**

How well you get your message across, your negotiation skills and conflict resolution skills. (Employers often use your interview performance as an indication of your communication skills).

- **Your intelligence and mental agility**

Your mental alertness and comprehension, capacity to make subtle and intelligent distinctions and deductions, capacity to quickly change your frame of reference, capacity to re-frame ideas, potential to learn new skills, ability to think analytically, and ability to argue points and positions and draw inferences.

- **Your working style**

Your work ethic, attitude to authority, ability to set goals and manage your time, capacity for self-organisation and achieving goals/targets, ability to meet deadlines and work under pressure, ability to cope with change and meet new demands, ability to work with or without supervision, and ability to work cooperatively with others.

- **Your knowledge**

Your knowledge of the industry, commercial knowledge and general knowledge.

- **Your specific work-related skills**

Whether you have the skills required for the job and other skills that could contribute to the organisation like initiative, leadership, liaison and teamwork.

- **The validity of your claims**

Whether you can support the claims you made in your application/resume by providing examples and evidence.

- **Your organisational knowledge and understanding**

Whether you can demonstrate knowledge of the organisation and an understanding of its corporate culture, showing enthusiasm to be part of and contribute to the organisation

Your objectives

As a job candidate, your objective is to perform to the best of your ability and win the position.

Your major focus should be on positively **promoting and marketing** your skills, qualifications and attributes to convince the employer that you best meet the position requirements and fit the organisation's needs and culture.

Another major objective is for you to **assess the organisation and the position** in more detail through face-to-face contact. During the interview, you'll be able to examine the extent to which the organisation and the position meet your expectations and needs.

Ideally, the interview will confirm your research, and you'll welcome the opportunity to accept the position if it's offered to you. However, you may discover the position and/or organisation doesn't meet your expectations, and you may decide to pursue other options.

Whether this is your first interview or one of many, you should also consider **other objectives** that can be achieved in the process. These include:

- **Noting the interview model**

Interview formats vary and it's useful to note various interview models, differences in presentation, and how you perform in each.

- **Establishing useful job search contacts** (your networking strategy)

The organisation or someone on the interview panel could become a useful contact. Subsidiary companies with appealing positions could be mentioned, or other useful sources for similar or related positions could be mentioned (or you could request them) during the interview.

- **Seeking feedback about your interview performance**

Whether you're successful or not, you can always improve your interview performance. Ask for feedback when the selection process is completed.

All candidates can build skills to improve performance. Even if you're not initially successful, each interview can be a positive and useful learning experience.

Types of interviews

There are various types of interviews:

- **One-on-one:** the candidate is interviewed by one person.
- **Panel:** the candidate is interviewed by a panel of people (common in government departments and large organisations).
- **Group:** a number of candidates are interviewed or assessed together by one or more people (usually as part of an assessment centre, as outlined below).
- **Telephone:** used if the candidate is not in the same city as the employer and/or to determine the need for a face-to-face interview.
- **Video-conferencing:** Skype or similar platform for a video-conference interview.
- **Video-Interview:** A self-recorded interview responding to 3-4 general questions

For many large organisations, the interview is the second part in a longer graduate recruitment process. First is an Online Psychometric Testing, Video Interviews, attendance at an Assessment Centre in person followed by a panel interview.

Smaller organisations usually conduct only one interview. Recruitment agencies can conduct part or all of the selection process, including interviews.

The selection process might comprise:

- **Online Psychometric Testing** – Online testing and scoring of all candidates for large recruitment rounds including psychometric testing and personality inventories.
- **Video Interviews** – 3 to 4 general questions to ascertain who you are and why you are applying for the role. This 'recorded' interview is often used by recruiters to shortlist or highlight candidates directly to hiring managers.
- **Assessment Centre** – Candidates are brought together for a range of assessment activities including individual and group exercises. (Appendix 1 - Assessment Centres has more information).
- **Panel Interview** – This typically involves exploratory questions that look for evidence provided in the application. It can be face-to-face or via the telephone.
- **Final interview** – Usually conducted by a Senior Manager or Partner of the organisation, it could be more challenging than the first interview with greater emphasis on how you'll perform in the job.

Before any interview, find out:

- Interview date, time and venue
- Travel and parking arrangements
- Type of interview
- Approximate duration
- Names, positions and backgrounds of people on the interview panel
- Whether you need to bring any work samples or will undertake tests
- If the interview is part of an ongoing recruitment process

Research shows that time taken in preparing effectively for an interview is repaid in more successful outcome

Interview preparation

Congratulations! You've been shortlisted for your first graduate job and are invited to attend an interview.

How do you prepare for this interview so you stand the best chance of getting the job?

The following steps will help. The first six involve reviewing your application. At the interview, you may be asked for more detailed information and examples than you could provide in the application. This means you can draw on a wider range of evidence in answering questions or in discussion with the interview panel.

1. Revisit the job advertisement

Advertisements usually detail the job's required qualifications and essential skills, application details and closing date; but they also often include subtle hints about the type of applicant sought and/or the company culture. Taking time to study the advertisement will help you target your interview answers effectively.

Note the obvious job requirements and the more hidden clues about the philosophy and culture of the organisation in this advertisement.

2. Find out as much as you can about the job

Having a clear understanding the job is essential for you to market your experience and skills during an interview. Jobs in government departments and large organisations typically have a **job information package** that includes a **position description** and **selection criteria**. Study this information again when preparing for your interview, and consider how your skills, training, knowledge and experience match the job requirements.

Graduate Accountant*

(an online job advertisement)

Hunter Valley NSW

The opportunity has arisen for a committed, enthusiastic and highly versatile professional to join Xstrata Coal NSW as a Graduate Accountant.

This career opportunity would be ideally suited to a recent graduate with some proven experience or professional interest in progressing their career with a global mining company. The successful candidate will be enrolled in/or have the relevant qualifications to enable entry in the CA or CPA program.

You will be looking to develop your current skills and/or experience base, and will have a practical and systematic approach to applying your skills to improve the performance of mining operations. You will possess a strong focus on working safely; well-developed interpersonal and communications skills and be able to work as part of a team environment.

Our Graduate Program offers you a supportive environment and a constant learning curve as you put your skills into practice. During the two-year program, you will be required to work in different locations within Xstrata Coal NSW.

Applications close: 31 January

Apply online at: www.xstrata.com/jobs/careers

3. Research the organisation

Visit the company's website and read any promotional material, annual reports, corporate plans, mission statements, legislative provisions or in-house newsletters. It might also be useful to talk to someone in the organisation to fill in any gaps in your knowledge. Use your LinkedIn Account to look up Graduates of Griffith University and your connections who are currently employed or previously employed with the organization.

Clearly understanding the organisation and position will help you:

- demonstrate effectively during the interview how your skills and experience match the position requirements and the organisation's culture and future direction; and
- decide whether you want to work there, or remain there in the long term.

Preparing a list of questions before you phone the company creates a good impression. Remember, you are marketing yourself every time you contact the organisation. Don't forget to research the organisation and the interview panel on LinkedIn.

4. Be clear about your strengths - they're your selling points!

Effective interview performance relies upon:

- understanding the value of what you can offer an employer; and relating your
- strengths to the position and organisation.

Spend time reflecting on details in your resume. Reconsider and list your skills, strengths and attributes gained from study, employment and extra-curricular activities, and think about how they relate to the employer's needs, the job's stated duties and the selection criteria.

Ask yourself:

- When have I operated effectively as a team member?
- How has my tertiary study developed analytical and critical thinking skills?
- What employment skills have I gained through community and leisure activities?

Review your interests, values, skills and strengths, and list the personal qualities and skills you could contribute to the organisation and job.

5. Gather evidence

It's not enough to just assert that you have the required experience and skills for the position during the interview. You must provide **evidence**. An employer will ask you about the basis for any claims you make, and you'll probably be asked to expand on information in your resume and application.

Your research should identify the skills the employer wants. Prepare examples that demonstrate *how* you gained each skill. When providing examples at an interview, describe the situation, what you did, how you did it, and the result (the **STAR** approach - see page 13). Practice first person statements and ensure your answers are comprehensive and relevant.

For example:

"Can you tell me about a time when you had to meet a deadline?"

"Yes, last semester my course required the submission of five pieces of work in the same week. From the outset, I developed a schedule which enabled me to allocate and better manage my time. This meant I avoided a last minute rush and achieved good results, I gained high credits for all assignments."

The following table lists some of the skills and attributes employers seek. Prepare examples that will convince an employer you have these skills.

SKILLS	DEMONSTRATED BY
Teamwork	Group assignments at Uni (credit average), A-grade netball for 5 years (in finals 3 times), debating team (runners-up)
Oral communication	
Ability to find and assess information	
Problem-solving	
Negotiation	
Organisational/time-management	

Employers will also ask about your capacity to undertake specific tasks and responsibilities and you'll need to provide *evidence* that illustrates your abilities. Below are some tasks specific to a marketing role and examples of evidence you might use.

JOB REQUIREMENTS	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
1. Implementation of promotional campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand marketing theory and practice (from degree) Coordinated three-month promotional campaign for the Student Guild Assisted mentor with promotion of Live and Local Expo (Logan) - reference from mentor Edited student magazine
2. Ability to write, design and produce promotional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devised flyers for a campaign run by local public relations firm The Corporate Edge (vacation job) Designed brochure for student food co-operative

It's useful to find a related job advertisement and identify the employer's requirements.

6. Don't overlook practical aspects

- Confirm the date, time and venue for the interview.
- Do a 'dry run' to estimate travel time and investigate parking and building access.
- Find out the dress standard for the position and organisation and ensure you have a suitable outfit.
- Prepare a portfolio containing your resume, application letter, academic transcript and other academic documents, details of programs and courses you've undertaken, course work samples, academic and employment references, certificates and awards, and any official documents (birth certificate extract, citizenship information). Take certified copies rather than originals and take photocopies of important documents in case the interviewers require them. You may take the opportunity of placing your portfolio on the table during the interview so interviewers can peruse it.

7. Rehearse your performance

Rehearsing your responses to likely questions and scenarios is vital to interview success.

- a) Develop sample questions the interviewers are likely to ask, and prepare your answers.

You can't predict exactly what questions you'll be asked at an interview, but reviewing the advertisement and selection criteria can give you a good idea. Most interviewers follow common themes. Design practice questions around the requirements below.

- **Qualifications** - from training, previous employment, job-related interests and extra-curricular experiences.
- **Skills and abilities** - technical, degree-related skills and generic skills like self-management, interpersonal and communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving, organisational skills, project management, leadership experience and potential, and the ability to work under pressure and learn new skills.
- **Personal attributes** - like adaptability, motivation, tenacity, stress tolerance, initiative, creativity, independence and goal orientation.
- **Knowledge of the organisation and the job** - Interviewers frequently base their questions around the selection criteria, so use them to brainstorm possible questions.

- b) Practise aloud, then role-play an interview with a friend or family member.

Ask for feedback on your body language, confidence and the quality of your answers. Practising answers to likely questions develops confidence and will enhance your effectiveness at the interview. (See Appendices 3, 4 and 5 for more about interview questions).

8. Prepare questions you might ask

Prepare several questions regarding the job and the organisation to ask during the interview, possibly at the end. Don't ask questions that can be answered from the organisation's website, the job advertisement and associated information package, or other organisational literature. It's not a good idea to ask about pay or conditions at this stage.

Here are some ideas:

- How does this section/department relate to the organisation as a whole?
- What kind of induction into the job and organisation do you offer?
- What opportunities exist for professional development?
- What are the reporting relationships in this position?
- Could you describe a typical day in this position?
- How would I be assessed/my performance appraised?
- Can you give me a fuller picture of your training program?
- Will I be required to work in different locations?
- What is the potential for career advancement in this position?
- How are employees evaluated and promoted?
- How would you describe the future of the organisation? Where is it heading?

Asking intelligent, relevant questions shows the employer you have seriously thought about the job and organisation.

Interview performance

You've completed your preparation and now you're faced with the job interview. How do you approach it and how can you deliver your best performance?

The following suggestions have been consistently endorsed by employers and recruitment agencies.

1. Approach the interview positively

Use positive self-talk, for example:

- I have reached the shortlist. The employer believes I have the skills and qualifications for the position.
- I have prepared thoroughly.
- I have an opportunity to promote myself for this and possibly other positions.
- I know I can do well.

2. Present a confident, enthusiastic image

First impressions are important and several factors contribute to a positive image:

- Dress to the highest standard for employees in this type of position.
- If you carry a briefcase or bag, ensure it's appropriate, neat and tidy.
- Present a neat and well-groomed image.
- Smile and shake hands confidently.

3. Demonstrate you are well-organised

- Arrive early (e.g. 10 minutes) and use the time to prepare.
- Display your documents in a portfolio, and know how to find them easily.

4. Display positive body language

Body language contributes more than 70 per cent in interpersonal communication. Accentuate positive body language and avoid negatives.

- Maintain an alert but relaxed posture. Sit comfortably in the chair, not on the edge of the seat!
- Look attentive and interested.
- Make eye contact when the interviewer is talking, and when you respond.
- Avoid fidgeting and other inappropriate and annoying mannerisms.
- Return your hands to a pre-determined 'home' after gestures.

5. Communicate effectively

The key to a successful interview is effective communication between the interviewer/s and the candidate, promoting a confident, professional and respectful interchange. Be aware of your body language, and ensure you:

- Speak clearly and at a level appropriate to the size of the group and the room.
- Adopt a business-like approach and language.
- Listen carefully and don't interrupt.

- Think through your answer before responding. Don't rush.
- Seek clarification if necessary.
- Use positive language and action words.
- Provide one or two examples to support your answers.
- Take time to answer difficult questions.
- Look for the interviewers' visual cues that indicate when they want more information or are satisfied with your answer.
- Avoid verbal fillers, such as 'um'.

6. Use calming techniques if necessary

- Even when you're well-prepared for an interview, you may become nervous or flustered. Have some calming techniques ready for such occasions, for example:
- Deep, slow breathing.
- Counting slowly to five.
- Ask the interviewer to reframe the question, especially if it's tricky or difficult.

7. Conclude confidently

- Thank the interviewers for the opportunity of being considered for the position.
- Re-state your interest in the job.
- Ask any questions you had prepared.
- Ascertain when you could expect to hear the result.

Interview stages

Formal interviews are carefully planned and usually follow a certain pattern, proceeding through several stages. See Appendix 2 – *Interview stages* for more information.

First impressions are critical and strongly influence interviewers. Make a positive impact to ensure you are remembered and compared favourably with other candidates.

Interview questions

Interview questions range from simple to complex but usually fall into three categories: **open-ended questions, hypothetical questions and behavioural questions.**

1. Open-ended questions

Open-ended questions allow you to explore issues and provide information and examples to the extent and depth you choose. The challenge is to provide an appropriate answer without rambling. Keep to the point, and frame your answer around the employer's requirements. Some examples:

- *What do you enjoy doing away from your academic work?*
- *What are your short-term goals?*
- *What supervisory or leadership roles have you had?*
- *If I asked your friends to describe you, what would they say?*
- *What are your greatest work and non-work accomplishments?*
- *Where do you see yourself in five years?*

2. Hypothetical questions

Hypothetical questions explore possible scenarios and require you to demonstrate your judgement. There are no right or wrong answers but interviewers use these questions to assess your knowledge of the field, problem-solving skills, awareness of relevant issues and common sense. Here's an example:

Your immediate supervisor has asked you to complete an environmental impact study by the end of the day. Early in the afternoon, the head of department calls you in and asks you to work on an urgent task for her. How would you manage this situation?

3. Behavioural questions

These questions examine how you acted in particular situations. They usually start with, "Tell me about a time when..." Use the **STAR** format to structure your answer and keep you on track:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| SITUATION | - what situation were you in? ‘ |
| TASK | - what were you trying to achieve? |
| ACTION | - what action did you take? |
| RESULT | - what was the result? |

For example:

Describe an occasion when you had a number of important tasks to be handled at once. How did you manage this?

Can you describe for the interview panel about a time when you had to go beyond what is ordinarily expected of an employee to get the job done.

Where possible, relate your answers to your future responsibilities and the organisation's policies.

Answers to interview questions should be:

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Clear | - so the employer understands what you're saying. |
| Relevant | - so the employer can determine your suitability for the job. |
| Adequate | - so the employer has enough information to make a decision. |

The employer wants to know: *Can you do the job? Will you do the job?*

Reviewing the interview

Self-reflection is important after any interview or selection process, whether you think you performed well or not, were successful or otherwise. Review your performance, acknowledge the strong points and identify areas that need attention. Start by considering the following:

My qualifications and experience

- Did they meet the position requirements?
- Did the position require specific skills or knowledge that I chose not to cover in my degree?
- Do I need further study/post-graduate qualifications to be more competitive?
- Did I have the experience required for the position?

My preparation for the interview

- Did I have detailed knowledge of the position's duties?
- Did I review the job advertisement?
- Did I thoroughly research the organisation?
- Was my portfolio of an appropriate standard?
- Did I develop and rehearse possible interview questions and responses?

During the interview

- What parts of the interview went well?
- What points did I make that interested the interviewer?
- Did I present my qualifications in the best manner possible?
- Did I talk too much? Too little?
- Was I too tense? Passive? Assertive?
- Did I effectively use opportunities to promote/market myself, demonstrate the quality of my work, and/or show how my strengths would benefit the organisation?

Feedback

Most employers will provide feedback on your performance. Ask for comments and suggestions on the positive and negative aspects of your performance.

At the next interview

As a result of your reflection and feedback, think of how you can improve at your next interview. For example:

- What will I do more of? Less of? The same?
- What skills do I need to work on?
- What parts of my preparation need attention?

And remember:

You may have performed well at the interview but were unsuccessful because of the high quality of candidates. Take heart from the positives! Ask yourself if the interview altered your ideas about the type of job, level of job, or kind of organisation you are seeking. Where appropriate, send a 'thank you' email, highlighting any points you may have omitted at the interview and re-stating your interest in the position. Advise your referees of the outcome of the interview, and ask whether they've been contacted.

Telephone and Video-Conferencing Interviews

Employers may not be able to arrange face-to-face interviews with interstate or remote candidates, or you may not be able to get to the interview venue, so they often chose to interview you over the phone. The greatest difficulty here is the lack of visual cues and feedback you would normally receive when being interviewed in person. Because you can't assess body language indicating interest, humour, satisfaction, surprise, or confusion, you'll need to check more often that you and the interviewer/s understand each other. For example:

Chris, you were asking whether ...?

Have I explained that fully enough or could I give you more details, Susan?

Everyone presents differently over the phone, so ask your friends how you come across on the phone and if you have any distracting mannerisms. Practise answering possible interview questions with a friend. A telephone interview requires all the preparation of a face-to-face interview, but there are additional points to consider:

- Confirm the time and allow for any time differences.
- Use a hands-free phone, if possible.
- Ensure you have the telephone number to call back in case you're disconnected.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper, water and quiet space.
- Ensure other household members understand that you require absolute quiet, and attend to distractions from children, pets, work noise, movements, etc.
- Know the names of the interviewers, have name cards for them, and address them by name more often than you would in a face-to-face conversation.
- Have your resume and application in front of you.
- Prepare as for a face-to-face interview.
- Speak more slowly and clearly than you would face-to-face.
- Seek confirmation that you have sufficiently answered the question.
- Write reminder notes of things you want to say during the interview.

With advances in technology, video conferencing (Skype or Zoom etc) is used more frequently for interviewing remote candidates. If you've been invited to attend this type of interview, make sure you send any materials the recruiter needs in advance (resume, etc.) Remember that a video conferencing interview carries as much weight as one conducted face-to-face, so you will want to make sure you're well prepared to interview remotely. This type of interview can be a little intimidating, even for those who are familiar with technology and use it on a regular basis. Below are a few tips to help you manage the process with confidence.

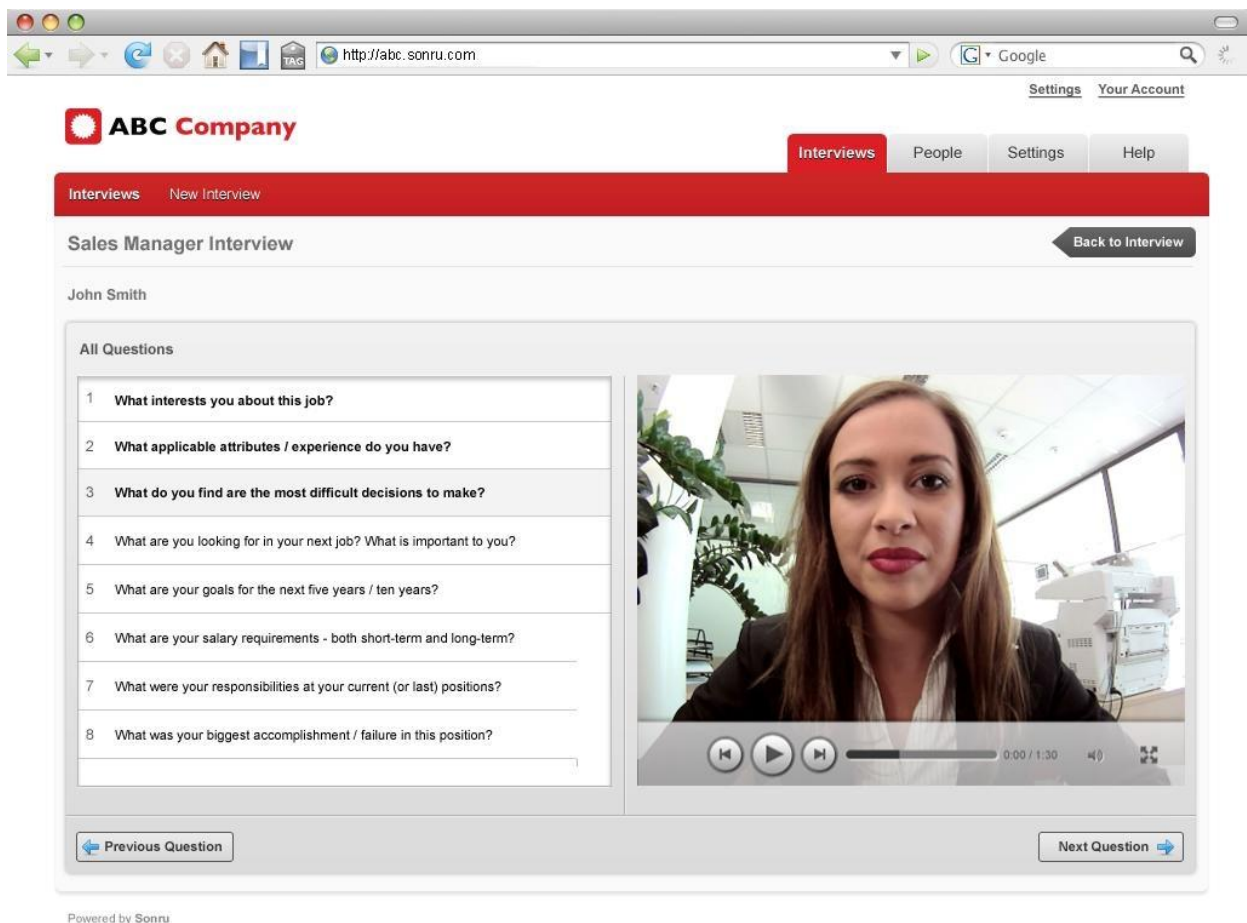
- Arrive early so you have time to get settled.
- Ask for assistance if you're not sure how to use the equipment. Even if you think you can figure it out, it might be good to ask for a quick overview.
- Wear the same interview attire as you would for a face-to-face interview.
- Make sure the table is clean and neat. You don't want to distract the interviewer.
- Be aware that the microphone picks up all the noise in the room, so don't tap your pen or shuffle papers.
- Make eye contact. If you don't, the camera will be focussed on the top of your head!
- Use the 'Picture-in-Picture' feature so you can keep an eye on how you're coming across.

Video Interviews

Video Interviews are not the same as Skype or Video-Conferencing Interviews. A Video interview is predominantly used in large graduate recruitment intakes where special software is used inviting all candidates in the selection process to pre-record themselves answering a few key questions.

Video Interviews are time based and used for pre-screening candidates. You only get one chance to record your answer within set timeframes. This software has replaced many telephone screening interviews however large firms have found the time taken to 'review and grade' all interviews very time consuming, resulting in a reduction in overall questions from around 10 down to three to four questions on average.

Candidates are invited to participate in this process and allocated approximately 30 seconds to 2 minutes to read each question, before automatically recording for a set time period. A screen shot below from the Sonru (www.sonru.com) provides a visual example of what this will involve with interview questions on the left, and 'yourself' on the right.



How to prepare for a Video Interview:

- Review all instructions provided very carefully.
- Frame your face to the camera and consider lighting in front of you.
- Consider raising your laptop to be at your eye level.
- Dress as would for a face to face interview
- Remember to smile and express your personality.
- Note your non-verbal communication.
- Note the length of time for your response and adjust your answer appropriately.

Virtual Interview Training via Big Interview

Big interview is a software platform that provides free online interview practice for Griffith students.

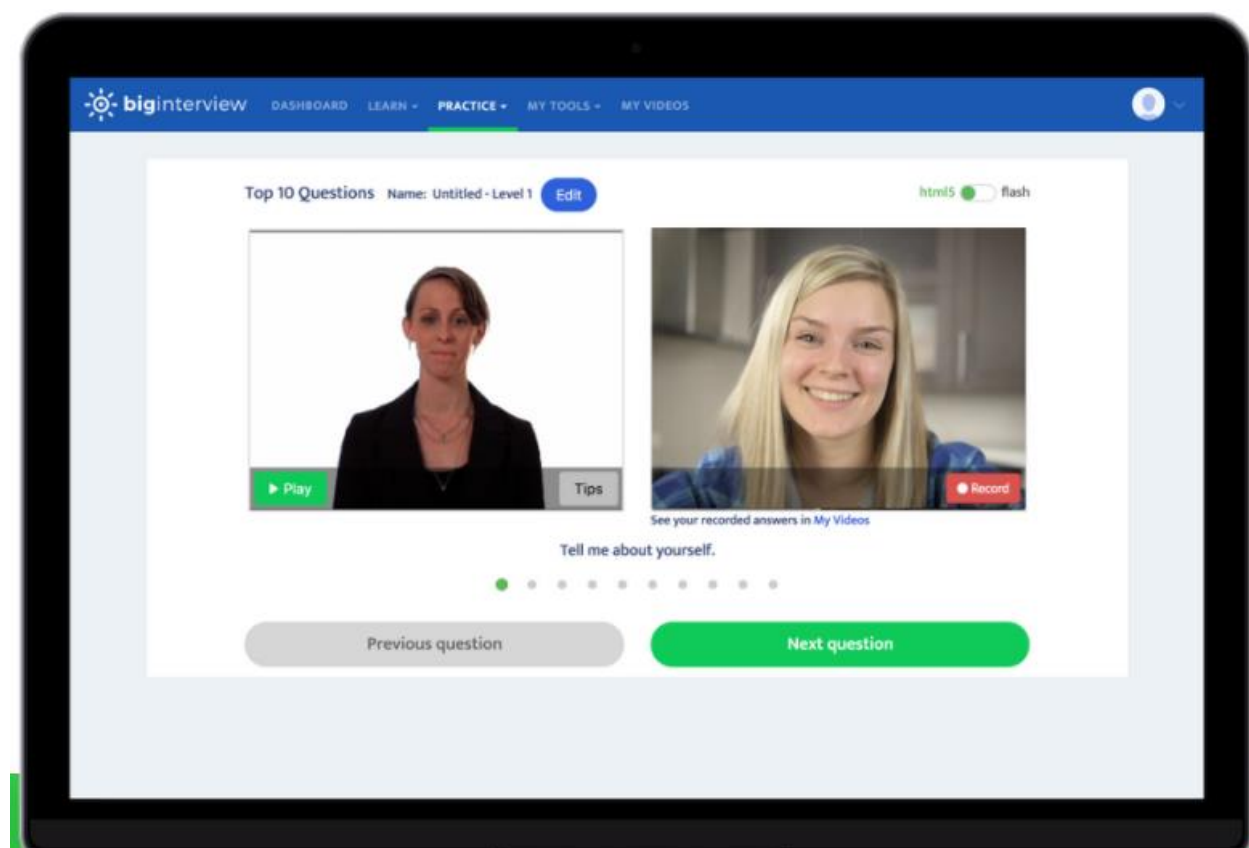
Learn – Find out exactly what interviewers are looking for and how to anticipate and properly answer the toughest questions.

Practice – Once your answers are planned and refined, use our Practice tool to make your delivery confident and natural. Practice from dozens of interview questions from over 20 industries.

Analyse – use our built-in feedback tools to get objective analysis on your progress from mentors, academics, Career Development Consultants and friends.

How do I use Big Interview?

1. Go to <https://griffith.biginterview.com/>
2. Register your account with your Griffith Student or Griffith Staff email address.
3. Conduct your first practice interview.
4. Send your interview for feedback.



Accepting the job offer

For large organisations if you've been successful in the interview, you'll usually be offered the job via email. Smaller organisations may confirm this via telephone or email.

Once you have considered the offer and decided to accept it, you'll need to verbally accept the offer via telephone and in writing via email. You may ask to see your job contract before you start work. It will probably contain:

- The names of both parties
- Position title and duties
- Annual salary
- Superannuation (amount and fund)
- Hours of work and overtime arrangements
- Annual leave, sick leave, and parental leave entitlements
- Termination arrangements
- Probationary period (if applicable)
- Salary reviews

You should know if you are employed under an Award or an Agreement. Before starting work, ask for a written job description so you are clear about your key responsibilities and your supervisor's expectations. (Visit Fair Work Australia at <http://www.fwa.gov.au/>)

Salary questions

You might be asked during an interview or after the offer has been made about the salary you expect. Always talk about a salary range (e.g. \$60,000 to \$70,000), not the exact amount. Negotiate your place on that salary range based on your skills and experience.

How much should you ask for?

The following resources can help you work out an appropriate salary range:

- Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (Graduate Outlook Survey) <https://www.qilt.edu.au/about-this-site/graduate-employment>
- Graduate starting salaries ([Graduate Salaries GCA](#))
- Fair Work Ombudsman <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/pay>
- Trade Unions ([ACTU](#))
- [Professional associations](#)

Workplace rights

As an employee you have rights and responsibilities in respect of issues such as Health and Safety and Equal Employment Opportunity. For further information, contact the following agencies:

- The Queensland Workplace Rights Ombudsman
- Young Workers Advisory Service (for workers under 25 years of age)

Checklist

Before the interview

- ☐ Check time, venue and transport.
- ☐ Check interview format.
- ☐ Investigate appropriate dress standard.
- ☐ Review your skills and attributes.
- ☐ Revisit job advertisement/selection criteria.
- ☐ Revisit job application.
- ☐ Research the organisation.
- ☐ Prepare practice questions and rehearse responses.
- ☐ Prepare your portfolio (resume, application, certificates, documents, work samples, etc.).
- ☐ Prepare questions you will ask.

After the interview - ask for feedback

- ☐ What needs improvement?
- ☐ Preparation - list specific aspects.
- ☐ Confidence.
- ☐ Volume, clarity and speed of speech.
- ☐ Body language.
- ☐ Evidence/examples of skills, strengths and attributes.
- ☐ Depth and relevance of answers
- ☐ Did the job suit?
- ☐ Did the organisation suit?
- ☐ Possible contacts/job leads.

Appendix 1

Assessment centres

What are assessment centres?

(This edited article, reprinted with permission from Mark Emdin of Shell Australia, describes the nature and use of assessment centres).

An assessment centre is not a place, as suggested by the word 'centre', but a process of assessment. The term 'assessment centre' describes a series of exercises candidates undertake while being observed by a team of managers or consultants acting as assessors. Assessment centres are being used increasingly by employers as part of their selection process when recruiting graduates. An assessment centre's objective is to establish how well candidates exhibit a number of defined intellectual and personal qualities. Exercises are designed to provide an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate these qualities. Candidates don't compete against each other at an assessment centre, they are tested and measured individually against a predetermined set of criteria.

Why do employers use assessment centres?

Some employers feel an hour of traditional interviewing is not enough to decide about an applicant's suitability for a job. They want to see applicants in practical situations to ascertain if they are the right 'fit' for their organisation.

A brief history

Assessment centres began with the great armies prior to and during World War II, although there is some dispute as to whether the Americans, Germans or British were first to use these techniques. The aim was to improve the selection of field officers as traditional methods proved unsatisfactory. By the 1960s, assessment centres were established in the US with major blue chip companies like AT&T and IBM using them for selection and promotion, particularly for management positions. In the UK and Australia, assessment centres gained rapid recognition throughout the 1970s and 80s. Today, a large number of companies around the world employ at least some assessment centre methods for staff selection and promotion.

How an assessment centre works

A typical mix of assessment methods and processes includes:

- *Biodata* - A screening procedure of personal particulars and career history.
- *Structured interview* - A predetermined format seeking specific qualities in candidates.
- *Personality tests* - Tests that elicit general tendencies, preferences and salient traits.
- *Simulation exercises* - May be completed individually or in a group activity.

The assessment centre process can range from a half day to two days. Candidates are assessed by a number of assessors who deliver a consensus recommendation against an agreed set of criteria related to job or corporate behaviour. Criteria are predetermined and applied equally to all candidates.

Assessment centre activities

The activities used vary according to the organisation and the length of the assessment centre. Some examples are outlined briefly below.

Case study

Also known as an 'in tray' or 'in basket' exercise, this is an individual task in which the candidate is asked to deal with a number of items typically found in a manager's in tray (memos, financial statements, letters). The candidate needs to identify the issues to be addressed and develop an action plan.

Proposal

Candidates are given a choice of topics or problems and asked to prepare a proposal for dealing with one of them. The focus is on identifying issues or problems to be addressed and developing an action plan.

Written tasks

A written task may be used to assess how candidates present reports.

Group tasks

These can take a number of formats including activities requiring a group to reach a consensus, group participation in physical activities, group involvement in writing a report, etc. The aim is to see how candidates contribute and interact in a group or team environment.

Interview

Many assessment centres will include an interview. This should be treated similarly to any other job interview.

Where assessment centres fit in

Organisations focus on three core elements when selecting graduates.

Job-specific skills

Organisations require differently qualified people for different roles, e.g. finance, engineering, computing, human resources. Qualifications and relevant skills are assessed by examining a student's academic transcript and discussing technical issues during an interview.

General management skills

Graduates are employed to make immediate and long-term contributions to an organisation's operations. To do this, they require general management qualities including an appreciation of business issues, communication skills, motivation, decision-making abilities, etc.

Corporate fit

People may perform better in a dynamic, high risk company rather in a small, conservative organisation. One may not be better than the other, but people work differently depending on the environment. Psychometric testing is often used to determine corporate 'fit' in candidates.

In conclusion

There is no perfect predictor of how a person will perform in an organisation but assessment centres give high predictive results. This benefits the organisation and the individual. It's important that people work in organisations to which they are suited, and to which they will be able to make a long term contribution.

Appendix 2

Interview stages

Following are common stages in the interview process:

Initial phase

<i>Applicant meets panel</i>	Introductions, handshakes, first impressions.
<i>Panel puts applicant at ease</i>	Offers coffee/tea/water. Smiling/pleasantries/humour.
<i>Start of serious discussion</i>	Description (by chair) of company/structure/position. Open-ended, non-threatening questions, encouraging the applicant to talk.

Marketing/matching phase

<i>Marketing and matching</i>	Applicant 'markets' self, knowledge, skills, experience. Organisation 'matches' applicant's attributes to job requirements. Applicant 'matches' organisation, culture and career opportunities with preferences and expectations. Organisation 'markets' itself, salary, career structure, opportunities.
<i>In-depth questioning</i>	About applicant's other career-relevant experiences. Eliciting applicant's 'real' characteristics/skills. Eliciting how applicant meets selection criteria. Substantiating evidence for claims made in application.

Confirmation phase

<i>Confirmation of impressions</i>	Follow-up questions/clarification: <i>You mentioned earlier / Can you tell us more about?</i> <i>You said you'd dealt with / Can you tell us a time when...?</i>
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Conclusion phase

Applicant's questions to the panel.
Formal sighting of documents.
What happens next in the recruiting process?
Panel's / applicant's closing remarks.
Departures, handshakes.

Appendix 3

Sample interview questions

Personal attributes

- Tell me about yourself.
- How do you describe yourself?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What have you learned from participating in extra-curricular activities?
- What types of books do you read? What was the last one?
- What entrepreneurial activities have you been engaged in?

Qualifications

- Tell me about your university studies.
- What skills do you think you have obtained from your degree?
- What subjects did you like best/least at university?
- What are the reasons for failures/inconsistencies on your academic record?

Communication/interpersonal/teamwork skills

- How do you get on with other people?
- What does teamwork mean to you?
- How would you go about resolving conflict with your colleagues/manager?
- How would you prepare to deliver an oral presentation?

Organisation

- Why did you apply to this organisation?
- What do you know about this organisation?
- What interests you about our products/services?
- What can you offer our company?
- What do you think determines a person's progress in an ethical company?
- What is your attitude towards unionism?
- What do you know about other areas of our operation in Australia/overseas?
- What do you know about an issue of recent significance to our industry/organisation?

Problem solving/analytical skills

- Here's a problem we faced recently How would you have handled this issue?
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult customer. What happened and how did you resolve the situation?
- How would you deal with a problem you had not encountered before?

Career direction

- What are your long-term career goals?
- Where do you see yourself in five year's time?
- What made you choose this career?
- What are the most important considerations for you in choosing a job?
- What appeals to you most about this position?

Time management/goal setting

- How do you manage your time? Give us an example.
- Tell me your work diary commitments from Monday to Friday this week.
- What do you regard as your most important accomplishment?
- If you get the job, how would you measure your success after a year?

Motivation

- What motivates you to put in your best effort?
- Are you ambitious?
- What style of management brings out the best in you?

Appendix 4

Answering interview questions

Remember that the purpose of many questions is to test whether you have the specific qualities and skills required for the position. There may not be a right or wrong answer to such questions: interviewers are seeking evidence of qualities like motivation, energy, attitudes, initiative or maturity.

An example of a seemingly irrelevant question could be: *Tell me how would you go about buying a car?* The interviewer isn't concerned about what car dealer you would go to or the order in which you would go about doing this, but rather about the approach you would use. Do you plan? Do you give up easily? Do you seek assistance? How do you budget your time and money?

Outlined below are examples of some difficult questions you may be asked in interviews. The guidelines are intended only to stimulate your thinking. They are not model answers. You will not necessarily be asked all or even any of these questions and they are not in any particular order.

Question 1 *What do you have to offer us?*

Guidelines - Answer in terms of the skills and personal qualities you have that are relevant to the job. Refer to your academic qualifications, relevant university courses work experience, leisure activities or personal qualities.

Question 2 *What prompted you to apply for this position?*

Guidelines - Explain why you are interested in the organisation. If you have had a long-term interest in them, say so. If location is significant, mention this after relating your interest in the firm. Try not to focus on what you will get from the organisation, but the qualities you will bring to them. Mention that you see the position as offering challenge, a chance to learn new things and to enhance and develop the skills and abilities necessary for the position.

Question 3 *What do you want from us?*

Guidelines - This is a good time to talk about training or promotion opportunities, giving some idea of long-term career plans. There may be aspects of the organisation's work that really interest you, and you may wish to move into another area of that organisation later on. The interviewer is probably trying to assess your enthusiasm and ambition.

Question 4 *If you got this job, how would you measure your success after the first year?*

Guidelines - Your interview preparation would have developed a good understanding of the duties and personal attributes listed in the job description, as well as finding out about the organisation's goals and objectives. Think about tangible results you might be able to achieve on the job that contribute to those goals and objectives. The interviewer is not so interested in what tasks or duties you will complete, but how you plan and assess your performance. Are there any practical ways you measure your success in part-time work or study, e.g. sales figures, grades, feedback from supervisors/lecturers?

Question 5 *What are your long-term plans?*

Guidelines - If you are flexible about your long-term plans, say so, but provide a general picture of what interests you now, and how you see that developing. Don't commit yourself to a long-term period with an employer if you don't honestly feel you can do so. You may not be in a position to know how long you would see yourself staying in one job. On the other hand, you are keen to put to work the skills you have developed. Avoid saying, *I don't know* and shrugging your shoulders. An employer is usually trying to assess how motivated you are.

Question 6 ***Tell us about yourself.***

Guidelines – If this is asked at the beginning of an interview, give a quick run-down of your qualifications and experience to date, and ask if the interviewer would like you to expand. If the question is asked towards the end of the interview and you have already talked a lot about yourself, this is the opportunity for you to elaborate on any positive points and communicate messages you haven't mentioned.

Question 7 ***How do you handle pressure?***

Guidelines – Outline situations in which you were under pressure and how you handled them. There is no one correct answer. The employer is more interested in whether you developed coping strategies rather than what they were.

Question 8 ***What are your major strengths and weaknesses?***

Guidelines – The employer is assessing how mature you are and your self-awareness. If you have a job description, you may find it useful to talk about where you see your strengths and weaknesses in relation to the tasks listed. Remember, weaknesses can be turned into strengths. Talk about the strategies for dealing with weaknesses, or their positive side, e.g. taking time to make decisions may slow you down slightly, but you're not impulsive. Listing too many weaknesses is negative, but denying any weaknesses makes you appear naive, arrogant or dishonest.

Question 9 ***What do you do in your spare time?***

Guidelines – This is generally asked by employers seeking a more complete picture of you, or to help you relax during the interview. Learning about your interests and leisure activities gives employers another opportunity to uncover skills and abilities that may not have been discussed, and assess your enthusiasm, curiosity and quality of life.

Question 10 ***What are the most important considerations for you in choosing a job?***

Guidelines – Answer in terms of job objectives, training, experience available or future prospects. Don't mention pay, overseas travel or other indications of self-interest.

(This document is adapted from *Guide to Getting that Job*, Victoria University, Wellington)

Appendix 5

Non-legitimate questions

It is not legitimate for employers to ask potential or current employees certain personal questions, and it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of age, gender, sexual preference, marital status, family responsibilities, political opinion, pregnancy, physical or mental disability, national origin, social origin, race or religion. Further information is available from the Anti-discrimination Commission Queensland - <https://www.adcq.qld.gov.au/>

You can refuse to answer inappropriate questions but, if you want the job, you might choose to answer. Consider the concern or intention behind the question. For example, if the job involves regular travel, the interviewer might ask if you are married out of concern that your partner may be unhappy and cause you to resign. You could highlight the fact that you have thought through the implications of the job requirements and are committed to the position.