

## POSTGRADUATE STUDY INTERVIEWS (Oct 2024)

### Questions to prepare for:

#### *Core/General Questions:*

1. Why did you choose to apply to our programme/for this research project?
2. What are your career goals? How will this programme or field of research help you achieve your goals?
3. What skills do you bring? How will any research you carry out support your Supervisor with theirs?
4. Describe a research project you've worked on.
5. How would your past lecturers describe you?
6. In what ways has your previous experience prepared you for graduate study in our programme?
7. What do you believe your greatest challenge will be if you are accepted into this programme?
8. If you're not successful in this application, what are your plans?
9. How will you be able to make a contribution to this field?
10. Why should we choose you over another applicant?

Before answering the following questions, it is important to remember that most interviewers will be looking for three things when you answer questions:

1. The content of the answer itself, especially discipline specific information
2. How well you can organize your thinking
3. How well you articulate your answers

For more information about preparing for interviews and answering questions, refer to the section on Interviews on the Career Development Centre website. Interviews will vary across institutions and the individuals conducting the interviews. Questions may be direct, indirect, hypothetical or behaviour-based. Below is a sample of other questions you might be asked during an interview, broken down by category:

#### *Personal Characteristics / Skills / Strengths:*

- Tell me about yourself.
- What is your strongest personal asset?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses as a student?
- Name 3 strengths that you have and how you have demonstrated these strengths.

### ***Academic Experiences / Performance:***

- Why did you specialise in \_\_\_\_\_?
- Why did you choose to attend \_\_\_\_\_ College/University?
- When did you choose to enter this occupational field and why?
- How did you make the decision to apply to our programme? What other programmes did you consider?
- How has your undergraduate background prepared you for our programme?
- What subjects have you enjoyed the most?
- What subjects have been most difficult for you?
- What satisfaction have you gained from your studies?
- Tell me about the research project you completed that you are most proud of?
- Do you feel your academic record accurately reflects your abilities and potential?
- How would you rate yourself in the following areas?
  1. Reading and Comprehension
  2. Analytical Skills
  3. Communication – oral and written, listening
- What didn't you like about your college/university?
- Tell me about a lecturer or manager you didn't like and why.
- Why would you be an asset to our department? How would you be able to contribute to our programme?
- What skills and experiences do you feel have prepared you for admission to this programme?
- Why should we consider you for our programme instead of several other equally qualified candidates?
- How many programmes have you applied to besides our institution/programme?
- What will you do if you are not accepted into our programme?

### ***Extracurricular Activities:***

- What extracurricular activity has been most satisfying to you?
- What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school?
- What activities do you enjoy most outside of the classroom?
- Do you have any hobbies or outside interests?
- Tell me about any volunteer experiences in which you have participated.

### ***Weaknesses/areas of challenge:***

- What challenges do you think you might face in the graduate programme?
- What would you say is an area in which you need improvement?
- What's one thing you would you change about yourself and why?
- What skills or abilities do you hope to strengthen through our programme?

**Goals:**

- What has motivated you to pursue this academic field?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- Why do you want a graduate degree in \_\_\_\_\_?
- How do you see this program fitting into your career goals?
- Tell me about a goal you have set for yourself and how you have achieved it or intend to achieve it.

**Transferable Skills including Leadership/Teamwork/Problem Solving Skills etc.:**

- Tell me about a major accomplishment and how you achieved it.
- Tell me about a situation in which you showed initiative.
- Tell me about a group in which you were involved. How did you contribute to make this group achieve a goal?
- Tell me about a time you assumed a leadership role.
- Tell me how you handle stress.
- Tell me about a time you had a number of assignments due. How did you make sure you completed all of them on time and did a good job?
- Tell me about a time when you were confronted by a fellow student, co-worker or a customer. How did you handle it to resolve the conflict?
- Tell me about a time you were faced with a difficult situation and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a mistake you made and how you handled it.
- Define teamwork (or success... quality... fairness)
- What was the last book you read or movie you saw?
- How will you make the world a better place?
- If you could have dinner with someone (living or dead), who would that person be?

**Field Specific Questions & Current Affairs:**

You will undoubtedly encounter questions that related specifically to your chosen field of study. Be certain that you are aware of current trends, issues and controversy in your field so that you will be able to answer questions intelligibly. Below are a few examples

- What do you believe to be the major trends in your intended career field at this time?
- What do you think about \_\_\_\_\_ (current event)?
- What problem in the world troubles you most? What would you do about it?
- What is the most important development in this field over the past 25 years, and why?
- What do you believe will be the greatest threat to this discipline areas in the future?

## **Suggested approaches to a range of questions:**

### ***Why this institution?***

This is a popular question that universities ask you in entrance interviews. The key to answering it successfully is to match your answer with your application. Express your interest in the university based on your research. Explain how you're impressed with the successes and achievements of the department or a particular academic that will be involved on your course. Demonstrate your enthusiasm to study at the university and most importantly, explain how you trust it to be the best place to develop your experience and skills.

### ***Why this course or field of study?***

Try to convey your enthusiasm and motivation. Tell them about how you first became passionate about this topic and all the experience you have in engaging with it – through your studies, employment and extra-curricular activity you've been involved in. Mention any relevant projects or dissertations you've completed, awards or prizes you have won, travel or study abroad and relevant employment. Describe anything that shows creativity, dependability or independence. Think hard about your reasons, is it a continuation of your undergraduate course, or skills you think would be good for your career goal, or something you think you'd really enjoy.

### ***Tell me about yourself?***

This is a run through your CV/career to date but focusing only on the aspects that the interviewers are going to be most interested in. If you go into too much detail, especially on information they are not interested in you are simply talking yourself out of being selected. Keep it succinct and high level to begin with and then you can ask if they would like more detail on any aspect. Tell them why you are passionate about the field of study you want to study in then tell them of any professional experience you have. Facts and figures around your achievements always impress. Extra-curricular and volunteering activities are great examples of how you can include your personal achievements whilst staying relevant to this question.

### ***What skills can you offer?***

They may ask about academic skills (e.g. computing skills, knowledge of relevant scientific techniques, research skills) and transferable skills (e.g. team working, communication, working under pressure, time management). They may also ask what personal skills you can offer, so you'll need to demonstrate that you have done your homework about the course/research and that you have considered your own strengths and areas needing development.

### ***Have you had to overcome any obstacles or hardships in your life?***

This can show evidence of determination and resilience. Sometimes we prefer not to describe very personal situations we have had to overcome but it can really give the interviewers an insight into you as a person, your emotional intelligence and how you manage adversity.

### ***What are your greatest weaknesses?***

Think of what you feel you need to work on to help get you to where you want to go but do also show them the work that you are already doing to develop and improve yourself.

### ***What is the relevance of your first degree to this study?***

This can arise if you are entering a field that seems very different to your previous studies and employment experience. It is a great opportunity to show the interviewers what effort you have put into researching and finding your 'best fit' career and showing how motivated you are to progress in this field of study by completing postgraduate study in it.

### ***What is your career aim?***

You may not have a very clear focus on what you want to do afterwards, but you should at least have done some exploratory thinking on this. Showing that you have thought about where you want this to take you will further show your commitment to do well in your studies and beyond, into at least the next 3-5 years.

### ***Are you applying for other courses?***

Do say if you are. In particular, where you are making a full or part financial contribution to the cost of your study, it is good for providers to know that there is competition in the market. But be sure to say why you feel this course/department and institution are likely to be a good fit for you.

### **Questions you might ask the Interviewer:**

Asking questions not only helps you as a candidate determine the "fit" of the programme with your desired academic and career objectives, it also communicates to the selection committee the extent of your interest in their programme:

- What characteristics distinguish this programme from others in the same academic field?
- How long does it take typically to complete the programme?
- Where are recent alumni employed? What do most graduates do after graduation?
- What types of financial aid are offered? What criteria are used for choosing recipients?
- What opportunities are available through the programme to gain practical work experience? Are there opportunities such as assistantships, fellowships or internships available? What are the deadlines to apply for these opportunities?
- Are there any scholarships or fellowships available? How do I apply?
- (Taught programmes only) Do most students publish an article/conduct research prior to graduation?
- I've read articles written by \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ -- \_\_\_\_\_. To what extent are students involved in assisting these faculty members with related research projects?

- What types of research projects are current students pursuing?
- (Where relevant) How are grades, letters of recommendations, and personal statements evaluated for the admissions process?
- What is the selection timeline? When will candidates be notified about their acceptance into the programme?

**Other resources:**

Click on the links below to find other supports to help you with your postgraduate application interviews:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7cJicu5cLg>

[The secret of successful postgraduate interviews](#)

[Top 10 Postgraduate Interview Questions and How to Answer them!](#)

**Contact us:**

Students are encouraged to avail of interview coaching from the Career Development Centre to hone their interview skills. To schedule a coaching session, mail us at: [careers.city@tudublin.ie](mailto:careers.city@tudublin.ie) or book a session directly with your Career Coach at [www.tudublin.ie/careersconnect](http://www.tudublin.ie/careersconnect)