

# ANSWER LIKE A PRO!

## PPE

# PPE: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In this resource, we have chosen eight past-interview questions, and asked a PPE graduate, Resham, to explain how she would go about answering each of these tricky subject-specific questions.

## 8 truly tricky questions... how would YOU answer?

The best way to practise these is to get a friend, sibling or parent to ask you them before you've read them through. That way you can practise your interview manner, as well as your way of answering.

1. Should happiness be the basis for morality?
2. If a psychopath gains true happiness from murdering people, should we allow him to kill people that truly want to die?
3. What are your views on the aid budget, and is it helping developing countries?
4. What did you think of the most recent budget? If you were Osborne, what would you have done differently?
5. Will "Help to Buy" lead to the next credit crunch?
6. Should a political party define ideology, or should ideology define the party?
7. What is more influential- economics or politics?
8. Should we leave the EU?

## We asked Resham, our graduate PPE expert and part-time blogger, how she would approach these questions...

1. Should happiness be the basis for morality?

The issue here is not just whether or not you believe that happiness should be the basis for morality, but whether we can define morality in the first place. Given that people from different cultural, religious and racial backgrounds already have differing laws and opinions on what is right/wrong, it should be apparent that people already disagree on what constitutes morality.

The founding argument for your answer should be that both morality and happiness are subjective. If happiness was to be the foundation for morality, we would be presuming that what made one person happy, would make all people happy, and we would also struggle with how to definite morality when two people were made happy by conflicting actions. There is no "correct" answer to this question, so long as you have considered the arguments with regard to subjectivity and the difficulty of defining happiness, but the wrong answer would be a simple "yes" or "no".

**2. If a psycho gains true happiness from murdering people, should we allow him to kill people that truly want to die?**

This is usually one of the follow up questions to the above, and you need to be careful when answering philosophical questions as the follow up question is usually designed to poke holes through your argument, and to test out the strength of your conviction. The follow-up question will normally be formed in a way that can lead you to trap yourself into giving a certain answer, so do not be afraid to explore other options - better to change your argument having considered other possibilities, than to force yourself into giving an answer you don't believe in.

This question offers a lot of room for manoeuvre as you can discuss the morality behind murder, as well as the option for euthanasia/suicide. The fact that the question uses the word "allow" should also give you the opportunity to discuss who has the authority to decide whether a psycho can kill people that want to die. From a question like this, you are able to discuss the basis for happiness, for rule-making, governance and the question of who should be able to decide what actions are acceptable or not.

**3. What are your views on the aid budget, and is it helping developing countries?**

If you are not aware that the UK has committed to spending 0.7% of GNI on International Aid, you would make it very evident that you do not read about International Development/Economic Development/Globalisation. Whilst it is important to consider the pros and cons of the aid budget, you need to have an opinion in order to answer this type of question with credibility. Whether you support the aid budget or not, you need to demonstrate an understanding of both sides of the argument, as well as being able to evidence reading on the topic.

You would also be expected to discuss the arguments for trade, and demonstrate that you can think around the topic - whether you want to bring in discussions of globalisation, marginalisation, the Prebisch-Singer hypothesis and/or aid being positive for our safety and increasing trade opportunities, you need to make sure you widen the discussion to more than a simple and straight forward answer that doesn't explore around the topic.

**4. What did you think of the most recent budget? If you were Osborne on that day, what would you have done differently?**

This is a good question for weeding out the students that claim they read the Economist/Newspaper frequently, from those that actually do. Be aware that the budget is published in March, so by the interview stage you will also have been able to read up about how well it has been working.

Be sure to have picked a few points from the budget - a couple of good things and a couple of bad things. These will differ from person to person, depending upon your political and economic leaning, but do be sure to have considered what you might have done differently if you were the Chancellor, as that is usually the follow-up question. Even if this is not asked, be sure to have thought about what you think Osborne should have done, and be prepared to discuss the impact upon the economy, as well as how you might fund it (remember the opportunity cost of funds!) Be sure NOT to suggest changes in the interest rate, as Osborne does not control this, and you will look awful if you suggest that he could. If you have read about small business, talk about the parts of the budget that address helping small businesses so that you can weave in your outside reading.

If you really do not remember what the budget said, try and discuss what could be done now - you can make the point that the budget was based on information and economic circumstances in March and that you would require different policies given the current climate.

**5. Will "Help to Buy" lead to the next credit crunch?**

This question will test your awareness of the most recent budget, your outside reading, and your understanding and awareness of the causes of the 2007/8 Credit Crunch and the following recession. Be aware of how bubbles are formed, and if you do not know what the Help to Buy scheme is, ask for clarification before you try and guess. If you feel comfortable to, you would benefit from comparing the current economic environment to the one in the lead-up to 2007/8. Be aware that the scheme is not open

to everyone, and has many conditions that must be met, but there will always be some risk when the housing market is stimulated - it depends partially on your appetite for risk.

You would also benefit from discussing the link to globalisation, and how housing bubbles in other countries could once again cause financial problems for us. Some people may argue that if we are at risk from a housing bubble bursting, we might as well help our economy until that day comes. This is also an opportunity to discuss the type of action that you think the Government should be taking to stimulate the economy. If you are against this scheme, (or even if you aren't), offer other solutions or potential schemes that could help boost growth, but consider the opportunity cost, and how the schemes might be funded.

#### **6. Should a political party define ideology, or should ideology define the party?**

Should you wish to, you could answer this question by discussing Economics and/or Philosophy, but be aware that at the heart of the question, an understanding of political ideology and the current political parties is necessary. Whether you choose to discuss Political theory from a more philosophical point of view, or an economic one, be aware that how you choose to categorise your ideology will be affected by which point of view you look at it from.

You will need to explain what is meant by an ideology, and how we can tell from a party's policies, what its ideology might be, and vice versa. In this type of question, you will need to demonstrate that you are aware of the different political parties that exist in the UK, and that parties can have similar policies, even though they may have very different ideologies. Be sure to give examples of cases where ideology has defined a political party, and vice versa. (Examples could include Communist China, Nazi Germany, or for less extreme examples, the Labour party.)

#### **7. What is more influential- economics or politics?**

The main issue in this question, and one that baffles lots of students, is how interlinked the two tend to be. Often, economic decisions are made for political reasons, and political decisions may be made based on an economic needs. You should provide examples, and demonstrate an understanding of both monetary and fiscal economics as they can be used in different ways according to the political need. It is essential when answering this type of question, to give a final answer- whilst you need to explain both sides of the argument, it will not look as though you are sure unless you explicitly state what you think. Over the years, as different political parties have been in Government, there has been shifts in focus of politics (and ideology) as well as economics.

Be sure to discuss the effect that politics can have upon a political party's ability to enact economic change, and be prepared for follow-up questions focussing on what is more important for people to understand between politics and economics.

#### **8. Should we leave the EU?**

This is a question that can be asked in relation to lots of topics of discussions, and it is up to you as to what you choose to focus on. However, be aware that there are many facets to discuss, and by limiting yourself to just one of two, you will not be demonstrating the breadth of your knowledge. Some of the elements to discuss, are: Fiscal policy, the Common Agricultural Policy, Trade links and opportunities, the UK's presence on the global stage, the changing risk and vulnerability to economic problems in the Eurozone, and sovereignty. This question would expect an implicit understanding of the Credit Crunch and the following recession, so you would be expected to discuss what may be different if the crises were to reoccur and we were no longer a member of the EU.

Many students get confused and talk about the Eurozone, maintaining the pound and keeping control of our monetary policy, however this will simply highlight your lack of understanding about the formation of the Eurozone, and the EU as well as the (very important!) difference.

Make sure you have read up on the implications of Scotland leaving the UK for both parties, as this could be a question that comes up in a very similar fashion.