

# **INTERVIEW RAPPORT INTERACTIVE INTERVIEW EXERCISE**

# INTERACTIVE INTERVIEW EXERCISE

One of the key elements of the interview that candidates struggle with is the fact that the situation feels very unfamiliar. This is why practice is so valuable when it comes to interview: it makes the unfamiliar, familiar, allowing you to focus on your answers.

## What is the interactive interview exercise?

This manual is interactive. On the next page, you will find a series of instructions to help you create your own mock interview at home. Read through and follow the instructions, using someone to help you if you can.

## A note on interviews.

Before starting, it is important that we remind you of the core of what really matters in an academic interview, like the ones you will experience when applying to Oxbridge. Admissions Tutors are looking for candidates who can demonstrate passion for and potential in their subject. Other factors, like how you are dressed, or if you have a haircut beforehand, may have a subliminal impact, but if you have prepared well to talk about your subject this will be the most effective way of proving you deserve a place.

The main purpose of completing this exercise – and undertaking mock interviews in general – is not necessarily to teach you how to give a better handshake or dress ‘the right way’. It is actually to help you begin to feel confident and familiar in a strange environment. This, in turn, will allow you to focus on what you are communicating in response to the questions you are asked, helping you answer better.

When it comes to university interviews, Admissions Tutors are looking for candidates who are stimulating, who will benefit from the course, who seem genuinely to love their subject and who will challenge them.

## Before you start...

- Make sure your phone is on silent. You wouldn't check it in the real thing, so you shouldn't check it now.
- Dress as you would like to dress on the day.
- If you would take a bag, or a bottle of water with you on the day, then make sure you have those things with you.
- Choose a room in which to be interviewed, and then start the exercise outside it, ready to walk in.

This may seem excessive. However, in order for you to get the most out of a practice interview, it must be similar to the real thing. If at all possible, try and make sure that within the mock interview room there is at least one of these things:

- A family member or friend. This will mean you can get feedback from someone within the room.\*
- A video camera set to record.
- A mirror so you can watch yourself.

*\*If this is the case give them a copy of this download, so they can ask the questions. This is the best option, as it is the most realistic.*

# THE EXERCISE:

Although it may seem strange, the more seriously you take the mock scenario, the more beneficial you will find the exercise.

1. Start outside your room of choice, and practise how you would sit outside the interview room. If you make a good impression before you have even entered the room, you will be in the right mind set to make a good impression once you are in there. Furthermore, in certain situations the interviewer might come and invite you into the room themselves, so make sure that you are ready at any time.
2. Turn your phone on silent, walk into the room and introduce yourself to your interviewer/the camera/yourself.
3. **The Interviewer:** explains the format of the interview: “a thirty-minute discussion regarding your interest in your subject, and some subject-specific questions. You will also have an opportunity to ask your own questions at the end. If you don’t understand anything, please feel free to ask for more information.”
4. **The Interviewer:** offers you a drink of water. Respond.
5. **The Interviewer:** asks “Why you want to study your subject?”. Respond.
6. **The Interviewer:** selects an aspect of your answer and asks you to expand and go into further detail. Have a go at doing this.
7. **The Interviewer:** asks why you have chosen to study the course at this university, specifically. Try to respond for each of your chosen universities.
8. **The Interviewer:** begins with broad questions. Please answer the following:
  - a. “How do you learn best?”
  - b. “What’s the most interesting subject-relevant article you have read recently? Please tell me what you think was wrong with it?”
  - c. “What is it about your subject that you believe makes it worth studying?”
9. **The Interviewer:** begins the subject-specific part of the interview. Turn overleaf to find a selection of questions to choose from per subject.
10. **The Interviewer:** asks if you have any final questions. You must offer at least one question. Respond.
11. **The Interviewer:** rounds off. Thank them for the interview, say goodbye, and leave the room.

# SUBJECT-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

## MEDICINE

- Are some medical charities better than others?

## ENGINEERING

- What is the difference between an elastic band and 10p?

## MATHS

- Prove that any 3 digit number (which is actually divisible by 9) is divisible by 9.

## PPE

- What European country has serious problems protecting its minorities?

## LAW

- Should judges be elected?

## ENGLISH

- Is knowledge of the context of the author's life or the time they are writing in necessary to analyse a text?

## MODERN LANGUAGES

- What effect does history have on translation?

## HISTORY

- Is popularity a useful word when assessing historical figures?

## PHILOSOPHY

- Is it possible to conceive that one day in the future artificial intelligence and humans will be utterly indistinguishable?

## ARCHITECTURE

- Should a building on the outskirts of a town be different to one in the town centre?

## MUSIC

- How can music affect bodily functions?

*For other subject specific questions, our course reports offer a multitude of recently used interview questions from our students that have gone for interview.*

## Phew, that's it!

How did that feel? Consider which aspects of it you found most challenging and which felt most natural. Do you think you answered the questions well. Did you feel comfortable talking about your subject or did you feel you were tying yourself in knots?

Try watching the video back, or getting your friend/family member to give you feedback. Make sure you are as honest with yourself as possible. Think about where your strengths and challenges lie.

How did you do in the personal questions? Did you find it hard to articulate your reasons for choosing the course, or the college, or the subject? If so, then why not have a think about the key points you want to convey, and note them down before practising again.

In particular, how did you respond to the subject specific questions? Did they stimulate you? Are you able to cope with the pressure of not knowing the answer? If not, practice makes perfect. Make sure you are up to date with both your subject knowledge, and also ethical and social issues surrounding it.

# GENERAL TIPS

- Practise shaking hands. This may happen and its best to be over prepared than underprepared. Never go for a fist-bump.
- Practise your posture. You want to appear confident but not arrogant. Don't slouch, try to have a straight back and...
- Try not to fidget. This could look like you are unsure or nervous. You may very well be nervous and that is completely normal and nothing to worry about, but wringing your hands, or playing with your cufflinks may be distracting for the interviewer trying to listen to your answer.
- Use eye contact. You don't want it to seem like you are attempting to hypnotise your interviewer, but a healthy amount of eye contact is very useful for sending a direct message to your interviewer that you are excited and interested to engage with them and the matter at hand.
- If you feel like your answer has reached its logical conclusion, then don't talk for the sake of filling a silence. If the interviewer wants more from you, then they will prompt you.
- One-word answers – that is, a 'Yes', or a 'No' is never good enough. The reason for this is it doesn't allow the interviewer any chance to see how your mind works. If you have a strong opinion on one side or another, explain why. Similarly, 'I don't know' is lazy, but 'I don't know, but here are my initial thoughts' is a perfectly acceptable answer.
- Remember, it's okay to hear something that you have never heard before. Part of the interview is putting you in an environment in which you might not be entirely comfortable, and seeing how you can adapt to having to learn new things.
- Keep calm! The tutors aren't here to trip you up. They want to see if you're the type of student who responds with curiosity and interest in when they don't know the answer.