

Key Potential Questions:

1. Why did you choose to apply to our programme?
2. What are your career goals? How will this programme help you achieve your goals?
3. What skills do you bring to this programme? How will you help your mentor in his or her research?
4. Describe a research project you've worked on.
5. How would your professors 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 aren't accepted into graduate school, what are your plans?
9. How will you be able to make a contribution to this field?
10. Why should we accept 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. Your answer
2. How well you can organize your thinking
3. How well you express yourself

For more information about preparing for interviews and answering questions, refer to Interview Help Sheet (PDF) handout under the resources section on the Career Development Centre website. Interviews will vary among programmes and the individuals conducting the interviews. Questions may be direct, indirect, hypothetical or behaviour-based. Below is a sampling of questions you might be asked during an interview:

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 why you consider these strengths.
- What would one of your friends/teachers/supervisors say about you?
- What would a supervisor or professor tell me are your strengths?

Academic Experiences/Performance:

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- Why did you major 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 courses have you enjoyed the most?
- What courses have been most difficult for you?
- What satisfaction have you gained from your studies?
- Tell me about the research project you completed with Professor _____?
- Do you feel your academic record accurately reflects your abilities and potential?
- Do you feel you have worked to your full 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 professor or supervisor that 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:

- 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 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?

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- 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.

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 about a recent significant problem you faced and how you handled it.
- 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 Events:

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?

Questions Applicants Might Ask an Interviewer:

Asking questions not only helps you as a candidate determine the “fit” of the programme with your desired academic and career objectives, but 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?

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- 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?
- 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?
- How are graduate test scores, 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?

Students are encouraged to schedule a Mock/Practice Interview with Career Services to hone their interview skills. To schedule a practice interview, call the Career Development Centre at 01- 402-3082.

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

<http://postgradireland.com/advice-and-funding/applications/secret-of-successful-postgraduate-interviews>

<http://postgradireland.com/advice-and-funding/applications/interview-hot-seat>

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

Facing an interview for postgraduate study is a daunting thought, so we've put together what we think are the top ten interview questions and how best to answer them. The interview process could decide whether you gain a place at your first choice university or not, so getting the answers right is vital! Whether you're facing an interview to study for a Master's degree or PhD funding, we think these are the ten most likely questions to crop up.

1. 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.

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2. Why this course?

Second on the list of top interview questions, answering it involves similar skills to the previous question. Think hard about your reasons for applying for a particular course, perhaps it's a continuation of your undergraduate course or a development of your current career. Consider career aspirations and options at all times and ensure you give a clear idea of your reasons for applying. Prepare your answer for this question carefully as you can expect it to come up at every interview you attend.

3. Tell me about yourself?

This does not mean your personal life. The interviewers don't want to know that you were born in Sheffield but grew up with your cat in Scarborough. 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. Keep the answer relevant and concise; facts and figures are helpful for doing this. Extracurricular and volunteering activities are great examples of how you can include your personal achievements whilst staying relevant to this question.

4. What are your greatest strengths?

This is your time to shine! If you're asked this question, it gives you permission to go all out with listing your best skills, but be careful how many skills you list. Reeling off a list of skills with no evidence won't impress the panel. Instead, focus on three or four skills that make you a great candidate and provide examples. You might be creative, a quick learner, flexible, hold great people and teamwork skills; whatever you're good at, let them know (with examples)!

5. What are your greatest weaknesses?

This is a tricky question to answer, nobody is perfect after all. Instead, state something which is (or was) a weakness, but also explain the steps you have put in place to change this. You could always just provide weaknesses the interviewer already knows such as lacking a Postgraduate Qualification or state weaknesses that aren't related to the course.

6. What are your career goals?

If asked this question, it's important not to just state your career goals, you need to explain how you intend to succeed. Broad statements like 'wanting to become a specialist' are unmeasurable, instead you should state that you want to become a recognised leading expert in the field with several published works. The goals should be attainable within the next five years, although you may wish to elaborate further if appropriate.

7. What is your philosophy towards work?

There are many work philosophies that universities want to see. Motivation, focus, balancing, creativity and resourcefulness are often top of their lists though. Pick out two or three work ethics

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that you hold and give examples of when you've had to use them, for example, you may have used time creatively in your undergraduate years, balancing work with university.

8. Are you applying for other courses?

Although it's tempting to say, "No, of course not, this is the only University I'm interested in and I want to spend my dying days in its libraries", everyone knows this probably isn't true and as such, it won't help you get on the course. Be honest, if you are looking at a few other courses, tell them, but be sure to say why this course is the best of the bunch! It is of course advisable only to apply for related courses; applying for an MA in Humanities as well as an MSc in Biosciences shows that you may not be passionate about a particular field of study.

9. What Would Be Your Dream Job?

Don't give a specific job title or position, you're asking for trouble if you do! Tell the university interview panel instead about a dream career, free from titles or companies. This makes it easier for the interviewer to understand what you want to do, as it allows them to create the job you want in their mind.

10. What skills do you have that will help you succeed on this course?

In order to answer this question correctly you need to make sure you know the course profile and course content like the back of your hand. You need to know what is involved in the course, is it predominantly research based or are you required to complete practical work? When you know this you can match your skills to what is required. Don't be shy in reminding the interview panel what is required of students on the course and explain how your skills (which you've probably mentioned already by this point) match those prerequisites perfectly.

Other Potential Questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- If you're not accepted into graduate school, what are your plans?
- Why did you choose this career?
- What do you know about our programme?
- Why did you choose to apply to our programme?
- What other schools are you considering?
- In what ways have your previous experience prepared you for graduate study in our programme?
- Any questions?

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- What do you believe your greatest challenge will be if you are accepted into this programme?
- In college, what courses did you enjoy the most? The least? Why?
- Describe any research project you've worked on. What was the purpose of the project and what was your role in the project?
- How would your professors describe you?
- How will you be able to make a contribution to this field?
- What are your hobbies?
- Explain a situation in which you had a conflict and how you resolved it. What would you do differently? Why?
- Describe your greatest accomplishment.
- Tell me about your experience in this field. What was challenging? What was your contribution?
- What are your career goals? How will this program help you achieve your goals?
- How do you intend to finance your education?
- What skills do you bring to the programme? How will you help your mentor in his or her research?
- Are you motivated? Explain and provide examples.
- Why should we take you and not someone else?
- What do you plan to specialize in?
- What do you do in your spare time?

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