



Job interview

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What does a panel for academic position look for?



- **Research excellence:** potential to become leader, track records, ideas, funding and potential
- **Developing others:** teaching, training, flexibility, enthusiasm in sharing
- **Contribution to wider research community, society**
- **Are you a good colleague?**



Interview format

Employers define a “format” i.e. a way of organizing interview to be able to assess candidates' skills, experience and qualifications for a job.

Specific format depends on several factors:

- role requirements
 - Engineers => technical interview
 - Lecturer => give a mock lecture
- company's policies
 - Transparency, fairness, feedback loop...

Interviews in academy are multi-stage process and you will be evaluate all the day, not just during lecture or panel session.



Different type of interviews format

1. Panel
2. Multiple-round
3. Technical
4. Individual
5. Informational
6. Group



“Everything on your resume is true, right?”



Panel

Your typical job interview @ESO

- Several interviewers assessing an individual candidate.
- The interviewing panel typically consists of a hiring manager, the position supervisors or managers and one or more coworkers that meet with the candidate, someone from human resources.
 - Fellowship committee @ESO: 4 staff, 2 fellows, manager/deputy Office for science (ex-officio), manager operations (ex-officio)
- The types of questions you might encounter in a panel interview include:
 - Questions about your values, your knowledge of the organization and your career goals
 - Topics focused on your teamwork, collaboration and conflict resolution skills
 - Inquiries into your past accomplishments and how you plan to meet objectives in the role
- During a panel interview, engage with everyone involved like you would a regular conversation. Maintain eye contact with each panel member and focus on your enthusiasm for sharing your successes and qualifications with the individuals you're meeting with.



Multiple-Round

Staff position application: "visit on site"

- Several employees involved in the hiring process that evaluate a candidate's fit each in separate one-on-one interviews. This allows interviewers to gauge a candidate's personal and professional traits such as:
 - How they will fit into the company culture and work environment
 - Their abilities to interact and collaborate with diverse personality traits
 - Teamwork, communication and conflict resolution skills
- Success during a multiple-round interview means applying your interpersonal and communication skills to adapt to each interviewer's conversation style and answering questions that highlight your strengths and capabilities.



Technical (I)

Designed for IT, Engineering (at ESO!), technical roles position

- Involve answering a series of technology-specific questions (such as software development applications or data analysis) as well as mathematical or complex tech problems, much like an exam.
- Key elements of a technical interview format include:
 - Role-specific interview questions like designing software products, running automation tests or coding languages
 - Mathematical and numerical reasoning problems like calculating values and applying algebraic formulas
 - Questions that prompt candidates to explain their analytical reasoning for employers to understand their approaches
- Prepare for this type of interview by researching the company and evaluating how your approaches to solving technical problems can be a benefit in the organization. Additionally, use online resources to practice solving mathematical and numerical reasoning interview questions, and continue to develop your hard skills like coding and programming languages.

Technical (II)

Teaching

- Similar to Panel + technical, only tailored to lecturer
- Often includes a mock lecture on given topic. Make sure you find the reference book for the lecture well in advance. Panel plays the role of the students and asks questions. Sometime beyond what is requested... get ready.
- Typical questions include: describe your teaching philosophy: how do you incorporate technology into your teaching; how do you handle differences in learning abilities among students; how do you handle feedback...
- Gather information about the panel, the institute, study the topic, practice, showcase your qualifications effectively

Type of interviews questions (I)

- **Open-ended : used in “traditional interview” techniques.** They aim to get a sense of the candidate’s overall background, personality, and fit for the company culture. So-called ice-breaker questions
 - @ fellowship/staff interview: present yourself and your scientific view in 5-10 minutes
 - These questions are valuable for understanding a candidate’s motivations and general suitability
 - Train by practicing your ability to articulate thoughts and experiences in a narrative form
- **Situational:** candidates are presented with a real-world scenario and ask them to solve the problem or evaluate how they would approach the situation.
 - Give specific examples of how you handled similar situations in past roles,
 - or you can describe how you would approach the scenario if you have no experience with situations similar to the one you're presented with.

Type of interviews questions (II)

- **Behavioral questions** focus on your behavior in past professional, personal and interpersonal positions and what outcomes resulted from your actions.

Use the STAR method for answering

- This approach can help you highlight exactly what employers look for: effective communication, leadership, teamwork and interpersonal skills.



Prepare the interview based on the type of position

Academic positions:

- Enhance your teaching experience (training you gave, mentorship, technical talks, handovers, etc...).
- Be prepared to interact with all academic staff
- Think on how to complement or align your research with the research line of the department.

Staff position with technical duties:

- Refresh your technical knowledge, there may be technical questions
- Think on how to maintain your science while doing duties.

Management position:

- Show your organization and time management skills
- Clear vision on how to run the team
- Show your soft skills and your conflict management style.





Questions you can expect

Typical ESO panel @Fellowship/staff

Present yourself and your research

Describe your research and its significance in two minutes

How will your research program complement the work already underway in the department?

Where do you see yourself in x years?

Where do you see your research leading in 5-10 years?

How do you deal with some specific situations?

5 qualities and "defects"

Why are you interested in this position? Why should we give you this position?

Why do you want to be part of this department/company/project?



Zoom/Teams interviews good practice

- Use the mute button
- Look into the camera while speaking
- Choose a professional background
- Find a brightly lit room
- Pick a quiet space
- Silence your phone
- Maintain your focus
- Turn off notifications
- Use a laptop or computer
- Charge your laptop
- Do not read the answer, stay natural
- Update your computer
- Find a good internet connection
- Communicate with your household
- Wear professional attire
- Keep your screen clear
- Practice using Zoom/teams
- Use appropriate body language
- Ask your interviewer questions
- Join five minutes early
- Practice answering questions

What not to do

Dress inappropriately

Be late

Use your phone

Answering the wrong question. Listen carefully and answer the right one. Not more than 2 minutes

Not being prepared

Badmouthing past employers



How to deflect inappropriate questions

Illegal to Ask a Candidate Questions About

- Race, Color, or National Origin.
- Religion.
- Sex, Gender Identity, or Sexual Orientation.
- Pregnancy status.
- Disability.
- Age or Genetic Information.
- Citizenship
- Marital Status or Number of Children.

Unique and unpredictable interview questions can be used to assess how well an interviewee copes under pressure.





How to deflect inappropriate questions

- Don't take them personally
- Don't be shocked, be ready with what you consider an appropriate and friendly response without being alienating.
- Don't let a prospective employer bully you into disclosing something that you are not comfortable with.
- Don't get defensive and protect your personal boundaries with grace and confidence. Aim to diffuse the situation and use this as an opportunity to showcase your interpersonal skills.
- "I don't feel that question is relevant to this position".
"I know how to separate very well my personal life from my work"

Tips for research presentation

Research job talk

- Research panel expertise
- Structure well: speak to the department needs, balance past, present, future
- Stick to time
- Practice with peers, colleagues, supervisor who can give you feedback on technicalities
- Listen to other talks and assess your strengths





Do you have questions for us?

- Not more than 3
- Not obvious or questions with yes/no answer
- Set your priorities right: support for students, training, development, ongoing research seminars,...
- Question about salary usually after receiving the job offer, when meeting with Human Resources



After the interview

- Make sure you have time-line of the process to be able to follow-up
- What are *your impressions*? Can you see yourself working there?
- Job negotiations: be clear on what you want to negotiate; get ready to compromise; if cannot get a higher salary, negotiate some benefits. At ESO cannot negotiate salary but can negotiate the starting step level.
- If you are unsuccessful ask for feedback
- Interviews blues are normal, get support for it



Why do you want to come here?



Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?

Are you married?, do you have children or do you plan to have children?

INAPPROPRIATE

Do you have any commitment that may prevent you for working on night shifts?



Can you tell us about your experience working in research teams?



How do you manage conflicts?

5 different styles of interview

Beyond “competency based” interviews

Competency based interview do not predict future performances of the candidate. Discussion ongoing about alternative possibilities.

1. Some companies are turning to “values-based” interviewing, where the focus is on assessing a candidate’s alignment with the company’s values and culture.
2. Strength-based interviews are gaining in popularity as an increasing number of organisations recognise the benefits, including being useful for those who don’t have a lot of work experience and means candidates have less opportunity to prepare and rehearse their answers,
3. Situational interviews: In situational interviews, candidates are asked to describe how they would handle hypothetical scenarios or situations that they may encounter in the role they are applying for.
4. And there’s good old-fashioned conversation - sitting down and having a chat with a candidate, getting to know them as a person, and exploring whether they’d be a good fit for the company. Although this does require people to better awareness of their own unconscious biases.
5. Case interviews: Case interviews are commonly used in consulting and other professional service industries to assess problem-solving skills. Candidates are given a business problem to solve and are asked to walk through their approach to solving it.



Thank you!

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Useful links

- Credit: some material from internet links you may find below, some from personal experience, slide 12 and 15-24 slides from previous workshops in 2018 and 2020
- https://youtu.be/54wvYQUJNFg?si=JTkc8od8UFDv_Zn7
- <https://career-advice.jobs.ac.uk/jobseeking-and-interview-tips/top-ten-tips-for-preparing-for-academic-interviews/>
- <https://www.eui.eu/Documents/ServicesAdmin/AcademicService/Academic-and-Professional-Development/Mock-interviews-preparation-guide.pdf>
- <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/succeed-in-a-panel-interview>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/advice/0/what-most-common-mistakes-during-interview-role-plays?trk=cg>
- <https://resources.workable.com/interview-process-policy>
- <https://www.betterteam.com/astronomer-interview-questions>
- <https://ckgroup.co.uk/candidate/advice-centre/the-star-interview-technique/>