

Recruitment Interviews Question Bank

Introduction

This document contains some general interview questions categorised by topics. It is advisable to pick a few questions from relevant topics for the role along with more specific work related questions.

These questions are merely a guide to formulating a structured interview for candidates.

You will find a step-by-step guide to the University's recruitment process on the Human Resources website under 'Manager Guidance' in the [Recruitment](#) section.

June 2013

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Support Role Question Bank

General Questions

- Why are you leaving your current role?
- What attracts you to the University?
- What skills and contribution can you bring?
- Where do you want to be in 2-5 years time? Why?

Understanding Current/ Previous roles

- Can you talk to me about your most recent role?
 - What were your key responsibilities
 - Did you work as part of a team
 - Did you supervise/ manage anybody?
- What aspect of your job gives you most satisfaction?
- What gives you least satisfaction?
- What are you looking for in your next role?
- Tell me about your most successful part of this role? What made it successful in your eyes?
- Looking further back, can you tell me about the role before the last one?
- What made you decide you wanted a career in / as a?
- This seems like a change in direction for you, can you tell us about that?
- Could you please describe your greatest achievement in the workplace?
- Describe the greatest challenge in your last role, what made it challenging? What did you learn?
- What feedback did you get in your last performance review?

Working with others

- What is your preference working as a team or working alone?
- Tell us about a time you have worked as a team member?
 - What role did you play in the team?
 - How successful was the team?
 - Give examples to back up your view.
- Tell us about a time when the team you were working with was under delivering, what did you do in the circumstances?
- Tell us about a time when you've worked as a high performing team?
 - How did the team work?
 - What comments did the team get from the customer or manager?
- What was the most successful / effective team you've worked in? Why was it successful?
- Can you give us an example of a time when you've had to deal with conflict and how you have managed it?
- Tell me about a time when you felt it important to intervene to help resolve some conflict between two colleagues.
- What was your particular contribution to the team?
- How would you feel about working on a project which made it difficult for you to be part of a team? Why?
- How would your colleagues describe your main contributions to the team? What about your two most important development areas?
- Describe a situation when you had difficulties working with a team.
 - What caused the problems?
 - How did you respond?
 - What was the outcome?
- Describe your greatest success as a team, what role did you play?
- How would team members describe you and why would they say that?

Resilience and Working Under Pressure

- Can you tell me about a time when you had to forsake accuracy for the sake of speed? How did this make you feel?
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an arrogant, condescending person or one who made you angry. What did you do?
- Tell me about the process you use when you have to make a decision in a short amount of time.
- When presented with two equally important projects with short completion times, how do you decide which one to focus on?
- How would you respond to your manager if they asked you to provide a service or piece of work that you know nothing about?
- Give me a recent example where you experienced a significant setback at work. Describe the situation. How did you react to this?
- Give me an example of a time when you were unfairly criticised. Why was this?
 - How did you respond?
 - What was the outcome?
- How would your colleagues know if you were under pressure at work?
- Give me an example of your biggest learning when working under pressure?
 - How would you describe your style?
- What puts you under pressure? Give us an example.
- How do you prioritise work, give us an example.

Managing/ Leading Other people

- Tell me about a time when you've led a team. What activities did you undertake to ensure the team delivered a successful outcome?
- Can you tell us about a time when you've led a team and the goal looked like it was not going to be delivered? What did you do?
- Can you tell us about a time when you've managed:
 - Someone with talent that need stretching to maintain their interest?
 - Someone who is underperforming and causing problems in the team?
 - Someone who is coasting, who could contribute much more?

What did you do? How did the conversation(s) go, what was the end outcome?

- How would the people you manage describe your management style? At your last review what did your manager say?
- What do you consider to be the most critical skills a manager needs to succeed in an environment like the University of York?
- A key role of a manager is to manage employee performance and to review others. Tell me how you manage employee performance and how you have gone about giving negative or difficult feedback.
- How would you describe your own supervisory style?
- As the supervisor of a small team, what would you take into consideration when delegating tasks?
- How would you ensure that the quieter members of the team had their say?
- Tell me about a time when you tried to improve the morale in your department.
 - What measures did you put in place?
 - What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time where you were able to motivate others to achieve team goals.
 - What exactly did you do?
 - What was the outcome?
 - In retrospect would you have done anything differently?
- Tell me about a time when you took charge of a group in which you didn't like how things were going and you convinced the people to do something different.
- Tell me about a time when there was a problem with one of the team you were supervising. What was the problem? How did you deal with it?
- Describe the methods you've used to develop the potential of your staff.
- Tell me about a project you personally took the lead on. How did you assign tasks to your other colleagues?
 - How did you monitor progress?
 - How did you measure success along the way and in the end?
- Tell me about your best and worst boss. How were they the same and different? How were you able to work with these individuals?
- Describe a time when you have had to deal with an underperforming team member.
 - What happened?
 - What was the outcome?
 - What was your learning?

Organisation/ Planning/ Time Management

- Can you tell us about how you organise your day? Give us an example
- How do you prioritise your work? Give us an example
- Can you tell us about a time when you had several high priority pieces of work all with tight delivery deadlines? What did you do?
- How do you keep track of what you need to do and when they need to be delivered?
- Can you tell us about a time when two people have asked you to do urgent pieces of work to extremely short timescales? What did you do? What happened in the end?
- Can you think of a time when you missed a deadline? What did you do?
- Tell me about a time you had to handle multiple responsibilities. How did you organize the work you needed to do?

Project Management

- You say that you've managed / worked on a project, can you tell us about the project methodology that you used?
- Tell me about a time when you took a good idea from start to completion
- Give me an example of a change you saw coming and how you planned for that change.
- Tell me about the process you use when you have to make a project decision in a short amount of time.
- Tell me about a time when you dropped a project in the middle and moved on to some other priority (or ...about a time when your schedule was suddenly interrupted and your plans for the day completely changed)
- What is the most effective way(s) to keep a task on track?
- What do you think makes a successful project manager?
- What particular skills did you need to display in your most recent project?
 - What was your main contribution to the project?
 - How did you measure success?
- In your work, do you prefer to adopt well-proven methods or to be more experimental? Give us an example

Communicating with others

- Thinking about the last report you wrote, who was the audience? What feedback did you get? Did it achieve its aim?
 - Can you give us an example of the last presentation you gave?
 - How long was the presentation
 - How big was the audience
 - Who was the audience
 - What tools did you use to assist you?
 - Did you write it alone?
- Tell me about a presentation you made to a larger audience. What was the purpose? How did you prepare for it?
- Describe a work situation that required you to really listen to a person who was telling you about a personal/sensitive situation. How do you let others know you have fully understood?
- Give an example of a situation where you have been faced by an individual with a different opinion from your own, and you have attempted to change his/her mind. What did you do to persuade that individual of your opinion?
- Tell me about a time when you failed to give your team or a member of your team the information needed to do the job you asked of them.
- Tell me about a time you needed to get cooperation from someone in another department for you to be successful on a task or project.
- Describe a recent situation when you had to explain something that was particularly complex (or to someone with whom you were unfamiliar). Tell me about the way you explained it to them. What makes you think you were successful?
- Tell me about a time when you found it difficult to keep someone's attention. Why was it so difficult? What did you do? How well did this work?
- Tell me about your most successful piece of communication.
 - What method (s) did you use?
 - why was it successful?
- Tell me about your least successful example of communication.
 - What happened?
 - What was the outcome?
 - What was your learning?

Service Delivery

- We all deliver services to other people whatever our role; can you describe your approach to service delivery?
- Service delivery can often be about delivering a process in an efficient manner, can you tell us about a time when you varied the process to deliver the service? Did you make the decision, or did your manager?
- Can you tell us about a time when due to constraints outside your control you could not deliver the expected service?
 - What did you do?
 - How was this received?
 - What was the end result?
- Can you tell us about a time when you exceeded expectations, how did the recipient react? How did this make you feel, did you change anything so you keep to this level of service?
- What contribution have you made to ensure that the service your team/ department delivers remains service focussed and maintains an efficient but friendly delivery?
- Can you describe a time when you have instigated change and how you approached it? [you may wish to be specific about the type of change e.g. to processes, departmental structures etc]
- What is the best way to measure Client satisfaction?
- Describe a situation when you have had to deal with a particularly angry customer.
 - Why were they angry?
 - How did you begin to calm them down?
 - If you were in a similar situation again, what would you do differently?
- How would you go about adjusting a client's unrealistic expectation in terms of delivery time, while still keeping them on-board?
- Tell me about a recent situation when you had to build a relationship with an important new customer.
 - Why was this relationship important?
 - How did you develop the relationship?
- Give me an example of a time when a customer's trust in you was diminished. What did you do to restore the trust? Did you retain the customer?
- What is the most important thing you have done to increase profit?

Decision Making

- Thinking about a recent decision you have made, can you tell us the scenario you faced. What process did you use to give you the information to make a decision? How did you communicate the decision? What impact did the decision have?
- Can you tell us about the process you use to decide whether you have the authority to make a decision and when you need to refer it elsewhere?
- Can you tell us about a recent decision you made which was unpopular? What were the circumstances? How did you handle the “noise”? Did anything change as a result of what you did?
- What is the most difficult decision you have had to make in the workplace? Give us an example.
- Tell me about a decision you made and later regretted.
- What information do you need, so that you can make a decision?
- Tell us about a time when you didn't have all the information available to you and you had to make a decision?
 - How did it make you feel?
 - What was the impact on the timescales?
 - In hindsight would you have done anything differently?
 - How big were the risks?
- How do you assess risks when making decisions? Give us an example.

Initiative & Problem Solving

- Can you tell us about a time when you used your initiative to resolve an issue at work? What was the context? What did you do? Did you resolve the issue? What did you learn from the process?
- Describe a time when you were asked to do something that you had never done before? How did you approach the task? What was the outcome? What did you learn from the experience?
- What are the typical problems you encounter in your current/ last role, how do you resolve them?
- How have you encouraged the people you lead to resolve their own problems?
- Tell us about a time when you have spotted something that needed doing and that no one else was going to do. What did you do?
- Tell us about a time when it felt like you were taking some risks to resolve a problem. What was the impact of that on the outcome?

Personal Development

- Tell us how you go about developing yourself at work?
- Can you tell us about the last time you did something outside your comfort zone? What was the situation, why did it make you uncomfortable? What happened? Was this outcome you expected? What did you learn from this?
- What development feedback have you received from your manager? What have you done develop in this area?
- Tell me about a time when you had to learn something new in a short amount of time. What created the situation? What did you have to learn? How did you learn it?
- Describe for me a situation where you may have missed an obvious solution to a problem.
- Tell me about a time when you came back from a course excited about what you learned and then had trouble implementing the change back in the workplace.
- Describe a situation where you, at first, resisted a change at work and later accepted it. What, specifically, changed your mind?
- Tell me about a time when you were not pleased with (or were disappointed in) your performance. What did you do about it?
- Tell me about an occasion when you made a significant investment in your own personal development. Why did you choose this as an area for development? What did you do? How have you applied this in your role?
- How do you keep up with advances in the field of.....?
- What is your most recent sustainable change you have made in your work? Why have you made the change?

Academic Question Bank

Academic Leadership, Management and Administration

- How would you describe good academic leadership? Which of these skills do you possess?
- What academic leadership skills would you bring to the Department?
- How well do you inspire others in the group to write grant applications?
- How would you describe your people management skills, both in terms of staff and students?
- How would you contribute to the academic administration in the department?
- What administrative roles have you held previously and what would you consider to be your greatest achievement in this area?
- How do you balance all the aspects of your academic role?
 - What do you think is a good balance?
 - How do you feel about the balance?

Teaching

Commitment to teaching and the promotion of learning

- What makes you a good teacher?
- How do you bring your research into your teaching?
- What experience do you have of teaching large groups of students? Please give some examples.
- How could you contribute to the development of a new course?
- How do you strike the right balance between research and teaching?
- What are the challenges of making and sustaining teaching collaborations?
- What does 'widening participation' mean to you?
- What teaching skills and techniques do you use?
- How do you see technological advances impacting on teaching?
- How do you think you might teach large groups of students in lectures most effectively?
- You have experience of teaching groups of 15 - what might you do differently if you had to teach a group of 70 students?
- Would you use different teaching styles with postgraduates compared to undergraduates?
- How do you see yourself contributing to the teaching in our department?
- Are there any changes that you might make to the current undergraduate/postgraduate programme?
- Do you see any potential for new course development?
- How do you know when you have made a difference to your students?
 - How do you assess it?
 - What do you do with the knowledge?
- What is your proudest teaching experience?
- What is your most challenging teaching experience?
 - What did you learn from it?
 - What did you do differently from then on?

Research

Achievements in Research:

- What are you most proud of in your research to date and what are your future plans?
- What is your most outstanding publication?
- What do you believe to be the big issues in your field today? Do you propose to address these?
- How does your research relate to the current research themes within the Department?
- What do you see as the main direction of your research over the next five years?
- What external research links would you want or need to maintain or develop? How would you manage these links?
- At York we are keen to develop collaborations across disciplines and departments, have you had an opportunity to consider what opportunities York would give you for multi-disciplinary research work?
- Who would you like to collaborate with at York if you obtain this post - both within and outside the Department, and external to the University?
- How confident are you of continued funding success in the future?
- What ideas do you have for further funding for your research and what are the potential sources of funding? How many postgraduate/PhD students have you supervised?
- Tell us about your anticipated REF submission.
- What is exciting/ innovative about your research?
- How do you see your research fitting in with the Department?
- What piece of your research has had the most impact?
 - Who was the audience?
 - What feedback have you had?
 - What did you do or are planning to do next with it?