

Common Academic Interview Questions

(Contributed by those who have gone before you)

Practice Talking About You:

- Tell us about yourself.
- Tell us about your work.
- Tell us about your dissertation.
- Tell us about your service activities.
- Describe your degree of involvement in your professional associations/conferences.
- Tell us about your goals.

Practice Talking About Your Fit:

- Why did you apply for this job?
- Why are you interested in university/college X?
- What is it about our department that interests you?
- What are your impressions of our curriculum?
- What experience do you have working at our type of institution?
- What do you know about working at our type of institution?
- Why do you want to teach at a liberal arts college?
- Why do you want to teach at a research institution?
- Why do you want to teach at a state university?
- How would you teach our class on X?
- As a faith-based institution how might you contribute to our mission and campus atmosphere?

Practice Talking About Your Dissertation:

- Tell me about your dissertation.
- When will your dissertation be completed?
- What impact will your dissertation have on the field of X?
- How do you explain your dissertation to someone not in your discipline?
- What will you need to do to revise your dissertation for publication?

Practice Talking About Your Publications and Presentations

- What was your contribution to this publication?
- Which of your publications do you feel is the most significant?
- On what topics do you intend to publish in the future?

Practice Talking About Your Teaching:

- Tell us about your teaching experience.
- Which of our current classes can you teach?
- What teaching techniques do you use in the classroom?
- What methods do you use to involve students?
- What new classes would you want to teach?
- What are your teaching strengths/weaknesses?
- Describe a time when you felt challenged in the classroom.
- What steps have you taken to improve your teaching?
- What technologies have you used in the classroom?
- How would you get undergraduates excited about the field of X?
- What texts might you use to teach a new course that you would develop?
- Tell us something about your teaching experience.

Practice Talking About Your Research:

- What are your research plans? How about for the next X number of years?
- How do you see your research fitting within our department and what we already do?
- How would you incorporate others in your research?
- What plans do you have for future research?
- With whom might you collaborate in our department?
- What types of interdisciplinary research might you do?
- In ways might you include undergraduates in your research?
- What are your research strengths/weaknesses?
- What funding sources are you aware of that might support your future research?

NOTE: It is not enough to craft precise responses to each question, because the interview committee will ask variations on a theme. It is essential to understand what an interview committee seeks to learn about you through your responses to the questions they ask. Practice talking about the various categories of information that the interviewer seeks. Consider what you would say in 30 seconds and what you would say in two minutes.

Interview Tips from Faculty

Pre-Work

- “Learn everything you can about the institution, the faculty, and the department.”
- “Have a sense about with whom in the department you might want to collaborate.”
- “Gain an understanding about the students attending the institution.”
- “Be able to talk about yourself and your work in the past, present, and future.”
- “Practice out loud.”
- “If interviewing by phone or Skype, practice with a friend to ensure your technology is working properly.”
- “Participate in a practice interview and ask for feedback on any distracting habits you might have.”
- “If having a virtual interview, arrange your space to convey your professionalism.”

During the Interview

- “Know your audience. Are all the interviewers in your field?”
- “Provide examples to feature your skills and strengths.”
- “Convey enthusiasm.”
- “Limit any distracting habits.”
- “Ask a clarifying question if you don’t understand what the interviewer is asking.”
- “Always talk about the experiences and skills that you do have to offer; don’t talk about what you don’t have to offer.”

After the Interview

- “Do something that you find relaxing.”
- “Begin drafting thank-you notes and/or emails to everyone with whom you interviewed.”
- “Use your thank-you notes to more thoroughly answer a question for which you felt you did not initially give the best answer.”
- “Use your thank-you notes to convey the ways that you feel you would be a good fit with the department and institution.”
- “Keep a log with any questions that you would like to practice answering with greater competency; also write down what you felt you did particularly well.”
- “Consider tweaking your presentations and documents based on your experiences using them.”

Note: The interviewer typically seeks to know six things about the candidate.

1. Is the candidate competent?
2. Can the candidate work with others?
3. Does the candidate demonstrate a range of interpersonal skills?
4. Does the candidate seem friendly?
5. Could I consider the candidate a colleague?
6. Will the candidate add something beneficial to our department?