Interview Preparation for International Students and Postdocs

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Career Services: What Can We Help With?

- Understand Yourself
  - Interests
  - Values
  - Strengths
  - Goals

- Explore Options
  - Resources
  - Networking
  - Activities
  - Internships

- Take Action
  - Applications
  - Letters
  - Resumes
  - Interviews
Objectives of this Workshop

• Discuss how U.S. culture influences the interview process
• Outline three steps for a successful interview
• Provide strategies and resources for practice answering interview questions
Interviewing in the U.S. May Be Different Than What You’re Used To

http://growthnation.com/tips-and-techniques-for-cross-cultural-selling/
## Differences Between U.S. and International Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal relationships may be more important than time. Being late may not be a problem.</td>
<td>Be punctual. Arrive 5 to 10 minutes prior to appointment.</td>
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<td>Eye contact, especially with persons of higher status, may be disrespectful.</td>
<td>Eye contact is expected and shows confidence.</td>
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<td>Citing accomplishments and skills might be considered boastful, self-serving, or too individualistic.</td>
<td>Open discussion of accomplishments and skills shows confidence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Researching an organization in advance may show too much initiative and independence.</td>
<td>Researching the organization and demonstrating that knowledge during the interview is expected. Shows initiative and interest.</td>
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</table>
Three Steps for a Successful Interview

• Research the employer and industry

• Analyze the job description and how it connects to your skills, experience, and interests

• Understand interview types and practice answering potential questions
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Researching Employers and the Industry

What do you research?

• News
• Mission statement
• Competitors
• Interview approaches
• Employee perspectives *

* nothing compares to face-to-face/voice-to-voice research
Researching Employers and the Industry

Where do you find this information?

• Johnson Library Guide
• LinkedIn
• Glassdoor
Three Steps for a Successful Interview

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• Understand interview types and practice answering potential questions
Understand the Position

What are employers looking for?

• Educational background
• Experience
• Skills
• Interest
• Understanding of the job/role/career
Understand the Position

*Deloitte Consulting–Business Technology Analyst*

**Qualifications:**

- Strong academic performance and extracurricular activities
- Detail oriented
- Experience, interest and aptitude in technology
- Sharp analytical mind
- Demonstrated leadership abilities
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Willingness to travel (required)
Understanding Yourself

- Cultural diversity and global perspective
- Insight into your field/specialization area
- Language skills
- Adaptability
- Demonstrated ability to overcome obstacles
- Career goals
Three Steps for a Successful Interview

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Interview Types

- Phone/Skype Interviews
- Campus Interviews (face-to-face)
- Office Visits (typically full day or more)
- Panel Interviews
Interview Approaches

• Basic
• Behavioral
Interview Approaches

• Basic
  • Widely used for screening
  • Questions pertain to the job and your qualifications
  • All candidates are asked the same questions
Interview Approaches

• Basic Interview Questions
  • Why are you interested in this position?
  • Why are you qualified?
  • What is your greatest strength/weakness?
Interview Approaches

• Basic

• Behavioral
  • Use past behavior to predict future behavior
  • Most questions start with the phrase:
    • “Tell me about a time…”
    • “Can you give me an example when…”
Interview Approaches

• Basic

• Behavioral Interview Questions
  • Tell me about the most complex problem you’ve had to solve in the last several years
  • Tell me about a time when you were working on a team and you had a disagreement with a team member
Think ✰ STAR ✰ !

<table>
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<th>‘STAR’ Technique to Answer Behavioral Interview Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Detail the background. Provide a context. Where? When?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the challenge and expectations. What needed to be done? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Elaborate your specific action. What did you do? How? What tools did you use?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Results</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain the results, accomplishments, recognition, savings, etc. Elaborate.</td>
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Illegal Interview Questions
(Refer to the Career Guide, page 75)

- Race
- Gender
- Religion
- Marital Status
- Physical and/or Mental Status
- Ethnic Background
- Country of Origin
- Sexual Orientation
- Family Status
- Age
An Interviewer May Ask

• Are you authorized to work in the US?
• Do you now or will you in the future require sponsorship to work in the US?
• Do you have a work permit for the US?
• Are you a US citizen? *(but only if position requires citizenship)*
How to Answer: “Are you authorized to work in the US?”

- Familiarize yourself with OPT/CPT regulations on the isso.cornell.edu website
- If necessary, talk to an immigration advisor at ISSO before the interview
- If the employer doesn’t discuss your work eligibility during the first round interview, consider mentioning it during the second round—don’t wait until a job offer has been made!
Asking Questions at the End of Your Interview

• What is your management style?
• What have you enjoyed most about working here?
• What have past employees done to succeed in this position?
During the Interview

• Be aware of body language and eye contact
• Ask clarifying questions if necessary
• Be positive; **show enthusiasm** and **confidence**
• Always remain calm and positive, even if you feel that the interview is not going well!
• Thank the interviewer for their time
• Ask for a business card
Interview Tips and Suggestions

• Slow down your speaking speed
• Never hesitate to confirm or ask to repeat a question if you do not understand
• **Don’t worry about your accent!**
• Practice rephrasing; don’t be flustered by searching for the “right” words
• Don’t use an obviously memorized script
Follow Up

• Send thank-yous within 24 hours to each interviewer
• Spell names correctly and use correct titles
• Check on application status
• If rejected, consider sending another letter thanking the employer for the opportunity to interview then reiterating your interest in the organization and the position
Next Steps…

• Become comfortable talking about yourself and highlighting your skills

• Learn to answer concisely; not too long (over 2 minutes) or too short (20 seconds)

• Practice interviewing:
  • OptimalResume’s Interview Prep
  • Mock Madness
  • Individual appointments
What Are Your Questions?