

Preparing for Interviews

It is critical to prepare thoroughly before an interview as this helps you to feel confident, answer questions concisely and make a great impression.

Types of interviews

Quite often you will already have made it through some type of assessment or test before you get invited to an interview. Most commonly interviews are in these formats:

- **face-to-face meetings** with one or more interviewers (a panel)
- **telephonic interviews** with one or more callers (conference call)
- **video calls** using skype, facetime or a similar app

Depending on the job and the number of applicants, you might be required to attend more than one interview; the first interview may be a short screening interview to secure a place in the more in-depth second round of selection interviews. Selection interviews may include a competence evaluation, where you are required to prove your skills, complete a test or provide a presentation.

When invited to an interview

An invitation to interview may come a few weeks after applying, so make sure you keep track of where you apply to and for what job. Ideally have a copy of the job description saved.

Request and note the following details:

- Date and time of the interview
- Exact location and directions. (Find out how long it will take to get there if you are taking public transport or find out where to park.)
- If you need to prepare anything specific or bring anything to the interview
- The name or names of the caller or interviewer
- How long the interview will take

What to research before the interview

- Think about yourself, what you have to offer and what you have done that would make you the ideal candidate for the position. (To do this, you can highlight key skills and requirements in the job ad, and then think about examples that speak to these specifics.)
- The job, the employer and the industry. Check their website and research the industry they are in. Google the company for additional information and use LinkedIn.
- Questions you can expect - this is available in our hand out: Interview questions. Also consider what you should ask and prepare around five questions about things not covered in the ad, website or interview.

Virtual interviews:

For online or telephonic interviews, plan and test the following items well before the interview:

- Book a venue or ensure you have access to a quiet space. Ask the UCT Careers Service about facilities that are available for this purpose – we have a virtual interview room that you can book

An interview is a meeting between an employer and a job seeker that takes place after applying for a job and being short-listed for the position. The interview is as much for the employer to evaluate you as it is for you to assess if the job and employer are right for you.



- Make sure you have enough battery life on the device you are using
- Test call to check the connectivity and stability of the phone or internet line
- Test your camera and make sure the lighting is good (e.g. no bright backlight)
- For video calls, dress smartly and check that the background is clean (e.g. they can't see your unmade bed or a pile of dishes!)
- Frame the camera to include your upper body so you appear natural and there isn't a focus on the top part of your head, which can happen when using a webcam
- If using Skype or a similar application, make sure that your username and profile picture are appropriate and professional (e.g. NOT @cheekySquirrel99 or @soccerHooligan32).

Presentations

If you are presenting something in the interview, you will need to cover logistical items as well as some technological ones. Check that you do the following:

- Have multiple copies of digital files (e.g. on flash drive, in the cloud, emailed to the interviewer, and/or on your computer if you are taking one).
- Test the format on different devices or file types, as layouts may alter during conversions
- Bring any equipment you might need, including power cables and adaptors - ask if you are unsure of what is available
- Limit animations and embedded clips that could malfunction.

In the interview

First impressions count, so it's in your interest to conform to professional standards in terms of dress, behaviour and timeliness:

Arrive (or be ready) 5–10 minutes early

- Dress appropriately and professionally (as if you have the job)
- Look people in the eye – for video calls that means looking at the camera when talking
- Speak audibly and be friendly and polite
- Shake hands and/or stand to greet people (follow the interviewer's lead on these types of gestures)
- Turn your phone to silent or off
- Don't chew gum
- Have a copy of your CV and/or professional references.

Within 24 hours of the interview:

- ✓ Send a short email to say thank you for the opportunity to interview for the position, perhaps mentioning something you learnt or enjoyed
- ✓ Send any additional information that you were asked for or offered to send during the interview.

What happens next?

- You are invited to a second interview and you need to start preparing
- You get a job offer. This is wonderful news! The offer normally outlines the conditions of your employment (e.g. the salary they are offering, the amount of leave, the length of the contract (if not a permanent position) and working hours). Make sure you know and understand all the conditions before you sign; you may wish to negotiate the terms before
- You get a rejection. Accept the decision graciously (keeping up your professional impression) and ask for feedback on why you didn't get the position. This will help you to prepare better for the next interview or identify skills that you need to acquire.
- You don't hear from them again - this is frustrating! During the interview, you should have asked for next steps and a timeframe of when you can expect to hear back. If that period passes with no news, it is acceptable to contact the organisation asking for feedback.

