Teacher Training Interviews
Presumably, you’re reading this because you’ve got an interview for a teacher training opportunity coming up, in which case well done! Universities and schools don’t waste time interviewing people they’re not interested in; you’ve done well to get to this stage.

If you’re reading this because you think you’ll have an interview lined up soon, even better – you’re the type of organised person that will do well in the teaching profession!

In this hand-out we will talk about what to expect from the process, what recruiters are looking for, and the best ways to prepare.

**Preparation**

As with any interview situation, much of your success (or not!) will be determined by how much effort you have put into the preparation process before the day. So what do you need to do to give yourself the best chance of success?

1. **Read the information about the interview process given by the teacher-training provider**

   Many schools and universities will send you quite detailed information, often a full leaflet, about what to expect from their selection process and what they are looking for. This is the first thing you should be studying carefully. It should tell you: what will happen on the day, the tasks to expect, anything you need to prepare in advance, and what you need to bring with you (often including photo ID and a copy of all your qualifications – so root out your old certificates now, you’re going to need them).

2. **Research the teacher-training provider**

   If it’s a school direct/SCITT interview – use the school website, Ofsted reports etc. to find out as much background information as you can about the schools in the partnership, their ethos, the catchment areas they serve. You have to convince them you really want to come to their partnership - make them feel special!

   If it’s a university-led PGCE, look at their Faculty of Education teaching department pages – what do they place emphasis on? Wherever you are applying to, you need to be able to answer the question – “Why have you applied to us?”

3. **Read up on general issues in the UK education sector**

   You need to be knowledgeable about changes to the curriculum, government policy, new national strategies and current developments/hot topics in your chosen key stage and subject (if secondary). Speak to teachers and read relevant websites – e.g. The Times Education Section, Education Guardian, BBC Education.
Also, use this link to make sure that you are very familiar with the National Curriculum for your chosen age-range/subject and the different key stages etc. For example, if you’re asked a question in a primary interview such as, “Tell me about current literacy and numeracy policy” you need to have done your research!

Reflect on your experience to-date

The panel will expect you to be able to describe and analyse the range of experience you have gained, especially any experience of working with children and young people, particularly in a school environment. What knowledge and understanding has this given you of how children learn and the professional role of a teacher?

You cannot predict every question you may be asked, but you can prepare in advance specific examples from your school experience – particular classes you were in, pupils you worked with, good practice you observed, perhaps how you contributed to a specific lesson or a particular child’s progress. You can then adapt these examples to answer different points. Try & structure your examples using the “STARR” technique, Situation, Task, Action, Result, Reflect. E.g.:

**Situation:** Which class were you in, at which school, working with which pupils?

**Task:** What were you/the teacher setting out to do? What was the learning objective?

**Action:** What did you actually do? How did you/the teacher do it – what strategies/methods did you use and which skills? This should form the major part of your answer.

**Result:** How did you measure the success of what you did? E.g. from good verbal feedback from pupils/the teacher, better behaviour, or an improvement in grades etc.

**Reflect:** What did you learn from this example? Is there anything you would do differently?

E.g. in answer to a question such as “How do children learn?” You could talk about different learning styles, making lessons engaging etc., and then try to give a concrete example from your observations using the structure above.
Selection Guidance: what are they looking for?

The purpose of the interview is to see whether you:

- Possess the appropriate qualities, attitudes and values expected of a teacher
- Can communicate clearly and accurately in written and spoken standard English
- Have sufficient subject knowledge to teach the subjects you are applying for
- Have the intellectual and academic qualities needed to meet the required QTS standards

You will be given the opportunity to demonstrate that you have an enthusiasm for teaching and would be likely to adopt a positive approach to your work.

So, what skills and qualities will they be looking for from you on the day? Here’s what a local school direct partnership’s interview booklet states:

- confidence and clear speech
- positive demeanour
- the capacity to be an effective member of a team and get on with people
- good communication skills
- enthusiasm
- a genuine liking for and understanding of children
- the ability to manage your own learning and adapt to change
- the ability to be an independent and autonomous learner
- resilience
- leadership capability

Knowledge and understanding of the professional role of a teacher

You will be expected to have well thought out ideas on why you wish to enter the teaching profession, and, in addition, to show an awareness of the work of a school teacher. You need to demonstrate that you have a realistic idea of the stresses and strains of being a teacher as well as the rewards. This is where your work experience gained to-date in a school environment will be very useful to draw on. Stating that one of the attractions of teaching is the long summer holidays will definitely not impress the interview panel!
The Assessment Day: What to Expect

You will be given full details in advance of the format of the day(s) so make sure you study it carefully. You are likely to face an interview, and often some/all of these: a group task, a written task and a presentation or a “mini-teach” lesson to a group of pupils. You may also find that you face other short tests/activities as set by the provider. If you are applying for school direct you might find that you have 2 assessment days – the first at university and if you are successful there, a second day at the school partnership.

1 The Interview

- You cannot prepare for every possible question, but you are likely to be asked questions around the topics of:
- Teaching and learning (e.g. what makes a good lesson, how do you motivate the children, how do you make a lesson fun, what makes children behave?)
- Knowing about the life of a teacher. They are looking for applicants that know about the challenges but are still motivated to apply.
- Diversity and Inclusion (being able to articulate what diversity means in a school setting.)
- Assessment and progress (different forms of feedback, effective questioning, peer and self-assessment etc).

Remember your STARR technique to structure your answers—see page 3

Teacher training interview example questions:

General

- Why do you want to be a teacher?
- What does the term “inclusion” mean to you?
- What does “diversity mean to you?”
- What strategies can you use to meet the individual needs of the pupils in your lessons?
- Why do you want to work with this age range of young people?
- What qualities do you think make a good teacher?
- What do you think are the main differences between education today and in your own school days?
- Tell me about a time when you've had to make a difficult topic interesting and accessible
- How do you ensure that you respect and include people of all backgrounds as you go about your daily life?
- Do you have any other skills/interests that you think a school might be interested in?
- What have you learnt from your teaching work experience/shadowing?
- Why did you choose to study...?
- Give an example of a good lesson you have observed.
- Give an example of a bad lesson you have observed.
- How will you cope with the intensity of teacher training?
• What have you done that convinces you that teaching is for you?
• What do you think are the rewards and challenges of teaching?
• How will you use ICT for teaching and learning?
• What makes an outstanding lesson?
• What will you contribute to the wider life of the school?
• What are the other roles of a teacher within a school?
• What is the value of an extra-curricular programme?
• Teaching is challenging. What will you do to help you deal with the pressures of the profession?
• What is your view on teachers using social media personally and professionally? If I looked up your social media profile what would I find?
• Tell me about a successful experience from your placement and why it was successful.

Secondary/Further Education

• Why do you want to teach this subject?
• Tell me why you think _________ is an important subject.
• What subject knowledge is needed as a _________ teacher?
• What is the role of a form tutor?
• How would you attempt to motivate an A level student who had lost interest in this subject?
• How much of your degree do you think is relevant to the subject you want to teach?
• How well does your degree subject relate to the national curriculum?
• How would you motivate uninterested pupils?
• How would you handle a lesson encompassing a huge range of different ability levels within the group?
• How would you cope with disaffection and poor performance of KS4 pupils?
• PE -how would you maintain participation in physical activity of Y11 pupils?
• How would you deal with a pupil who is deliberately and repeatedly disruptive in your lessons?
• Tell me about an experience from placement that did not go well/according to plan and what you learned from this.
• What you understand by the term ‘climate for learning’?
• FE: Why have you chosen to teach at post-16 level?
• FE: What do you think are the key issues currently for the post-16 sector?
• FE: What do you know about your subject within the sector and the qualifications a student can apply for?
• FE: Can you tell us about any changes to your subject or Government actions?
• FE: Why do you want to teach this sector?
• What qualities do you think make a good FE teacher?
• FE: Give examples of good and bad practice
• FE: What other qualities/experiences could you bring to teaching?

Primary

• Talk about a day spent in a classroom and the layout of the classroom.
• Tell me about current literacy and numeracy policy.
• How is your degree subject helpful for teaching at primary level?
• What do you think is the importance of playtime?
• Who are the main stakeholders in a primary school?
• How do you deal with gifted children in a mainstream classroom?
• How can your hobbies and interests be incorporated into the classroom?
• How will you cope with teaching across the range of national curriculum subjects?
• Can you give me 2 examples of things you have learned about children’s learning and teachers and their teaching whilst being in the classroom.
• Tell me about safeguarding, how this applies to ICT, and did you feel children are aware of the dangers of the internet?
• If a child suffered a set-back in his/her work in a lesson, how would you help them?
• How would you ensure you included all cultures in your lessons?
• How would you include pupils with SEN and physical disabilities?
• How would you make sure that your classroom was universal?
• How would you make sure that your teaching material was diverse?
• Would you find it challenging fitting into a new school? And how would you form relationships with teachers?
• What will you contribute to the wider life of a school?
• How would you deal with a child who was refusing to do their work, and causing trouble within the classroom?
• How would you stay organised and cope with the intensity of the course?
• What challenges do you think you will face in taking this course? How will you face them?

2 The Teaching Task

You may be asked to prepare and lead a session for a group of pupils. This will often last around 15 minutes. This is most common if you are applying for a school direct/SCITT opportunity. The details of this session will usually be sent to you prior to the interview date. You should produce a plan for your session which can be shared with the interview panel. You can often bring additional resources to be used as part of your teaching activity. Make sure you know what resources/IT will be available for you to use on the day.

It could be worth contacting the school to find out – will there be any pupils in the lesson who require additional support/information in a different format?

What are they looking for here?
• This is your opportunity to demonstrate your flair, imagination and initiative; which are key skills for a secondary teacher.
• They want to see that you have put some thought into the planning of your lesson and pitched it at an appropriate level.
• The panel will be looking to see how you interact with students and how you have involved pupils in the lesson.
• How you have managed and used resources
• How you will assess what pupils may have learnt from your “mini” lesson.
Remember, the assessors are well aware that you are not a trained teacher and will not judge you as one but they will be looking to see if you show the potential through your knowledge and interaction with the students to become a good teacher in the future.

**Example Teaching Tasks**

**Primary**
1) You will lead a group of children in a games-based activity of your choice.
2) Reading activity - bring along a book of your choice to form the basis of a lesson to a small group of pupils.
3) 30mins Maths lesson for a mixed ability class of year 2s on “place value”.

**Secondary Computer Science and ICT**
You will be required to prepare a 15-minute lesson to a group of Year 9 (13-14 year-old) pupils on the following topic: “Summarise the key hardware components that make up a computer system, how they interact and how they affect performance”.

**Secondary English**
You will need to prepare a 'mini-lesson' on language. We want you to select an aspect of grammar, such as word classes, types of sentence (e.g. simple, complex, compound), clauses, use of conjunctions, that kind of thing, and think how you might teach this concept to a class. You will need to think of how you will introduce the concept, ways to make the topic interesting, and how you will engage and sustain the attention of learners. Feel free to choose both the aspect of grammar you wish to teach and the context for this activity.

**Secondary History**
You will be required to prepare a 15-minute “lesson” to a group of Year 9 (13-14 year-old) pupils on one of the following topics: Propaganda with reference to sources, Similarity and/or difference, Cause and/or consequence, Reliability with reference to sources, Usefulness with reference to sources.

You can choose any context eg, First World War, Medieval England, China in the 6th Century etc... You can choose your lesson from any, or a combination of the above topics

**Secondary Maths**
1) You will be required to prepare four ten minute lessons on each of the following topics: Area, Fractions, Decimals and Percentages, Statistics, Calculus.
2) You will be assigned your topic on the day, and you will have to teach it to a group of pupils.

**Secondary PE**
You will be given an activity to teach to a small group (12-18) of pupils for approximately 30 minutes. This will involve both planning and evaluating your lesson with reference to the National Curriculum programme of study. You will be sent the necessary information needed to plan the lesson prior to the interview day. The focus of this will be to examine your subject knowledge but also your professionalism and your engagement with the children being taught.
3 The Writing Task

You may be asked to provide a short written response to an extract about a current educational issue. You may be asked to read and comment on a piece of prose (often sent to you in advance).

What are they looking for here?

- The ability to frame a coherent argument
- That you can write English clearly, with no major grammar issues etc.

Some example writing tasks:

**Secondary Computer Science & ICT:**
Sent to candidates in advance – Read this article “Michael Gove admits schools should teach computer science”. You will be asked to complete a writing task related to it.

**Secondary English**
Close reading of three unseen poems. You will be asked to choose an aspect of each poem you find interesting and to say why, and then what links you can find and/or make between the poems. This tests your subject knowledge and understanding and how you think about literature and language.

**Secondary, English**
Test of reading and writing. You will be sent an article prior to interview. On the day of the interview you will be required to write something in response to the article and also to state what you think is essential to the subject English in the 21st Century (focussing on core knowledge, skills and understanding).

**Secondary Maths**
Read the article “Trainspotters’ Paradise”, Dave Hewitt, bring it with you as it will form the basis of a task on the day.

**Secondary MFL**
Complete written tasks in English and in your first foreign language. As part of your preparation for the task in English, we are enclosing an article, which we would ask you to read before interview. You will also be required to undertake a written task in the language you are offering. You will not be allowed to use a dictionary.

**Primary**
1) Written comprehension task to do: the importance of classroom behaviour using an article from the National College for Teaching and Leadership: comment/discuss.
2) Article sent in advance, “Are standards in primary schools slipping?” Discuss

**Secondary PE**
On the day- you will be provided with a newspaper or journal article, which considers an aspect of Physical Education [or] the place of PE in the curriculum. Produce a 300 word summary.
Article sent in advance and on the day candidates had to answer:
1) What does a good lesson look like and what would elevate it to ‘outstanding’?
2) What makes a teacher outstanding?
3) Can learning only be ‘outstanding’ with a charismatic teacher? Discuss. (25 mins allocated)

4 Presentations to Interview Panels

Most common in university-led PGCE courses instead of the “mini-lesson” to pupils. You may be presenting just to the interview panel or to the panel plus your fellow candidates on the day.

What are they looking for?
- Preparation
- Confidence, enthusiasm in your voice
- Are you interesting to sit and listen to?!

Some examples of presentations.

Secondary Computer Science & ICT:
Sent to candidates in advance – Prepare a 5 min presentation on the topic of “What do I believe the future of ICT in secondary schools should look like?” or “Why my subject should be studied by all secondary students”

Secondary English
You should prepare a 5 min presentation on a text you think is suitable for teaching at KS3. (This requires you to look at the Nat Curr Programmes of Study for English, to think about a suitable text, how you might approach teaching it and engage learners with it, and what you think learners might gain from such study. Please note, it may not be possible to use Powerpoint during this presentation).

Secondary Geography
Give a five minute presentation to an audience on the subject of ‘What should a revised National Curriculum for Geography enable pupils to do and why?’ Your presentation should not depend on a PowerPoint presentation, just in case equipment is unavailable.

Secondary History
A five-minute presentation on “What do you consider to be the challenges in teaching History in the 21st Century?” (There will be a laptop available; however if you would like to use other audio-visual/ICT resources, please let us know in advance.)

Secondary MFL
A teaching presentation, where you will spend 10 minutes teaching (not talking about) a grammar point from your first foreign language. Think of your audience as being students in Year 7 (although you will in fact be presenting it to the interviewers). This means the point you choose to teach should be something from the Year 7 national curriculum for your language. If you require any particular equipment for your presentation, e.g. projector and screen or interactive whiteboard, please let us know in advance.
Secondary Science
Please come prepared to give a five minute presentation suitable for either a key stage 3 or 4 group as you decide, on one of the following topics: Elements, compounds and mixtures, Photosynthesis, Parallel and series circuits, the rock cycle. The presentation could take the form of an introduction to the topic, a summary of the topic, or target a key concept associated with the topic. You will be assigned your topic at interview, so please be prepared to talk about any of these topics.

Secondary Chemistry
5 min presentation to the other candidates: allocated a topic on the day from: the importance of CPD in teaching, classroom behaviour, assessment, inclusion, barriers to learning, inclusion.

FE
As part of your interview, please can you prepare a five minute PowerPoint presentation prior to the interview which explains why your subject is important within the Lifelong Learning sector? Your presentation will be delivered to the interviewers and other interviewees. Please bring a hard copy of your slides with you.

Primary
- Topic sent in advance: A short presentation on a teacher you found to be an effective professional.
- A short presentation on an educational topic of your choice (e.g. the new SAT’s, new curriculum, absence of male teachers in the profession), presented in front of all candidates – to be prepared in advance
- A short presentation with no prior notice- pine cone was produced by the panel, and asked which two topic areas this could be used in and also how it could be used in a cross-curricular way for Maths, English and Science.

Other Primary Activities
(often as part of a School direct assessment process)
You will sit in on a lesson by an experienced teacher and act as their classroom assistant. You will be asked to observe a lesson and feedback your observations to the assessors.

5 Group Discussions
This will likely take place as part of a university’s assessment process. You will often be given an educational scenario to discuss with the other candidates on the day.

What are they looking for?
- Listening skills,
- People who can talk articulately about their experiences,
- Good interpersonal skills - not to be too dominating or too shy,
- What do you actually know about teaching and learning?
- How do you engage with people in your peer group.
Secondary Subject Audits

You may be asked to prepare a subject knowledge audit in advance and bring it with you. This is usually to check the topics that you have covered related to your subject and the level to which you have studied them. If you’re applying for a modern languages course, be prepared to be interviewed in the language you propose to teach and to answer questions about your time abroad.

Secondary English
A mini subject knowledge audit and test. You will be asked to evaluate your knowledge of literature against a list of topics, themes and genres, and in language there will be questions and tasks relating to grammar, punctuation, syntax and types of sentence and clause.

Secondary Science
A written test of applicants’ knowledge of science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Earth Science) and ideas about issues in science education. The test will help to inform the guidance we offer you about suitable routes into Science teaching.

Secondary Art & Design or Design and Technology
Bring to interview a representative selection of your personal work illustrative of your interest and areas of expertise. Include any support materials

Secondary PE
Bring with you a DVD featuring your own practical performance in a variety of sports and demonstrating your awareness of health and safety issues, your competence in ICT and your ability to organise the appropriate environment.

The applicants then had to complete a tick box, rating exercise to assess their personal experience of a range of sports and included questions like: How relevant are the following sports to your degree? How much do you know about the following sports and how suited to them are you? Your personal experience of a range of sports.

Secondary Design & Technology
It would be helpful if you could bring examples of your work in one area of specialism. You will have 5 mins during the interview to present your work. Suggested examples are: final year dissertation, photographic evidence of work completed, teaching materials used with young people.

Art & Design
You should bring to the interview a representative selection of your personal work illustrative of your interests and areas of expertise. Include any support materials such as personal journals or research studies that would help to provide a context for review and discussion.
Further Resources

- PGCE Interview Tips: teacherstalk.co.uk/faq/pgce/interview-tips.php
- Kent University Online Teaching Interview: kent.ac.uk/careers/interviews/ivteaching.htm
- Tips from UCAS: ucas.com/ucas/teacher-training/apply-and-track/interviews
- For an overview of applying to teach, including interview information: prospects.ac.uk/routes_into_teaching.htm
- Research the National Curriculum: education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum
- Times Educational supplement tes.co.uk
- The Independent education section independent.co.uk/news/education
- Careers & Employability Service ‘Finding School work experience’ guide: mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides

Careers & Employability Service Support

The Careers & Employability Service offers a range of support to Manchester Met students and graduates:

MMyou Careers Centre:

MMyou provides a wide range of online resources and interactive tools to help you continue your professional development and achieve your career goals. Log in through My Career Hub.

Key resources include:

- A mock interview simulator and preparation resources
- Ideas on future career pathways
- Guides and interactive tools to build the perfect CV and covering letter
- E-learning packages to develop your professional skills
- Self-assessment exercises to discover your strengths and preferences
- Advice on how to manage your professional social profiles
- Job search function which accesses multiple job-boards

Detailed careers guides: Access our full range of careers guides on our website.

Ask a Careers Question Online: Get online advice through My Career Hub, ask your question at any time and receive support via email.
Careers Consultant Appointments: Book a 30 minute appointment to discuss preparation for upcoming teacher training interviews or review your performance with a Careers & Employability Consultant.

Term-Time Drop-Ins in Brooks 1.40:
Applications Drop in - Wednesday 1-3 / Careers Guidance Drop in Thursday 10-3

Careers Events: Meet employers and enhance your employability by attending our workshops, employer events and careers fairs.

For more information visit mmu.ac.uk/careers

Please note:
Obtaining school experience is not an entry requirement for teacher training courses like the PGCE. Having some experience in a school can help you decide if teaching is the right career for you and could help to strengthen your application regardless of which route you choose.