Interviews
Congratulations! You have been selected for interview. This means that you meet the basic requirements of the role and the employer is eager to meet you to see if you are the right person for the job.

The interviewer will be looking to assess your understanding and motivation for the job, suitability for the role and fit for the organisation. There are many different types of interview, and you may be required to undertake one or more of these when applying for a role. This guide provides detailed information on the different types of interview, what to expect and how to prepare.

For more detailed information on Assessment Centres, please see our Assessment Centre guide: mmu.ac.uk/careers/guides.

**Telephone**

Large recruiters may use telephone interviews as a part of the earlier stage of the recruitment process. They are just as formal and important as face-to-face interviews and are a crucial deciding factor to see if you will be progressing onto the next stage of the recruitment process.

The questions asked in a telephone interview will be very similar to those asked in a regular interview. You should also structure your answers the same (see below information.) It may also be useful to keep a copy of your preparation notes and your application close by to use as prompts if you are stuck on a question.

**One-to-One**

These type of interviews mainly consist of yourself and the hiring manager (usually the successful candidate’s line manager or a member of the HR team.) One-to-One interviews can take different formats, either a formal process where the interviewer will take note of your answers and assess these against the key shortlisting criteria, or a more casual process where you will be invited to an informal chat.

**Panel**

Panel interviews consist of two or more panel members, who are involved in the selection process, asking you a number of questions. Often there will be a panel chair, who will explain the format of the interview, and then each panel member will ask you questions in turn, although one person may be there just to take notes. Ensure that you maintain eye contact with the person who speaks to you and asks you the questions, but remember to make eye contact and engage with the other panel members as well.
Preparing for interviews

Thorough preparation is key. The employer will have decided on the selection criteria for the job, and will then ask each candidate questions to supply evidence to determine whether they have the skills to do the job effectively. You need to research the employer, the industry sector and the job role and clearly relate your own skills and experiences to what they are looking for.

Read as much as you can about the company or organisation to find out:

- What the company does.
- What are its current priorities and developments?
- Who are its major clients, customers, suppliers, competitors?
- What are the major trends in the sector?
- Has any legislation impacted on the sector?
- Sector salaries: regional and national.

Be sure that you have a clear understanding of what the job involves. Look at the job description and person specification, see which skills or qualities are required.
Think of situations where you demonstrated these skills, choose examples from all areas of your life including academic work, outside interests, placements/work experience.

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Area</th>
<th>Example Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team Work</td>
<td>Working in a shop or bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Skills</td>
<td>Course dissertation or project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Delivering a presentation or working in a call centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning/Organisation</td>
<td>Organising an event</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strength Based Questions**

Strength based questions are focused primarily around what you enjoy doing and what your interests are. If you are struggling to think what your strengths are, think about what you enjoyed most out of your various experiences in university, societies, part-time work, travel, hobbies and volunteering. Strength questions are particularly helpful if you have limited work experience as you can show your passion and enthusiasm for a role.

Some examples of **strength based questions** are:

- Tell me about an activity or task that comes easily to you.
- What unique qualities could you bring to the company?
- Describe a successful day.

It is hard to predict what strength questions you may be asked. Research the strengths or values the company is looking for; check their website, job description and person specification as initial preparation.

If employers are focusing on your strengths, they may ask about your weaknesses too. Think of some weaknesses you do have, but balance these out with strategies that you are using to overcome them.

**Competency Based Questions**

Competency-based questions appear regularly in almost all interview scenarios. Employers identify the skills and abilities (competences) that are vital for working in their organisation and they use these as selection criteria when recruiting. Job descriptions and person specifications often list the key skills required for a role and many graduate employers highlight the core competences they look for on their recruitment websites, so this will be a good starting point when preparing for potential questions.
Some examples of competency based questions are:

- ‘Can you talk me through an example of when you…’
- ‘Describe a time when you…’
- ‘How would you go about…’

More example interview questions can be viewed by visiting MMyou: https://mycareerhub.mmu.ac.uk/students/abintegro?redirectURL=/resources/elearning/Hub.aspx?

**Answering Interview Questions**

Using the STAR format is the most effective way of getting your answer across in an interview. It is the clearest way to help the employer understand in what context you have the desired skills and attributes they are seeking.

**Situation**—You should give context to the example you are about to state. This should be a short description, such as: ‘Whilst working on a group project’ or ‘During my internship last summer’.

**Task**—Briefly explain what it was that you had to do, and what the success criteria was. If you were working as a group explain what the overall task of the group was, but be clear about your own role.

**Action**—This should be the lengthiest and most detailed part of your example. You should include: What you did; Why you did it; How you did it; What skills you used.

**Result**—What happened because of your actions. Was the outcome positive and if so how?

**Example Answer**  "Describe a situation when you had to deliver excellent customer service following a complaint"

### Situation

During my summer internship in 2018, I was responsible for managing the company's customer relations, this included handling customer queries and complaints.

### Task

On one occasion, a customer had contacted our service centre as an email they had sent had not been answered yet by the company. As I was working with this customer via the telephone, quick thinking and a personable telephone manner were essential.

### Action

I explored the situation with the customer and I also explained that we had a company policy of answering all email communications within a 48 hour period. I was able to resolve her initial query which originally required her to get in touch via email, so that at the end of the call she felt satisfied that all of her concerns had been answered.

### Result

As a result the client not only continued to order from us, but also added positive customer service feedback to our website.
Depending on the role you are applying for, you may also get asked a mix of technical and case study questions that are related to your particular vocation or industry.

**Questions to ask at an interview**

Interviews are an opportunity to find out more about the company. At the end of the interview you are likely to be asked if you have any questions for the company - say yes! This shows you are enthusiastic about the role and prepared. Ask 2-3 questions. Questions you could ask include:

- If I am successful in getting the job what will I be doing in the first 6 months?

Ask questions that demonstrate you have done your research, for example:

- I see the company is doing ...*(mention some current activity)*, what impact will this have on ...*(the business, customers etc)*?

Ask questions about the interviewer eg

- Did you join as a graduate?
- What do you enjoy most about working here?

**After the interview**

You could consider sending a thank you email or letter after the interview, as this shows you are keen and interested in the role. Keep it brief, but you would reiterate that you have the skills for the role. If you don’t get the job, it could be that your interview needs improvement. On the other hand, you could have been fantastic and someone else just had the edge. Many employers will provide feedback if you request it. It can be difficult to hear the reasons for the rejection but this can provide valuable insight into why you didn’t get the job and help you to reflect and perform better next time.

**Careers & Employability Support**

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

- **Careers Consultant Appointments**: Book a 30 minute appointment to discuss preparation for interviews and assessment centres, or review your performance.
- **Ask a Careers Question Online**: Get online advice through My Career Hub. Whether you would like feedback on your CV or have initial questions about preparing for interviews, this service allows you to ask your question at any time.
- **Careers Events**: Meet employers and enhance your employability by attending our workshops, employer events and careers fairs.
- **MMyou resources**: https://mycareerhub.mmu.ac.uk/students/abintegro?redirectURL=/members

For more information visit mmu.ac.uk/careers