

Navigating Behavioral Interview Questions

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES

APRIL 7, 2020

Welcome!



What employers are saying due to Covid-19

NACE IS CONDUCTING A SECOND ROUND OF COVID-19 POLLS, FOCUSING THIS TIME ON HOW EMPLOYERS AND COLLEGES ARE ADAPTING THEIR PLANS AND OPERATIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE EPIDEMIC.

REVOKING OFFERS TO FULL-TIME RECRUITS AND INTERNS (N=135)

64% are not revoking offers to full-time recruits and interns

Another 25% are not revoking offers yet but are considering it

CHANGES TO SUMMER 2020 INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS (N=130; SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

35% are making no changes

35% are reducing length of internship by delaying start date

29% are moving interns to virtual program

20% are moving events online such as end of program presentations

15% are reducing the number of interns

EXPECTATIONS FOR RECRUITING CLASS OF 2021 (N=134)

67% are planning to recruit at the same level as for the class of 2020

13% are decreasing the number of recruits compared to class of 2020

6% are increasing the number of recruits compared to class of 2020

EXPECTATIONS FOR ATTENDING CAREER FAIRS IN THE FALL (N=135)

62% plan to attend on-campus and virtually

17% plan to attend on-campus only

5% plan to attend only virtually

EXPECTATIONS FOR INCREASING VIRTUAL RECRUITING (N=135)

42% Yes

53% not sure yet, still deciding

Poll

Which of the following most applies to you?

- A. I am actively on the market and applying to positions, but haven't interviewed yet
- B. I have an upcoming interview
- C. I have had interviews recently, but am looking for ways to improve
- D. I am planning to go on the job market soon (through summer 2020)
- E. I'm just planning ahead for a future job search (fall 2020 or later)

What is the purpose of an interview?

- Opportunity for employer to “meet” you and learn about your experiences, skills, and competencies
- Helps you assess if the employer/position is a good fit for you based on your skills, interest, and values
- They want to know are you the missing piece



Are You the
Missing Piece?

Preparation: Interviewing from Home



Four easy things to make your virtual interview even better:



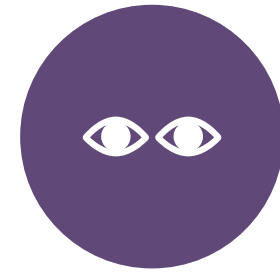
1. SOUND



2. LOCATION



3. LIGHTING



4. YOU!

How to Look Good in Skype Interviews

PRE-INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Sound

- Enough “stuff” in room to absorb/deflect sound
- No loud noises in background

Location

- Background is appropriate
- Nothing distracting in background
- Camera height at eye-level
- Camera about arm’s length away
- Eyes two-thirds of the way from bottom of frame

Lighting

- Window or lamp in front of you
- No strange shadows
- No bright overhead lighting

You

- Dressed appropriately
- Put on makeup

Remember

- Look directly at the camera
- Keep your head and body reasonably still

Watch the video: <http://youtu.be/rQwanxQmFnc>

Pre-Interview Checklist



Past performance
indicates **future** success

Three Habits of Successful Candidates:

1. Ability to speak in great depth about an experience
2. Ability to think carefully about the goal they're referencing – why was it an important experience for them? What actions did they take to achieve X accomplishment?
3. Ability to tell stories well



Preparation: Identifying Skills & Accomplishments

You can't advocate for yourself as being a good fit for a job without knowing what you have to offer.

- What is the employer looking for and what can you offer them based on your skillset?
- What have you accomplished both inside and outside the academy?

Top 10 Skills Employers Seek*

1. Verbally Communicate



2. Work as a Member of a Team



3. Make Decisions & Solve Problems



4. Plan, Organize, & Prioritize Work



5. Research, Read Critically, Collect & Process Information



6. Use Quant. Skills & Analyze Data



7. Language & Technical Skills



8. Knowledge of Software & Tech.



9. Create and/or Edit Written Reports



10. Ability to Sell or Influence Others



Document your skills using the **OCS Skills Tracker** in Crimson Careers!

* National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Job Outlook Survey

World Economic Forum: Top 10 Skills for 2020



SKILLS
TRACKER
TOOL

-
-
- 1. Complex Problem Solving**
 - 2. Critical Thinking**
 - 3. Creativity**
 - 4. People Management**
 - 5. Coordinating with Others**
 - 6. Emotional Intelligence**
 - 7. Judgment and Decision Making**
 - 8. Service Orientation**
 - 9. Negotiation**
 - 10. Cognitive Flexibility**

A Hiring Manager's Mind Set:

- What do you know?
- Why should I care?
- Why should I hire you?
- Do you have confidence and ability to take on new challenges?

They are only looking for **skills and competencies that are important to meet their needs**, solve their problems, fix what's broken, etc.

Behavioral Interview Question Examples:

- **Give me an example** of a time you faced a challenge. How did you deal with it?
- **Tell me about** a conflict you had with a professor, lab mate, supervisor...why was there a conflict? What did you do?
- **Tell me about** a time when you used your leadership skills to get a project done.
- **How in the past have you** influenced other people and their actions?

How to Answer: PAR Format

You will want to walk the employer through a story in the following order:

- 1. Briefly tell them the **overall problem/situation** (set the stage)
- 2. Next you will want to **provide specific actions** you took
- 3. End **with the outcome** or result. Were you successful? *Quantify whenever possible.*



Problem

The image features a stylized human head silhouette on the left side, constructed from a dense array of glowing white dots and intricate circuit-like patterns. The background is a dark, gradient black, with a diagonal band of blurred, glowing white dots extending from the bottom left towards the top right. The word "Action" is prominently displayed in the upper right quadrant in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

Action

Result



Prepare Stories to Demonstrate:

- **Communication**
- **Teamwork**
- **Leadership**
- **Skills that are relevant to the employer!** *(Use the job description and your research as your guide)*

Tell me about yourself...

What NOT to do...

“Well, I was born in ...”

“Haven’t you read my resume and cover letter?”

Drown them in jargon:

- “I’m getting my PhD in BBS in the Spring. I’ve found that in CH-128 cells in culture, a low oxygen, high pH environment induces dephosphorylation of the 5’ end of the ABX-Hatch gene, resulting in upregulation of the upstream inhibitory primer and subsequent decrease in expression of the beta-amyloid repressor protein, and finally, increased amyloid expression. Coming from Harvard, I’m sure I could do a great job at your company.”

Tell me about yourself...

Try something like this...

- “I’ll be graduating with a PhD in Genetics from Harvard in May, and my research has focused on gene expression in Alzheimer’s disease. In addition, I managed our lab’s monthly journal club for four years and successfully established a mentoring program for incoming graduate students in our department. With my deep knowledge of genetics and neurodegenerative diseases, along with my strong communication, analytical, and teamwork skills, I know I can make an immediate contribution to the market research team at NeuroSystems.”

Tell me about yourself

=

Why should we hire you?

Tips for Discussing “Weaknesses” or “Failures”

- Set the stage
- Be mindful of demeanor, tone (practice having difficult conversations)
- Define your role and the players involved without giving any personal information
- Don't blame
- Reframe as an area for improvement
- Illustrate self-awareness and adjustments you've made since

Prepare 5 to 10 Behavioral Examples

1. _____

P _____

A _____

R _____

2. _____

P _____

A _____

R _____

Important Day of Interview Tips

VIRTUAL	IN PERSON
Login just a couple of minutes early	Arrive <i>at least</i> 15 minutes early
Be nice & respectful to <u>everyone</u>	Be nice & respectful to <u>everyone</u>
Solid Greeting!	Solid Handshake
Eye contact	Eye contact
Stand/Sit tall and confidently	Stand/Sit tall and confidently
Prepare questions to ask at end of interview	Prepare questions to ask at end of interview
Get a sense of hiring timeline	Get a sense of hiring timeline

Important Day of Interview Tips Cont.

After the Interview:

- While things are fresh in your mind, reflect on what you did well, what you could improve?
- Send a thank-you email to interviewers
- Remind interviewers of anything additional you want to mention

Resources for Practicing

1. [LinkedIn Interview Tool](#)

2. [LinkedIn Learning](#)

3. [InterviewStream](#)

4. Prepare for [case interviews](#) if you are applying for consulting jobs or internships:

- Join the [Harvard Graduate Consulting Club](#) – participate in their [case practice meetings](#)
- Access [CaseQuestions.com](#) (Free, PIN protected)
- Attend the [Fast Math](#) workshop that is held in early fall.

5. Reference [Vault Guides](#) (Free, Harvard Key protected, requires one-time registration) for interview prep in specific fields or industries.

6. [Make an appointment](#) with an OCS adviser for a 30-minute mock interview.

7. Sign up for a mock interview with alumni through [Firsthand Advisers](#).

Five Remote Work Resources

1. [Crimson Careers](#) (filter employers seeking graduate students!)

2. [Global Wonks](#)

3. [Parker Dewey](#)

4. [GigNow](#)

5. *Remote filters on job sites ([HigherEdJobs.com](#), [Idealist](#), etc.)*

Upcoming Programs

- [APRIL 8th: MIT Spring Career Fair \(Virtual\)](#)
- [APRIL 14th: Navigating Careers in STEM: Virtual Panel Discussion](#)
- [APRIL 16th: Job Search Strategy for International Students Webinar \(Interstride Event\)](#)
- [APRIL 21st: Career Opportunities at the World Bank & International Finance Corp. \(IFC\)](#)
- [APRIL 30th May 1st: Social Impact Expo \(Virtual\)](#)
- [OCS Employer Event Calendar](#)
- [OCS is Engaged!](#)

Questions?
