

# Interviews: Ten questions to consider when you are offered an interview

by Dr Catherine Armstrong

## 1. What does the department specialise in?

Make sure that you know in advance which areas the department needs to improve on. You should also be aware of the major issues and challenges they are facing. Getting inside knowledge is best. This is why academic networking is so important; you never know when that connection will be useful!

## 2. What is the role?

It might be an obvious question, but what is the job you are being interviewed for?! You have probably applied for tens of jobs while you have been job hunting. It is important, then, to re-read the job specification so that you know what the successful candidate will be asked to do. This will also help you to identify your unique selling point as a candidate.

## 3. What format will the interview take?

You will need to know what you will be required to do on the day. You should be told this when you are invited to interview. Are you going to do a presentation? Will there be formal or informal lunch arrangements? How long will it last?

## 4. Why do I want this job?

This is crucial. It is a question you will be asked during the interview and you must answer it by describing what you can contribute and how it fits into your career plans. Do not say that you want the job because you are desperate for work, even jokingly.

## 5. What can I offer that is unique?

Match your own qualifications, skills and experience to the person specification in the job advertisement. You need to make yourself stand out from the other interviewees too. What do you do in terms of teaching and research that is different to others (i.e. e-learning specialism etc)?

## 6. What questions can I ask them?

At the end of an interview you will have the chance to ask the interviewers any questions you may have. It is important not to look blank at this point! Prepare a question about the

department as a whole or the job role; don't ask about salary. Good questions include 'what is the department's plan for the long term future?' Or, 'how does this role contribute to your broader vision?'

### **7. How will I get there?**

Don't forget to carefully plan your transport arrangements. The last thing you want to do is arrive late, which will make you flustered. If the interviewers notice that you are late, you will be discounted there and then.

### **8. What should I do the night before?**

Relax! Make sure all your paperwork and clothes are ready and then focus on something else. Try not to over-prepare by tinkering with your presentation at the last minute; your time will be better spent just quietly preparing for the interview on the next day.

### **9. What should I wear?**

Even if you are used to wearing informal clothes in the classroom, do not consider doing this in an interview situation. Clothes should be formal and fairly conservative. Do not think about using clothing to express your quirky personality - this is fine for careers such as graphic design but not academia.

### **10. How can I keep calm?**

Try doing some deep breathing exercises if you feel really flustered. Good preparation should also give you some reassurance. No one enjoys interviews but if you follow these tips you will have a good chance of success.