

Wellington Careers and Employment

Career Essentials—Introduction to interviews

An interview is a two-way conversation with a purpose: it enables the employer to learn about you, your personality, skills, general abilities, potential, and what you would add to the team and the organisation. For you, the interview enables you to learn more about the organisation, the role, the culture, and the people.

Types of interviews

Interviews can vary in levels of formality, but all require good preparation. Many interviews are conducted by more than one person (i.e., a panel) and may include other selection tests.

- Typically, a panel interview will be two to four people who may take turns asking questions. One person may be present simply to record information.
- Sometimes an applicant will have a second interview with one person, often the manager who will be appointing you. This is a good sign, and it may be more informal, but you still need to treat it like a formal interview.
- Interviews can also be by phone or video link. See [Career Essentials—Phone and video interviews](#).

Before the interview

- Read the job description and advert, conditions of appointment, and your application.
- Research the organisation: its goals, functions, structure, or products online. Use social media and LinkedIn. Read their annual plans and reports. You can talk to contacts in the organisation.
- Reflect upon your strong points and particular messages you want to convey.
- Ask about the structure and expected length of the interview. Try to find out the names and roles of who will be on the interview panel. Find out if there will be other selection tests or activities.
- Think of questions to ask them to help you decide if you want the job. Some of these may be covered during the interview.
- Collect originals of any references or other copied material sent with your application as they may need you to bring this with you.

What to take with you

- Bring any documents required by the organisation (e.g., original academic transcript, referee details, your application, samples of your work, etc.) and a few questions you have prepared. There will usually be an opportunity to raise these at the end of the interview.

Presentation

- Wear clothes appropriate to the position. Where possible find out how people in the organisation dress prior to the interview. It is safer to lean on the conservative side. Appearance and grooming are important.
- First impressions really matter. Greet the interviewer(s) in a friendly manner, preferably by name, using a firm handshake (allowing for current health regulations) and smile.



- Because each interviewer will be individually assessing you, it is important to make eye contact with all panel members. Be alert and enthusiastic.
- Sit comfortably. Try to relax by breathing evenly and be aware of any distracting mannerisms you have such as gritting teeth, rubbing eyes, or nail biting.

Be positive

- Speak clearly and positively—avoid a flat, monotonous recital!
- It is all right to pause when faced with a difficult question or ask for it to be repeated if you don't understand.
- Use active “I” statements (e.g., not “it was organised by me”, but “I organised”).
- Avoid trailing off at the end of answers (e.g., “you know” or “sort of”).
- Be careful not to criticise previous employers or university courses, even if probed. If you do, the interviewers may assume you will run down people in their organisation.
- Remember you cannot know the biases of interviewers. You can never be sure who knows who.

Concluding the interview

- A skilled interviewer will signal the end of the interview by outlining the procedure for what will happen next, particularly the time until a decision is made, and how you will be notified of the outcome. If you sense an interview is ending and this aspect has not been covered, ask!
- If there are other things about yourself which you haven't said yet, now is your chance.
- If the interview has made you realise you do not want the job it is unwise to say this in the interview. It is better to call or send an email the following day, after you have thought about it further.
- If you are interested in the role do let them know. It's not always obvious to the interviewers.

After the interview

- We recommend writing a few notes immediately after the interview.
- Think back objectively over the questions that were asked and your answers.
 - What did you say you would do if appointed to the position?
 - What did the interviewers say about the terms and conditions of the job?
 - Note any commitments you gave about the priorities of the job.
 - Note any promises made by the interviewers to the successful applicant.
- Review your interview performance. Think about how you can improve next time. You may wish to discuss this with family, friends, or a career consultant.
- Write to the interviewer thanking them. This is not compulsory but a nice touch and a chance to reiterate your interest in the position.

Keep on applying

- Until you have accepted a specific role that has been offered to you, continue to apply for positions while you wait to hear the outcome of earlier applications.
- Ask for feedback on how you interviewed, what went well, and how you can improve. We recommend you confirm your continuing interest in the organisation. Other roles may come up that may be suitable.

