

Graduate & Professional School Interview Questions

Remember that most interviewers will be looking for three things when you answer interview questions:

1. Your answer
2. How well you can organize your thinking
3. How well you express yourself

Interviews will vary among programs and the individuals conducting the interviews. Questions may be direct, indirect, hypothetical or behavior-based. Below is a sampling of questions you might be asked during an interview:

Personal Characteristics / Skills / Strengths:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What is your strongest personal asset?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses as a student?
- Name 3 strengths that you have and why you consider these strengths.
- What would one of your friends/teachers/supervisors say about you?
- What would a supervisor or professor tell me are your strengths?

Academic Experiences/Performance:

- Why did you major in _____?
- Why did you choose to attend _____ College/University?
- When did you choose to enter this occupational field and why?
- How did you make the decision to apply to our program? What other programs did you consider?
- How has your undergraduate background prepared you for our program?
- What courses have you enjoyed the most?
- What courses have been most difficult for you?
- What satisfaction have you gained from your studies?
- Tell me about the research project you completed with Professor _____?
- Do you feel your academic record accurately reflects your abilities and potential?
- Do you feel you have worked to your full potential?

- How would you rate yourself in the following areas?
 1. Reading and Comprehension
 2. Analytical Skills
 3. Communication – oral and written, listening
- What didn't you like about your college/university?
- Tell me about a professor or supervisor that you didn't like and why.
- Why would you be an asset to our department? How would you be able to contribute to our program?
- What skills and experiences do you feel have prepared you for admission to this program?
- Why should we consider you for our program instead of several other equally qualified candidates?
- How many programs have you applied to besides our institution/program?
- What will you do if you are not accepted into our program?

Extracurricular Activities:

- What extracurricular activity has been most satisfying to you?
- What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school?
- What activities do you enjoy most outside of the classroom?
- Do you have any hobbies or outside interests?
- Tell me about any volunteer experiences in which you have participated.

Weaknesses:

- What challenges do you think you might face in the graduate program?
- What would you say is an area in which you need improvement?
- What would you change about yourself and why?
- What skills or abilities do you hope to strengthen through our program?

Goals:

- What has motivated you to pursue this academic field?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- Why do you want a graduate degree in _____?
- How do you see this program fitting into your career goals?
- Tell me about a goal you have set for yourself and how you have achieved it or intend to achieve it.

Leadership/Teamwork/Problem Solving Skills, etc.:

- Tell me about a major accomplishment and how you achieved it.
- Tell me about a situation in which you showed initiative.
- Tell me about a group in which you were involved. How did you contribute to make this group achieve a goal?
- Tell me about a time you assumed a leadership role.
- Tell me about a recent significant problem you faced and how you handled it.
- Tell me how you handle stress.
- Tell me about a time you had a number of assignments due. How did you make sure you completed all of them on time and did a good job?
- Tell me about a time when you were confronted by a fellow student, co-worker or a customer. How did you handle it to resolve the conflict?
- Tell me about a time you were faced with a difficult situation and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a mistake you made and how you handled it.
- Define teamwork (or success... quality... fairness)
- What was the last book you read or movie you saw?
- How will you make the world a better place?
- If you could have dinner with someone (living or dead), who would that person be?

Field Specific Questions & Current Events:

You will undoubtedly encounter questions that related specifically to your chosen field of study. Be certain that you are aware of current trends, issues and controversy in your field so that you will be able to answer questions intelligibly. Below are a few examples:

- What do you believe to be the major trends in your intended career field at this time?
- What do you think about _____ (current event)?
- What problem in the world troubles you most? What would you do about it?
- What is the most important development in this field over the past 25 years, and why?

Questions Applicants Might Ask an Interviewer:

Asking questions not only helps you as a candidate determine the “fit” of the program with your desired academic and career objectives, but it also communicates to the selection committee the extent of your interest in their program:

- What characteristics distinguish this program from others in the same academic field?
- How long does it take typically to complete the program?
- Where are recent alumni employed? What do most graduates do after graduation?

- What types of financial aid are offered? What criteria are used for choosing recipients?
- What opportunities are available through the program to gain practical work experience? Are there opportunities such as assistantships, fellowships or internships available? What are the deadlines to apply for these opportunities?
- Are there any scholarships or fellowships available? How do I apply?
- Do most students publish an article/conduct research prior to graduation?
- I've read articles written by _____ and ___ -- _____. To what extent are students involved in assisting these faculty members with related research projects?
- What types of research projects are current students pursuing?
- How are graduate test scores, grades, letters of recommendations, and personal statements evaluated for the admissions process?
- What is the selection timeline? When will candidates be notified about their acceptance into the program?