

# Graduate & Professional School Interview Preparation

Many graduate and professional school programs may include an interview as a part of the application process. After you have submitted your application materials to the school, the program may contact you to arrange for an interview. The following guidelines may assist you in the preparation of the graduate or professional school interview. If you wish to schedule a Mock Interview with a CEC counselor, submit the Mock Interview Form (see attached) 24 hours before your scheduled appointment.

The graduate or professional school interview is a way for the program to learn more about you. The interview also serves as a means to see if your interests and personality would be well suited for their particular program.

The interview itself may be in the form of a phone interview or in-person interviewing. In-person interviews may come in one of various forms. Some programs may even use a combination of these forms:

- One or two faculty members may interview you in a one-on-one setting
- You may individually interview in a setting among a small panel of faculty members
- You may be interviewed by graduate students currently enrolled in the program
- A group interview may consist of faculty members interviewing you and a select number of other applicants at the same time.

## HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW

### STEP ONE: RESEARCH THE PROGRAMS

One way to learn more about the graduate or professional school programs is to gather information from brochures, websites, classmates, faculty members, and alumni. Another way to obtain information is through the program's currently enrolled students. You may want to call or e-mail current students to learn about their experiences in the program. In the information gathering phase:

1. Find out about the program's interests, teaching styles, and unique strengths
2. Read about the faculty's research areas through the Internet and journal/industry publications
3. Incorporate how you will prepare for the interview questions based on the information you have gathered

### STEP TWO: PRACTICE ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

On the back of this page is a list of possible interview questions that may be asked of you. As you read these questions, note which questions may be more difficult for you to address. Critically think about your responses, as you want to sound prepared, but not rehearsed. Also, be flexible because the answers you give may spawn ideas for new questions for them to ask you.

### STEP THREE: GENERATE QUESTIONS TO ASK THEM

It is important for you to have questions regarding the program. A lack of questions may suggest lack of preparation on your end or disinterest in the program.

Create several questions to address the program, faculty, and students. Questions should be in-depth enough that answers cannot easily be obtained from the program's website or brochures. Examples may include:

- "In what industries do your graduates become employed?"
- "What percentage of your students receive assistantships?"
- "I noticed your department emphasizes in \_\_\_\_\_ theory. What research opportunities might be available to study this theory more deeply?"

## **AND LASTLY...**

1. Know the exact time and place of the interview, where to park, estimated travel time in traffic, and the interviewer's full name and correct pronunciation.
2. Before the interview, you may want to contact the department and inquire about appropriate attire. The style generally calls for professional dress, which includes dress shirts and dress pants, ties, suits and appropriate-length skirts. Focus on a neat, well-groomed appearance. Occasionally, this may vary based on program expectations.
3. Arrive at least 15-30 minutes prior to the interview. You may choose to navigate the campus and locate the place of the interview beforehand.
4. Have a professional, courteous, and friendly attitude throughout the interview process. Every contact you have with someone in the program (e.g., office staff) may potentially offer input and feedback to the admissions committee.
5. Most importantly, be yourself! You are interviewing the program, too. By being yourself, you can determine if this program is a good match for your personality, learning style, and research interests.

## **Graduate/Professional School Sample Interview Questions**

- How did you come about choosing this field?
- What are your research interests?
- Why do you see yourself as a good candidate for this department?
- What do you see yourself doing ten years from now?
- What do you consider your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- Why would you choose this university over other universities?
- Why should we choose you over other applicants you have met today?
- What do you expect from this department?
- How are you going to balance the requirements of this program with the other areas in your life?
- Why do you want to become a \_\_\_\_\_? (lawyer, doctor, etc.)
- What are your thoughts on controversial issues? (e.g. Doctor-assisted suicide)
- What extracurricular activities are you involved in? How do they play a factor in your life?
- How do you account for your weaknesses? (e.g., Lower test scores, Lower GPA)
- What do you think you could offer this field?
- What faculty members are you most interested in working with and why?
- What theoretical/research/philosophical approaches do you identify with in this field?
- What have you learned from your undergraduate studies to prepare you for graduate/professional school?
- If you had to pick a topic for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, what might it be?
- What do you know about this program?
- What other schools have you applied to?
- What will you do if not accepted?

# Mock Interview Form

To arrange for a graduate or professional school mock interview with a CEC counselor, please call our office at 471-1217 to schedule an appointment for a mock interview. We ask that you turn in this completed form to our office in JES A115A at least 24 hours before your appointment time. This will give the counselor time to prepare for your mock interview.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Appoint: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Appoint: \_\_\_\_\_

Think of the mock interview as a dress rehearsal. Wear what you would wear to your actual interview. You can gain feedback on your interview outfit and accustom yourself to professional attire.

In the brief time we have for a mock interview, we may not be able to cover everything or conduct an actual-length interview, but this practice interview can help you:

- Address the most difficult questions that you anticipate in an interview
- Decide what you want the interviewer to know about you
- Obtain constructive feedback about the impression you make upon an interviewer

We will give this form to your counselor so that he or she can direct questions and comments toward the factors that are most important to you. Please complete all of the items below.

1. Choose three questions from the list on the previous page that you would find most difficult to answer in the interview, and write out a brief practice answer to each of these (25 words or less per answer). If there is a question you'd like to focus on which is not on the list, please include it.

**Difficult Question:**

**Practice Answer:**

**Difficult Question:**

**Practice Answer:**

**Difficult Question:**

**Practice Answer:**

2. What are some of the most important facts you would like the program to know about you? There may be specific skills you have to offer, a unique background or perspective to share, or a poignant story that illustrates how you arrived at this career choice. Even if the interview questions do not specifically ask for these, find ways to incorporate them into your responses so that they are addressed. List three facts about yourself that you would like to integrate into your answers.

**Fact #1:**

**Fact #2:**

**Fact #3:**

3. Just as the program is interviewing you, you are also interviewing the program! Generate questions that will help you decide if this program suits your background, goals, and learning style. List three questions below that you want to ask, using the guidelines in Step Three on the previous page.

**Question #1:**

**Question #2:**

**Question #3:**

4. Our counselors can give you many kinds of feedback about the way you come across in an interview. In addition to learning how well you answered the key questions you have identified, what kinds of feedback would be most useful to you?

**FEEDBACK DESIRED**

1.

2.

3.

**Remember to be yourself!** An interview is not an acting session, nor is it giving responses you think the interviewer wants to hear. If you are offered an interview, chances are that you already meet the qualifications for the program. The interview is an opportunity for the program to see if the “real you” would be a good match for their graduate or professional school program.