

COMMON ACADEMIC JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thousands of interview questions exist, and one rarely knows which questions will get asked. The best preparation focuses on:

1. Dedicating time to practice aloud, talking about your skills, knowledge, and experience(s) relevant to the opportunity for which you are being interviewed;
2. Identifying examples and developing short verbal narratives to provide evidence of your skills, knowledge accomplishments, strengths, experiences, etc.;
3. Anticipating and understanding what an interviewer or interviewing committee seeks to learn about you.

Practice Talking About You:

The interviewer seeks to learn about you relevant to the opportunity. The interviewer might ask you to talk about yourself by using one or more of the following prompts, (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Tell us about yourself.
- Tell us about your work/research.
- Tell us about your dissertation.
- Tell us about your service activities.
- Describe your degree of involvement in your professional associations/conferences.
- Tell us about your goals.

Practice Talking About Your Fit:

The interviewer is interested in determining if your experience, skills, values, perspectives, and knowledge align with the needs and goals of the department and institution. The following types of questions are an indication that the interviewer seeks to learn about your fit, (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Why did you apply for this job?
- Why are you interested in our university/college?
- What is it about our department that interests you?
- What are your impressions of our curriculum?
- What experience do you have working at our type of institution?
- What do you know about working at our type of institution?
- Why do you want to teach at a liberal arts college/a research institution/community college/state university?
- How would you teach our class on...(name of course)?
- As a faith-based institution (if it is one), how might you contribute to our mission and campus atmosphere?

Practice Talking About Your Dissertation:

The interviewer wants to know about your dissertation focus (and research) and seeks to hear how you talk about it. If there are individuals interviewing you from fields of study outside of your academic discipline, they will be listening to determine if you can talk about your dissertation topic in ways that can be universally understood. The following types of questions and prompts are common when an interviewer seeks to learn about your dissertation, (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Tell me about your dissertation.
- When will your dissertation be completed?
- What questions led you to your focus and what new ideas have emerged?
- What impact will your dissertation have on the field of "X"?
- How do you explain your dissertation to someone not in your discipline?
- What will you need to do to revise your dissertation for publication?

Practice Talking About Your Research:

The interview wants to be able to understand your past, current, and future research. The following types of questions and prompts are common when an interviewer seeks to learn about your research, (this is not an exhaustive list):

- What are your research plans? How about for the next X number of years?
- How do you see your research fitting within our department and what we already do?
- How would you incorporate others in your research?
- What plans do you have for future research?
- With whom might you collaborate in our department?
- What types of interdisciplinary research might you do?
- In what ways might you include undergraduates in your research?
- What are your research strengths/weaknesses?
- What funding sources are you aware of that might support your future research?

Practice Talking About Your Publications and Presentations

The interviewer wants to learn about the roles you have had in the publications and presentations cited on your CV, and the future topics you seek to explore. The following types of questions and prompts are common when an interviewer seeks to learn about your publications and presentations, (this is not an exhaustive list):

- What was your contribution to publication X on your CV?
- Which of your publications do you feel is the most significant and why?
- On what topics do you intend to publish in the future?
- You presented at the (name of conference), tell us more about that?
- What are your goals for publishing?

Practice Talking About Your Teaching:

The interview wants to be able to create an image about what you are like as a teacher and what the student experience is in the classes you teach. The following types of questions and prompts are common when an interviewer seeks to learn about your teaching, (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Tell us about your teaching experience.
- Which of our current classes can you teach?
- What teaching techniques do you use in the classroom?
- What methods do you use to involve students?
- What new classes would you want to teach?
- What are your teaching strengths/weaknesses?
- Describe a time when you felt challenged in the classroom.
- What steps have you taken to improve your teaching?
- What technologies have you used in the classroom?
- How would you get undergraduates excited about the field of "X"?

Practice Talking About Your Research:

The interview wants to be able to understand your past, current, and future research. The following types of questions and prompts are common when an interviewer seeks to learn about your research, (this is not an exhaustive list):

- What are your research plans? How about for the next X number of years?
- How do you see your research fitting within our department and what we already do?
- How would you incorporate others in your research?
- What plans do you have for future research?
- With whom might you collaborate in our department?
- What types of interdisciplinary research might you do?
- In what ways might you include undergraduates in your research?
- What are your research strengths/weaknesses?
- What funding sources are you aware of that might support your future research?
- What resources, technology, equipment, etc. to you need to do your research?

Note: The interviewer typically seeks to know six things about the candidate.

1. Is the candidate competent?
2. Can the candidate work with others?
3. Does the candidate demonstrate a range of interpersonal skills?
4. Does the candidate seem friendly?
5. Could I consider the candidate a colleague?
6. Will the candidate add something beneficial to our department?

INTERVIEW TIPS FROM UCONN FACULTY

Pre-Work

“Learn everything you can about the institution, the faculty, and the department.”

“Have a sense about with whom in the department you might want to collaborate.”

“Gain an understanding about the students attending the institution.”

“Be able to talk about yourself and your work in the past, present, and future.”

“Practice out loud.”

“If interviewing by phone or Skype, practice with a friend to ensure your technology is working properly.”

“Participate in a practice interview and ask for feedback on any distracting habits you might have.”

“If having a virtual interview, arrange your space to convey your professionalism.”

During the Interview

“Know your audience. Are all the interviewers in your field?”

“Provide examples to feature your skills and strengths.”

“Convey enthusiasm.”

“Limit any distracting habits.”

“Ask a clarifying question if you don’t understand what the interviewer is asking.”

“Always talk about the experiences and skills that you do have to offer; don’t talk about what you don’t have to offer.”

After The Interview

“Do something that you find relaxing.”

“Begin drafting thank-you notes and/or emails to everyone with whom you interviewed.”

“Use your thank-you notes to more thoroughly answer a question for which you felt you did not initially give the best answer.”

“Use your thank-you notes to convey the ways that you feel you would be a good fit with the department and institution.”

“Keep a log with any questions that you would like to practice answering with greater competency; also write down what you felt you did particularly well.”

“Consider tweaking your presentations and documents based on your experiences using them.”

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