Interview Preparation for International Students and Postdocs

Anne Poduska, Cornell Career Services
Craig Jones, Cornell Career Services
Adriana Rovers, International Students & Scholars Office
Career Services: What Can We Help With?

- Understand Yourself
  - Interests
  - Values
  - Strengths
  - Goals

- Explore Options
  - Resources
  - Networking
  - Activities
  - Internships

- Take Action
  - Applications
  - Letters
  - Resumes
  - Interviews
Where Can You Go For Help?

• Workshops and Events
  CCS Event Calendar
  CCNet

• Websites
  Cornell Career Services
  College career office
Career Offices: Undergraduates

- **Arts & Sciences**: 55 Goldwin Smith
- **Agriculture and Life Sciences**: 140 Roberts
- **Architecture, Art & Planning**: 103 Barnes
- **Engineering**: 201 Carpenter
- **Hotel**: 180 Statler
- **Human Ecology**: 172 MVR
- **ILR**: 201 Ives
- **University-wide**: 103 Barnes
Career Offices:
Research Master’s and PhD students

- **Agriculture and Life Sciences**: 140 Roberts
- **Engineering**: 201 Carpenter
- **Hotel**: 180 Statler
- **ILR**: 201 Ives
- **University-wide**: 103 Barnes

**Professional Master’s Students**: Visit your program office
Career Services:
Postdocs and Graduate Students Interested in a Postdoc

- Christine Holmes, Director of Postdoctoral Studies:
  Caldwell Hall, ch18@cornell.edu
Objectives of this Workshop

• Discuss how U.S. culture influences the interview process

• Outline three steps for a successful interview

• Provide strategies and resources for practice answering interview questions
Interviewing in the U.S. May Be Different Than What You’re Used To

http://growthnation.com/tips-and-techniques-for-cross-cultural-selling/
# Differences Between U.S. and International Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal relationships may be more important than time. Being late may not be a problem.</td>
<td>Be punctual. Arrive 5 to 10 minutes prior to appointment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye contact, especially with persons of higher status, may be disrespectful.</td>
<td>Eye contact is expected and shows confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citing accomplishments and skills might be considered boastful, self-serving, or too individualistic.</td>
<td>Open discussion of accomplishments and skills shows confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching an organization in advance may show too much initiative and independence.</td>
<td>Researching the organization and demonstrating that knowledge during the interview is expected. Shows initiative and interest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three Steps for a Successful Interview

• Research the employer and industry

• Analyze the job description and how it connects to your skills, experience, and interests

• Understand interview types and practice answering potential questions
Three Steps for a Successful Interview

• Research the employer and industry

• Analyze the job description and how it connects to your skills, experience, and interests

• Understand interview types and practice answering potential questions
Researching Employers and the Industry

What do you research?

- News
- Mission statement
- Products
- The division/unit for which you’re interviewing
- Competitors
- Interview approaches
- Employee perspectives *

* nothing compares to face-to-face/voice-to-voice research
Researching Employers and the Industry

Where do you find this information?

- Johnson School Library
- Hoovers
- Factiva
- Library Guide
- LinkedIn
- Glassdoor
Three Steps for a Successful Interview

- Research the employer and industry
- Analyze the job description and how it connects to your skills, experience, and interests
- Understand interview types and practice answering potential questions
Understand the Position

What are employers looking for?

• Educational background
• Experience
• Skills
• Interest
• Understanding of the job/role/career
• Aptitude
Understand the Position

Deloitte Consulting–Business Technology Analyst

Qualifications:

• Strong academic performance and extracurricular activities
• Detail oriented
• Experience, interest and aptitude in technology
• Sharp analytical mind
• Demonstrated leadership abilities
• Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
• Willingness to travel (required)
Understanding Yourself

- Cultural diversity and global perspective
- Insight into your field/specialization area
- Language skills
- Adaptability
- Demonstrated ability to overcome obstacles
- Career goals
Three Steps for a Successful Interview

• Research the employer and industry

• Analyze the job description and how it connects to your skills, experience, and interests

• Understand interview types and practice answering potential questions
Interview Types

• Phone / Skype Pre-screening Interviews
• Campus Interviews (face-to-face)
• Office Visits (typically full day or more)
• Panel Interviews
• Group Interviews (sometimes in finance interviews)
• Skype and Video Conference Interviews
Interview Approaches

- Basic Interview
- Behavior-Based
- Stress
Basic Interview Approaches

• Widely used for screening
• Questions pertain to the job and your qualifications
• Confirmation of your interest and understanding of the job which is being offered
• All candidates are asked the same questions
Basic Interview Questions

• Why are you interested in this position? Why did you apply for this position?

• Can you tell me about yourself? Or Show me what’s important on your resume

• What are your goals for the next 3 (5 or 10) years?

• What are your greatest strengths?
Behavioral Interview Approaches

- Use past behavior to predict future behavior

- Most questions start with the phrase:
  - “Tell me about a time…”
  - “Can you give me an example when…”
  - “How would you…”

- Seeks to identify personal and professional characteristics that are consistent with success at that employer
Sample Behavior Questions

Critical Thinking

• Tell me about the most complex problem you’ve had to solve in the last several years

Teamwork, Leadership

• Tell me about a time when you were working on a team and you had a disagreement with a team member

Oral Communication

• Describe a situation where you convinced others to adopt your position
**Think ★ STAR ★!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘STAR’ Technique to Answer Behavioral Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Your Turn to Practice

Practice using STAR in pairs for this question:

Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem
Stress Interview Approaches

• Typically used to evaluate your composure and ability to react under stress
• Can be used in group situations
Difficult/Stressful Interview Questions

• What do you think about yourself?
• Do you plan to stay in this location?
• What are your three greatest weaknesses?
• Why didn’t you take part in service or extracurricular activities?
• What do you think your salary should be?
• Your resume suggests that you are over/under qualified for this position—what is your opinion?
Approaches for Answering Difficult/Stressful Interview Questions

• Stay calm
• Acknowledge the negative but always end on a positive note
• Ask for clarifications if needed
• Show enthusiasm for the position
Illegal Interview Questions
(Refer to the Career Guide, page 72)

- Race
- Gender
- Religion
- Marital Status
- Physical and/or Mental Status
- Ethnic Background
- Country of Origin
- Sexual Orientation
- Family Status
- Age
An Interviewer May Ask

• Are you authorized to work in the US?
• Do you now or will you in the future require sponsorship to work in the US?
• Do you have a work permit for the US?
• Are you a US citizen? *(but only if position requires citizenship)*
How to Answer: “Are you authorized to work in the US?”

- Familiarize yourself with OPT/CPT regulations on the isso.cornell.edu website
- If necessary, talk to an immigration advisor at ISSO before the interview
- If the employer doesn’t discuss your work eligibility during the first round interview, consider mentioning it during the second round—don’t wait until a job offer has been made!
Asking Questions at the End of Your Interview

Example questions:

• What is your management style?

• What do you enjoy most and least about working here?

• What are the greatest challenges facing the person in this position?

• What qualifications would you expect the successful candidate to possess?

Don’t ask a question to which you’re not interested in learning the answer—it will be obvious to the employer.
Opportunities to Practice

• **OptimalResume’s Interview Prep**

• Mock interviews:
  • Mock Madness
  • Individual appointments
Practice

- Become comfortable talking about yourself and highlighting your skills
- Practice interviewing skills
  - Learn to answer concisely; not too long (over 2 minutes) or too short (20 seconds)
  - Frame your answers (e.g., “I see three main points that relate to this issue…”)
- If the question is not clear—ask for clarification
During the Interview

• Be aware of body language and eye contact
• Answer concisely; ask clarifying questions if necessary
• Be positive; show enthusiasm and confidence
• Always remain calm and positive, even if you feel that the interview is not going well!
• Prepare 2-3 questions to ask the interviewer
• Thank the interviewer for their time
• Ask for a business card
Interview Tips and Suggestions

• Slow down your speaking speed
• Never hesitate to confirm or ask to repeat a question if you do not understand
• **Don’t worry about your accent!**
• Practice rephrasing; don’t be flustered by searching for the “right” words
• Don’t use an obviously memorized script
Perfecting Your Handshake

• A good handshake is important—it should be firm and held for three or four seconds

• Tips on shaking hands
Follow up

• Send follow-up letters (or e-mail messages if you believe they're preferred in the organizational culture) within 24 hours to each interviewer

• Spell names correctly and use correct titles

• Check on application status

• If rejected, consider sending another letter thanking the employer for the opportunity to interview then reiterating your interest in the organization and the position
What Are Your Questions?