Interview Strategies for International Students

International Student and Scholar Services

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What is the Purpose of an Interview?

An interview is a two-way exchange, a conversation, in which both participants have some goals.

The **Interviewer** wants to determine:
- Can the candidate do the job?
- Will the candidate fit in?
- Is this the best candidate for the position? *(technical skills, leadership skills, cross-cultural skills)*

The **Interviewee** wants to determine:
- Do I want this job?
- Can I do this job?
- Does this job fit me?

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

- Informational interview (job seeker asks for career and industry advice, rather than employment)

- Telephone/Screening interview (a step before face-to-face interviews)

- Second or on-site interview

- Individual interview (30-90 minutes)

- Panel interview (allows different interpretations of the same answers)
TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

● On-campus interview (log into GoldPASS and click on "On Campus Interviews.")

● Behavioral-based interviews (theory: past performance in a similar situation is an indicator of future performance; Utilize STAR technique: situation, task, action, and results)

● Technical interview (to assess candidates for technical or specialist graduate job positions)

● Case interview (usually for management consulting and investment banking jobs)

Career center for Science and Engineering (http://ccse.umn.edu/students/prepare-for-your-job-search/interviewing/types-of-interviews/)
What do employers expect from you?
Cited from: Career Services Center at University of Delaware

U.S. Employer Expectations
• Communication style: Assertiveness and eye contact
• Future sense of self: Confidence in openly discussing goals and accomplishments (5 year plan)
• Follow-up with employers: telephone inquiries about status of application, thank-you notes
• Attire: Appropriate dress
• Punctuality: Arriving 5-10 minutes early

Cultural Variations
• Appropriateness of eye contact
• Constructive feedback vs. criticism
• “We” vs. “I”

So, what do you need to know?
Cultural Values

U.S. Employer Expectations

- Race, sex, age should not affect interview relationship
- Expected to shake hands, use first names if given permission

Other Cultural Frameworks

- Gender expectations may be different
- Age signifies more knowledge and respect
Self-Promotion

**U.S. Employer Expectations**
- Assertiveness
- Confidence in openly discussing goals and accomplishments
- Follow-up with employers (telephone inquiries about status of application, thank-you notes)

**Values of Another Culture**
- Unless presented as part of group activity, citing accomplishments and skills is viewed as boastful, self-serving, and too individualistic
- Asking employer directly about status of application may be considered as disrespectful
Self-Disclosure

U.S. Employer Expectations
- Personal descriptions of experiences, strengths, and weaknesses
- Answers to questions related to personality (e.g. leadership style, problem-solving abilities)
- Answers to questions targeting to the specific job

Values of Another Culture
- Personal questions about likes, dislikes, etc., are considered an invasion of privacy and are discussed only with close friends and family
Directness in Communication

U.S. Employer Expectations

- Open and direct responses to questions
- Eye contact with interviewer, relaxed posture, and other appropriate nonverbal behavior
- Equality and authority

Values of Another Culture

- Eye contact, especially with persons of higher status (e.g. employer, interviewer) is disrespectful
- Appearance of criticism must be avoided to save face
Interview Tips for International Students

1- Enhance communication skills by:
   - talking and speaking up in class
   - making presentations
   - making friends and talking with other students
   - taking communication courses
   - attending workshops by Career Services and ISSS
   - joining and participating in diverse student organizations
   - reading newspapers and academic publications/journals
   - social media

2- Study commonly asked interview questions, write answers to those questions and practice those responses in front of a mirror as well as with friends.

3- Schedule a mock interview with ISSS to receive feedback on interview skills for traditional style interviews (contact Marina at uehar003@umn.edu)
Interview Tips for Intl Students

4- Attend Career Services workshops

6- Check the ISSS Career Services web-site at [http://www.isss.umn.edu/career/](http://www.isss.umn.edu/career/) as well as other Careers Services in your department/program

5- Practice, practice, practice!

(From Career Services at University of Delaware)
Behavioral Interview Techniques: STAR METHOD

- **S** situation (What was the situation or setting of this example?)
- **T** task (What specific task or problem had to be addressed?)
- **A** action (What specific skills/tools did you use to address the above task?)
- **R** result (What was the result of your behavior?)

*Career & Internship Services, CCe–CDes - CFANS*
STAR METHOD

“Tell me about a time that you worked as a team member effectively?”

- S/T I was involved in a team project, preparing for a new employee orientation. The communication within the group had broken down

- A To resolve this situation, I organized an informal lunch meeting for people to discuss relevant issues

- R The morale of the group then improved as did the lines of the communication

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Practice

- Tell me about a project or a challenge that did not go well. How did you handle it?

OR

- Tell me about a time you had a conflict with a peer. How did you handle that situation?
INAPPROPRIATE QUESTIONS

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Act establishes guidelines that employers need to follow in conducting job interviews. Questions should not be asked to which answers will have a disparate effect in screening out any minorities or members of one sex

- Marital and family status
- Religious or political affiliations
- Age (expect to establish that the applicant meets minimum age requirements by law)
- Ancestry, National origin, race, or color
- Sex
HOW TO HANDLE INAPPROPRIATE QUESTIONS?

● Deflect the question by simply stating what you are good at.
● You can give an honest, assertive, and not contentious reply (e.g. “My spouse is supportive with my career ambitions”)
● Be prepared
● Consider whether or not you want to work for such an organization
● If you feel that your rights have been violated, discuss the situation with a Career Services staff member.
WORK AUTHORIZATION

● F-1 students
  ● Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
    ● Still in school
  ● Optional Practical Training (OPT)
    ● Post graduation

J-1 students

● Academic Training (AT) During and After graduation

● Employment-based Visas and Permanent Residency Workshop
● Watch the online workshop videos (CPT/OPT) on the ISSS website before you see an adviser during walk-in hours (http://www.isss.umn.edu/fstudent/fwork.html)
EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION (VISA ISSUES)

When do you think it is a good idea to bring up your visa status?

- Informational interview?
- Formal interview?
- After a job offer?

Questions on employment eligibility/work authorization (OPT, CPT, etc)
QUESTIONS?

Please e-mail us if you have any questions left

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