

Being successful in the graduate labour market

Session 4: Impressing at interview

1.30-4pm



Being At Your Best At Interview

How can you make sure you are at your best in an interview?



What this session aims to cover

A brief overview of:

- ▶ Purpose of the interview
- ▶ Types of interview – telephone, face to face, panel
- ▶ Preparation, performance and review
- ▶ Interview formats – traditional/biographical, competence/strength-based, case study
- ▶ Impression management in interviews



**Detailed objectives are available in your programme and supporting materials are available on your web page*

Selection methods used by AGR graduate recruiters



Selection method	% of AGR employers using it
On-line self-selection exercises	28%
Preliminary telephone screening	46%
Psychometric testing* Numerical reasoning (74.5%) Verbal reasoning (70.9%) Situational Judgement tests (40%) Personality questionnaires (23.6%) Spatial reasoning (9.1%)	62%
First interview at regional centre	17%
First interview at head office	41%
Final round assessment centre/selection events	90%

Association of Graduate Recruiters Survey – May 2010

A total of 215 AGR members participated in the survey which represents a 62.1 per cent response rate. Collectively, these are estimated to offer a total of **17,920 vacancies**



Purpose of interview ?



For employer

- ▶ Do you live up to your written application?
 - ▶ Your suitability
 - ❑ Could you do the job well?
 - ❑ Would you do the job well?
 - ▶ Would you fit in ?
 - ▶ Your potential
 - ▶ Your motivation
- ...and to further promote the opportunity/company to candidates

For you

- ▶ To **demonstrate** that you **match** employer requirements
- ▶ To **demonstrate** your potential
- ▶ To impress them
- ▶ To progress to the next stage of assessment
- ▶ To find out more about the company and the job
- ▶ To determine if this is the right role and organisation for you

What do employers look for?

- ▶ Academic achievement
- ▶ Employability skills
- ▶ The competencies to be successful in the role
- ▶ Interpersonal skills
- ▶ Knowledge
- ▶ Personal qualities
- ▶ Motivation
- ▶ Maturity
- ▶ Business and commercial awareness
- ▶ Cultural awareness
- ▶ Creativity and flair



The interview process may involve;

▶ **A telephone interview**

- as initial screening
- as later stage selection procedure



Exercise 1

▶ **A one- to one interview**

- As initial screening
- As later stage selection procedure

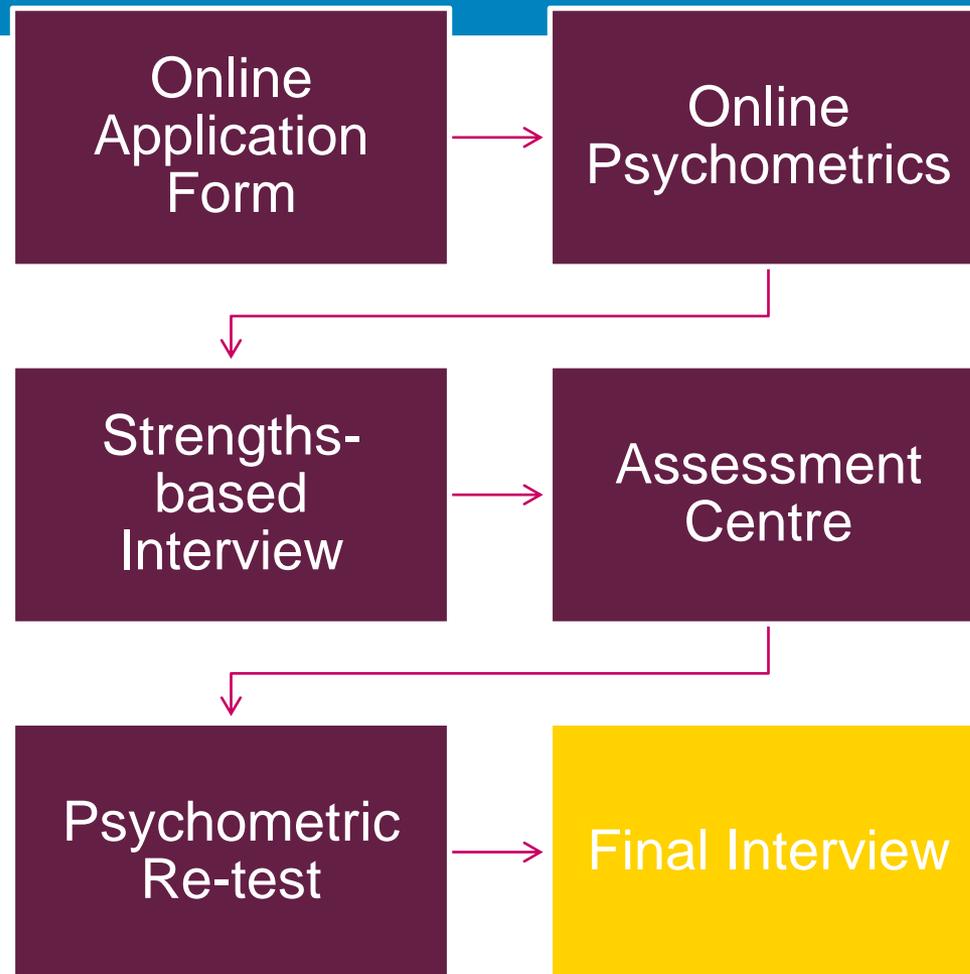


▶ **The interview as part of an assessment centre**

- May be a panel interview
- May be one-to one interview
- May be several interviews
- May be a group interview



Example of a process: Ernst & Young



Telephone interviews

Purpose

- ▶ To verify information and 'claims'
- ▶ To test out competencies and specific skills
- ▶ To check out knowledge
- ▶ To check out motivation



Preparing

- ▶ Make sure you are in a private and quiet area.
- ▶ Have your application to hand
- ▶ In advance think of evidence and examples you could give
- ▶ Think of questions to ask
- ▶ Prepare yourself psychologically by dressing appropriately
- ▶ You need to listen
- ▶ You need to communicate without visual cues
 - ❑ Do a 'test run'

Face to face interview

Types

- ▶ One to one
- ▶ Panel interviews
- ▶ Several interviews in sequence
- ▶ Group interviews



Preparing

- ▶ **Clothes:** dress as if you were working at the organisation
- ▶ **Arriving:** aim to arrive a little early, check out directions and transport in advance
- ▶ **First impressions:** count – a firm handshake, smiling, eye contact, showing interest, being pleasant
- ▶ **Responses:** address these to all panel members

Face to face Interviews: format

▶ Traditional

- ❑ focuses on your experience, skills, knowledge, education, etc

▶ Competency/strengths-based

- ❑ structured, designed to encourage you to demonstrate you have what the role requires

▶ Case study

- ❑ focusses usually on real situations, designed to check how you would react, make a decision, problem solve etc.

<http://www.careerplayer.com/tips-and-advice/general-advice/granular-interview-technique.aspx>

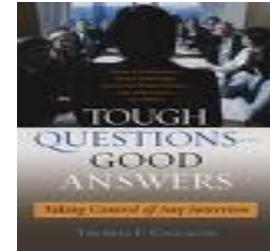
What interview questions do you find difficult?

Exercise 2



Dealing with questions you don't want to be asked

- ▶ Tell me about yourself?
- ▶ Why did you leave a particular job?
 - ❑ **Don't** criticise previous employer
- ▶ What are your weaknesses?
 - ❑ Shows self awareness, learning and development
- ▶ How would your friends describe you?
- ▶ *Curveball questions*



Activity: answering a curve ball question

Activity: answering a Curve ball question

Exercise 3

If you could have dinner with anyone from history, who would it be, and why?



Curve ball questions: what and why?

- ▶ How well you think on your feet
- ▶ Challenging you
- ▶ Checking for sense of humour
- ▶ Coping with pressure
- ▶ Ice-breaker to relax you



- ▶ **Don't** let these Q throw you
- ▶ **Do** take time to consider your answer
- ▶ **Do** remember, there is usually no right or wrong answer

More examples of curve ball questions

- ▶ If you were a fictional character who would you be?
- ▶ If Hollywood made a movie about you who would play you?
- ▶ If you could be a superhero, what would you want your superpowers to be?
- ▶ If you had to be shipwrecked on a deserted island, what two items would you want to have with you?
- ▶ If you had six months with no obligations or financial constraints, what would you do with the time?
- ▶ If you could compare yourself with any animal, which would it be and why?
- ▶ If you were a food, what would you be?
- ▶ If you won £20 million in the lottery, what would you do with the money?
- ▶ If you were a car, what kind would you be?
- ▶ Who do you admire the most and why?

Questions usually cover;

Suitability and potential

- Qualifications, skills, knowledge and personal qualities

Motivation and ambitions

- ▶ Why are you applying to *us*?
- ▶ What interests you about this job?
- ▶ Where do you see yourself in five years?

Your background

- ▶ Education, employment, interests etc
- ▶ Why you made the choices you did and what you have gained

Your understanding of the employer, sector and the opportunity

- ▶ Products/services, market position, profit/turnover/share-value
- ▶ Core values and strategic plans
- ▶ Challenges facing the organisation/sector
- ▶ Typical career paths



Competency-based interviews

- ▶ Interviewer is seeking **evidence** of situations in which you have shown specific abilities
- ▶ Structured, with detailed, more persistent questions and challenges
- ▶ You should prepare (at least 3) examples of your past experience against the competencies you know they want
- ▶ Use the CAR model to structure your responses
 - ❑ Context, Action, Result (CAR)
- ▶ <http://www.herecomestheboss.com> for information and useful video clips



Reminder: competencies most employers seek

- ▶ Planning
- ▶ Building relationships
- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Team working
- ▶ Influencing
- ▶ Leadership
- ▶ Commercial awareness
- ▶ Problem solving



Example: questions assessing teamwork

Teamwork: they are looking at ;

- ▶ Can you work with others to achieve positive results
- ▶ Can you accept others' ideas, be tolerant of others
- ▶ Do you show consideration for colleagues



Possible questions you may be asked:

- ▶ Tell me about a time when **you** worked in a group to undertake a task
- ▶ What was **your** role and how did **you** get on with the others?
- ▶ How did **you** resolve any differences of opinion within the group?
- ▶ How did **you** influence the group as regards your ideas?
- ▶ What was **your** contribution and the overall group result?
- ▶ Reflecting on the task is there anything different **you** would have done

Be prepared for the interviewer to keep digging!

Typical **probing/clarifying** questions in competency interviews:

- ▶ What was the situation?
- ▶ What did **you** do
- ▶ What action did **you** take?
- ▶ What was the outcome/result?
- ▶ Did anything go wrong?
- ▶ What were the challenges?
 - How did you deal with them?
 - What did you learn from them?



Exercise 4: demonstrating competency

Strength-based interviews

What

- ▶ Used by some employers as alternative to competency interviews
- ▶ The focus is on what candidates really **enjoy** doing rather than what they **can** do
 - their innate strengths and natural aptitudes for the role
- ▶ Employers currently using strength based Interviews include; Ernst & Young, Aviva and Barclays

Why: the rationale

When a candidate uses strengths they;

- ▶ Show a real sense of energy and engagement
- ▶ Often lose sense of time because they are fully engrossed
- ▶ Rapidly learn new information and approaches
- ▶ Show very high standards of performance
- ▶ Will be drawn to tasks that ‘play to their strengths’ – even when tired, stressed or disengaged

How Ernst & Young use strength-based interviews

Source: www.kent.ac.uk/careers

- ▶ Focuses on 16 strengths related to E&Y's work
- ▶ At interview, applicants are asked a broader range of questions than in competency interviews - at a faster pace
- ▶ Interviewers are trained to;
 - ❑ observe body language and speech signals
 - ❑ to identify if candidate has pride in what they are doing
 - ❑ to identify if candidate has a specific interest in a subject

Case study interviews - what is the interviewer looking for ?

- ▶ Logical reasoning and thought process
- ▶ Creativity
- ▶ Quantitative skills
- ▶ Business judgement and common sense
- ▶ Problem solving ability
- ▶ Ability to evaluate ideas

Remember

- ▶ There is no *right* answer
- ▶ The case study may be related to the sector/ the type of work you will be doing
- ▶ May be on strategy – solving a business problem eg investment decision, a merger/acquisition
- ▶ Importance is placed on; your approach, how you pursue your line of thinking, your ability to rationalise it



Some case study examples

- ▶ Your client is a ski resort. Global warming has reduced natural snowfall by 50%. The client is concerned. What should they do and why?
- ▶ Your client is a petrol station. The market is competitive, they make no money on petrol. The profit is in convenience store sales. What is the profit maximizing way to layout the convenience store and why?
Source: www.caseinterview.com/case-interview-questions

- ▶ See further samples at:



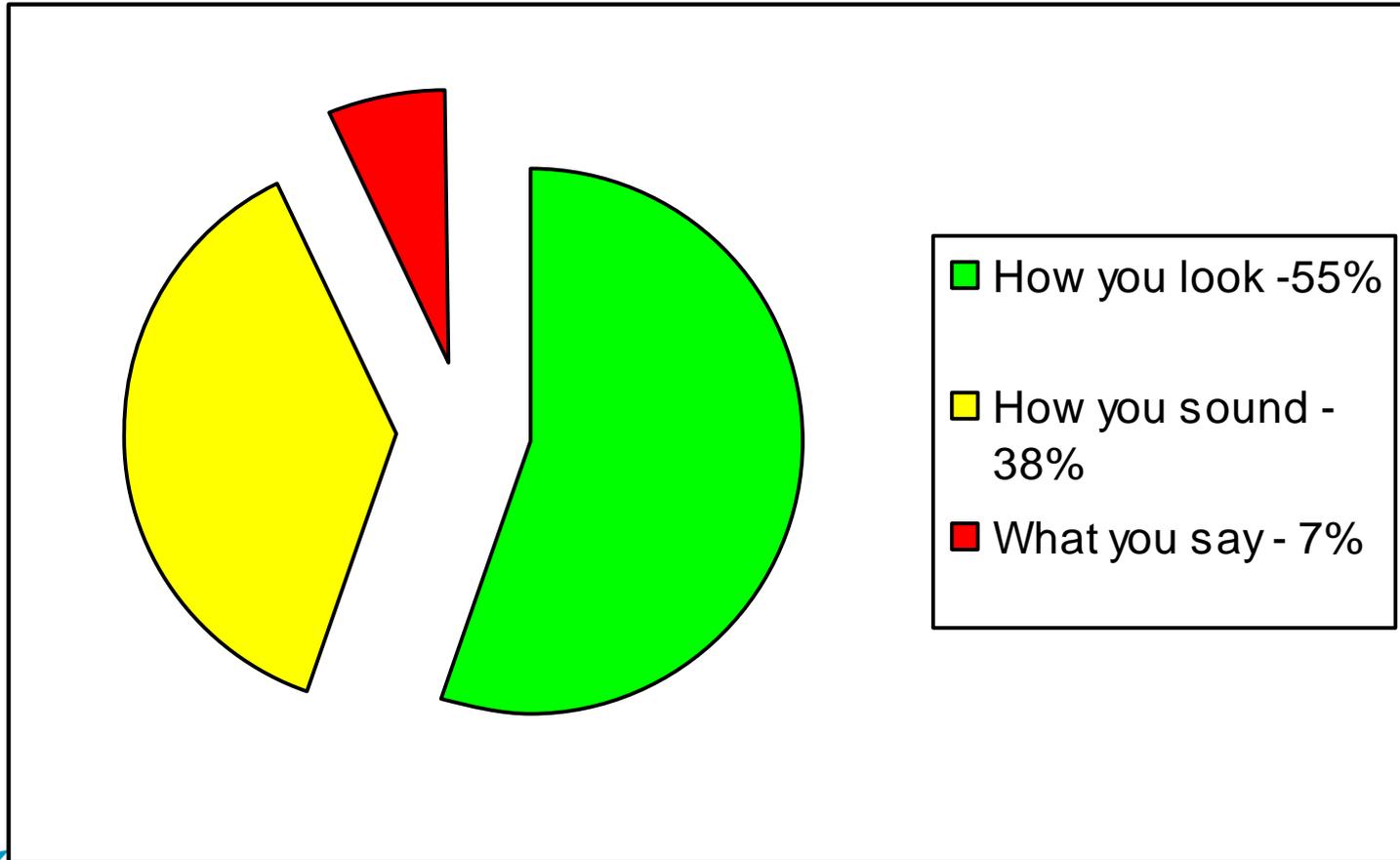
Bain

<http://www.joinbain.com/apply-to-bain/interview-preparation/default.asp>

McKinsey

http://www.mckinsey.com/careers/how_do_i_apply/how_to_do_well_in_the_interview/case_interview.aspx

First Impressions count: What interviewers first notice



Dress to impress

- ▶ Aim to mirror the dress code of the organisation
- ▶ Go for neutral colours and styles – avoid distracting the interviewer's attention
- ▶ Go for plain rather than patterned suits (for flexibility)
- ▶ Go for smart but comfortable
- ▶ Do not wear clothes that make you feel uncomfortable, self-conscious or will distract you or the interviewer!



Preparing for interviews: brainstorm

1. Research

- the employer
- key competitors
- industry trends

Use Targetjobs employer research sheet <http://targetjobs.co.uk>

1. **Read:** your written application
2. **Anticipate:** possible questions and consider your answers
3. **Prepare:** your questions to interviewers
4. **Check:** travel arrangements
5. **Decide:** what you will wear
6. **Organise:** what you need to bring with you
7. **Stay calm and focussed**



Making a good impression at interview

- ▶ **Attitude:** be positive, enthusiastic, honest and natural
- ▶ **Listen:** show listening skills, don't interrupt, look interested
- ▶ **Response:** respond as fully as you can to questions – if you don't know the answer be honest
- ▶ **Motivation:** show an interest in the job and the organisation
- ▶ **Sell yourself:** take responsibility and lead the interviewer towards your strengths



Positive Body language in interviews



- ▶ Confidence: project a confident manner
 - ❑ this comes from posture, eye contact and tone of voice.
 - ❑ keep your posture open
- ▶ Avoid clutching files/folders or fidgeting with pens/pencils
- ▶ Look for positive cues (nodding, leaning forward) and negative cues (staring into middle distance, clock watching)
- ▶ Moderate any behaviour issues that may come out in interview

How to manage anxiety at interviews: exercise 5

- ▶ Preparation
- ▶ Relaxation
- ▶ Exercise and diet
- ▶ Managing self-talk



Ernst & Young: Managing Self-talk

Negative reaction to not getting a job	<i>“I’m just not good enough, I’ll never get a job.”</i>	Anxiety Discouragement Depression Agitation Loss of self-esteem Self-doubt Embarrassment
Positive reaction to not getting a job	<i>“If I’ve not been successful at getting this job, maybe it’s just not the right job for me”</i>	Hope Calmness Motivation to improve Focus

Ernst & Young: advice on self-talk

Negative Thoughts	Positive Thoughts
<p data-bbox="170 422 815 482">I don't deserve this job</p> <p data-bbox="170 605 765 739">I don't want to let my parents/friends down</p> <p data-bbox="170 862 892 996">It will be embarrassing if I fail</p>	<p data-bbox="1062 422 1812 482">I would be good at this job</p> <p data-bbox="1062 605 1789 739">I believe in myself and so do my parents/friends</p> <p data-bbox="1062 862 1827 996">It's OK to make mistakes, I will learn from them</p>

Asking questions at interview



Use your questions to:

- ▶ Show your understanding of company priorities
- ▶ Show your commitment to training and personal development
- ▶ Show your motivation
- ▶ Mention key aspects of your background and experience not mentioned in the interview

Don't ask questions that:

- ▶ Focus on pay and conditions
- ▶ Are already covered in employer website
- ▶ Have been covered already in the interview

Types of questions to ask

- ▶ What training is available at your organisation?
- ▶ What are the possibilities of using my languages
- ▶ What are the possibilities for overseas travel?
- ▶ How would you describe your organisation culture?
- ▶ How do you see the company performing in the next few years?

Reflecting on your interview experience

- ▶ Try to remember questions you were asked
- ▶ Reflect on how you responded to questions
- ▶ Which questions were you comfortable with?
- ▶ Were there any questions you found difficult and if so, why?
 - think about how you responded
 - how could you have answered differently?
- ▶ Make notes on your experience before you forget
- ▶ If unsuccessful seek feedback from the organisation on how to improve



Resources to help you

Leaflets: *Interviews and Telephone Interviews*
(available on your section of the careers website with the PowerPoint for this session)

Useful Websites for advice on interviews

- ▶ Prospects: www.prospects.ac.uk
- ▶ Targetjobs <http://targetjobs.co.uk>
- ▶ Vault On Line www.vault.com