

## The Interview

**So, you have been invited for an interview? Congratulations; you have already overcome one of the major hurdles in the job-application process.**

**Your written application has attracted your potential employer's eye, and now they want to get to know you personally and find out whether you are suited to the post and fit into the company. Apart from your**

**professional expertise, the employer will want to find out about your personality, whether you can work in a team, what your communication skills are like and what your motivation is. As a candidate, you in turn will have the opportunity to learn more about your potential employer, including concrete details about the post and information on corporate culture.**

### Confirming the appointment

When an employer invites you for interview, you should confirm the appointment by email or telephone, thanking them for the invitation. Here, you can also clarify any questions you may have about the application process – for example, if there are any aptitude tests or tasks – and whether the company will pay travel expenses. Only under exceptional circumstances and only if absolutely necessary should you cancel and rearrange appointments.

### Preparation

- **Find out as much as you can about your potential employer.**

What products or services does the employer offer? In which market sector do they operate? Who are the competitors? What developments have been made in the past few years? How big is the company's workforce? How is the company divided up? What are the current challenges? What is the corporate philosophy?



During your research, you can check the company's own website. But it is also worth taking a look at external sources, e.g. the press. You can also ask the company to send you their annual report. If your invitation gives the contact persons and names of the people who will be interviewing you, make sure that prior to interview you inform yourself about them and commit their names to memory.

- Your choice of outfit will also send out a message. As a general rule, your clothing should be neat, clean and ironed. It should also be sober and decent. A good point of orientation is how others working in this sector would typically dress. Avoid garish colours, heavy make-up, too many accessories and strong perfume or aftershave. It is advisable to wear something you have had on once before.
- At all events, be punctual, arriving approximately ten minutes before the actual interview. Plan plenty of time for your journey, taking into account possible train delays, hold-ups or traffic jams. If the interview is far away or early in the morning, it is advisable to travel there the day before. Familiarize yourself with where the interview will take place. Large companies or big factory complexes can be confusing, and you might need time to find the main entrance or correct department.

In order to prepare yourself thoroughly, read through the job advert and your application again. Your CV will often serve as the basis for the interview. What professional and soft skills did the job advert demand, and how did you manage to incorporate them in your covering letter and CV?

Bring all your application documents to the interview.



## An interview will generally follow a specific pattern

**1. Greetings and introductions:** First impressions are lasting impressions! Make it obvious from the start that you are pleased to have been invited for interview. Smile when you are greeted and greet those present with a firm handshake, making eye-contact and introducing yourself by name. Usually, you will be asked at this point whether you had a good journey and whether you found the company without too many problems. These questions aim at creating a relaxed interview atmosphere. Take advantage of this opportunity to indicate your dependability and planning skills, for example by saying that you had made

sure you had clear directions in advance. You might also want to add how helpful the secretary had been on the phone or how convenient the directions given on the company's website were. At this stage it is usual to be offered something to drink. Accept and choose something uncomplicated, such as water, tea or coffee.

**2. Company profile:** After the warm-up phase, you will usually be introduced to the people present and to the company. Listen attentively and show interest. During this introduction you might find some useful information that you can include when you are talking about yourself.

3. Following the introduction to the company, you will generally be asked to introduce yourself and to speak about your career to date:

- Would you like to introduce yourself, please?
- We'd like to get to know a bit about you. Can you tell us about your education and experience to date?

4. The next questions are usually about your motivation and reasons for applying to the company.

- What made you take up this profession?
- Why did you decide to apply for this position?
- What is it about working for our company that interests you?

5. After you have explained why you are interested in the job, you will be asked about and tested on your suitability for the position:

- Why are you the right person for this job?
- Why should we employ you?
- What educational and professional experience do you have that could be of benefit in this job?
- What do you expect from this job?
- What do you expect your responsibilities to be?

6. The employer will often want to have a clearer impression of job candidates.

- How would you describe yourself?
- What is it about you that your fellow students and colleagues appreciate most?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What have been your biggest successes? What have been your biggest failures?
- What are you aiming at in your career?
- What do you see yourself doing in five years time?
- What do you most appreciate about your colleagues.

7. In order to obtain a comprehensive picture, the interviewer will often ask about your hobbies and leisure activities:

- How do you spend your leisure time?
- How do you relax?
- What hobbies do you have?

8. Once the employer has asked all their questions, candidates usually have a chance towards the end of the interview to ask their own questions.

Again, you can show how well prepared you are by having a list of questions up your sleeve. Obviously, they should not be questions that have already been dealt with in the job description or during the interview.

- Do you have any further questions?
- Are there any questions you would like to ask?



You might want to ask the employer about scope for development, about how they envisage the introductory phase of the job, about the tasks and projects awaiting you, or about continuous and further training opportunities.

9. Once your questions have been answered, you can ask about the next steps. When, for example, can you expect to hear from them? Or should you contact them on a specific date?

**If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us for individual advice:**

**<http://www.uni-due.de/abz/career.php>**

**Good luck with your applications!**