



THE UNIVERSITY

INTERVIEW PREPERATION
GUIDE



EDVANTAGE

Getting your personal statement right is just the beginning of getting into university. Nowadays, many universities are using interviews to choose who gets in, especially for popular courses where lots of people apply. If you've been asked to come to an interview at the universities you applied to, don't worry. Read on for our tips on how to do really well in your university interview.

University interviews can be either evaluative or informative. In evaluative interviews, especially in prestigious universities like Oxbridge, they're like tests. Your performance in these interviews determines if they'll accept you or not. On the other hand, in informative interviews, they tell you more about the university, and they also want to learn about you. Both sides try to impress each other because they want you to pick their university. **Your interview might have bits of both types.**

Getting invited to a university interview is a sign that you've made a strong application, but it's essential to remember that you'll be competing with other impressive candidates. To maximize your chances of success, thorough preparation is key. Here are some tips to help you prepare effectively for your university interview.



EDVANTAGE

Re-read your personal statement

Your interviewer will likely talk about your personal statement a lot during the interview, so read it again a few times to remember what you wrote. Be prepared to explain more about the points you made, as your interviewer might ask you detailed questions. Also, print out and read any essays you mentioned in your application, especially for Oxbridge interviews. You might need to explain the conclusions you reached in those essays too.

Know your stuff

In addition to revisiting your previous writings, it's essential to update your understanding of your subject. Are there any recent breakthroughs or advancements in your field? Have any significant academic papers been published lately that relate to your course?

Interviewers are primarily seeking enthusiasm, so staying informed about developments in your subject area demonstrates your engagement and eagerness to learn more. It's also beneficial to refresh your general knowledge. Take the time to read a newspaper or two before your interview if it's not something you usually do. You never know when you might have the chance to impress your interviewer by mentioning a recent event!

Lastly, make sure to research both the university and the course you're applying for. Simple mistakes, like getting the course name wrong, could potentially impact your chances, so ensure you have a good understanding of the basics.



EDVANTAGE

Re-read the course information:

It's beneficial to revisit the information about the course. Take a moment to review the university's prospectus or official website to understand how the course is organized, what the entry requirements are, and what optional modules are available, among other details. This demonstrates that you've thoroughly researched the course and could also help you come up with relevant questions to ask the admissions officers during the interview. Even in a more formal interview setting, there's usually an opportunity to ask questions. Just make sure the questions you ask haven't already been answered in the published course information.

Think of how to stand out

In the competitive landscape of university admissions interviews, it's crucial to find ways to distinguish yourself and make a lasting impression. When prompted to introduce yourself, seize the opportunity to share something impactful. Use this moment to express your enthusiasm for your chosen field, outline your aspirations, and highlight the attributes that will guarantee your academic excellence.



Types of Interviews:

Interview formats vary between universities, so it's essential to familiarize yourself with the specific details of any interview you've been invited to. Ensure you review the provided information about the interview format beforehand. Additionally, the university's website may offer valuable resources to assist you in preparation.

Conventional discussion-based interviews

Conventional discussion-based interviews typically entail a conversation between you and the course tutor of your chosen subject. During these sessions, you'll delve into your motivations for studying the course and articulate why you're a qualified candidate. In some cases, you might be tasked with completing a relevant assignment. While some interviews adopt an informal approach and occur within a group setting, it's advisable to inquire about the format beforehand if you're uncertain. Fortunately, most universities provide insight into the interview structure beforehand, allowing you to prepare adequately.

Oxbridge interviews

Oxbridge interviews, referring to those for the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford, are renowned for their challenging nature. The purpose of these interviews extends beyond mere trickery; they aim to assess your response to unfamiliar scenarios. Therefore, anticipate the unexpected.



EDVANTAGE

Multiple-Mini Interviews (MMI).

Multiple-Mini Interviews (MMIs) are commonly utilized for prospective Medicine and related course applicants. These interviews aim to evaluate whether you possess the requisite skills and qualities for success in your chosen field. During MMIs, you'll navigate through a series of 'stations' designed to assess various attributes.





Some top university interview tips

Primarily, tutors seek to witness your genuine enthusiasm for your subject. Your application has evidently captured their attention thus far, so remain authentic. You might be prompted to elaborate on aspects of your personal statement, particularly if you've referenced additional research or work experience. Below are insights from universities regarding additional qualities interviewers seek:

- University of Bristol: "Among other things, they will ask you about your reasons for wanting to study that particular subject and make sure you are aware of what the course involves and what the career options are. They will also assess your ability to communicate and to cope with stress."
- University of Kent: "Interviewers will expect you to show some knowledge of the course and university, and have the ability to present your ideas and arguments well."
- University of Oxford: "They are looking for evidence that you are thinking independently, that you are willing to engage with new ideas beyond the scope of your school or college syllabus, and that you are committed to your subject."



Common Interview Questions:

"Can you tell me about yourself?"

is often one of the first questions asked in interviews. It's an opportunity for you to provide a brief overview of who you are and highlight key aspects of your background that are relevant to the position or course you're applying for. Here's a structured approach to answering this question effectively:

1. Start with a brief personal introduction: Begin by mentioning your name and where you're from. Keep this part concise.
2. Highlight your academic background: Provide a summary of your educational history, focusing on relevant qualifications, courses, or academic achievements. If you're applying for a university course, briefly mention your academic interests and how they led you to choose this particular field of study.
3. Discuss relevant experiences: Talk about any work experience, internships, projects, or extracurricular activities that are relevant to the position or course. Highlight skills or qualities you developed during these experiences that are applicable to the role or program.



4. **Emphasize your strengths and attributes:** Identify key strengths or qualities that make you a strong candidate. These could include traits like problem-solving skills, leadership abilities, teamwork, or a strong work ethic. Try to provide examples or anecdotes that illustrate these qualities.
5. **Connect to the position or course:** Tie everything back to why you're interested in the opportunity. Explain how your background, experiences, and strengths align with the requirements or expectations of the role or program.
6. **Conclude confidently:** Wrap up your answer with a brief statement indicating your enthusiasm for the opportunity and your readiness to contribute or succeed.

Remember to keep your response concise and relevant, focusing on the aspects of your background that are most pertinent to the interview context. Practice your answer beforehand to ensure you deliver it confidently and effectively.



EDVANTAGE

When answering the question "Why did you choose this course/university?" in a university interview, it's crucial to demonstrate your genuine interest and alignment with the program and institution. Here's how to craft a compelling response:

1. **Research the Course and University:** Begin by explaining what attracted you to the specific course and university. Highlight key aspects such as the reputation of the course, its curriculum, specializations, research opportunities, or teaching methodologies. Similarly, mention unique features of the university, such as its facilities, faculty expertise, campus culture, or extracurricular opportunities.
2. **Personal Connection:** Share any personal experiences, interests, or motivations that led you to choose this course and university. Discuss how your academic or career goals align with what the course offers and how it can help you achieve them. Be specific and genuine in illustrating why this course resonates with you personally.
3. **Future Prospects:** Emphasize how completing this course at this university will contribute to your future aspirations. Whether it's pursuing further studies, entering a specific industry, or making a positive impact in your field, articulate how the course and university will prepare you for success and help you fulfil your goals.



EDVANTAGE

4. **Link to Your Background:** Connect your choice of course and university to your academic background, experiences, and skills. Highlight any relevant coursework, projects, or extracurricular activities that have influenced your decision. Show how your past experiences have prepared you for this particular course and how you can contribute to the university community.

5. **Express Enthusiasm and Commitment:** Conclude your answer by expressing genuine enthusiasm for the course and university. Communicate your eagerness to immerse yourself in the academic environment, engage with fellow students and faculty, and make the most of the opportunities available. Convey your commitment to fully investing yourself in the program and contributing positively to the university community.

By following these steps, you can craft a persuasive and authentic response that effectively communicates your reasons for choosing the course and university while showcasing your enthusiasm and suitability for the opportunity.





What are your strengths and weaknesses?

When discussing strengths and weaknesses in a university interview, it's essential to provide honest yet strategic responses that demonstrate self-awareness and a willingness to improve. Here's how to approach this question effectively:

Strengths:

1. **Identify Key Strengths:** Begin by identifying two or three strengths that are relevant to the course or program you're applying for. These could include academic strengths, such as analytical skills, creativity, or problem-solving abilities, as well as personal strengths like teamwork, leadership, or communication skills.
2. **Provide Examples:** Support each strength with specific examples or experiences from your academic, professional, or personal life. Describe situations where you demonstrated these strengths and achieved positive outcomes. Be concise and focus on the most relevant examples that showcase your abilities effectively.
3. **Link to the Course or Program:** Connect your strengths to the requirements or expectations of the course or program. Explain how your strengths make you well-suited for success in your chosen field of study and how they align with the skills or qualities valued by the university.



Weaknesses:

1. **Acknowledge Areas for Improvement:** When discussing weaknesses, choose one or two areas where you have genuine opportunities for growth. Avoid mentioning weaknesses that are essential for success in the course or program. Instead, focus on areas where you're actively working to improve or overcome challenges.

2. **Demonstrate Awareness:** Show that you're aware of your weaknesses and their potential impact. Discuss how you've recognized these areas for improvement through feedback, self-assessment, or reflection. Emphasize your willingness to address and overcome these weaknesses through proactive measures, such as seeking additional support, training, or mentorship.

3. **Highlight Strategies for Improvement:** Share specific steps you're taking or plan to take to address your weaknesses and enhance your skills or abilities. This could include seeking out relevant resources, participating in relevant workshops or courses, or setting personal development goals.

4. **Focus on Growth:** Frame your weaknesses in a positive light by emphasizing your commitment to continuous learning and improvement. Highlight how addressing your weaknesses will contribute to your overall growth and development as a student and future professional.

By approaching the discussion of strengths and weaknesses with honesty, self-awareness, and a focus on growth, you can provide a thoughtful and compelling response that showcases your readiness for the challenges and opportunities of university life.



EDVANTAGE

Can you provide an example of a challenging situation you've faced and how you overcame it?

When discussing a challenging situation you've faced and how you overcame it in a university interview, it's important to choose an example that demonstrates your problem-solving skills, resilience, and ability to learn and grow from adversity. Here's how to structure your response:

1. **Describe the Situation:** Start by providing context for the challenging situation you encountered. Briefly explain the circumstances, including when and where it occurred, and the nature of the challenge you faced. Be specific and focus on the key details that are relevant to the interview question.
2. **Highlight Your Role:** Clearly outline your role and responsibilities in the situation. Explain how you became aware of the challenge and the initial steps you took to address it. Emphasize any leadership or decision-making roles you assumed, if applicable.
3. **Discuss Your Actions:** Detail the actions you took to overcome the challenge. Describe the strategies or approaches you employed to tackle the problem, including any obstacles you encountered along the way. Highlight your problem-solving skills, creativity, and resourcefulness in finding solutions.





EDVANTAGE

4. **Share the Outcome:** Explain the outcome of your actions and how the situation was resolved. Discuss any positive results or achievements that resulted from your efforts. If the outcome was not entirely successful, reflect on what you learned from the experience and any adjustments you made for future situations.

5. **Reflect on the Experience:** Take a moment to reflect on what you learned from facing this challenge. Discuss the personal or professional growth you experienced as a result of overcoming the obstacle. Highlight any new skills, insights, or perspectives you gained that have helped you become a stronger and more resilient individual.

6. **Connect to Your Future Goals:** Tie the example back to your academic or career aspirations and how it has shaped your readiness for university study or future professional endeavors. Emphasize the transferable skills or qualities you developed through overcoming this challenge that will benefit you in your chosen field.

By following this structure, you can effectively showcase your ability to navigate difficult situations and emerge stronger and more capable as a result. Remember to focus on a specific and relevant example and to communicate your experiences and insights with clarity and confidence.





EDVANTAGE

What relevant experiences or skills do you have that make you a strong candidate for this course?

When discussing relevant experiences or skills that make you a strong candidate for a university course in an interview, it's essential to highlight how your background aligns with the requirements and expectations of the program. Here's how to structure your response:

1. **Identify Key Experiences and Skills:** Begin by identifying two or three experiences or skills that are particularly relevant to the course you're applying for. These could include academic achievements, coursework, research projects, internships, work experience, extracurricular activities, or personal qualities.
2. **Provide Examples:** Support each experience or skill with specific examples or anecdotes from your past experiences. Describe how these experiences have helped you develop the relevant skills or qualities that are valued in the course. Highlight any achievements or accomplishments that demonstrate your capabilities in these areas.
3. **Link to Course Requirements:** Explain how each experience or skill aligns with the requirements and expectations of the course. Discuss the specific knowledge, abilities, or attributes that are sought after in successful students of the program and how you possess these qualities.





EDVANTAGE

4. **Demonstrate Transferable Skills:** Emphasize any transferable skills or qualities that you have developed through your experiences that are applicable to the course. These could include critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, or time management skills.
5. **Highlight Your Passion and Motivation:** Convey your enthusiasm for the subject matter and your genuine interest in pursuing further study in this field. Discuss any relevant academic interests, projects, or research topics that demonstrate your passion and commitment to the subject area.
6. **Connect to Future Goals:** Tie your experiences and skills back to your future academic or career aspirations. Explain how completing this course will help you achieve your goals and how your background prepares you for success in the program and beyond.

By following this structure, you can effectively showcase your relevant experiences and skills that make you a strong candidate for the university course while demonstrating your enthusiasm, motivation, and readiness for the academic challenges ahead.





EDVANTAGE

How do you plan to contribute to our university community?

When asked how you plan to contribute to the university community in an interview, it's essential to demonstrate your enthusiasm for getting involved and making a positive impact. Here's how to structure your response:

1. **Identify Your Interests and Strengths:** Begin by identifying your interests, passions, and strengths that you can contribute to the university community. This could include academic interests, extracurricular activities, hobbies, or personal qualities that you can leverage to enrich campus life.
2. **Highlight Past Experiences:** Discuss any previous experiences or involvement in activities that demonstrate your commitment to contributing to a vibrant university community. This could include leadership roles, volunteer work, club memberships, sports teams, cultural organizations, or community service projects.
3. **Propose Specific Contributions:** Outline specific ways in which you plan to contribute to the university community. This could involve participating in student clubs or organizations, organizing events or activities, volunteering for community service initiatives, mentoring other students, or pursuing leadership opportunities.
4. **Emphasize Collaboration and Inclusivity:** Highlight your commitment to fostering a culture of collaboration, diversity, and inclusivity within the university community. Discuss how you plan to work collaboratively with other students, faculty, and staff to create a welcoming and supportive environment for everyone.



EDVANTAGE

5. **Connect to University Values and Mission:** Align your proposed contributions with the values and mission of the university. Demonstrate your understanding of what makes the university unique and how your contributions will contribute to its overall goals and objectives.

6. **Express Enthusiasm and Commitment:** Conclude your response by expressing your genuine enthusiasm for becoming an active and engaged member of the university community. Reiterate your commitment to making meaningful contributions that enhance the student experience and enrich campus life for everyone.

By following this structure, you can effectively communicate your readiness and willingness to contribute to the university community while showcasing your enthusiasm, leadership potential, and commitment to making a positive difference during your time at the institution.





EDVANTAGE

Can you discuss a current issue or topic related to your field of study?

When discussing a current issue or topic related to your field of study in a university interview, it's important to choose a relevant and timely subject that reflects your knowledge and engagement with the discipline. Here's how to structure your response:

1. **Choose a Relevant Topic:** Select a current issue, trend, or development within your field of study that you find particularly interesting or significant. This could include recent research findings, emerging technologies, policy debates, social or ethical considerations, or industry challenges.
2. **Provide Context:** Begin by providing context for the issue or topic you've chosen. Explain why it is relevant and timely within your field of study, and briefly outline its significance for academics, professionals, policymakers, or society as a whole.
3. **Discuss Key Points:** Dive into the specifics of the issue or topic, discussing key points, arguments, or perspectives that are relevant to your field of study. Draw upon your academic background, coursework, research, or extracurricular experiences to provide depth and insight into the subject matter.
4. **Offer Your Analysis:** Share your own analysis, opinions, or insights regarding the issue or topic. Consider how it relates to broader themes or trends within your field of study, and discuss its potential implications or consequences for research, practice, policy, or society.



EDVANTAGE

5. **Highlight Your Engagement:** Showcase your engagement with the issue or topic by discussing any relevant experiences, projects, research, or coursework that you've been involved in. This could include relevant coursework, research projects, internships, volunteer work, or extracurricular activities that demonstrate your knowledge and passion for the subject matter.

6. **Connect to Your Goals:** Tie the discussion back to your academic or career goals and aspirations. Explain how your interest in this issue or topic informs your desire to pursue further study in your field and how you envision contributing to addressing or advancing the issue in your future academic or professional endeavours.

By following this structure, you can effectively demonstrate your knowledge, critical thinking skills, and passion for your field of study while showcasing your ability to engage with current issues and topics in a meaningful and informed way.





What are your long-term career goals?

When discussing your long-term career goals in a university interview, it's important to demonstrate ambition, clarity, and alignment with your chosen field of study.

Here's how to structure your response:

1. **Be Specific:** Clearly articulate your long-term career goals, focusing on the specific role or industry you aspire to work in. Avoid vague or general statements and instead provide a clear and focused vision for your future career path.
2. **Explain Your Motivation:** Discuss what motivates you to pursue these particular career goals. Share any personal or professional experiences, interests, or values that have influenced your career aspirations and shaped your vision for the future.
3. **Highlight Relevant Skills and Qualifications:** Highlight the skills, qualifications, and experiences you will need to achieve your long-term career goals. Discuss how your academic background, coursework, research, internships, or extracurricular activities have prepared you for success in your chosen field.
4. **Discuss Your Plan:** Outline the steps you plan to take to achieve your long-term career goals. This could include pursuing further education or training, gaining relevant work experience, building a professional network, or developing specific skills or expertise.
5. **Connect to the Course or Program:** Tie your long-term career goals back to the course or program you're applying for. Explain how completing this course will help you achieve your career aspirations and how it aligns with your professional interests and objectives.



EDVANTAGE

6. **Demonstrate Ambition and Commitment:** Convey your ambition and commitment to achieving your long-term career goals. Discuss your willingness to invest time, effort, and resources into realizing your aspirations and your determination to overcome any challenges or obstacles along the way.

7. **Acknowledge Flexibility:** While it's important to have clear long-term career goals, also acknowledge that your plans may evolve over time. Express openness to new opportunities, experiences, and learning opportunities that may shape or influence your career trajectory in the future.

By following this structure, you can effectively communicate your long-term career goals in a university interview, demonstrating your ambition, motivation, and preparedness for success in your chosen field of study and beyond.





How do you handle stress or pressure?

When discussing how you handle stress or pressure in a university interview, it's important to demonstrate resilience, self-awareness, and effective coping strategies. Here's how to structure your response:

1. **Acknowledge the Question:** Begin by acknowledging the question and expressing your understanding of the importance of effectively managing stress and pressure, especially in academic or professional settings.
2. **Describe Your Approach:** Discuss your approach to handling stress or pressure. Share specific strategies or techniques you use to stay calm, focused, and productive during challenging situations. This could include time management, prioritization, organization, mindfulness, deep breathing exercises, or seeking social support.
3. **Provide Examples:** Offer examples of times when you successfully managed stress or pressure in the past. Describe the situation, the specific challenges or pressures you faced, and the actions you took to address them. Highlight any positive outcomes or lessons learned from these experiences.
4. **Emphasize Self-Care:** Highlight the importance of self-care in managing stress and pressure. Discuss how you prioritize activities that promote your physical, mental, and emotional well-being, such as exercise, healthy eating, sufficient sleep, hobbies, or relaxation techniques.
5. **Demonstrate Adaptability:** Show that you can adapt your approach to handling stress or pressure based on the situation. Discuss how you remain flexible and open-minded, willing to adjust your strategies as needed to effectively manage different types of challenges or pressures.



EDVANTAGE

6. **Discuss Problem-Solving Skills:** Highlight your problem-solving skills and ability to identify and address the root causes of stress or pressure. Discuss how you proactively seek solutions, break tasks down into manageable steps, and remain focused on finding constructive ways to overcome obstacles.

7. **Express Confidence and Resilience:** Conclude your response by expressing confidence in your ability to handle stress and pressure effectively. Emphasize your resilience and determination to persevere through challenges, learn from setbacks, and ultimately achieve your goals.

By following this structure, you can effectively communicate your ability to handle stress and pressure in a university interview, demonstrating your resilience, adaptability, and commitment to personal and academic success.





Do you have any questions for us?

When asked if you have any questions for the interviewers in a university interview, it's essential to seize the opportunity to demonstrate your interest in the institution and your commitment to making an informed decision about your academic future. Here's how to approach this question:

1. Ask about the Program or Course: Inquire about specific details of the program or course you're applying for. You could ask about the curriculum structure, opportunities for research or practical experience, available resources and facilities, or the faculty's expertise in your area of interest.
2. Inquire about Student Life: Ask about student life on campus, including extracurricular activities, clubs or organizations, student support services, or opportunities for networking and socializing. This demonstrates your interest in becoming an active and engaged member of the university community.
3. Explore Career Opportunities: Inquire about career development and job placement services offered by the university. Ask about internship or job opportunities, alumni networking events, or career counseling services available to students.
4. Seek Advice or Guidance: Ask for advice or guidance on how to make the most of your academic experience at the university. Inquire about study tips, academic support resources, or opportunities for academic enrichment or specialization.
5. Request Clarification: If there are any aspects of the university or the application process that you'd like clarification on, don't hesitate to ask. This shows your attention to detail and your commitment to understanding all aspects of the university experience.
6. Express Interest in the Interviewers: Take the opportunity to learn more about the interviewers themselves. Ask about their experiences at the university, their academic backgrounds, or their insights into the program or course you're applying for. This demonstrates your genuine interest in connecting with the interviewers on a personal level.



Interview techniques for on the day

- It's not just what you say that's important – body language is key to the impression you'll make. Sit up straight, make eye contact and look (and sound) interested. It's important to engage with the interviewer right from the start.
- Listen carefully to the question and don't be afraid to take some time to think about your answer or ask them to repeat it – you won't be penalised.
- Remember, an interview is a two-way process. Make the most of it by finding out as much as you can about the course (including teaching methods) and getting a feel for whether the course and the university are right for you.
- Whatever the format of your interview, try to contribute to the discussion as well as responding to what your interviewer asks you.

But remember, there is no such thing as the perfect interview – or the right answer to a question.

University interview tips and preparation - including what to wear

- Look carefully through any material that is sent to you before the interview, so you know what to expect when you arrive.
- Choose something suitable to wear. The university may offer dress code recommendations, but if not, dress in something you feel comfortable.

Take a deep breath, and smile!

This is definitely easier said than done, but try not to worry too much. Remember that the university interview is usually not considered on its own when it comes to accepting you as a student. And also remember that the admissions officers have clearly been impressed with you so far to offer you an interview, so they're seriously considering offering you a place. Even if you're feeling terrified on the inside, force yourself to smile – it will make you feel better, and help to show your interviewers that you're excited about the opportunity.