

(MSRF) MICROSOFT RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP



Post Interviews:

After the interviews on 19th May, I reached out to Suresh to inquire about the status of my application after 2-3 weeks. Unfortunately, I learned that I was not accepted, and my hopes were dampened. However, on 5th July, Arjun emailed on behalf of the **PROSE** team and expressed interest in interviewing me.

The first preliminary round of discussion with Arjun was scheduled for 7th July to assess my candidature for further progression. Subsequent interviews were arranged with other individuals who reached out individually to book interview timings. Each interview lasted for approximately 1 hour. The schedule was as follows:

Arjun Radhakrishna	Preliminary	9:30 pm	7th July
José Cambroneró	Research round	6 pm	20th July
Sherry Shi	Coding round	10 pm	25th July

7th July 2023 - Arjun

Arjun contacted me about the discussion on 5th July. Prior to the interview, I conducted thorough research on the team, their work, and even reached out to seniors who were part of the project. The interview commenced with an overview of how the discussion would proceed. It began with introductions from both Arjun and myself, followed by discussions about my interests, reasons for choosing Microsoft, an overview of the project, my past projects, the selection procedure, and some additional questions.

Arjun introduced himself and his team's primary focus. He informed me that if I qualified in this round, there would be two more rounds: a research round (involving discussions on past projects and new papers) and an engineering round (involving coding).

During my introduction, I was asked about my future plans and why I specifically chose Microsoft. Arjun then provided insights into the role, mentioning that it involved working with a research+engineering team, having one mentor for the project, and a one-year time frame with a possibility of extension if both the candidate and mentor agreed. The work would be based in Bangalore, possibly involving virtual discussions and meetings. While Arjun discussed his work, I actively contributed the information I had gathered about the team and engaged in a fruitful conversation. He also inquired about one of my past papers, asking for a brief overview of the problem, the solution, and other related aspects.

Additionally, he asked me questions and I sought advice on how to prepare for the next rounds and interviews.

Suggestions for others' preparation:

Research Round: Focus on paper reading, tasks, past projects, and future approaches. Reply back by next week Wednesday.

Coding Round: Emphasize programming knowledge and engineering skills.

20th July 2023 - Jose

On the night of 13th July, I received an email from José. In the email, he highlighted the topics we would discuss during the interview:

1. Discuss your past research experience, particularly around ML projects
2. Discuss this paper (please think about extensions or questions you may have):
<https://ojs.aaai.org/index.php/AAAI/article/view/25642>
3. Please share a repo for a project that you have contributed substantially to and that you think is a good reflection of your implementation skills. I will then ask some questions about this.

Prep:- studied the paper in-depth, and created a repository on GitHub for a server-side project. I shared the link with him and refreshed my memory on my past work.

During the interview, similar to the previous ones, we began with an overview of how the discussion would proceed. Introductions were made, and we delved into discussions about my past projects, the research paper provided earlier, miscellaneous data, future scope questions, and some additional questions from my side.

José introduced himself and his team's work, and then asked about my research interests. He requested an explanation of my past paper and inquired about the problem's inception, the solution, and my coding knowledge. Next, we discussed the paper he had sent me, and he asked me to present a brief on my understanding of it, its limitations, and future scope. I expressed my opinions, and he asked for further elaboration on data extraction for fine-tuning. I

responded by discussing my approach to data sources extraction, preparation, and analysis, which he appreciated.

Once again, I asked some questions related to interview preparation, and José provided resources to study and improve on AI for coding. He mentioned that he would update me on the coding round within two days.

25th July 2023 - Sherry

On the night of 20th July, I received an email from Sherry, where she outlined the structure of our 1-hour interview for the Research Fellow position on her team:

I'd like to schedule a 1-hour interview with you regarding your candidacy for a Research Fellow position on my team. We will spend the first ~15-20 minutes chatting about your past experiences, then we will spend ~35-40 minutes on some coding questions, and in the last ~5-10 minutes, you will have a chance to ask me some questions.

Prep:- I focused on coding languages and brushed up on my basic Data Structures and Algorithms and Operating Systems, overview of Object-Oriented Programming knowledge.

As usual, the interview began with Sherry introducing her team and discussing the technical experience expected from researchers. She then asked about a time when I faced a technical difficulty and how I resolved it. Similarly, she inquired about a situation where I had a disagreement during a discussion and how I reached a conclusion with the team. Later, she asked me to explain a CS topic as if she were a layman with no experience in the field.

Sherry proceeded to evaluate my understanding of OOP (Object-Oriented Programming). Following that, she provided a Codility platform and asked me to write classes in Python to depict various properties of OOP for a flight booking website. Additionally, she gave another coding question involving a list of mappings from one destination to another and asked for a method solution to print a list of connected cities from source to destination.

I mailed all 3 researchers for update on my application on 1st August (wherein they reverted that results will be out later that week). I reminded again on 7th August for which they gave me my selection mail!!!

I WAS SELECTED!

Thank you for your patience. I wanted to reach out and let you know that we are working with HR to have an offer extended to you.