

Science and ethics

Why do you think some people claim scientists interfere too much with nature?

Do you have anything against animal testing?

Is scientific progress always for the greater good?

Sample answers:

Examiner: What have been the most significant technological developments of recent years?

Candidate: Undoubtedly, ones connected with the Internet. The Internet has created a global village where everyone can easily and cheaply contact almost anyone in the world, just to chat or to do business or to find love. It's a revolution, the like of which I don't think has been seen before. We have the Internet at home through our personal computers but also on the move through the use of smartphones and laptops, so wherever we are we have access to almost limitless sources of knowledge.

Examiner: In what ways have these developments changed society for the better and for the worse?

Candidate: Well, as I said, they have brought people closer together in many ways. However, there are disadvantages. First of all, some people believe everything they read online, which is dangerous. Then, many people spend too much time sitting in front of their computers rather than going out and socialising, so they put on weight, they don't develop and maintain friendship circles. Last but not least, it can cut dead debate. When I'm in the pub with my friends, we no longer have a friendly, informal debate about which band has sold the most albums. We just check our smartphones and find the answer in a few seconds, and then have nothing left to say to each other!

Examiner: Are people in your country nostalgic about life before technology?

Candidate: Yes, I think so, and not just the older generation. Younger people, too, are beginning to see that community is not what it was and that is largely due to technological developments. For example, before the car most people walked to work. This meant that they lived close to their place of work, and so everyone lived and worked in the same area and they all knew each other.

Examiner: Why do you think some people claim scientists interfere too much with nature?

Candidate: In my view, people are scared because scientists seem to be all-powerful. They come up with some new discovery almost every week. There seems to be no end to it. So people are bound to question whether it's right or not to delve so far into nature's secrets, manipulating genetic codes and so on. But then maybe progress is always scary and that's what keeps us interested. It is challenging and thought-provoking.

Examiner: Do you have anything against animal testing?

Candidate: I do if it's for the purposes of cosmetics and other unnecessary luxuries. I'm not sure what I think of testing on animals for reasons of finding cures for human illnesses. But I think it's something I'd rather not talk about, to be honest. I don't feel comfortable discussing it.

Examiner: Is scientific progress always for the greater good?

Candidate: Not necessarily. After all, scientists developed the atom bomb and all the efficient new ways we have of killing each other. What matters is that we keep on questioning scientists, letting them know that we are grateful for their discoveries but will not give them free rein. They need to keep morality in mind when they're working.

Track 45

What would you say were the advantages of having a mobile phone?