PRACTICE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tell us why you wanted to apply for this PhD program and project/job, employer, and role.

*important to show interest in the specific project/role and the specific uni/employer*

Tell us about your previous research/work experience and how it is relevant to this PhD/role.

*if you don’t have research experience, you can talk about how other positions – e.g. sales or hospitality – mean you are good with a variety of colleagues and are good at communication*

Why is your chosen topic an important study area?

What are the broader implications of this topic (e.g. societal, knowledge increase, etc)?

*think creatively here*

What additional training do you want during your PhD/in this role?

*highlight here both what you know already and what you know you need to learn more about*

What was the most exciting scientific paper you read recently?

*this needn’t be a recent paper*

What do you think is the most important discovery in this area in the last 10 years?

What is the biggest challenge you’ve overcome during your studies or prior research?

*this can be personal things too, but try to not be too personal/don’t disclose things you’re not comfortable discussing – a good example might be discussing a busy class schedule, or something that got in the way of your studies*

What are your career ambitions? What is your 5 and/or 10 year vision?

*I personally think it’s ok to mention non-academic careers, although some people may disagree*

Tell us about a time that you displayed initiative or innovation.

Have you ever mentored or supervised someone or helped train someone? How did you do this or

how might you do this?

*it’s 100% ok for the answer to be no, but be prepared to explain how you might approach it*

How do you ensure your work is organized and work to deadlines? How do you prioritize tasks?

How do you make sure you are continuously improving in your work?

Have you had to learn new techniques in a previous role? Please give an example.

What strengths do you bring to the project?

What will make you succeed as a PhD student/in this role?

*common good answers include “determination”, “passion”, “strong interest”, “love learning in depth about new areas”, etc*

What are your greatest weaknesses and how might they affect your PhD/your performance in this role?

*be careful here – try to turn your weaknesses, if any(!), into positives or areas where you are already working to improve – e.g. “I know I have issues with time management, so I’ve recently started keeping a daily schedule to make sure I stay on task”*

Do you have any questions for us?

*try to think of a few here – it’s very awkward when the candidate has none! I have in the past asked “what is your favourite thing about the employer/uni”, “do you have any resources/books/literature you’d suggest I read to increase my knowledge in this area”, “what is your favourite thing about the city”. Please don’t ask how you did in the interview, this is* VERY *awkward in my experience!*