

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol [Non-NPP-Affiliated]

This version of the interview protocol is intended for interviewees who are ***not affiliated with NPP*** but ***have received NPP's support and mentorship***. Interviewees may be university students, university staff or faculty, working professionals in the tech industry, or hobbyists.

Interviews are to be hosted using Zoom, which supports audio recording and automatic transcription, or in-person if requested as a preference by the interviewee. If an in-person interview is requested, the interviewer(s) will use their phone to record the interview, which will then be transcribed afterwards.

As this is a protocol for *semi-structured* interviews, the questions below serve as a starting point for each of the subcategories. However, the interviewer(s) may provide clarifications or ask follow-up questions relevant to the interviewee's answers.

Introduction

- Confirm that the participant has previously received or is currently receiving support and mentorship from NPP. This could include computing hardware gifts and both technical and non-technical mentoring.
- Describe the purpose of the interview and overall research study with the participant, and provide an estimate of how long the interview will take (~45-60 mins).
 - Depending on participants' backgrounds, their history with NPP, and their willingness to participate, interviews may last longer and are not to exceed 90 minutes without explicit permission to continue from the participant.
- Notify the participant that they may withdraw from the study at any time.
- Explain the confidentiality of their responses in this interview and notify them that their responses will be anonymous, confidential, and only used for our research.
- Check if the participant has any questions about the research and/or the process before beginning.
- ***Obtain consent for recording the interview (for further transcription and analysis by our team).***

Start recording.

Note for interviewers: In each subsection of questions, there may be more questions than can be asked within the 90-minute maximum time. Please keep an eye on the time and proceed to the next subsection as necessary, ensuring you receive a wide range of responses that align with what we are looking for. The questions are listed in priority within each subsection. If you have additional time, please see the questions at the bottom of this protocol.

Warm-Up

- What is your current occupation or field of study?
- Are you currently or formerly affiliated with any cybersecurity clubs, and if so, what is (or was) your role and involvement with the club(s)?

Main Questions

Interactions with NPP

- How were you originally made aware of what NPP is doing for your club?
 - If you are aware, approximately how long ago did NPP first reach out to your club?
- How is NPP currently supporting you and your club?
- What kind of computing equipment has NPP provided for you and your club, if any?
 - How would you describe the quality of the equipment you were provided?
- From your perspective, what are NPP's intentions and goals in supporting you and your club?
 - How aligned are NPP's goals with your club's goals?
 - Do you feel NPP understands the specific needs of your club? Why or why not?

Security Education

- Taking a step back, what has been the extent of your experience with security education in school and courses?
 - How do (or did) you feel about the course offerings at your institution, with regard to security education?
- What topics in security would you like to see more of within higher education?
 - Why these topics specifically?
 - How can NPP and the upcycled computing equipment/server infrastructure be utilized to better support education in these topics?
- Outside of formal coursework, where else do you and your peers learn about security?
 - How well prepared do you feel to apply security knowledge in practical or industry settings?
 - How has NPP's support and mentoring assisted in your education and preparation?
- What formats (e.g., hands-on labs, lectures, mentorship, CTFs) would you prefer for learning security topics?
 - Which one would you recommend the most to newcomers? For continued education?

Outcomes

- What outcomes involving you and your club have been made possible by NPP's support?
 - [Follow up on specific outcomes as necessary.]
 - Can you describe a memorable moment or success story that involved NPP's support?
- What technologies and concepts are you exposed to through the upcycled computing equipment/server infrastructure?
 - How familiar were you with such technologies and concepts before?
 - What activities specifically did you do to get exposed to such technologies and concepts?
 - From your perspective, how has what you've learned and done relate to cybersecurity?
- How has what you learned from using the provided computing equipment shown up in classes, your internship/career, or elsewhere?
- Has NPP's support impacted member recruitment, retention, or engagement in your club? If so, how?

Challenges and Needs

- What challenges have you faced when working with NPP?
 - [Follow up on specific challenges as necessary.]
- What challenges have you faced when working with the upcycled computing equipment/server infrastructure they provide?
 - [Follow up on specific challenges as necessary.]
 - Are there specific features or resources you would like the equipment to have?
- What forms of non-technical support would be valuable from NPP?
- What do you and NPP need right now to better support you and your club's goals and operations?
 - [Follow up on specific needs as necessary.]
 - What would "ideal" support from NPP look like to you?

Growth and Collaborative Directions

- If NPP had to focus on one thing next year to support clubs like yours more effectively, what should that be?
- What would you and your club like to do more with the upcycled computing equipment/server infrastructure?
- What advice would you give NPP to better understand or engage with student-led security education efforts?

- With the shift and integration of AI and LLMs into every aspect of tech, what can NPP do to support exploration and education in AI?
 - What can be done with the upcycled computing equipment/server infrastructure they provide in relation to AI and LLMs? What would you like to do with it?

Conclusion

- We've reached the end of our interview.
 - Do you think there was anything that we should have asked but didn't?
 - Was there anything you felt was relevant but didn't get a chance to say?

End recording.

- Thank the interviewee for their time and insights.
- Inform the interviewee about the follow-up survey that will be sent out after all interviews have concluded.
 - The follow-up survey will likely take no longer than 15 minutes and will be in a Likert-scale format (i.e., questions that ask participants to rate their sentiments on specific themes on a scale of 1 to 5).
 - If they are further interested, ask for the best way to contact them (or check if the original method you used is the most effective one).
- Offer compensation in the form of a \$20 Amazon gift card - if they accept, ask for an email address where they can receive the gift card.

Additional Questions

Interactions with NPP

- How has the level or type of support from NPP changed over time?

Challenges and Needs

- Are there any processes or policies in NPP that you find unclear or difficult to navigate?