

PDS SCIE/ENGN.2100 Questions about Interviewing (w/ answers!)

QUESTIONS ABOUT JOB SEARCH PROCESS

- **What are some good resources outside of CareerLINK for co-op positions?**
I recommend looking for positions on Indeed.com, LinkedIn, and by going directly to company websites.
- **What is one of the most common mistakes an applicant makes either in the overall process or during an interview?**
Not applying for enough positions. Not preparing for interviews. Not responding to employer communication (either because they forget or it gets lost in their inbox).
- **How much networking should you do?**
For the purposes of a co-op/internship search, networking is not always required. However, it always helps! You did some networking when you spoke to co-op students at the Co-op Expo and again when you talked with employers at the Career Fair. You've also been networking if you informed your family/professors of your job search, attended company info sessions, conducted informational interviews, etc. Anything you can do to spread the word about your search and make a face-to-face connection with an employer will help you move out of the resume pile and into the interview phase!
- **How do you make yourself stand out from other candidates who are going for the same position especially if you are not as qualified?**
My first question would be, how do you know you aren't as qualified? You don't know what this particular employer is looking for. Next, I would remind yourself that this person saw your resume and was intrigued. One of the best ways to stand out is to tell detailed stories in your interview (think of the PARK framework from the Bridging Exercise). Facts are helpful, but stories make you memorable. You should also have a good answer for "why do you want to work here?"
- **What should I bring to a job interview?**
See "Interview Prep Checklist" in Blackboard & handed out in class! At a minimum, bring 2-3 printed copies of your resume in a padfolio or professional looking folder.
- **What to say if they ask about my current salary?**
First, you should always be armed with the knowledge of what the average hourly rate is for a co-op in your major. If you don't know, ask your co-op advisor. If an employer asks about what you made at a previous internship or at a current position, be honest. If they simply ask what you would like to make on this co-op, refer to the average hourly rate – *"The Career & Co-op Center at UML tells us the hourly rate for <major> students is X so I would be hoping for something in that range."*
- **How do I negotiate a higher pay?**
You should not negotiate higher pay for a co-op position. The goal of this is to gain work experience and asking for more money could make you seem ungrateful. Plus, most companies have set budgets for their co-ops/interns and they cannot deviate. If the company is paying you below the average for your major, talk with your co-op advisor. We will talk about negotiating salary in the Assessment class to help you prepare for the full-time job search.
- **How pushy is pushy?**

PDS SCIE/ENGN.2100 Questions about Interviewing (w/ answers!)

I would need more information in order to answer this question. Pushy in regards to following up after an application? After an interview? Pushy as in your booth speech at the Career Fair? Please feel free to email me directly with more details if this was your question.

■ **Should you know everything about the company before interviewing?**

Of course not! You should spend about 15-20 minutes researching the company. Spend some time on their website, read the job description, look up the company on LinkedIn, do a Google search to see if they have been in the news lately, etc. You want to know enough about the company to answer the questions “Why do you want to work here?”

■ **During the interview are there any ways to tell it's going well or poorly?**

Unfortunately, no. As described in the textbook, each interviewer has a different style so there isn't one specific way to tell how things are going.

■ **What is the average time from applying to phone interview?**

It really depends. Many companies will never get back to you and you should not reach out—that's just the way it is. Some companies will reach out the very next day after you apply, but it will most likely be 1-3 weeks before you hear about a phone interview. See your co-op advisor with specific scenarios.

■ **If they offer you the job, what is the most respectful way to say: “No”**

Whenever you turn down an offer, it is best to thank the company for their time and express that it was a difficult decision. You do not need to share where you are headed. It might look something like this - *“Thank you so much for taking the time to interview me. I really enjoyed getting to know the team. After careful consideration, I have ultimately decided to accept an offer with another company. I think the work you are doing is extremely valuable so this was a tough decision for me. I will spread the word about your organization to my friends and will keep <company name> in mind for my future job searches.”*

■ **If you receive a job offer but haven't heard back from other companies should you take the job?**

This depends on a variety of factors so I would recommend you speak with your co-op advisor. How far into the semester is it? Do you like the position that you've been offered? Do you think you'll learn a lot on the job? Do you have other interviews lined up? There's nothing wrong with accepting the first offer you receive – especially if it's a company you like and a position where you'll strengthen your skills.

■ **How do you tell a company that you want to wait to accept until you've considered other offers? What is the most respectful way to say: “I need time to think about it?”**

You will want to thank them profusely for the offer, express your excitement/reiterate your interest, and then ask for time. You should never directly tell the company that you need time to consider other offers – this could come across as self-important and start you off on the wrong foot.

Try this: *“Thank you so much for this offer! I have enjoyed learning about XYZ Company throughout this process and am very interested in doing a 6-month co-op here. May I have [insert length of time here] to read over the offer and get back to you?”*

Important: make sure you stick to whatever timeline you tell them. Responding earlier is okay, responding later IS NOT. Talk to your co-op advisor if you are stuck.

PDS SCIE/ENGN.2100 Questions about Interviewing (w/ answers!)

- **Is it ok to say yes to a company and then say no if a better offer from a different company comes shortly afterwards?**

No! This is called reneging on an offer and it is completely unprofessional. First and foremost, you are putting your reputation in jeopardy with both companies. It is a small world and companies are more connected than you might think. Second, this is grounds to be removed from the UML Professional Co-op Program which means you may not be able to work at either company. Last, this reflects poorly on UML and future students (even if the company is not a current co-op partner).

- **How can I build my confidence?**

Prepare. Do your research. Know your resume. Know your accomplishments (you ALL have them!). Practice, practice, practice. Reflect after your interview and be kind to yourself—for many of you, this is the first professional interviewing you've ever done. Perfection is not the expectation.

- **Is it a good idea to send a thank you email?**

Yes! You should send a thank you email within 24 hours of the job interview.

- **How do I construct a thank you email after the interview?**

Refer to page 114 in the textbook or the job search packet handed out on the first day of class. You can also see an example in the slides on Blackboard under Interviewing. These should be brief 3-4 sentence emails.

- **Why does it feel like I am on a different universe while on a job interview?**

There could be a number of factors at play here. Most likely it is that you haven't prepared enough and therefore are feeling uncomfortable. You may benefit from scheduling another practice interview with your co-op advisor. If you grew up in a different country and need some extra guidance on the United States job search, refer to Appendix F in your textbook.

- **How long should I wait to follow-up after an interview?**

Each company is different, so be sure to ask at the end of an interview when you can expect to hear something. I typically advise waiting one week before you follow-up. You can also check with your co-op advisor to see if they have heard anything from the company.

QUESTIONS ABOUT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- **Is it ok to ask the interviewer more about his/herself early in the interview or save questions for the end?**

Typically you would save all questions until the end. However, if it naturally comes up as part of the conversation then go ahead and ask!

- **How do you answer behavioral questions?**

Using PARK Statements! Break down your answer: describe the problem/situation, talk about the action you took, how it was resolved, and what you learned. Prepare a variety of stories/examples ahead of time and imagine questions those stories might answer.

- **What do you say when they say: "what do you do in your free time?"**

Be honest! This is a time for you to share more about yourself beyond the resume and your classwork. Tell them you like to go running, cook, read biographies, play Super Smash Brothers, play

PDS SCIE/ENGN.2100 Questions about Interviewing (w/ answers!)

basketball, listen to podcasts, spend time with your family, etc. If you do pursue technical interests outside of school then that's always nice to include as well (hackathons, CodeAcademy, Coursera, work on independent projects, etc.).

■ **What if you get the answer wrong?**

For non-technical questions, there are not really "wrong" answers... just answers that don't really answer the question. To avoid this, make sure you understand the question. It is totally okay to ask for clarification (ex: *"I'm not sure I understand exactly what you're asking. Do you mean [fill in the blank with that you THINK they're asking you]?"*).

If you start answering the question and feel yourself going down a path that doesn't seem related to the original question asked, try to wrap it up and give a thorough answer.

QUESTIONS ABOUT TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

■ **How can we effectively prepare for technical interviews? Is practice the best way to prepare?**

We will discuss this in class on 11/1. Some general guidelines would be to brush up on whatever languages/tools they mention in the job description, practice writing out code on paper, and go to a website like leetcode.com and do some sample problems.

■ **How should I prepare when I don't know the subject mentioned by the employer for the technical I interview?**

First, keep in mind that they have reviewed your resume so they are familiar with what you do and do not know. If you have advanced to a technical interview this means they believe you are capable of learning the material. Prior to the interview you should do some research on the topic and try to become familiar with basic concepts. Watch some YouTube tutorials, study practice questions on leetcode.com, ask a friend/professor, etc.

■ **What are the main programming languages being used by companies?**

This will vary by company which is why it's important to read the job description. Most companies use a variety of different languages depending on the task. I most often see Java, Python, and C++ in job descriptions.

■ **How do I deal with a technical questions that I do not know but the interviewer assumes I would know?**

If you do not know the answer, be honest! If you are able to take a guess then go for it; this will help the interviewer better understand your knowledge level and problem-solving abilities. You may also find that you are closer to the answer than you think but just needed a little guidance. If you truly have no idea explain that you don't know that but then tell them what you would do if you were on the job and ran into a problem like this (i.e. consult a coworker, look it up online, etc.).

■ **What are some technical questions computer scientists should prepare for?**

Refer to the sample interview packet on Blackboard or that Catherine emailed out to her co-op students.

OTHER TOPICS

■ **What is the relationship between co-op students and their employers? What do the employers want from their co-op students?**

PDS SCIE/ENGN.2100 Questions about Interviewing (w/ answers!)

They will teach you most of the technical skills required for the job. Employers are looking for students who are eager to learn, willing to work together with the team, and dependable. If you show up and try your best, you'll do just fine! While on co-op you want to communicate with your manager especially if you need help, are feeling overwhelmed, or don't have enough work to do. They cannot read your minds so you have to speak up so they can assist you (this is true when you are full-time employee too!).

■ **If I want to do a summer co-op do I have to accept a job this semester or can I accept one next semester?**

No! Many companies are searching for summer interns right now, however, many won't post their positions until spring. If you do not have a summer position secured by the end of December you will simply keep searching into next semester. Be sure to periodically check-in with your co-op advisor via email or in-person appointments since you won't be meeting each week in PDS.