

PREP TO IMPRESS

SCHOLARSHIP/AWARD INTERVIEW TIPS

SCHOLARSHIPS & FINANCIAL AID (SFA) UNIT



When you prepare, have this concept in mind:

If I was an interviewer in a scholarship interview, I would...

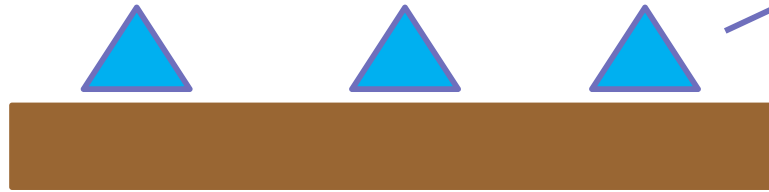




Common formats for interviews

- Three common formats for interviews:
 - One-to-one interviews
 - Panel interviews (more common)
 - Group interviews (more common)
- Length of an interview
 - Usually 10 to 30 minutes
- Language
 - English, Cantonese, sometimes Mandarin

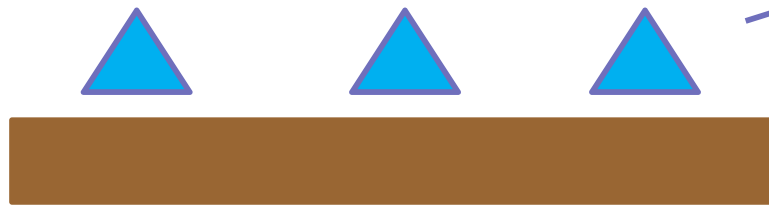
■ Panel interview:



2 to 5 interviewers

1 candidate

■ Group interview: (usually sharing individually; discussion is less often)



2 to 5 interviewers

3 to 5 candidates



■ A general interview structure

□ A warm-up stage

- Simple and friendly questions in order to break the ice

□ An information gathering stage

- Your study programme, extra-curricula activities and services you have done

□ An evaluative stage

- Probing questions may be asked about the candidate's strengths and weaknesses, goals and ambitions, career plans, views on current affairs, how would you use the scholarship if you were chosen, etc.

□ An ending stage

- Questions from candidate, if any
- The interviewer will close the interview



Usual Assessment Areas

Academic achievement

Communication skills

Leadership qualities

Services and contribution to society

Attitude and personality

Common interview questions

- **Self introduction**
- Why did you choose to study your programme?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses? (prepare 3 of each)
- Describe a time when you solved a difficult problem.
- What experience demonstrated your leadership skills?
- Describe a person whom you especially admire / who affects you most.
- What do you do in your spare time?



Some more.....

Common interview questions

- Things related to your study major
- Sharing on service experience
- What is your future career **plan**?
- What is your 5-year or 10-year **plan**?
- **How are you going to work that out?**
- Why should we give you this scholarship?
- What is your view on (a current issue)?
- How would you contribute to Hong Kong?
- **Questions related to your essay**

Prepare yourself before interview

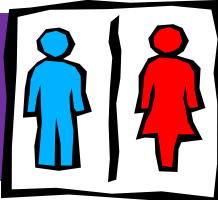
- Read your essay and what you wrote on your application form (so, please **keep a copy** of whatever applications you submit)
- **Self introduction**
- Know your strengths and weaknesses
 - Highlight your strengths
 - Improvements you are working on for weaknesses
- Aspiration / goals
- **Research** the donor and the scholarship
 - Know the organisation / company
 - Know the key players
- **Read through** the information in the interview invitation
 - Know where to go
 - Know what to take to the interview

Some more.....

Prepare yourself before interview

- Keep yourself updated on current affairs
 - Know different opinions on the issues
 - Do **think independently**, give your own views
- Prepare answers for common interview questions
 - English and Cantonese, better with Mandarin as well
- Prepare a one question to ask (**optional**) [**Don't ask if you cannot think of a suitable one.**]
 - Ask suitable & sensible questions
 - Ask no question would be better than asking a wrong one
- Take advantage of any public opportunities
 - E.g. tours, open houses, workshops, etc. organised by the organisation
- Practice an interview before actually going to one
- Videotaping your practice interviews will help

Appearance



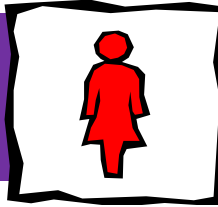
DOS

- ✓ Dress and look professional
 - ✓ Formal wear, leather shoes
- ✓ Follow basic hygiene, be neat and tidy
- ✓ Simple and plain

DON'TS

- ✗ Sports bag
- ✗ Sports shoes, casual slip-ons
- ✗ Bring too many things with you
- ✗ Wear too many accessories
- ✗ Show tattoos (i.e. hide tattoos if you have any)

Appearance



DOS

- ✓ Closed-shoes
- ✓ Trousers or skirt/dress is fine
- ✓ If hair is long or covers your eyes, tie or clip it up
- ✓ High-heeled or not: doesn't matter, as long as you are comfortable in them

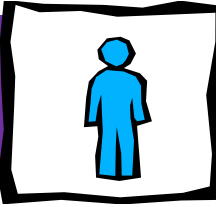


DON'TS

- ✗ Heavy makeup and accessories
- ✗ Fancy party bag/clutch
- ✗ Decorated tights
- ✗ Leggings
- ✗ Mini skirt
- ✗ Cropped pants (短褲/7分褲/吊腳褲)
- ✗ Clothing too tight
- ✗ Painted/gel nails



Appearance



DOS

- ✓ Business bag
- ✓ Shave
- ✓ Tie



DON'TS

- ✗ White socks
- ✗ Floral shirt
- ✗ Bow tie
- ✗ Cropped pants (短褲/7分褲/吊腳褲)



Non-verbal communication

DOS

- ✓ Be Punctual! Arrive 10-15 minutes earlier
- ✓ Knock the door
- ✓ Facial expressions
 - ✓ Look attentive and eager
 - ✓ Put on a pleasant smile
- ✓ Eye contact
 - ✓ Conveys confidence and enthusiasm
 - ✓ Try to even your eye contact on everyone in the room
 - ✓ Blink, be natural
 - ✓ Avoid looking down to your own hands or out the window, which conveys shyness, insecurity, making up stories or memorizing script
 - ✓ If looking straight into a person's eyes makes you uncomfortable, look at his/her nose, cheekbones or eyebrows

Non-verbal communication

DOS

- ✓ Posture
 - ✓ Sit up straight and keep your shoulders square yet relaxed – create an impression of an active and interested listener
- ✓ Gestures
 - ✓ Hand gestures can help to illustrate concepts and display confidence; indicates energy, but be careful to avoid nervous habits such as fidgeting
- ✓ Calm
- ✓ Cheerful
- ✓ Confident
- ✓ Relaxed
- ✓ Firm handshake
- ✓ Mute your mobile phone

Non-verbal communication

DON'TS

- × Eye contact: just stay with one person, let someone on the panel feel ignored
- × Demonstrate passive attitude/lack of interest
- × Show no purpose or goal
- × Bad habits that show your nervousness: e.g. fidget, rock back and forth or sideways in your chair (esp. in office chair), shake your foot, drum your fingers, scratch parts of your body, rub or touch your nose
- × Sit with your arms crossed
- × Slouch
- × Put your mobile phone on the table

Verbal communication

DOS

- ✓ Greet interviewers
 - ✓ Nod your head with a smile, or say a respectful form of address, e.g. Dr. Chan, Mr. Lee, Ms. Mak; say “good morning” / “good afternoon”
- ✓ When you are asked questions in an interview, you should:
 - ✓ Listen carefully and answer naturally
 - ✓ Give short and pertinent answers (but not simple yes/no answer) with an example and explanation
 - ✓ Elaborate when necessary
 - ✓ If you don't quite understand the question, ask for clarification
 - ✓ If you are unsure of the answer, be honest, do give your opinions and let the interviewer(s) know how you would go about finding the answer (this could demonstrate your problem-solving skills)

Verbal communication

DOS

- ✓ Be positive about yourself
- ✓ Be honest
- ✓ Distinguish yourself – why should you be picked but not others?
- ✓ Express opinions appropriately, esp. on sensitive topics, e.g. politics and religion
- ✓ When you don't agree with others, please still be polite and show respect
- ✓ Give mature, sensible and logical answers

Verbal communication

DOS

- ✓ Voice
 - ✓ Speak clearly at a moderate speed
 - ✓ Sound enthusiastic and be loud enough to be heard by everyone in the room
 - ✓ Use stress and pauses to emphasize important points
- ✓ Get involved during discussion
- ✓ Thank interviewer(s)

Verbal communication

DON'TS

- × Start with “Hi, everyone!” / “Morning, everyone!” (This sounds too casual. Simply a “Good morning” / “Good afternoon” is fine)
- × Interrupt (If you do, say sorry immediately and let the person finish his/her line first.)
- × Dominate the conversation/drag too long on a certain topic
- × Be too aggressive
- × Be too outspoken
- × Repeat things already included in your application form or resume
- × Memorize answers (If you do, you will not sound natural.)
- × Use unnecessary words, e.g. like, actually, you know, 啦, 嘅, 即係, 咁 (using these words too often is disturbing)
- × When you share the same views with others, don't repeat what they have already said but elaborate more
- × When you talk about another person, do not speak negatively on him/her

Verbal communication

DON'TS

✗ Don't ask:

- ✗ Info already stated in websites, guidelines or promotions, e.g.
 - ✗ when and how will candidates be informed about the interview result or be paid the scholarships
 - ✗ the criteria of selecting candidates
- ✗ Success rate of interview/scholarship
- ✗ How many candidates have been / will be interviewed
- ✗ Questions too personal to the interviewers, e.g.
 - ✗ things about their family / their own hobbies
 - ✗ what they would do during leisure
 - ✗ what they actually handle at their position
 - ✗ what do you think about my interview performance

Interviewers are not looking for a “correct” answer but a *mature* and *sensible* one, which can tell the *internal qualities*, *attitude* and *values* of a candidate

Personal qualities:

- Honest
- Sincere
- Analytical
- Consistent
- Trustworthy
- Energetic
- Purposeful
- Well-organized
- Well-prepared
- High initiative
- Self-motivated
- Mature
- Independent
- Good team player
- ...