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**Scholarships & Financial Aid Unit  
Office of Student Affairs  
Hong Kong Baptist University**

## **Prep to Impress – Scholarship/Award Interview Tips**

### **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
- 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
- The interviewer may ask you if you have any question at the end of the interview. If you don't have any, simply politely reply "**No, I don't have any question**".
  - Not a must to ask a question
  - Ask no question would be much better than asking a wrong one
  - Ask suitable & sensible questions
  - Never ask questions with no substance like "when will I know the result?", "how many awardees will you select?", etc.
- Take advantage of any public opportunities
  - E.g. tours, open houses, workshops, etc. organised by the organisation / company
- Practice an interview before actually going to one
- Video-recording your interview practices will help

## Appearance (for physical interview)

For both ladies and gentlemen:

DOS ✓

Dress and look professional: Formal wear, leather shoes	Follow basic hygiene, be neat and tidy	Be simple and plain
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DON'TS ✗

Bring sports bag	Bring too many things with you	Show tattoos (i.e. hide tattoos if you have any)
Wear too many accessories	Wear sports shoes or casual slip-ons	Wear cropped pants (短褲/7分褲/吊腳褲)

For ladies:

DOS ✓

Wear 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
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DON'TS ✗

Bring fancy party bag/clutch	Wear heavy makeup or accessories	Wear decorated tights	Wear leggings
Wear mini skirt	Wear clothes that are too tight	Painted/gel nails	

For gentlemen:

DOS ✓

Bring business bag	Shave	Wear tie
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DON'TS ✗

Wear white socks	Wear floral shirt	Wear bow tie
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## 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
  - Convey confidence and enthusiasm

- Try to even your eye contact on everyone in the room
- Blink, be natural
- Avoid looking down to your own hands, looking up or out the window, which conveys shyness, insecurity, making up stories or memorizing script
- If looking straight into a person's eyes makes you feel uncomfortable, look at his/her nose, cheekbones or eyebrows
- Posture: Sit up straight and keep your shoulders square yet relaxed – create an impression of an active and interested listener
- Gestures: Appropriate hand gestures can help illustrate concepts, display confidence and indicates energy, but be careful to avoid nervous habits such as fidgeting
- Be calm, cheerful, confident, relaxed
- Firm handshake
- Mute your mobile phone

#### DON'TS ✖

- Eye contact: don't just stay with one person, don't let anyone on the panel feel ignored
- Don't demonstrate passive attitude/lack of interest
- Don't show no purpose or goal
- Avoid 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
- Don't sit with your arms crossed
- Don't slouch
- Don't put your mobile phone on the table

#### Verbal communication

- 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 with an example and explanation (not simple yes/no answer)
  - 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)
- 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
- 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 the interviewer(s)

#### DON'TS ✖

- Don't start with "Hi, everyone!" / "Morning, everyone!" (This sounds too casual. Simply a "Good morning" / "Good afternoon" is fine)
- Don't interrupt (If you do, say sorry immediately and let the person finish his/her line first.)
- Don't dominate the conversation/drag too long on a certain topic
- Don't be too aggressive
- Don't be too outspoken
- Don't just list out items that are already on your application form or resume
- Don't memorise from an exact script (If you do, you will not sound natural.)
- Don't use unnecessary words too often, 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 have been said but elaborate more
- When you talk about another person, don't speak negatively on him/her
- Don't ask info already stated on 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
- Don't ask the success rate of interview/scholarship
- Don't ask how many candidates have been / will be interviewed
- Don't ask 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.

#### **Some example of personal qualities:**

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