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

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

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): 2 to 5 interviewers vs 1 candidate
  - Group interviews (more common): 2 to 5 interviewers vs 3 to 5 candidates; usually sharing individually; discussion is less often
- Length of an interview
  - Usually 10 to 30 minutes
- Language
  - English, Cantonese, sometimes Mandarin

### **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-curricular 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 and intellectual ability
- Communication skills
- Leadership qualities
- Services and contribution to society
- Civic-mindedness and social awareness
- Attitude and personality

## Common interview questions

- **Self-introduction** (usually in 1 to 2 minutes)
- 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?
- 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 your plan(s) out?**
- Why should we give you this scholarship?
- How will you spend the 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
- 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 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
- Videotaping your practice interviews will help

## Appearance

### 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

#### DON'TS

- Don't bring sports bag
- Don't wear sports shoes or casual slip-ons
- Don't bring too many things with you
- Don't wear too many accessories
- Don't show tattoos (i.e. hide tattoos if you have any)
- Don't 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

#### DON'TS

- Don't wear heavy makeup or accessories
- Don't bring fancy party bag/clutch
- Don't wear decorated tights
- Don't wear leggings
- Don't wear mini skirt
- Don't wear clothes that are too tight
- No painted/gel nails

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For gentlemen:

DOS

- Bring business bag
- Shave
- Wear tie

DON'TS

- Don't wear white socks
- Don't wear floral shirt
- Don't wear bow tie

**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
- 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

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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 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 memorize from an exact script (If you do, you will not sound natural.)

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- 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 they have already 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