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**Preparing for a non-academic job interview**

Guidelines for PhD students on preparing for job interviews outside of academia.

Good preparation is the key to ensure you perform to the best of your ability. Addressing the following questions will be an excellent starting point:

* Why do you want the job?
* Can you do the job?
* What selection methods will be used?

**Why do you want the job?**

A non-academic employer will be interested in your motivation in applying to them. Many employers assume a PhD is training for an academic career and may question your motivation for applying for the job.

Research the job and employer thoroughly so you can show your enthusiasm for the job and convince them that this is a positive choice for you. In addition, you should be able to show that you have thought about and understand the potential differences between an academic environment and the industry sector you are applying to as this is sometimes a concern for employers.

Your research should include reading the job description and employer information carefully, exploring the employer website, and finding out more about both the company and industry sector by looking at relevant media reports or sectoral information. The Occupations section of this site and TargetJobs provide good resources for this.

* [Occupations section of Careers Service website](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers/explore/occupations)
* [TargetJobs](https://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors)

**Can you do the job?**

There can often be a perception amongst employers outside higher education that PhDs are too specialised. Think about how your PhD has prepared you to do the job for which you are applying. What skills and expertise have you developed that will be of use?

If the job is unrelated to the subject of your PhD you should think about the approach you took towards your research and the skills that enabled you to successfully complete a PhD.

*In an academic interview one might say, “The rhetorician Kenneth Burke talked about using identification to connect with people and that’s what I do. I create enthymemes to involve my audience and create a didactic.” A preferable statement in a non-academic interview would be: “I’m very skilled at adapting my message to the person in front of me. For example, I know how to explain my dissertation to people who have a lot of knowledge about my topic and to those who know nothing about it in a way that’s understandable to them.”*

*Christine Kelly*

*Inside Higher Ed*

You will find the ‘Identifying your skills’ page in the ‘Making career decisions’ section of this site a useful resource when considering what you have to offer.

* [Identifying your skills](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers/postgrad/phd/making-career-decisions/identifying-your-skills)

**What selection methods will be used?**

In addition to individual interviews a range of different selection methods may be used. These can include:

* **Aptitude tests** – e.g. assessing your ability in verbal or numerical reasoning.
* **Group exercises** - where assessors look at how you interact with others, your communication skills, and other required skills.
* **Presentations** - you may be asked to prepare a presentation on a specific topic in advance, or be asked present on the day as part of another exercise.
* **In-tray exercises** - to simulate the work environment, assessing your skill in organising, planning and prioritising your work.

When inviting you for interview most employers will outline what you can expect during the course of the interview or assessment centre. If you are unsure then contact the employer before your interview to check.

You can find out more about different selection methods and how to prepare for these on the main part of the Careers Service website.

* [Types of interview](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers/using-careers-service/cvs-apps-interviews/interviews/types)
* [Other Types of selection exercises](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers/using-careers-service/cvs-apps-interviews/assess/types-exercise/overview)
* [Interviews – overview](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers/using-careers-service/cvs-apps-interviews/interviews/overview)
* [Assessment centres - overview](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers/using-careers-service/cvs-apps-interviews/assess/overview)