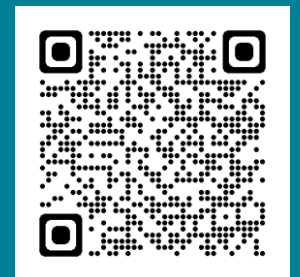




# Interviews



**Natasha Marron**  
Careers Adviser  
[careers@mu.ie](mailto:careers@mu.ie)





# Do you know...

Companies are looking to hire not to reject

- When called for interview employers want to offer you the job
- They are looking for the best person for their company....
- ...it is up to you to show them – That's you!
- Two way process - not an interrogation!



# What you need to know

- The Basics:
  - Research: Company, Position, You
  - Appearance | Body Language
  - Setting
- Questions
  - Traditional
  - Strengths Based
  - Competency Based Questions
- Resources




# Company research...Why? | Where?

You need to know

- Who they are, what they do, are they a good match for you?
- so you can answer when they ask “what do know about us?”

- Company Website
- Google
- Social Channels
- Company may send you information
- Other sources of information
  - Trade/Business websites and journals



# Research the Job – what are they looking for?

- Carefully read the Job Description
  - Qualifications
  - Experience
  - Abilities/Technical Skills
  - Personal Skills – transferable skills



# Know yourself...

## Why?

- Interests and Motivations
  - Is this the job for you?
- Skills and Abilities
  - Can you do this job?.... YES!
  - How will you convince others of this?
- What will you say when they ask...?
  - “Why should we employ you?”
  - “What will you bring to this company?”





# Know yourself...

## How?

- Divide your experience into categories
  - work through your CV and application form
  - Course (see module descriptions)
  - Part-time work
  - Extra-curricular
- Make a list of your skills
  - List one example (or more) of how you use this skill



# Prepare to sell yourself

## ...How?

- Compile a list of all the most important points you would like to make
- Use the job description and match to your skills and experience .... convince the interviewer that you are the best person for the job
- Know your Strengths and Weaknesses.

- Work through the likely questions.
- Prepare your answers.
- Practice your answers out loud – the more you do this the more polished your answers will become.





Browse by letter

Power statements...your skills

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)



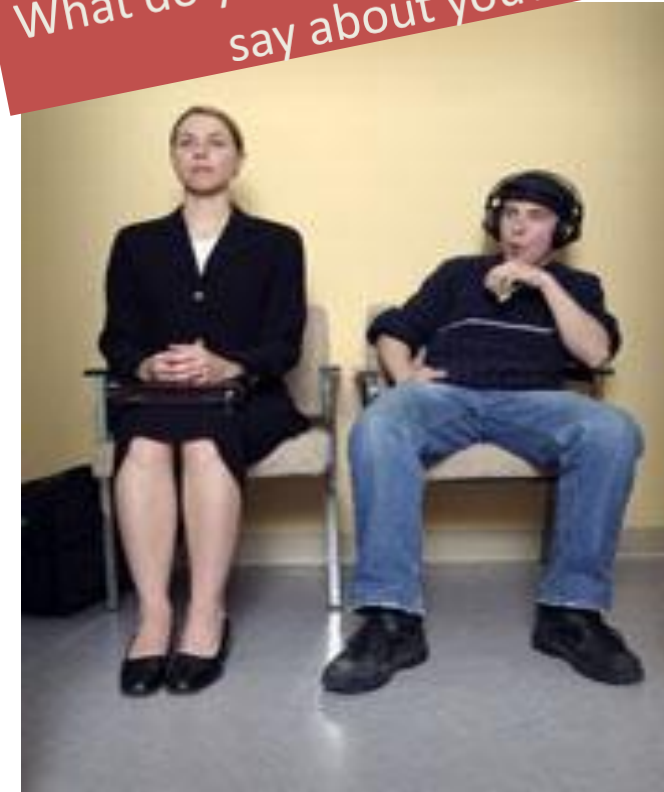
A

- Academic librarian
- Academic researcher
- Accommodation manager
- Accounting technician
- Acoustic consultant
- Actor
- Actuarial analyst
- Actuary
- Acupuncturist
- Adult guidance worker
- Adult nurse
- Advertising account executive
- Advertising account planner

# Professional Appearance

- Only one chance to make a first impression
- Style consistent with the type of position
  - Convey professionalism and competence
  - Co-ordinate your clothes
    - Suit, jacket/trousers/skirt, plain shoes
    - Accessories: keep to a minimum –  
keep focus on you and your message


What do you want your clothes to say about you?



# Dress and Appearance

- Conservative – convey professionalism
- Has to fit!!!
- Dark colours lend you more authority than light/pale ones






The Interview Begins... the moment you are at risk of meeting anyone from the company or institution

### In Person Interview

- Be early (10-15 minutes )
- Check travel arrangements
- Exact location – do a “dry run” at a similar time of day
- Have details of invitation with you – directions/phone number etc.
- Let reception know you have arrived
- Freshen up - check the mirror
- Mobile Phone – silent is not enough! Switch off so no distraction or vibrate noises



## The Interview Begins... the moment you are at risk of meeting anyone from the company or institution

### Online Interview


- Be early (10-15 minutes )
- Check login arrangements
- Be polite and professional in all pre-interview email/phone correspondence with organisation
- Mobile Phone – if not using for the call, have on silent and out of sight so it isn't a distraction



# The Interview Begins: In Person

- Be prepared to shake hands firmly!
  - A weak handshake creates a negative impression
- Wait to be asked to be seated
- Smile!
- General Chat...Warm up/Settle down question.
  - How was the journey?
  - Do not give a blow by blow account






# Body Language: are you “saying” what you mean?

- Do not perch on the edge of your seat.
- Sit well back but lean slightly forward.
- Do not fidget, play with hair, jewellery, tie etc.
- OK to use some hand gestures
- Use eye contact as is comfortable for you



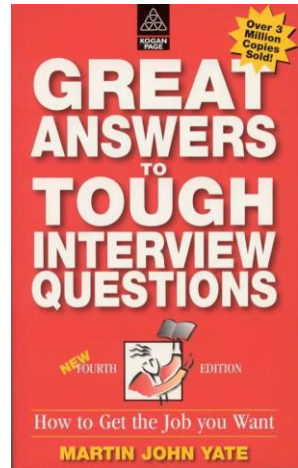
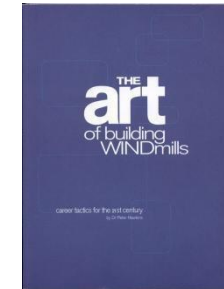


# Body Language: What is your body language saying..?

- Take your cues from them
- Be wary of injecting humour but OK to laugh as long as you are sharing a joke
- Voice – practise your answers out loud before the interview
- Pause to gather thoughts
- Speak clearly
- Volunteer information
- Do not waffle
- Ask for clarification of question

# “The Toughest Questions you’ll ever be asked”

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you apply for the job?
- Tell me what you do in your spare time/to relax?
- When have you been involved in teams?
- What are your main strengths and weaknesses?
- Why should we employ you?
- What has been your biggest achievement? What have you learned from your past work experiences?
- When did you last work under pressure or deal with conflict - how did you cope? What is the biggest problem/dilemma you have ever faced?
- What other career opportunities are you looking at?
- Where would you like to be in five or ten years time?
- When have you had to.....?
- What would you do in .....situation?
- Sell me this product.
- What salary do you expect?
- How competent are you at....?
- You haven’t been much of a success so far, have you?
- Do you have any questions?





# Interview Questions


“Tell me about yourself.”

- Employers are looking for a quick snapshot of you and how well you sell yourself and your capabilities.
- Don't ramble on - but make sure you get the main points in – Be Prepared!



# Tell me about yourself!

- Be concise and to the point (3 or 4 sentences)
- Give the information most relevant to the job
- Education
- Relevant Experience
- Skills
- Career goal



# Interview Questions- General

“Why did you apply for the job?” (You need to be familiar with the company and the job description!)

- This looks at your levels of motivation and commitment.
- Outline what you can offer them, and then what they can provide for you.
- Be positive - say why you want this job - not why you are leaving your present one.



# Strength Based Interview

- Series of quick -fire questions to test how you see your strengths
- Testing
  - Who you are
  - What makes you tick
  - How you like to work
  - Will you fit in
- Be strategic
- Be honest
- Be succinct
- Be enthusiastic
- What do you do well?
- What energises you?
- When are you at your best?
- How can you capitalise on your strengths more?
- Are you a big picture person?
- Are you a starter or a finisher?
- What would your friends say about you?



# Competency Based Interviews

“Tell me about a time when you showed....”

- Teamwork /Relationship Building
- Initiative
- Communication Skills
- Customer Focus
- Excellence under Pressure
- Organisation /Planning
- Leadership
- Flexibility
- Problem-solving





# Types of competencies likely to be assessed

- Individual competencies:
  - your personal attributes: flexibility, decisiveness, tenacity, independence, risk taking, personal integrity
- Analytical competencies:
  - the elements of decision making: innovation, analytical skills, numerical problem solving, problem solving, practical learning, detail consciousness
- Interpersonal competencies
  - dealing with other people: communication, impact, persuasiveness, personal awareness, teamwork, openness
- Motivational competencies
  - the things that drive you: resilience, energy, motivation, achievement orientation, initiative, focus on quality
- Managerial competencies:
  - taking charge of other people: leadership, empowerment, strategic planning, corporate sensitivity, project management, management control



# Behavioural Questioning

- Organisation Skills
  - Ability to Plan Tell me about a time when you had to plan an event? What steps did you take? What were the results?
  - Ability to Set Priorities Could you tell me about a time when you were really busy with study or work or other commitments? How did you handle it? What did you do?
  - Ability to Delegate Have you ever been in a position when you were organising/managing something and had others helping you? How did you distribute tasks? What happened?
- Interpersonal Skills
  - Client Relations Tell me about any people-oriented or customer-service roles you've held? How did you feel in the role? How did they respond?
  - Being a Team Player Were you ever involved with a group of people and a problem arose? What caused the problem? How did you approach it? How was it solved?
  - Ability To Deal With People at All Levels Tell me about a time when you've worked closely with someone at a higher or lower level to you? Describe the situation? What was the outcome?



# Behavioural Questioning

- Technical Skills
  - Problem Solving What was the most difficult work or school problem you ever faced? Describe it. How did you address the problem? What were the results?
  - Ability to Apply Knowledge Tell me about a time when you had to apply some newly acquired knowledge or skill? What was the knowledge or skill? What was the outcome?
  - Knowing Limitations Describe a situation when you had to turn to someone else for help. To whom did you turn? What happened?
- Growing With The Job
  - Taking Initiative/Leadership Tell me about a time when you had to step out from the crowd and take the lead in doing something different? What did you do? What was the result?
  - Ability to Learn on the Job Can you describe a time when you had to assimilate a lot of new knowledge and apply it. What was the situation? How did you apply the knowledge?



# Behavioural Questioning

- Communication Skills
  - Ability to Communicate Tell me about a time when someone misunderstood something you said? How did you make yourself clear? What was the outcome?
  - Ability to Listen Can you tell me about a time when a friend sought you out as a confidante? What skills did you utilise in this role? How could you apply these skills in the workplace?
- Commitment
  - Work Commitment Describe a situation where you kept persevering with a task even though every one else had given up? Why did you keep going? What was the result?
  - Service Commitment Have you ever done any work in a customer oriented or community service organisation? What did you do? What was the outcome?



# Preparing for Competency Based Interviews

Answer with a STAR

- **S**ituation / **T**ask- Set the Scene...
  - describe a situation where you used the relevant skill
- **A**ction - Tell the story...
  - describe the action you took. Give plenty of detail.  
Use “I” instead of “We”.
- **R**esults – In the end...
  - Outline the results or outcomes



# Preparing for Competency Based Interviews

- Review the job description carefully
- Identify the skills/traits likely to be assessed.
- Match to your experiences.
- Competency-focused, well-structured answers are extremely powerful and will impress the interviewer



# Your Questions?

- The Organisation
  - expansion plans, new services or innovations, products
- The Work and training
  - formal training programme, duration, reporting structure
- Location | Remote working?
  - travel/mobility required?
- Related to topics raised during the interview
  - demonstrates you were listening
- Chance to tell what has not been questioned





# During the Interview

## ...Remember

- Keep answers balanced: not too long, not too short – take your cues from the interviewer
- Remember - Provide lots of examples of experience and skills match
- Speak of weakness in the past tense and explain how you overcame it
- If negative issues arise, be positive and focus on what you learnt



# I don't know!!

- If you are asked a question to which you do not know the answer, you have two choices:
  - a) Say you don't know
  - b) Prove you don't know
- Waffle is not convincing!!



# Telephone Interviews...

- Can be used as first stage of selection process
  - A quick screening tool for employers
  - Once you've applied – be prepared for a call
  - Avoid clueless response
  - Professional Voicemail ...and online/social media presence
- This is a Real Interview
  - Be Focussed – no distractions
  - Practice your answers out loud
  - Stand up – you will feel more confident
  - Smile – they will hear it!
  - Desk – have CV,application form in front of you
  - Phone AND Charger
  - Good signal



# Teams | Zoom Interviews

- Simulate a business environment
- Desk or suitable surface to keep device steady
- Lighting – don't sit with light behind you.
- Background – have a professional setting - tidy area or use a background.
- Device charged and plugged in
- Good signal – check wifi and sound – ensure that you can be heard
- Remember to look at the webcam rather than the screen – Eye Contact!

Have your research ready...

- What competencies they want
- What strengths and skills you have
- Questions you want to ask




# Video Interviews

- This is a Real Interview
  - It is not Skype or Teams and not a telephone interview
  - Employers frequently use this to allow them to review large numbers of applicants
  - The interview takes place online (mobile device/laptop)
- You access the interview by clicking a link sent by the employer
  - The employer will provide detailed instructions on how to access the platform and the structure of the interview
  - Ensure you are familiar with what to expect



# Video Interviews

- Questions can be asked by a person in a pre-recorded video, by a bot or will appear as text on the screen
- You will be given a set amount of reading/thinking time (e.g. 30 seconds) and then a set amount of time to answer the question (e.g. 2 minutes)
- Opportunities to re-record your answer are not normally offered



# Video Interviews – Technical Set Up


- Check that your device supports the technology being used
- Ensure your device is charged (or ideally plugged in)
- Assess how you look on screen
  - No distractions in the background
  - Lighting – don't sit with your back to a window/light source
  - Ideally have the device at eye level, this facilitates eye contact
- Place the device on a secure surface – holding your mobile in your hand, while nervous will result in a “shaky” interview





# Video Interviews - Prepare

- Preparation is similar to a face to face interview with a few key extras
- Practise – set up a call on Skype or Teams and record yourself answering typical interview questions
- Dress code – professional, dress as you would for a face to face interview
- Maintain eye contact and be aware of your posture and body language
- Speak clearly, take time to breathe, pause to gather your thoughts if you need to



# Video Interviews – More Information

- <https://gradireland.com/careers-advice/interviews-and-tests/video-interviews-put-your-best-face-forward>
- <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/video-interview-tips>
- <https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/interview-types/323749-expert-performance-tips-for-skype-and-video-interviews>
- <https://www.wearehilt.com/tag/video-interviews/>



# After the Interview

- How did I do? ...
- Self-Assessment
- Examine how you felt it went
- Make notes / tips for yourself for next time
- When you know the result...Get Feedback
- What you did well
- What needs work
- Learn from it ... “What can I do better next time?”



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**never too early to start!**



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WEBSITE

[www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers](http://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers)



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- Jobs And Experience
- Postgraduate Study
- Key Information And Resources
- Talk With Us

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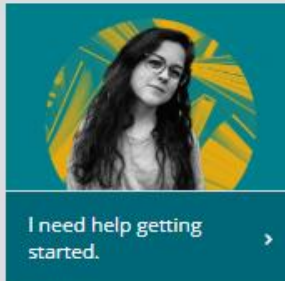
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I need help getting started.



I have some ideas of my next step



I have a clear idea of my next step



Upskill Programmes



Academic Placement



Jobs And Experience



Postgraduate Study



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We're available to help with any of your questions.  
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Using Careers Connect | Placement Connect - Current Students

Using Careers Connect - Alumni

Appointment Terms & Conditions

# Careers and Employability Service

## Appointments

[Home](#) / [Book](#) / [Appointments](#)

Current MU Students – We offer both In-Person and MS Teams appointments – Please select an appointment time below and click book.

### MS Teams Appointments –

MU Current Students, \*\* Link to join the Teams Meeting will be in your Booking Confirmation email.

### In-Person Appointments –

Your Appointment venue will be visible when booking and will also be listed in your Booking Confirmation email.

If you require a meeting to discuss Job Interview Preparation, please send us an [Interview Preparation Meeting request](#) by clicking "Queries" above.

Alumni users cannot book directly – please submit a Meeting request Query, indicating when you are available and we will book you in for an appointment

Additional appointments are added frequently so please check back to view latest availability.



### MS Teams: One to One Careers Meeting

Meet with a careers adviser to discuss any of your career quest... [Find out more](#)

[View appointments](#) ▾



### In-Person: One to One Careers Meeting

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Book a meeting with  
our careers advisers

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Careers Connect



Resourc...

## Resources



Resources provided by the Careers and Employability Service | Maynooth University to support you in your career journey.

### CV



**CareerSet CV  
Review Platform**  
CareerSet



**Sample CVs**  
View our Sample CVs



### Guidance



**Careers  
Information |  
Resources**  
Info Sheets, Careers  
Presentations ...



**Careers | Aptitude |  
Interest Tests**  
Careers Interest &  
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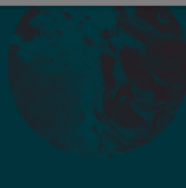
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**Forage Virtual  
Work Experience  
Program**  
Bitesize 5-6 hour  
virtual work  
experience programs



**ShortListMe Video  
Interview Platform**  
ShortListMe



## Careers Connect

Search

Book

Skills

My Career Passport

Career Discovery



Queries



Events



Appointm...



Jobs



Upskill Pro...



Forms



Pathways

### Careers and Employability Service



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Search events



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### Saved Jobs

You don't have any saved Jobs yet, have a look at our search pages to see what's available.

Search all Jobs



Search UpSkill Programmes



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Consultant (Belfast or Derry) -  
Summer/Autumn 2024 Start

Kainos

Northern Ireland, Belfast, Derry

Closing date: 20-Dec-2023

kainos®



Graduate Test/QA Engineer (Derry/  
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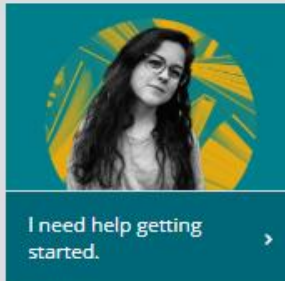
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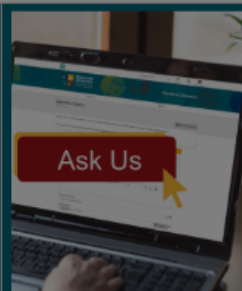
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Careers | Aptitude |  
Interest Tests  
Careers Interest &  
Aptitude tests



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Forage Virtual  
Work Experience  
Program  
Bitesize 5-6 hour  
virtual work  
experience programs



ShortListMe Video  
Interview Platform  
ShortListMe

