There is no fixed procedure for interviewing for postgraduate courses and interviews are not held for all courses. Interviews, when held, can vary considerably in length, structure, number of interviewers etc. depending on the institution and also on the department within the institution. Telephone interviews for some Masters courses may be held – particularly for international students. All candidates for PhD courses will usually be interviewed. An interview gives you a chance to see the department, meet potential tutors or supervisors and possibly current students. Occasionally, especially in the Humanities and Social Sciences you may get a group interview – try to make sure you speak up and make some contributions, while taking care not to dominate.

**Who will interview me?**
For most taught programmes, you can expect to find the Programme Manager or Head of Department and/or a member of academic staff on the panel. For research programmes, the Research Supervisor will sit in on the interview. Remember that academics may not be trained interviewers, so you may occasionally have to take the initiative.

**What should I wear?**
Interviews for vocational courses are likely to be more formal than interviews for research and you will probably be expected to dress in exactly the same way as for a job interview.

**What should I expect at an interview?**
Demonstrate a strong interest in the programme to which you are applying and outline why you are a strong applicant. There are many similarities to job interviews, such as the need to prepare well, to show enthusiasm and to ask appropriate questions.

**What are they looking for in an interview?**
Interviewers will be looking at several issues when they ask you for interview. They will want to find out about you as an individual. In essence, they want to find out:
- Can you do the course? (your knowledge, skills, experience).
- Will you do the course? (your motivations, commitment, goals) and
- Will you will you fit in? (personality, characteristics). Are you a good team member?
- Capacity for independent and original thought, your ability to communicate.

They will also be looking for evidence of your enthusiasm in your subject. Make sure you keep up to date with recent developments, etc. Be prepared to discuss and to state your opinions rather than giving the answer that you think they want.

Your reasons for study: This will help give them an idea of your motivation and your commitment to the course. Think through your reasons for wanting to do further study before you go to an interview. For example, do you want to?
- Develop specialist expertise in some aspect of your first degree subject?
- Have a complete change of career direction into a new, possibly vocational, subject area?
- Develop some new skills and enhance your employment prospects?
- Enter a profession, e.g. teaching, social work, for which a postgraduate course is essential?
Your potential for academic/practical work (where applicable) in order to assess how well you will cope with the requirements of the course/research. Before the interview, think about the kind of skills that will be relevant to undertake further study. You may want to include examples of your

- Research skills
- Written and verbal communication skills
- IT skills
- Commitment and perseverance
- Ability to use your initiative and work on your own without supervision
- Problem solving skills
- Analytical skills
- Practical skills (where applicable)
- Work experience (where applicable).

The interviewer will also be interested in your future career plans and will want to know that you have understood the relevance of your course to your longer-term career plans and that you understand and can fit into the department.

**How can I prepare for the interview?**

Read the draft of your application and personal statement or CV again. The interviewer(s) will pick out points from your application form/CV for further discussion and clarification. This will help you to anticipate questions they may ask you, and work out answers to commonly asked questions (see below).

Check out the research interests of academic staff in the department (on the departmental website) Be familiar with your research topic/proposal (PhD students). Also, prepare any questions you have yourself about the course and note any questions you want to ask.

- Be prepared, be enthusiastic, and be honest and genuine. Smile, make good eye-contact, and arrive early.
- Avoid simple 'yes' or 'no' answers: if you are asked a closed question, such as 'Have you enjoyed your course?' open it up.
- Talk to people who have done a similar interview in the past and ask them about their experience

**Typical Interview questions**

**Why do you want to study this subject/course/research programme?**
Show your enthusiasm and passion for the subject. Refer to relevant modules from your undergraduate study, projects or a dissertation that have led you to wish to develop this interest further. If you have a career aim, show how the course will help you achieve this. Explain the unique contribution your research will make to a university as well as how it will fit with existing research (if appropriate).

**Why this university/college?**
Demonstrate that you are familiar with the research strengths of the department and how it is regarded in the academic community. It may be the structure of the course, flexible study options, methods of assessment or the state of the art facilities that attract you. If you already study at this university, present this as a positive feature.

**What skills can you bring?**
Interviewers are interested both in academic and personal skills. On the academic side, show the taught skills you have, such as analysis, IT and research skills. On the personal side, demonstrate that you have transferable skills, such as communication and presentation skills, time management and ability to work in a team. Do not just list skills; explain where you gained them (from work experience or undergraduate projects).
What do you intend to do on completing this course?
Even if you don’t have a clear career aim at this stage, some sense of direction will signal that you have a reason for completing the course and may be more committed to it and doing well in your studies.

How do you intend to fund your study?
Ensure you have prepared well for this question. Check out any possible sources of funding, including from the university, well ahead of time to see if you would be eligible. Be prepared to show how you would fund a course personally, if you were not successful in grant applications. Perhaps you will work and study part-time or use a career development loan.

Which part of your degree course did you enjoy the most?
Show enthusiasm for study/research. Mention parts of your current course that link to what you are applying for or that you excelled in - show that you also do your own personal reading around the subject. You might be asked a philosophical or thought-provoking question or, for more vocational courses, how you would handle tricky situations or moral dilemmas.

What do you feel are the main differences between undergraduate and postgraduate study?
This is your chance to show that you have the skills and qualities needed for independent research and study. Demonstrate that you understand that postgraduate study involves taking a more proactive attitude to study, including independent reading, critical thinking, time management, problem solving, tenacity and self-discipline.

Why should we accept you?
This is a gift question. It gives you the chance to use a prepared answer. State your strengths, skills and relevant experiences putting them in the order that creates the best impression.

Questions for you to ask
Try to ask at least one question in the interview as this will indicate interest and enthusiasm. Make sure you research the website and the prospectus to ensure the information is not already available there. Questions might include:
- What are the tutorial/supervisory arrangements?
- What are the sources of financial support? What is the likelihood of financial support?
- Are there any awards or grants available?
- Who has sponsored previous students?
- What are the destinations/employment prospects of previous students?

Further Information
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers/postgraduate-study
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers/interviews
https://gradireland.com/further-study
https://www.prospects.ac.uk/