



## Sample Interview Questions

### Office for Alumni Affairs & Career Advancement

Additional resource – you can practice responding to interview questions in a webcam recorded interview via **Interview Stream**, accessible under the “Welcome” message on [www.hsph.harvard.edu/career-services/](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/career-services/)

#### General Questions

*Note: When responding to each question, build a subtle case for your ability to: solve problems, get along well with diverse individuals, be successful, and enjoy your work.*

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you decide to go into the \_\_\_\_\_ field?
- Why are you interested in this position?
- Why are you interested in this organization?
- What can you contribute to our organization?
- What are your greatest strengths?
- What are some of your weaknesses?
- What will be your greatest challenge in this position?
- What do you know about our organization?
- What did you enjoy most/least about your last position?
- What is your ultimate career goal?
- What other positions are you applying for?
- What do you enjoy doing in your free time?
- What are your salary expectations? (Answer this question by inquiring about the anticipated salary range; do some homework so that if you are pressed, you have a reasonable salary range that is consistent with the market.)
- Tell me about an accomplishment of which you are particularly proud.
- How would your past supervisor describe you?
- What skills do you have from your Harvard Chan education that you can bring to this position?
- Tell me about any item on your resume/CV.
- How do you prefer to be supervised?

#### Behavior-Based or Situational Questions

These questions are asked to get a sense of how you would react in specific scenario similar to one that you might face when you are on the job.

*Note: Prepare about five or six stories that you can use during interviews that highlight prior successes. Use the STAR method to prepare: describe the Situation, describe the Task or Action you took, and end with the Results (which are always positive).*

- Describe a time when you and your professor/advisor/supervisor/co-worker had a difference of opinion and how you handled the situation.
- Describe the organizational system that you use to juggle multiple work responsibilities at one time.
- Describe a time when you were involved in a project or research that was not going well and tell me how you handled it and the outcome.
- Describe a time when you were put in a questionable ethical position and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a time when someone was critical of your work and how you responded.
- Give me an example of a time when you failed to meet a deadline and tell me why.
- Describe a time when you were working with a team and tell me about your role in the group.
- Tell me about a time when you were working in a team environment and one of your team colleagues was not producing as expected. How did you handle the situation?
- Describe a particular problem that you encountered at work and how you went about solving it.



## Case Questions

(A must read is *Marc Consentino's, Case In Point*)

**Note:** *listen carefully, show that you can think on your feet, have excellent problem-solving skills, and can speak in a quiet, engaging, and persuasive manner.*

Take notes when asked a case question and summarize the question prior to beginning your response. If necessary, ask questions to gain additional information. While you will need to process the solution to the question out loud, you will want to filter what you say. The following will give you an idea of the types of questions asked. **There is no way to anticipate questions**, you can only practice and prepare a methodology to respond to the case question.

- What is the anticipated growth of cell phone usage in the world during the next five years?
- How much ice cream is consumed in the United States annually?
- How many individuals who are under 40 years old participate in online social networking communities in the United States?
- Do you think the iPhone will live up to its anticipated success and why?
- Choose three mall stores that you think have a strong future and tell me why?
- If you were the CEO of Dunkin Donuts, what would you do to improve the company's economic future?

## Questions for Teaching Positions

- What are your research interests?
- Why did you focus on this area of research?
- Describe your current research? Are you planning any future changes in this research?
- Why are you interested in teaching?
- What will your next research project be?
- Why do you want to teach here?
- How will you engage the students in your classes?
- Describe a course you taught and how you evaluated your teaching and students' learning.
- How would you teach \_\_\_\_\_ and which texts might you require?
- Describe your philosophy of teaching.
- Give me an example of a time you were working with a student who was not performing adequately and how you handled the situation.

## Willingness to Participate in the Department

- Can you tell us how you will be able to add value to our department?
- Which faculty committees are of greatest interest to you and how will you contribute to that committee?
- What institutional issues are of particular interest to you?
- How would you see yourself contributing to the mission of the college and to the campus atmosphere?

## Career and Personal Choices

- Can you convince me that you are interested in and can thrive in a small college town like ours?
- Where else are you interviewing?
- What are some of the non discipline-specific books that you are reading?
- How would you describe the ideal working environment?
- Can you describe the type of institution that will best suit your personal and professional needs?

## Questions You Can Ask During Interviews

*Note: Never ask questions that reference time off, salary, or benefits during a first interview.*

- Can you describe the primary responsibilities of this position?
- To whom does this position report?
- What is the largest challenge facing the department right now?
- Are there any future challenges that you anticipate?
- Why is this position open at this time?
- What do you want the person you hire to accomplish in the first year?
- How would you describe the work culture?
- Are there any anticipated major new developments or changes that will impact this position?
- What is your hiring timeframe for this position?
- Has there been much turnover in this department and if so, why do you think that is?
- Can you describe the student body/patient community/clients?

