Common Questions Asked by Employers

While you can never know for sure what interviewers will ask you, it is always helpful to think about your answers to some of the most common questions. Once you’ve put some thought into how you would answer a particular question, write down some of the key elements of your answer, and then practice answering the question aloud with friends, family, or a Career Counselor.

During the interview, listen carefully to what the interviewer is asking. If the question is unclear, ask for clarification. While it's important to keep your answers focused and on-topic, you also want some of your personality and passion for the job to shine through. The more prepared you are, the easier this will be.

Sample interview questions are provided below; to practice your answers to these (and other) questions, contact the Career Services & Cooperative Education Center to schedule a practice interview or check out InterviewStream, accessible from the Career & Co-op Center website.

Personal

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?
- Why did you choose to interview with our organization?
- What do you know about our organization (products or services)?
- Describe your ideal job.
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
- What is one weakness that you have?
- What is your definition of success?
- Tell me about a time when you failed at something; what did you learn?*
- What is one accomplishment that you are most proud of?
- Who has been a role model for you, and why?
- How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?
- What motivates you most in a job?
- Tell me about a time when you worked on a team where there were disagreements about how to meet goals and objectives.*
- Describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult customer.*
- Describe a time when you needed to work on several assignments or tasks simultaneously.*

(over)
Education

- Why did you choose your major?
- Why did you choose to attend your college or university?
- In which campus activities did you participate?
- Which classes did you like best? Least?
- If you were to start over, what would you change about your education?
- Were you financially responsible for any portion of your college education?
- Do you plan to return to school for further education?

Experience

- What job-related skills have you developed?
- Did you work while going to school? If so, in what positions?
- What have you learned from your work experiences?
- Have you ever done any volunteer work? What kind?
- What did you enjoy most (and least) about your last job?
- Have you ever quit a job? Why?
- Give an example in which you provided a solution to an employer.*
- Give an example of a time in which you worked under deadline pressure.*
- How do you think a former supervisor would describe you?

Career Goals

- Describe your ideal supervisor.
- Describe the type of organization you’d like to work for.
- Would you be able and willing to work overtime/flex-time if necessary?
- Would you be able and willing to travel for this job?
- Would you be able and willing to relocate if necessary?

* These are “behavioral” questions. See the Career & Co-op Center's handout on Behavioral Interviewing for tips on successfully preparing to answer these types of questions.