

Graduate School Interviews

The majority of schools use what is described as a structured interview, that is, they have identified important areas around which they will attempt to gather information from you. Use the following as a reference guide to think about these areas in relation to yourself. Try to assess ways in which questions may be posed to you to cover these areas.

1. Support Persons: Who does the candidate turn to in times of need to obtain help or advice? A student who is unable to seek help may be more at risk for not completing the graduate school program.
2. Work Exposure: What does the candidate know about this/her chosen career? Is the student's knowledge base coming from family, friends, personal experience or reading? How realistic is the understanding? What is the level of awareness of the changes in graduate work today? What other professions have been ruled out in coming to this choice?
3. Motivation: How has the student tested out his/her interest in graduate work? What level of responsibility has the student assumed for others? Can a student describe the values that he or she possesses that will sustain motivation in difficult times? Who are the role models that have been most significant in influencing career choice of graduate work? Is there anything that would cause a student to lose interest in graduate work if it changed dramatically?
4. Personal Qualities: Appearance, poise, confidence, ability to communicate, sense of humor and proper use of the English language will all be assessed by the interviewer. Interviewers will pay particular attention to emotional stability including making an attempt to discern unresolved personal problems. They will seek to gain a better understanding of family dynamics for each student, and what relationships are like with parents and siblings. Interviewers will want to know if the student is emancipated from his/her family, level of maturity achieved, and the degree of development of empathy skills. They will seek to understand the student's operating style, and whether tolerance for diversity has been manifested through life experiences and whether the student is sufficiently flexible to manage substantial changes that lie ahead.
5. Social Awareness: How informed is the candidate about local and national issues? Has the student taken a stance on any area of social concern? What is the level of awareness of some of the important ethical issues facing us today? Has the student ever acted upon his or her political or social conscience?

6. Caring, Compassion and Conscientiousness: If you wanted to convince someone that you are conscientious, how would you go about it? Caring and compassion should be daily events that are exhibited toward others. Are you willing to take a risk that might benefit a colleague or friend? What are your feelings about your abilities to be compassionate, yet remain sufficiently objective, thus not incapacitating yourself by becoming overly involved?

Questions will most often be presented in an open-ended, abstract manner; that is, few that can be answered by yes/no response. When the question is asked, if you don't understand it, seek clarification, interviewers will be assessing whether your thinking style is more abstract or concrete in nature. Other areas that interviewers will assess include:

1. your ability to understand the questions being posed.
2. your depth of knowledge in providing the response
3. whether you can synthesize from one experience to the next

4. what you learned about yourself from various experiences/events
5. what kind of reality testing has been done and evidences of maturity and professional judgement.
6. what areas of your personality are you working on, i.e. what you considered weaknesses.

Internal consistency is important in your responses. If there are negative comments made about yourself, they will likely follow up with questions of why you feel the way you do, and attempt to determine whether any of these disparaging comments might interfere with success.

Deciding Among Offers

Rexamine the criteria you originally established when you were first applying to your chosen school, and reflect on the following questions:

1. Which offer most closely matches your academic and career goals?
2. Which offer provides the best financial support?
3. Are you willing to live in the community where the school is located for the length of time required? Will your social and lifestyle preferences be met?
4. Does the program fit your learning style and particular strengths?
5. What does your “gut” tell you? (Both logic and emotion play differing roles for applicants. Your decision should be based on what is right for you.)

Next, notify all other programs you’ve applied to that you’ve accepted somewhere else.

Follow instructions about deposits that you are obligated to make before you enroll in a program(if there are any). This increases your credibility and commitment to their program. Utilize campus housing services for room rental possibilities. Explore additional employment options within the Graduate Division, College and/or campus as needed. Consider local area opportunities as well by seeking advice through the appropriate career resource services center or local area Chamber of Commerce.

Making the Transition to Grad School

<http://gradschool.about.com/cs/survival/>

