



SCHOLARSHIP INTERVIEWS

How to prepare for an interview

Pre-interview:

1. Wear something professional, clean, and neat, and ensure that your grooming is tidy.
2. Ensure that you are clear about the venue location and time, and then turn up at least 5 minutes early.
3. Re-read the scholarship regulations so you are fully aware of the terms and conditions.
4. Learn as much about the scholarship history as you can, such as:
 - a. Who donates the funding?
 - b. How long has the scholarship been offered?
 - c. Have any well known scholars been a recipient of the scholarship that you could quote?
 - d. If the scholarship is from a trust or estate, find out who the donor was and what association they had with the university or institution.
5. Think about what you want the interviewers to know about yourself. For example:
 - a. Why you applied for the scholarship?
 - b. What you are studying and what your goals are?
 - c. What have been some of your major accomplishments and successes, both scholarly and in your personal life?
 - d. Who has been your inspiration and why?
 - e. If the scholarship is a research scholarship, rehearse what you will tell the interviewers about your research. Ensure you explain your research in laypersons' language. Do not use technical and scientific jargon that they will not understand.
6. Think about your weaknesses (we all have them) and be prepared to be asked what they are. Ensure you minimise their significance and explain what you are doing to overcome them. If your academic record shows you have performed badly in certain courses be prepared to explain why this happened. Do not make excuses; be honest; and explain what you did to improve.
7. Be prepared for the interviewer to ask about your personal life. Think about what contributions you have made to the community, what your interests are, and what your leadership qualities you have.



8. Ensure you take with you a spare copy of your CV, a referees list, and a pen (that works), and some note paper. Make sure they are in a folder or satchel, not a plastic bag or pack. This way you are prepared should an interviewer ask for this information, and are able to take notes should an interviewer give you some helpful information to assist you with your study.

Interview:

1. When you arrive let the receptionist know who you are.
2. When you enter the interview room, if you can, shake each interviewer's hand (depending on the room layout, this may not be possible). Take note of the names of the interviewers and what university/institution they are from.
3. Ensure you smile.
4. Do not sit until you are invited to.
5. Body language tells a lot about a person. Although it is not always easy to control your body language, be aware of it. Sit straight, and keep your hands on your lap. Don't fold your arms and slouch. Try not to fidget. If you are a person that normally moves your hands and arms while talking, then that is OK. It is a form of expression, but do not overdo it.
6. Look your interviewer in the eye when they speak to you.
7. Respond to a question by looking at the interviewer who asked you the question, but also ensure that you scan all the interviewers when talking.
8. If you are unclear about a question, ask the interviewer to repeat it. It is better to answer a question correctly than guess what they are wanting.
9. If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. Better to be honest than to give an irrelevant answer.
10. If you need to think about your answer, then think about it before you respond. It is better to have a brief moment of silence, than to jump in and waffle.
11. Be aware about the length of your answers. Answer in detail and give examples, but don't ramble. Interviewers will quickly switch off if your answers are too lengthy.
12. At the end of the interview, it is very likely that you will be asked if you have any questions. Ensure that you ask some questions, but too many may annoy the interviewers. If they have not told you, ask them when they expect to make a decision, and ensure that they have your correct contact details and referees list.
13. Finally, thank them for the opportunity to attend the interview.



Handy Hints and Points to Note:

1. The more interviews you attend, the better you will get at it. However, if interviews are new to you, you may find that you become a little nervous. There are many ways to help yourself relax. Search the Internet for information on how to help overcome your nervousness. There is plenty of free information and suggestions from professional counsellors and researchers.

Massey's Student Counselling Services has a website called CROW (Counselling Resources on the Web) which provides information on 'Anxiety and Stress' http://student-services.massey.ac.nz/massey/study/services-for-students/health/resources/resources_home.cfm.

Take long deep breaths; this will help you regulate your breathing. Remember, the interviewers are not there to catch you out or make your interview an unpleasant experience. They are there to find out about you, your study, your achievements, and your goals.

2. If you can, arrange a practice interview with a friend and colleague.
3. It is unwise to have a late night the night before the interview. Make sure that you get plenty of sleep, and avoid any alcohol at least 24 hours before your interview. This will help you look fresh and alert, and will result in you being able to conduct yourself more positively at the interview.
4. Be aware that interviewers may find strong scents such as garlic, spices, perfume, or aftershave unpleasant or distracting.
5. Never criticise one of your peers (lecturer, fellow student, and supervisor). Even if there may be reason too, always show that you have a good relationship with others.
6. Turn your mobile phone off; even better don't take it with you.

Telephone Interviews:

It is not uncommon to attend an interview by teleconferencing. Particularly, if there are logistical problems with getting short listed applicants to one venue, or if you are overseas when the interviews have been scheduled. Telephone interviews do not disadvantage interviewees. All of the above is still relevant but the following should also be noted:



1. Make sure you choose a quiet location where you will not be interrupted by others, and where there is no background noise.
2. Ensure you speak clearly and not too fast.
3. As body language does not play a part in the interview, ensure that the interviewers have received all the information they want. Don't be afraid to ask them if they want any further information.
4. Ensure you smile when talking. A smile puts more energy into your voice and helps you sound positive.

Post Interview:

1. Contact your referees to warn them they may be contacted about your application. Explain to them which scholarship you applied for and how it will assist you in your studies.
2. If you are not offered the scholarship, still be polite. If an applicant turns down the offer for a scholarship, you may be next on the list. Being polite will only help your chances. Do not be afraid to ask why you were not offered the scholarship and how you can improve for the future. This will help you in other interviews, or you may get the opportunity to apply for the same scholarship the following year. Thank the interviewer again for the opportunity.
3. If you are offered the scholarship, thank the interviewer. If you can, write to the donor as well to express your appreciation. Check what the responsibilities are with regard to the scholarship and accept them. If you are required to provide regular reports on your progress, make sure you provide them on time.