

PhD Interview Questions



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I. What is a PhD Interview?

The format of the PhD interview will vary from institution to institution, and so will the degree of formality. You should expect to answer general questions about yourself, your motivations and future intentions, as well as discussing your PhD research proposal in greater depth.

You may be asked to attend an interview with your prospective PhD supervisor, or have a panel interview with admissions and the head of the department you wish to join.

It is most likely that you will be required to speak to several interviewers, one of them being your potential supervisor.

The interview may be formal and require a presentation of your proposed project, or it may be a more informal chat about your research, its nuances and potential legacy.

Depending on your location, your interview may either be face-to-face or via Skype (or an alternative video conferencing service). Video interviews are common when applying for a PhD, especially if you are located far away or internationally, so be prepared for this eventuality.

Do not be afraid of enquiring as to the interview structure when you receive your invitation to interview. Your interviewers will want you to feel as comfortable and prepared as possible, to be able to gauge your potential and fit accurately, so will likely be happy to answer any queries you may have.

Your PhD interview will be an important part of your postgraduate research application. This is your chance to meet your prospective department, discuss your project and show your potential as an academic researcher.

Of course, it's also when that potential is going to be assessed.

You'll need to show an awareness of what's involved in a PhD project and prove that you have the right aspirations and approach to work on one for three (or more) years. You'll also need to make it clear that this is the right university, department, research group or laboratory for you.

None of this has to be especially intimidating. Putting some thought into your project and your choice of institution can make answering PhD interview questions quite simple.