

Scholarship Interview Tips

The following information has been prepared by the Research Office at RNSH to assist students with preparing for upcoming scholarship interviews.

Preparing for the Interview

1. Know the exact place and time of the interview, the names of the interviewers, eg. full name and correct pronunciation and their titles.
2. Learn pertinent facts about the scholarship.
3. Find out why the interviewer is interested in your qualifications and academic record.
4. Determine how the opportunity will impact your immediate and long-term career development.
5. An interview is a "two-way street." Know what questions to ask during the interview. Your questions allow the representative to evaluate your professional and personal needs. Insightful questions help both of you determine if your relationship will be mutually rewarding. Lastly, the better you understand the opportunity, the more you will be able to communicate your interest in the scholarship.
6. Put your best foot forward. Always wear proper attire and greet your interviewer with a firm handshake and an enthusiastic smile.
7. Practice with fellow students/ your supervisor to improve your confidence in talking about your research.

The Interview

1. For the interviewer, the "right match" means the scholarship providers have identified individuals capable of performing the immediate challenges. More importantly, they hope the individuals have the potential to be future resources and assets to the institution offering the scholarship.
2. You are being interviewed by the interviewer to determine whether you have the qualifications necessary to undertake the scholarship and whether a mutually rewarding professional relationship can be formed.
3. Similarly, you must determine whether you can be successful in the scholarship and whether this opportunity will enable growth and development.

Be prepared to answer such questions as:

- Tell me about yourself?
- Tell me about your background, accomplishments?
- What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
- What interests you about the scholarship?
- What outside activities are most significant to your personal development?
- PhD progress issues and achievements to date. Discussion of proposal and how past work will fit into work to be done now.
- Where does the candidate see the award fitting into their future goals?
- What interested the candidate in coming into this field?
- What other financial resources does the candidate have available?

Be prepared to ask questions, such as:

- What would I be expected to accomplish through this scholarship?
- What are the greatest challenges experienced by people undertaking the scholarship?

Not letting these kinds of subjects catch you off-guard is a key factor in maintaining your composure during an interview. Rehearse these questions and answers in your mind or out loud in the days before the interview.

Possible negative factors evaluated by an interviewer:

- Personal appearance which is less than professional.
- Overbearing, over-aggressive or egotistical behaviour.
- No positive purpose.
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm - passive and indifferent.
- Lack of confidence and poise; nervousness.
- Evasiveness; making excuses for unfavourable factors in academic history.
- Lack of tact, maturity and courtesy.

- Inability to maintain a conversation.
- Lack of commitment to fill the scholarship available.
- Failure to ask questions about the scholarship.
- Lack of preparation for interview -- failure to get information about the organisation, resulting in inability to ask intelligent questions.

Closing the Interview

1. If you are interested in the scholarship, let the interviewer know. If you feel the scholarship is attractive and you want it, ask about the next step in the process. Be a good salesperson and say something like: "I'm very impressed with what I've heard. I am confident I could do an excellent job in the scholarship you have described to me." The interviewer is likely to be impressed with your enthusiasm.
2. Don't be too discouraged if no immediate commitment is made. The interviewer will probably want to communicate with the other committee members or possibly interview more candidates before making a decision.
3. If you get the impression that the interview is not going well and that you have already been rejected, don't let your discouragement show. Once in a while an interviewer who is genuinely interested in you may seem to discourage you as a way of testing your reaction.
4. Thank the interviewer for his or her time and consideration. If you have answered the two questions-- "Why are you interested in this position?" and "What can you offer?"-- you have done all you can.

Some "DOs" and "DON'Ts"

- Do plan to arrive on time or a few minutes early. Late arrival for an interview is never excusable.
- If presented with an application, fill it out neatly and completely. Don't rely on your application or resume to do the selling for you. Interviewers will want you to speak for yourself.
- Do greet the interviewer by last name if you are sure of the pronunciation. If not, ask the employer to repeat it. Give the appearance of energy as you walk. Smile! Shake hands firmly. Be genuinely glad to meet the interviewers.
- Do wait until you are offered a chair before sitting. Sit upright, look alert and interested at all times. Be a good listener as well as a good communicator.
- Do look the interviewer in the eye while speaking.
- Do follow the interviewer's leads, but try to get the interviewer to describe the scholarship to you early in the interview so that you can apply your background, skills and accomplishments to the scholarship.
- Do make sure that your good points come across to the interviewer in a factual, sincere manner. Stress achievements, eg. academic achievements.
- Do always conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the scholarship you are discussing. Never close the door on an opportunity.
- Do show enthusiasm. If you are interested in the opportunity, enthusiastic feedback can enhance your chances of being further considered. If you are not interested, your responsiveness will still demonstrate your professionalism.
- Don't forget to bring a copy of your resume! Keep several copies in your briefcase if you are afraid you will forget.
- Don't answer with a simple "yes" or "no." Explain whenever possible. Describe those things about yourself which relate to the situation.
- Don't lie. Answer questions truthfully, frankly and succinctly.
- Don't make unnecessary derogatory remarks about your present or former employers or lecturers, students.
- Don't over-answer questions.

Summary

- Adapt - Listen and adapt. Be sensitive to the style of the interviewers. Pay attention to those details of dress, office furniture, and general decor that will afford helpful clues to assist you in tailoring your presentation.
- Relate - Try to relate your answers to the interviewer and the organisation. Focus on achievements relevant to the scholarship.
- Encourage - Encourage the interviewer to share information about the organisation to demonstrate your interest.