

# Professor interview checklist

Colleges and universities usually shortlist on academic record and publications, then hold a teaching demonstration or research seminar and a selection committee interview with subject experts, the head of department and an administrator.

## 10 QUESTIONS TO PRACTISE OUT LOUD

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**1. Explain your PhD research to someone outside your field in two minutes.**

What it checks: Whether you can communicate your research clearly to non-specialists, a core skill for teaching undergraduates and serving on committees.

**2. Tell me about a time your research did not go as planned.**

What it checks: Whether you can cope with failed experiments or rejected papers, adjust your approach and still produce results.

**3. What pay level do you expect, and are you aware of our pay structure?**

What it checks: Whether you understand how academic pay is structured, such as pay levels, allowances and increments, and have realistic expectations.

**4. What is your research plan for the next five years?**

What it checks: Whether you have a realistic, fundable research direction that builds on your work and fits the department's facilities and goals.

**5. Describe a time you received poor student feedback. What did you do?**

What it checks: Whether you take student feedback seriously and change your teaching based on evidence, not ego.

**6. Why do you want to join our university rather than stay in your current role?**

What it checks: Whether you have researched the department's research strengths and see a long-term fit rather than a quick move.

**7. How do you design a course using outcome-based education?**

What it checks: Whether you understand course outcomes, their mapping to programme outcomes and how assessments measure them, which accreditation bodies look for.

**8. Tell me about a disagreement with a colleague or co-author.**

What it checks: Whether you handle professional conflict, such as authorship or workload disputes, with maturity and fairness.

**9. Are you willing to relocate and take up administrative roles such as class advisor or exam duties?**

What it checks: Whether you accept the full range of faculty duties and can commit to living near campus and joining on time.

**10. How do you teach a large undergraduate class of over a hundred students?**

What it checks: Whether you can keep large lectures interactive and still assess and support individual students fairly.

## TIPS FOR THIS INTERVIEW

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- Prepare a ten-to-fifteen-minute teaching demonstration on a core undergraduate topic, not your PhD topic, and practise it with a timer.
- Carry a one-page research statement with your key papers, grants, current work and a five-year plan with named funding schemes.
- Read the department's faculty pages, labs and recent publications so you can name specific collaboration opportunities in the interview.
- Be ready to explain every paper on your CV, including your exact contribution, methods, limitations and where it was indexed.

## THE DAY BEFORE

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- ☐ Confirm the time, venue or video link and the interviewer's name
- ☐ Plan your route and leave time for traffic, or test your camera, microphone and internet
- ☐ Keep copies of your resume, ID proof, certificates and photographs in a folder
- ☐ Iron your clothes and charge your phone and laptop
- ☐ Do one final run-through of your introduction, then stop and rest

## ON THE DAY

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- ☐ Arrive 15 minutes early, or log in 5–10 minutes early for a video call
- ☐ Greet everyone politely, including the receptionist or coordinator
- ☐ Listen to the full question, pause, then answer in a clear structure
- ☐ Take brief notes of names and key points
- ☐ Ask your prepared questions and confirm the next steps before you leave