

Edge Hill University

Interview Questions for  
**Teachers/Lecturers**  
  
**in Further Education &  
Training**

**CC 32**

**Careers Centre**

“For the interview, ensure you turn up smart, organised and prepared. Demonstrate knowledge of the job and the institution and do not be afraid to admit you do not understand a particular question. Also, do not forget your sense of humour, it makes you human. Be who you are rather than what you think we (the college you are applying to) want you to be. “

**Ian Swift, Vice-Principal Curriculum and Quality,  
King George V College, Southport**

“It is important that candidates for jobs have a little more conviction and confidence about themselves on interview. Their CV can read very well (hence the invitation for interview) but the person you see on the day can be a pale reflection of this person. Often the successful candidate is the person who has not necessarily got the best experience and skills but the one who has interviewed the best on the day. So the job interview is just as much an opportunity for you to show your true potential as it is for the employer to make an assessment of you.”

**David Rees  
Oldham Hulme Grammar School**

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Written by Jacqui Howe  
Edge Hill University Careers Centre  
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## **Preparation for Your Interview!**

- Make sure you have a copy of your application form, letter, CV etc. remember that questions may be asked about what you have written – try and work out what might be asked and prepare your answer.
- If you had a person specification, interview questions will be based around this. Look at this – again you should be able to work out what kind of questions you will be asked.
- The same applies for job descriptions and college details. Issues and topics which are relevant to the job description and college ethos may form the basis of interview questions.
- Colleges may now ask interviewees to do a micro teaching session – you should get notice of this prior to interview. Remember to prepare a lesson plan and copies of any resources for anyone observing the session. FET trainees might also consider providing a rationale to support the lesson plan
- If you have visited a college prior to the interview make sure that you can comment on what you have thought about it and maybe select one thing that particularly impressed you.
- Make sure you are up to date with the latest developments in the post compulsory sector– especially what has been on the news, the BBC Education Website or in the latest issues of the TES (in particular the FE Focus section).
- Take along examples of your work or a portfolio from your placements. Offer this to the panel to view but do not take offence if they refuse to look at it. Some may have time and some may not. At least you are demonstrating your enthusiasm for the post by bringing along evidence of your work. FET trainees may want to offer to give access to their e-portfolio – you will need a named contact to add to ‘viewers’ to do this
- First impressions are very important! Dress smartly – but comfortably! Smile, shake hands, and look enthusiastic. Do not be intimidated by five or six people on an interview panel. Often larger interview panels are not as rigorous in their questioning as two or three people can be.
- Have questions ready to ask towards the end of the interview, and no matter how painful you might have thought the interview experience was – make sure you thank the panel at the end of the interview.
- Always ask if it is possible to have feedback on your interview after the panel have made their decision. Even if you do not get this job –the feedback could make the difference for the next one!

NB. Throughout this guide the word “college” will stand for any Further Education college or organisations in the Post-Compulsory sector who recruit Further Education teachers.

**GOOD LUCK!**  
**Jacqui Howe**  
**February 2014**

## Preparing your Portfolio

### Advice from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers

Unless you are applying for a job very early into your training, you'll have material you can include in a portfolio, but be selective. Although it is advisable to include items that reflect your excellence, it can also be positive to include something that demonstrates your ability to learn from your experiences, especially if you are a newly-qualified teacher. Many interviews include questions on how well candidates bounced back from classroom 'disasters', which reveal your skills as a reflective practitioner.

When preparing for an interview, take anything out of your portfolio that is not pertinent to the job specification, so that you will be able to make use of everything.

## INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

Interviews normally take place at the college/training setting concerned. They may last for half or a whole day and usually comprise:-

- **Informal** talks with a Senior Tutor/Head of Department and perhaps other members of staff. This part of the procedure is extremely important as it can ultimately sway the balance for or against you, especially as Heads of Department often take part in the subsequent panel interview. This can be a good time to ask questions about e.g. The College's Code of Discipline, parental involvement and how the college funds specific projects.
- **A tour of the college and possibly college lunch:** remember you are being watched and assessed all the time from the moment you arrive and lunch and the college tour are no exception. You are more likely to make a favourable impression if you look interested, ask intelligent questions and talk to the students (but do not disturb them too much).
- **A panel interview** which may last up to an hour. Interview panels can vary considerably in size but usually contain 4 – 6 people including the Head of Department and Subject.
- **You may be expected to take part in a discussion** with the other candidates while being observed by a selector. Examples of topics given to recent applicants are – "Class management and control", and "Recent developments in the teaching of your subject". You will be assessed on your knowledge of the topic and also how you behave in the group.
- **Increasingly candidates are being asked to give a short lesson**, presentation or lecture, sometimes to a class or to staff (ie potential colleagues) or to the interviewing panel. This is quite common in the Further Education sector. You should be given prior warning if they are expecting you to do this and your preparation needs to be thorough. This will be a key part of the selection process and feedback from candidates has been very positive about this part of the selection procedure where applicants can showcase their talents and skills in the classroom. Take copies of your lesson plan for the interview panel and be

prepared for questions about your aims and objectives, choice of teaching materials and learning and teaching strategies employed etc.

Remember that initial impact is all-important and that interviewers tend to form an overall impression at a very early stage, i.e. during the first few minutes. It helps to smile and, if you can, try to look relaxed and at ease. Remember that the interviewers themselves may be nervous and that they may also wish to make a good impression on the other members of the panel.

It is advisable to play safe and dress neatly and even conservatively, appear confident, avoid irritating physical mannerisms and verbal repetitions, and look at the panel. Do not talk too much, if you are afraid that you may be too long winded you can always pause and ask "Do you require further details?" On the other hand, do not simply answer 'Yes' or 'No'.

It is difficult to anticipate every kind of question that you will be asked however you should be able to work out what most of the questions will be.

- Typical interview questions – see examples in this guide.
- Specific questions around the person specification, job description on information you have about the post/college
- Typical questions ie. What has been in the TES/news about the teaching of your subject or any new initiatives?
- Research – what is the ethos of the college/training setting? What are the most important things they are looking for in their teachers/ What continually appears in college literature, website, mission statement etc as being important to the college/
- What questions would you like to ask the panel?

Most interviews will focus on your application and supporting statement including your course and teaching placements, previous work experience, interests, why you want or feel you are suited to this particular job in this particular college, what you feel you can contribute etc. This is why the work you did before completing the application form is so important since ultimately you will be able to put across your ideas, aims, motivations, interests and strengths with more honesty and conviction at the interview.

Do not be afraid to repeat information you put in your application, you cannot assume that all the panel have read it thoroughly, let alone will remember what you said in it.

The degree of specialist knowledge of what you are saying will inevitably be very varied around the interview table so beware of underestimating what they know and seeming to talk down to them.

Be prepared to be constructively critical of yourself and others; perceptive, balanced criticism of your training course and what you made of it is far more impressive than either excessive praise or blanket criticism.

Above all, when suffering from pre-interview nerves, try to relax and be yourself and remember that you are qualified to do the job or you would not be called for interview. Somebody has to be appointed – why not you?

**If you have to prepare an interview lesson, here are some tips gleaned from a range of principals/vice principals:**

- Go equipped. Take your own resources. Photocopy plans and props just in case the college photocopier is on the blink.
- Check what information you will be given about the class prior to the lesson. Use this to inform your planning and teaching.
- Keep it simple but ensure you show differentiation in plans and tasks. Have an alternative activity up your sleeve in case what you have planned isn't working.
- Make it interactive – avoid lengthy monologues – students and staff will soon switch off. Keep the class involved with hands-on activities and open questions.
- Show enthusiasm. Be positive but avoid blanket praise – students know when they are being patronised.
- You are allowed to have a sense of humour; in fact, most colleges would view this as a vital pre-requisite. Once your nerves settle, try to make it fun.
- Choose comfortable and appropriate clothes. A suit may look good at interview but is it practical in the classroom?
- Do address behaviour issues – have a number of strategies you can use and check college procedures.
- Practice makes perfect – rehearse your planned lesson, preferably with a colleague who is likely to give you constructive feedback. This is a good confidence builder.

### **Articles from the TES:**

Search on the TES website for the latest news, forums and tips on interview lessons and preparation

### **Example Questions**

#### **The Course**

Tell me about your degree/Cert HE/PGCE course vocational area.

When did you decide to apply for a place on a teacher training course and why?

What were the strengths and weaknesses of your course?

What parts of the course did you find most interesting and why?

Why did you choose this subject/these curriculum specialisms?

I was interested to read about your project on ..... Tell me about it.

How have you developed in your subject (eg PE, Maths) during your course?

What leadership roles have you taken on during your FET course, including Teaching Practices?

How would you describe your relationship with other course members?

### **Teaching Interests**

Why did you choose to teach in this particular Post-Compulsory sector?

How would you use the locality of the college and its immediate environment?

How would you structure projects to give equal access to all students?

What are the important things to consider when setting up a classroom?

What have you gained by studying your main subject at University?

How do you see (Maths, Business Education/Your subject) developing over the next three years?

What are the major issues in Further Education at present?

How would you help other staff members to overcome their difficulties/reluctance using ICT in the classroom?

### **The College**

What makes a successful college?

How would you cope with lack of enthusiasm from colleagues?

What is your impression of the college?- be diplomatically honest. An honest yet balanced answer, stating the aspects of the college that impressed you and areas you feel need attention is better than blanket praise.

In what ways can parents and other non-teachers help in the college?

### **Professional Issues**

What are the main qualities of a good teacher?

What are your particular strengths as a teacher? How would you develop them further?

What are your weak areas and how are you overcoming them?

How much noise and moving around in the classroom do you permit?

How would you seek to ensure high levels of motivation in your classroom?

Describe the best lesson given by you on Professional Placement.

What are your views on assessment?

How would you ensure that you respond effectively to the different needs and abilities of individual pupils?

Do you differentiate between outcome or task?

Regarding the extra time required by staff meetings, extra-curricular activities etc. do you anticipate any problems with time management?

How would you react if a senior member of staff queried or criticised some aspect of your teaching?

Are there any gender issues involved in the teaching of your subject?

What do you like about teaching your main subject?

What other subjects could you teach and to what level?

What examination syllabuses/text books are you used to?

What part do you think your subject can play in students with learning difficulties eg dyslexia?

What would you say to a student considering taking your subject at 'A' level?

How important do you think it is to make links with other subjects?

You are also likely to be asked questions specific to your subject.

### **Pastoral (including 14 -19)**

How would you feel about taking on the responsibilities of being a personal tutor?  
What is your experience of having parents in college? To what extent should this be developed?  
How would you assess your ability to make relationships with young people and adults?  
How would you seek to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the young people in your care?  
How would you address the five categories of the Every Child Matters agenda?

### **Career Development**

How will you develop yourself as a professional teacher?  
What are your plans for the future?  
How would you like to see your career develop?  
Are you prepared to go on courses?  
How long do you expect to stay here?  
Would you aim to widen your experience by seeking posts in other colleges after a reasonable period here? *(You should commit yourself to at least two years providing of course that you and the college are satisfied with your progress).*

### **The Extras**

What personal interests or hobbies do you have that could be of value to the college?  
*(Say what interests you have but it is unwise to commit yourself irrevocably until you have had time to see how you cope with the rest of your teaching load).*

### **Yourself**

What is the relevance of your previous experience to teaching? *(Industrial experience, vacation work, bringing up a family).*  
What are your interests outside University and work and how involved are you?  
What have been the major events in your life – both good and bad – and how have they affected you?

### **Personal Considerations**

How easy will it be for you to get there?  
Are you able to work in the evenings?  
Can you drive and have you a car? (for getting from one campus to another)  
If we were to offer you this post are you in a position to accept it? *(If you **are** offered the job you will normally be expected to give an answer there and then and abide by it, so if you have other interviews arranged with colleges you prefer you will have to think carefully about how to respond to this question).*

### **General Questions**

Why did you become a teacher/lecturer?  
How did you plan for your teaching?  
How would you feed back to the learners about their progress?  
What has attracted you to this geographical area?  
Tell me about how you would record student progress?  
How would you implement an equal opportunities and inclusive practice policy in your class?  
How important do you think the college is in the community?  
How do you deal with disruptive behaviour?

What safety factors would you keep in mind when designing a practical lesson?  
What would you do with a student who swore at you in class?  
How would you embed Literacy, Numeracy and ICT into your specialist area?  
Are you a member of The Institute for Learning?  
How will you ensure you are addressing your CPD in relation to your Licence to Practice.  
What teaching strategies would you implement for non-traditional learners to ensure student satisfaction, retention and achievement:?

- A gentleman aged 45 arrives in your class. He has been made redundant and wants to retrain to be an electrician. He had a very negative experience at school and is very anxious that he will not be able to do the course work. How would you support this type of new learner?
- A 34 year old lady arrives at your class. She has three young children, the youngest has just started school. She now feels the time is right to gain the skills/qualifications to become a nurse. However, she is worried about organising her studies and childcare. What support would you put in place? Describe this.

### **Your Own Questions**

Interviews should be reciprocal affairs, providing you with the opportunity to learn more about the job, the working environment, colleagues etc. You will almost certainly be asked whether you have any questions towards the end of your interview. Only ask questions if you really want to know the answers, do not ask them solely to impress; however, they can indicate a genuine interest in the post, the college and the area.

Be aware of time constraints and do not ask too many. If you genuinely have no questions, reply, "No thank you, all the points I wished to raise have already been dealt with (either in the interview or earlier in the day)"

Of course, you are not going to be asked all these questions and there are many others you may be asked but this gives you a flavour of the possibilities. Trying to think of persuasive answers on the spot can be difficult for some of these so some time spent beforehand considering the likely questions and trying the answers out on a friend could be a useful exercise. Or investigate whether it is possible to have a mock interview perhaps through your department or your careers service. Also, remember that whilst the content of your answers is very important so too is your body language and the clarity of your speech. Always sound positive, enthusiastic and make sure everyone can hear you! Maintain eye contact and avoid distracting mannerisms.

I am very keen to continue my CPD – will this be supplied?

### **Salary**

The Association of Teachers & Lecturers (ATL) also provides information on FE Lecturers pay scales at [www.atl.org.uk](http://www.atl.org.uk). Qualified lecturers should start at around point 23 £23,712 (as of August 2013), however these are recommended pay scales only and each college sets its own rates of pay.

## ACCEPTANCE OF OFFERS

It is normal practice, within education, for applicants for a specific post to be asked to wait around after their interview for the panel to make their decision. The successful candidate is then called back into the room and offered the job and they are then expected to say whether or not they accept the offer.

If you find yourself in this situation it is of course possible for you to ask if you can let them know in a few days time, perhaps because you have another interview arranged and want to know the outcome. However, you must be prepared for the possibility that the college will not agree and will then offer the job to someone else.

Once again, as with the question of your starting salary, what you decide to do will depend on how strong a position you feel yourself to be in and how much you want that particular job.

It is also normal practice for Colleges to require applicants to confirm acceptance of an offer in writing. **However, even a verbal acceptance constitutes a contract and it is considered unprofessional behaviour to continue applying for other teaching posts.**

### **Advice from the ATL On Appointments & Interviews**

(Taken from Apply yourself Our Guide to getting your first teaching job - ATL)

#### **Accepting the post**

If you receive a job offer, you may feel that you can't accept the post immediately, particularly if you have another interview in the immediate future for a job that you'd prefer, or you are waiting for the result of another interview.

Be honest with the panel and you'll usually be met with a sympathetic response. While you shouldn't expect them to wait too long for a decision, it would not be unreasonable to ask for 24 hours to decide whether or not to accept the job.

If you receive an offer of appointment you want to take up, you should initially make an oral, provisional acceptance (i.e. Subject to receipt of all the final details of the appointment in writing).

The next stage, once you've received the formal written offer of appointment, is to confirm your acceptance in writing. Remember that once you formally accept a job offer, both sides become contractually bound. Needless to say you should be entirely certain about the precise terms and conditions of the post and details of the job description before you formally accept. If you have any doubts, seek extra clarification from the school or contact your Union/ATL for advice before going any further.

In your letter you should refer back to the employer's formal written offer and any other terms that have been agreed between you and the employer. These letters will then be evidence of all the terms of the contract.

#### **If you change your mind about accepting a post**

Be aware that if you change your mind and decide not to accept the job after formally accepting it (whether orally or in writing), you may be in breach of contract. If you do

so after accepting at interview but before the written offer is sent to you, the breach of contract is not likely to have serious consequences, since the employer will probably be able to offer the job to the next best candidate without too much difficulty.

If you withdraw after accepting in writing, the employer may then find it difficult to fill the vacant post without placing further adverts, holding interviews and drawing together another interview panel. Should the employer be put to this additional expense due to your withdrawal, you may become liable for this expense if a decision is made to sue you for breach of contract.

While there have been very few instances of employers successfully suing prospective employees under these circumstances, it is obviously best to avoid getting into these difficulties. Be sure that you're clear about and happy with the details of the appointment before you formally accept. If you decide to withdraw your acceptance of the post, inform the employer immediately.

### **Multiple Interviews**

What if you are offered interviews for more than one post? It may be that the post that you really want is the interview that comes up last. Also, as you will be under less pressure than the other candidates at the first interview, being more concerned to get the second job than the first, you will be more relaxed and therefore more confident, likely to interview well and become the successful candidate.

Do you turn down the job offer in hand in order to attend the interview for your preferred job? If the second interview is close to the first, do you ask for time to consider the first job offer, in the hope that you will be successful at the second interview? Do you accept the first job, attend the interview for the second job and if successful there then withdraw from the first post?

This is an area where the Association is unable to offer advice. Interviewing panels are made up of individuals whose responses to circumstances the Association cannot predict.

- An interviewing panel may be understanding and would defer making an appointment until you have attended the second interview. However, your request would indicate that their college was your second choice and that is unlikely to endear you to your possible future employers.
- **If you accept the post and subsequently withdraw you are technically in breach of contract, for an acceptance, even a verbal acceptance is a contractual arrangement. The college may not only request the return of any expenses paid, it could also demand the costs of re-advertising and re-interviewing to fill the post.**

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Publication title :

Will this publication help you? YES / NO

Did you find the information easy to understand? YES / NO

Was the publication interesting? YES / NO

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Do you have any other comments about Edge Hill's Careers Centre of the information we've given?

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