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Graduate School Interview Preparation

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Introduction

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Purpose of Graduate Interviews

Purpose

Graduate school interviews are opportunities for students to meet with faculty and current students. A chance for you to learn more about the program.

While you would have already made a great impression through your application, the interviews provide a place for graduate program to learn more about your background, goals, accomplishments and research interests. A chance for them to learn more about you.



What To Expect

- Often the interview takes place in 1 day on the campus of the graduate program. However, they can also be held as an independent, one-time virtual interview.
- The graduate program will *usually not* cover your travel expenses, lodging and food during the interview. If not, ask the department, if funding is possible!
- If in-person, the actual “interview” will sometimes be part of a series of activities including social mixers, presentations, and campus tours meant to provide you with information about whether the program, and the location is a good fit for you.



Tips:

- Be specific by providing examples of your experience
- Share specifics as to why you are interested?
- Be aware of your body language
- Deliver answers with confidence and certainty
- Remember expand beyond the general statement



Tips:

Elaborate by asking yourself how did that look like for you?

Version A: “My name is Scotty Bear, I am a first-generation student.

Version B: “My name is Scotty Bear, I believe in the power of education, I was the first in my family to obtain a bachelor's degree and the first in my extended family to pursue a graduate degree. My degree is a representation of my parent's encouragement and sacrifices, and I have focused my interest in leading and creating a path for others with similar backgrounds to follow in pursuit of their educational goals.



Interview Prep

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Interview Prep

Share Past Experiences

Practice communicating your past experiences, especially the ones that confirm your interest in the graduate program of study. Highlight your knowledge, skills, and passion.

Reflect on Past Academic Projects

Practice showcasing your academic projects, what they entailed, what you learned, and how you went about accomplishing these projects.

Faculty Research (PhD)

Research the faculty research interests, especially their recent publications, and be prepared to answer how your interests align with their research agenda.

Graduate Program Details

Review the graduate program dates, curriculum requirements, mission, campus resources, to ensure that you create thoughtful questions and can also incorporate these details into your responses.



Interviewing Formats (PhD)

Q/A Session: Usually happens in front of a graduate admissions recruitment panel.

Presentation: You will be asked to present your research proposal or your field of expertise. When asking you to present, they will most likely specify the length, content and any requirements pertaining to your presentation.

One-on-one discussion: Usually happens with your prospective advisor or faculty in your research area of interest.

Informal lunch: Often happens with your prospective supervisor or current graduate students. This could include informal activities such as a tour of the research spaces, social mixers or fun events around campus.



Interview Questions:

1. **Tell me about yourself?**
2. **How did you choose UCR and your major?**
3. **Why this university and graduate program?**
4. **What courses and activities have you engaged in to prepare yourself for graduate school?**
5. **How will you fund your graduate school education?**
6. **What do you know about our graduate program?**
7. **What area of specialty do you have?**
8. **Why graduate school?**
9. **How would your recommender describe your strengths/weaknesses?**
10. **Describe how you overcame a challenging time during your academic work at UCR**
11. **What questions do you have for us?**



Behavioral Based Interview Questions:

Tell me about a time? Share an experience when... Please describe a time...

- Prompting you to recall a specific example to demonstrate a skill.

Describe how you overcame a challenging time during your academic work at UCR

- Identify the Skill: (e.g. Demonstrate your ability to overcome challenges)
- What information are they seeking: (e.g. they want to see if you have resiliency to have academic persistence)



PARK Method – Answer Behavioral Based Questions

Problem: What was the problem? Provide context.

Action: What action did you take to solve this problem?

Result: By taking this action, what happened?

Knowledge: What do you learn from this experience?



Behavioral Based Interview Questions:

Describe how you overcame a challenging time during your academic work at UCR?

*"I would say, during my calculus course – it was really challenging...I ended having to get tutoring and really stay on top of my time management. Um... I would say that I just... I don't know.. I .. ended up, you know... getting an A or whatever, but yeah it really taught me to uh... prioritize and organize my time. [*awkward silence*] ..So yeah,..."*



Behavioral Based Interview Questions:

Describe how you overcame a challenging time during your academic work at UCR

Problem: During my academic work, I struggled with time management when I was taking an advanced calculus course. The course was very demanding, with complex assignments due every single week, and I was also involved in several campus activities, including being the curation director for the photography club. I needed to find a way to balance my academic workload with my leadership commitments.

Action: To overcome this challenge, I implemented a variety of time-management techniques. First, I created a detailed schedule for the week, allocating specific time slots to each task. I also began using the Pomodoro technique, where I would focus on a single task for a set period of time, usually 25 minutes, followed by a short break. This helped me maintain my focus and productivity. I also sought out tutoring services to help me understand concepts more easily. Additionally, I started delegating tasks more effectively within the photography club, enabling me to better manage my time.

Result: By implementing these strategies, I completed my calculus assignments on time and even improved my performance in the course. I maintained my commitments to the photography club, leading the team to win first place in a regional competition.

Knowledge: This experience taught me the importance of effective time management, prioritization and seeking support services how they play a vital role in not only overcoming academic challenges but in various areas of life.



Practice

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Interviewing Questions:

Tell me about yourself?

- Name, University, and Academic or Career Interests
- Describe your academic background, relevant experiences, and why you are interested in the graduate program.

1. Why did you choose to apply to this graduate program?

- Highlight (and specific) unique qualities of the graduate program (e.g. curriculum, faculty, resources, location)
- Demonstrate that you have carefully thought about your decision to pursue a graduate degree.

2. What are your career goals, and how will this program help you achieve them?

- Prepare to compliment your application
- Why are you committed to the field and how will this graduate program help you in facilitating your goal.

3. How will you contribute to our program?

- Communicate your enthusiasm to the program, how will you leverage the program? (e.g. writing center, student organizations, faculty research labs)
- Paint a picture of what it would be like to have you as a student in their program (e.g. share past experiences in class discussion, background and experiences, my perspective living in xyz, or my knowledge in xyz).

4. Share a time you demonstrated your leadership skills?

- Remember: be specific and use the PARK Method.



When asked, “Do you have any questions for us?”

Ask about any of the following:

1. What types of professional development opportunities are available for graduate students?
2. Are there any additional potential opportunities to collaborate with faculty?
3. How has AI (recent trend) changed your graduate program?
4. What is the average time to degree?
5. Can you tell me more about ____

Think about what is important to you, and create a question to capture it.

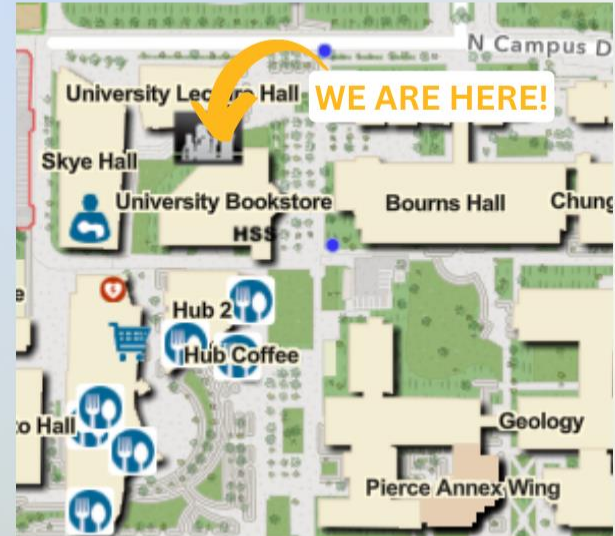
location

ENTRANCE IS ACROSS FROM ARC AND UNIVERSITY
LECTURE HALL, UNDERNEATH THE BOOKSTORE

hours

8 AM - 5 PM MONDAY-FRIDAY

website home *drop in hours*



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QUESTIONS?



Post-Workshop Survey

