

# Doctoral School

Preparing for Interviews and  
the Viva

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# Today's Aims

- Explore the purpose of an interview
- Outline different interview formats
- What do employers want?
- How to present yourself effectively
- Preparing for the Viva
- Chance to practise
- Resources

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## Post-it Exercise

- Write on the post-it any questions/concerns you have about interviews
- We will re-visit these at the end



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# How do Interviews make you feel?



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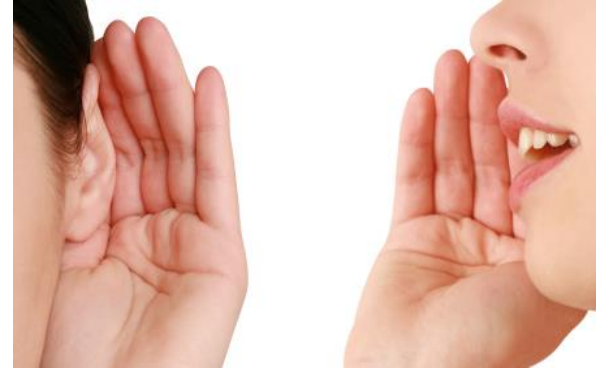
# Be prepared for anything!



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# Your experience of interviews



## Discuss in pairs

- What happened?
- Which organisations? What job role?
- What do you recall of the experience?
- What made it a good/bad experience?
- Types of questions asked?

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# Types of interview

- 1:1
- multiple mini interviews
- panel
- group
- telephone
- video - symmetrical/asymmetrical
- competency based
- technical
- formal/informal
- part of an assessment centre



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# Whatever the format....

An interview is an opportunity to:

- Present evidence to prove you can do the job!  
Do you have relevant knowledge, skills and experience?
- Show that you will **'fit'** into the organisation  
Do your personality and values match those of the organisation?
- Find out more and check that you want to work in that role/organisation

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# Essential research....

## About the job role:

- Job description/person specification
- Job profiles e.g. Prospects website ('Explore types of jobs')

## About the company:

- Company/organisation's website
- Recruitment literature

## About the job sector:

- Sector profiles on Prospects website (job sectors)
- Newspapers/professional journals
- Library information databases e.g. FAME

**And most importantly – about YOU!**



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# What do employers want?

- Technical knowledge and personal skills
- Subject expertise
- Strengths and interests
- Communication skills
- Analytical skills
- Commitment to further development
- Motivation and commitment
- Self-reliance
- Team work
- Organisation and adaptability
- Careers ideas & industry awareness

**....check out the Job spec!**

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# Questions

Questions will typically focus upon:

- You
- The Job role
- The company/industry sector
- A set of competencies

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# Types of interview questions

- Open/Broad questions

**"Why did you apply for the role?"**

**"Why do you want the job?"**



This is a real chance to sell yourself and your skills

Focus on the company, the role and what you have to offer

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# Types of questions

- Competency based:

"Tell us about a time you have solved a problem."

- Scenario/behavioural:

"How would you deal with a customer who was angry and upset?"

Use examples to build a mental picture

Structure using STAR

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# Types of questions

- Knowledge-based/Technical:

"How do you keep your sector knowledge up to date?"

Checking out what you know and how you apply it

- Strength-based:

"What motivates you in the workplace?"

"Why do you think you will be successful in this job?"

Trying to find out your best fit

Be honest!

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# Types of questions

- Tricky questions:

**"What is your greatest weakness?"**

Checking out your self awareness

Be honest - and explain how you've tackled your weakness

- Curveball:

**"Is life a comedy or a tragedy?"**

How do you respond under pressure?

Rationale more important than answer

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# Typical questions

## About You

*"Tell me about a time when you have demonstrated exceptional team-working skills..."*

*"What is your greatest achievement?"*

*"I see on your CV you have done.....tell me more."*

*"What is your greatest strength/weakness?"*

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# Unusual questions

"If your friend was seriously injured and you had to get him to a hospital, would you speed and go through a red light?"

– *Asked at Barlow Lyde & Gilbert (Trainee Solicitor candidate)*

"How would you explain Facebook to your Grandma?"

– *Asked at Huddle (Sales Executive candidate)*

"In a fight between a lion and a tiger, who would win and why?"

– *Asked at Capco (Associate Consultant candidate)*

"What makes you happy about work on a Friday evening?"

– *Asked at Tesco (International Deployment Manager candidate)*

[25 toughest questions asked at UK job interviews](#)

(Glassdoor/Guardian Work Blog)

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# Talking about your experience

## Using the STARR Structure

Situation - set the scene

Task - what did you have to do?

Actions - what did **you** actually do?

Result - what happened

Reflect - what did you learn from this?



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# Handling questions: summary

- Expand - but don't waffle
- Have an 'agenda' of points you want to get across
- Can't predict all the questions, but can prepare the information you want to present
- Listen carefully to the question
- Give specific examples not generic statements
- Be positive, stay calm and take your time to answer
- There may not be a right or wrong answer

# Interview Topic

- Individually select a role you may be interest in

- In pairs, devise 5 common questions

Open/Broad questions: **"Why did you apply for the role?" "Why do you want the job?"**

Competency-based: **"Tell us about a time you have solved a problem/managed a project"**

Knowledge-based/Technical : **"How do you keep your sector knowledge up to date?"**

Strength-based: **"What motivates you in the workplace/why do you think you will be successful?"**

Tricky questions: **"What is your greatest weakness?"**

- 5 minutes for each interview

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# Chance to practice



“The Interview” by Charles Schulz

In pairs, rotate the roles of

- Interviewer
- Interviewee

5 minutes for each interview

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# Feedback to the group



- How did your roles affect the experience?
- What was positive?
- Any areas needing attention?

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# Let's talk about body language

- How important is body language & non-verbal communication?
- What messages do we give out before we speak?
- What impressions do people form about us in an interview situation?

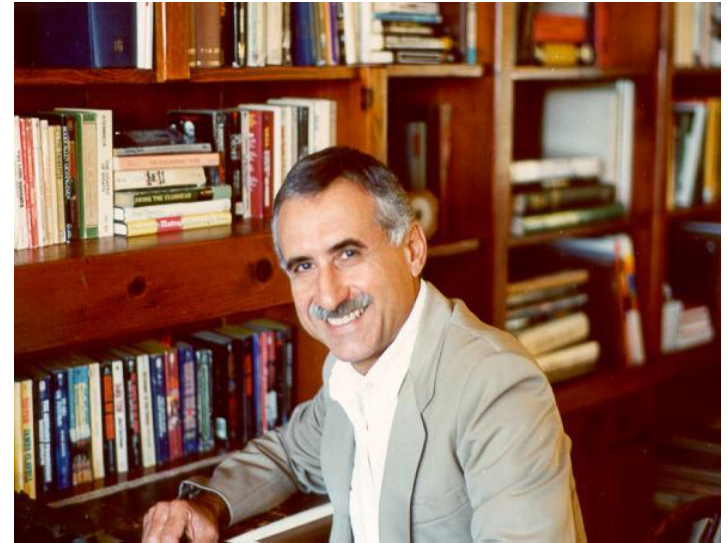
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# Non-verbal messages

## Albert Mehrabian

Professor of Psychology UCLA

Research published in 1971



- 93% of the meaning/feelings & attitudes generated by what you communicate is non-verbal
- Communication Model: 55% Body language, 38% Tone, 7% Content/Words

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# Your questions for the panel

## Ask questions that:

- show you are enthusiastic and interested in the role and the company
- avoid focussing on personal gain e.g. salary, holidays
- demonstrate commitment and a willingness to learn and develop
- reflect prior research but don't ask for information that is easily available - dig deeper
- 3 is the magic number!

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# Questions you might want to ask the panel

- Questions that focus on your needs
  - Induction, training and development, mentoring
  - Work life balance
- Questions about the company/sector
  - An opportunity to show your research/insights
- Next steps?
  - When will I hear outcome of interview?

**...don't ask what could have been easily researched**

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## After the interview

- Reflect & review
- Get feedback
- Accepting offers
- Second interviews
- Selection centres

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# Recommended Resources

- **Careers Central** - [CVs/Applications/Interviews/Assessment Centres](#) - advice and links to practice exercises and psychometric tests
- [Abintegro Interview Training](#) - videos from leading industry professionals and simulation software to help you practise and improve
- [Prospects](#) and [TARGETjobs](#) - Careers Advice sections
- [Career Player](#) videos

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# Further Reading

[Practice makes perfect \(or at least a lot better\) when it comes to job interviews](#)

[10 tips for job interview success](#)

[How to convince employers you're the one \(when you're not convinced yourself\)](#)

[5 ways to look confident in an interview \(even when you're freaking out\)](#)

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# Preparing for your Viva

You can face your viva with confidence!

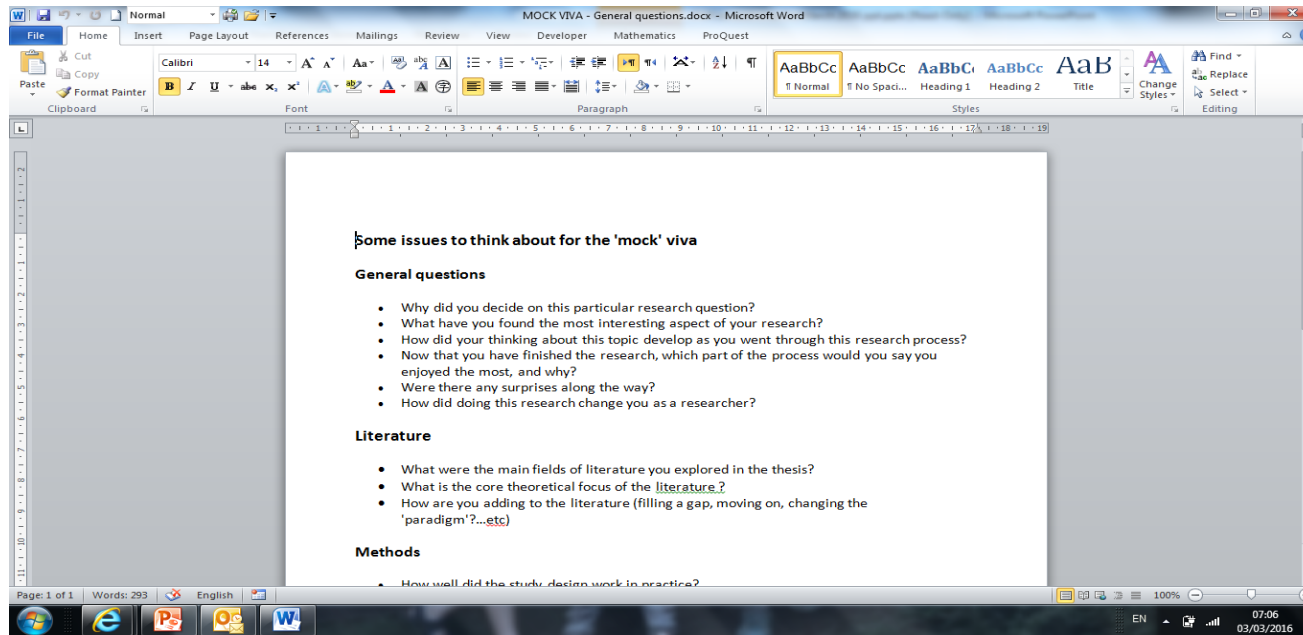
You are probably one of the world experts on your topic and the viva is a way of showing **genuine** interest and engagement with your research.

It's a rare opportunity to gain meaningful feedback on your research – make the most of it!

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# The Mock Viva

- Ask for one!



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# Vitae resources

Vitae: Defending your Doctoral Thesis

[www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/doing-a-doctorate/completing-your-doctorate/your-viva](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/doing-a-doctorate/completing-your-doctorate/your-viva)

Thesis Defence Checklist

[www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/doing-a-doctorate/completing-your-doctorate/your-viva/viva-checklist](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/doing-a-doctorate/completing-your-doctorate/your-viva/viva-checklist)

And other SHU resources...see:

<https://shardprogramme.wordpress.com/resources/>

<https://shdoctoralschool.wordpress.com/>

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# The Good Viva Video

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the 'Good Viva Video' page on the Sheffield Hallam University shuplayer platform. The browser's address bar shows the URL: [http://shuplayer.she.ac.uk/portal/#vod\\_title\\_information;\('voditem':'Good\\_Viva\\_Video'\)](http://shuplayer.she.ac.uk/portal/#vod_title_information;('voditem':'Good_Viva_Video')). The page features the Sheffield Hallam University logo on the left and the shuplayer logo on the right. A navigation bar includes links for 'Watch Video', 'Record', 'My Bookmarks', 'My Content', and 'Help'. A central 'Content Information' box provides details about the video: Title: Good Viva Video, Family: A to G, Categories: G, Owner: (blank), Access: Public, Duration: 0:34:13, URL: [Good Viva Video](#), Synopsis: (blank), and Total Views: 59. To the right of this information is a video thumbnail showing a woman speaking in front of a bookshelf. Below the information box, there is a section titled 'Using video in your work:' with instructions on how to use the URL in Word, PowerPoint, or Email. At the bottom of the information box are three buttons: 'Watch', 'Share', and 'Feedback'. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows various application icons and the system tray with the date 03/03/2016 and time 07:13.

Sheffield Hallam University

Please note: Only use IE browsers with shuplayer links.  
Also, BBC 3 will stop broadcasting at the end of Feb so it will no longer be available in shuplayer.

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## Content Information

Title: Good Viva Video  
Family: A to G  
Categories: G  
Owner:  
Access: Public  
Duration: 0:34:13  
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Synopsis:  
Total Views: 59

**Using video in your work:**  
The URL above can be used in Word, PowerPoint or Email. Highlight the link, right click and select 'copy', OR, to paste in Blackboard select 'copy shortcut'.

Watch Share Feedback

EN 07:13 03/03/2016

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# Preparing for your Viva

**Re-read** your thesis – produce an overview of each chapter, its contents and key points

**Literature** – review the key texts that you have used and what you have learned from them – check at least your main references

**Examiner's field of interest** – find out what this is. Helps you gauge their probable reactions to your work

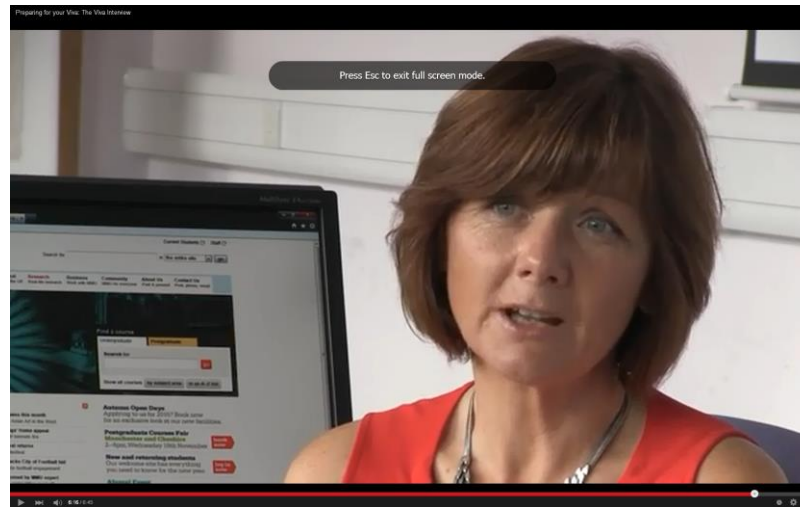
**Feedback** – get some from academic staff other than your supervisor or someone who is knowledgeable about one of your chapters

**Presenting or writing articles** about one single aspect of your research helps test out possible reactions from the wider academic community, advance particular aspects of your research, gain more ideas about how to develop your ideas, practice your public speaking skills

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# Dr Sheree McCormick MMU

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xncsi6RR8Ss>



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# At your Viva

Restate in brief and in detail the main aims and points of the thesis and discuss your results

Remember, **you** generated the material and you have the basic qualifications to join the researcher community

Have a good command of your subject and have developed and applied appropriate critical methodologies

In this exam you know more about the topic than your examiner!

Success depends on your ability to show that your research is **original** and contributes **significantly** to the development of your discipline

Will be conducted usually by an internal and external examiner  
– your supervisor may also be present but not allowed to take part

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# Demystifying the Doctoral Viva

(<https://shdoctoralschool.wordpress.com/current-drs/training-and-development/drts/>)

- Can vivas really last longer than 3 hours?
- Do I need to memorise my thesis?
- Will the examiners try and trip me up with questions about minutiae?
- Could it harm my chances if my examiner and supervisor don't get on?
- What if I've not addressed something the examiner thinks is crucial?
- Can I fail my viva and what happens then?
- Other fears/questions raised

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# Key resources to help you with interviews and the Viva

## **The Interviewer Simulator**

Interactive computer ShuSpace/Employability tab/Careers

<https://www.abintegro.com/resources/interviewsimulator/Application.aspx>

**Bemyinterviewer** - mock interviews site

[www.bemyinterviewer.com](http://www.bemyinterviewer.com)

**Prospects:**

[www.prospects.ac.uk/links/appsinterviews](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/appsinterviews)

**The Vitae** website resources

[www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk)

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# Conclusions

- General principles and purpose of Interviews & Vivas
- What to expect and different formats
- How to prepare and review performance
- A chance to practise
- Any other issues? (Refer to **post-it** notes)
- Any questions?

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# Contact us

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