

# Selection processes

## Skills for PhDs and Research Staff

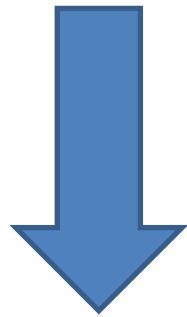
*Catherine Reynolds*

*Careers Consultant for PhDs and Research Staff*

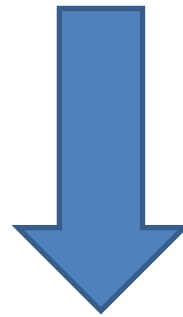
Feb 2016



Interviewing well **is** a skill that can be learned



Understanding  
the process



Preparation  
for your specific  
interview



Practise



# Why do selectors use interviews?

- Confirm their impression of you from the paper application
- Meet you face to face
- Chance to test your abilities to do aspects of the job e.g. present
- Explore your background, skills, future plans in more depth

**TIME-CONSUMING**

**EXPENSIVE**



# So.....

- Getting to the interview stage is a very positive reflection of your written application
- They are **already** interested in you
- They may start off with an idea of who is the front-runner BUT this can (and often does) change during the interview process

ALL TO PLAY FOR!

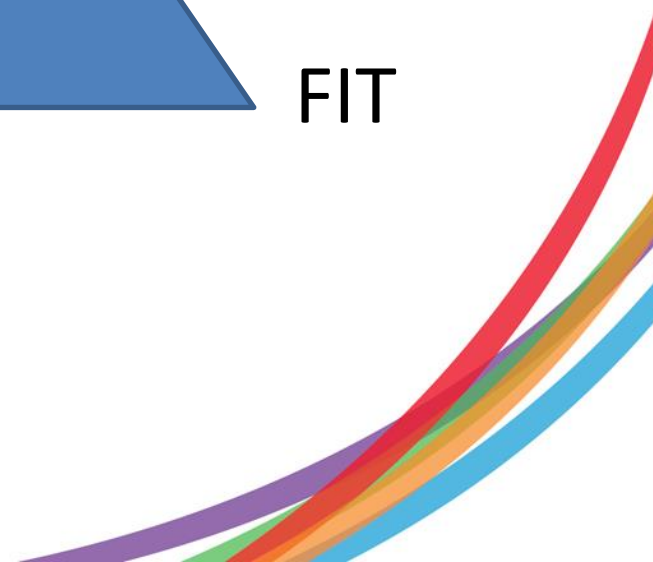


MOTIVATION

IDEAL  
CANDIDATE

SKILLS /  
KNOWLEDGE

FIT



# Face-to-face selection process

Interview

Talk or presentation

Group exercise/job-related task

Individual written exercise

Case interview

Tours/networking / hospitality

Assessment Centre – combination of these common in graduate recruitment

Their talk/presentation

[Careers website](#) for tips



## **Types of interview:**

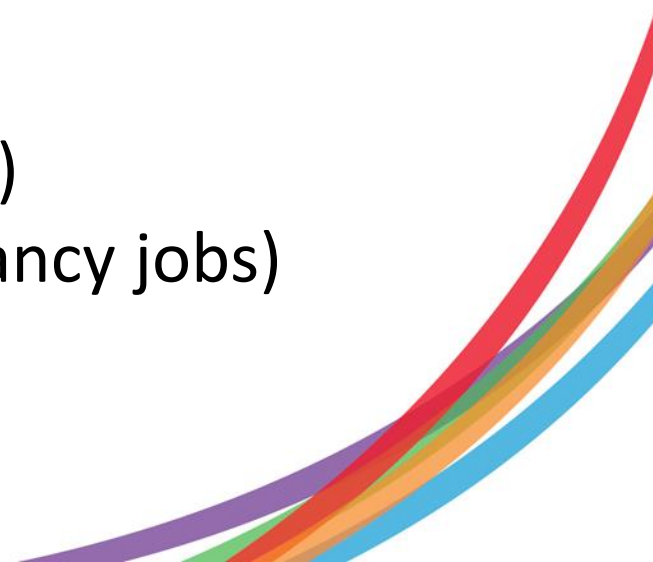
- Telephone/Skype or face-to-face
- Panel or one-to-one
- Formal or informal
- Multiple rounds

## **Styles of interview:**

- Standard competency/HR  
(common for all sectors)
- Technical (e.g. quant job in a bank)
- Case-study (management consultancy jobs)



TODAY'S FOCUS



# Telephone Interviews/Skype

- Prepare as for a face-to-face interview
- Pick a quiet location
- Have your application materials handy, use notes but don't rustle papers
- Practice openers and closers to conversation if you're nervous



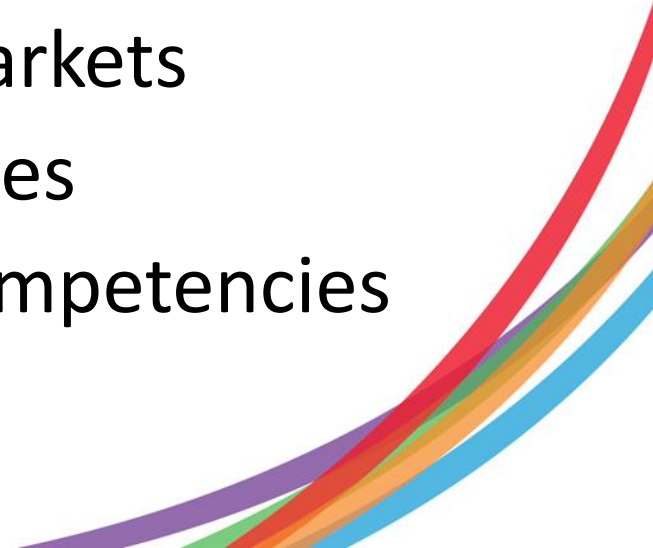
## **For Skype:**

- Look at screen when interviewer speaks and at webcam when you speak
- Avoid highly patterned clothing



# Case studies

## **Increasingly widely used in recruitment**

- Consulting – management, economic
  - Marketing – new products, market growth
  - Finance – acquisitions, new ventures
  - Digital industries – new idea launch
  - Energy – exploration of new markets
  - Non-profit – improving outcomes
  - Public sector – demonstrate competencies
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# Technical/Case Study Resources

## Case Studies

- <https://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/CareersAndVacancies/careersService/internal/InformationCurrentStudents/IntsAssessPsych/Case%20interviews/Home.aspx>
- <http://caseinterview.com/>

## Quant Finance Jobs

- 'Heard on the Street: Quantitative Questions from Wall Street Job Interviews' by Timothy Falcon Crack



# Preparation

- Understand what selector is looking for

Read job ad and person description again

- Background research into organisation/sector

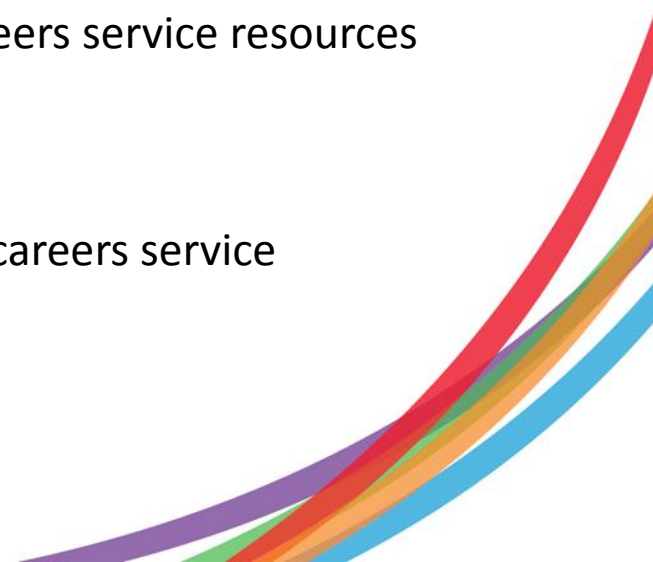
Organisation website, sector information, informal contacts

- Anticipate questions

Reread your application materials, careers service resources

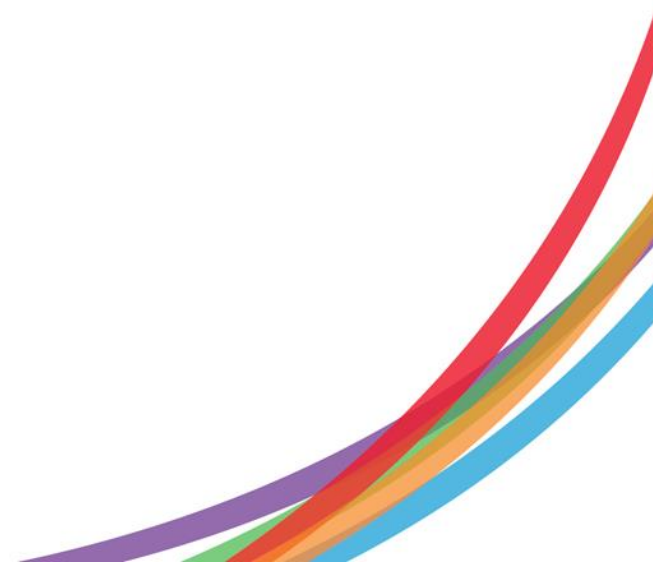
- Practice answers

STAR technique, practice interview at careers service



# Competency-based Questions

- “Tell me about a time when you.....”
- “Give me an example of when you.....”
- “Probing the skills required for the job”
- Related to the job description/person specification
- In addition likely to have: questions to probe knowledge of role/company/sector and motivations



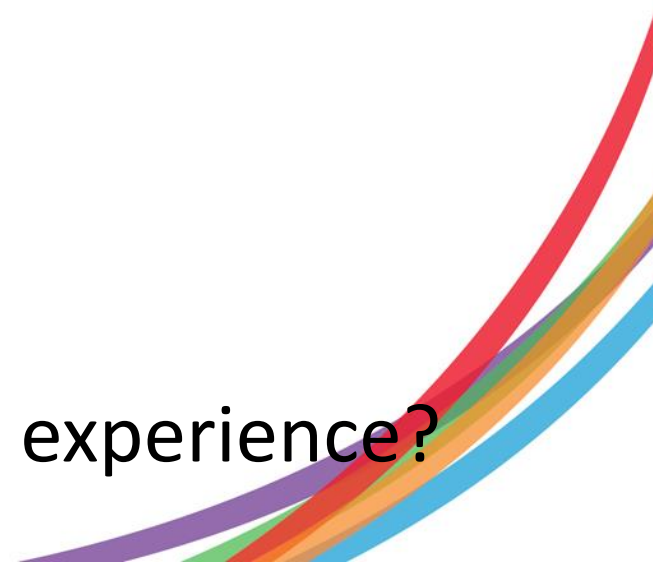
# Employers Perceptions of PhD

- Data analysis
- Problem solving
- Drive and motivation
- Project management

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- Interpersonal skills
- Leadership
- Commercial awareness

How will you 'translate' your PhD experience?



# PhD Speakers

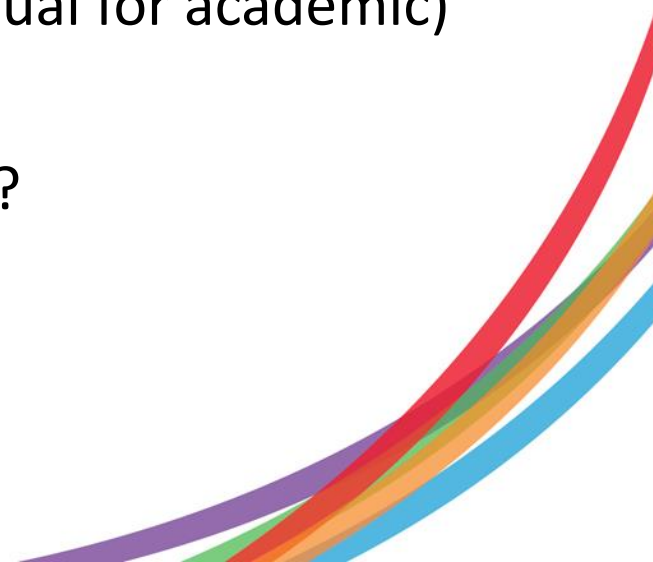
- Alex Free
- Giulia Pastorella



# EXERCISE








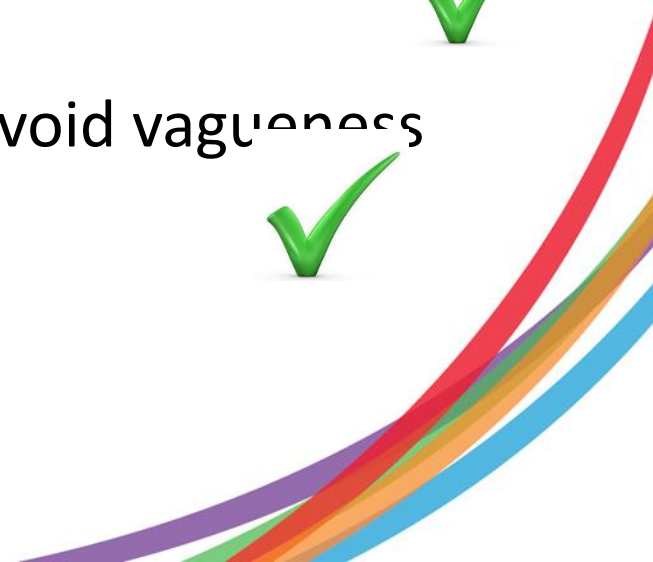
# Prepare these for ALL interviews:

- Tell us about yourself.
  - Why do you want to work for this company/org/university?
  - What attracts you to this role?
  - Why are you leaving your current role?
  - Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years time?
  - What are your salary expectations? (not usual for academic)
  - Do you have any questions for us?
  - If we offered you the job would you take it?
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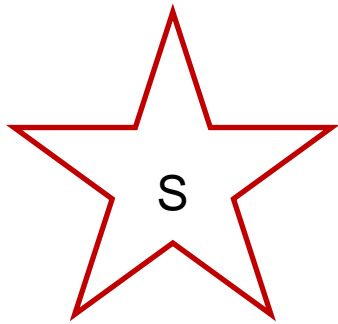


# What makes a good answer?

- Answers what the interviewer asked 
- Has a good structure – no rambling! 
- Is positive 
- Is a good length – not too little and not too much 
- Is interesting with appropriate detail – avoid vagueness 

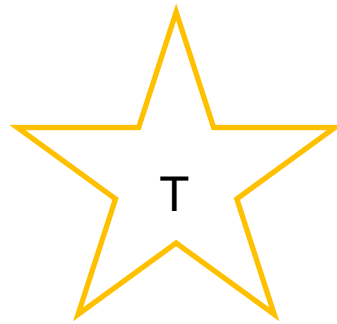


# Tool to help structure answers



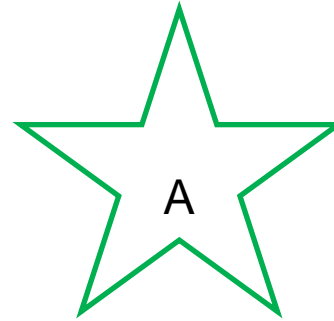
Situation

10%



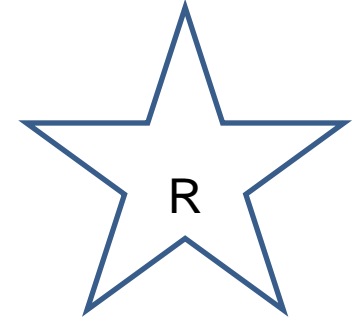
Task

10%



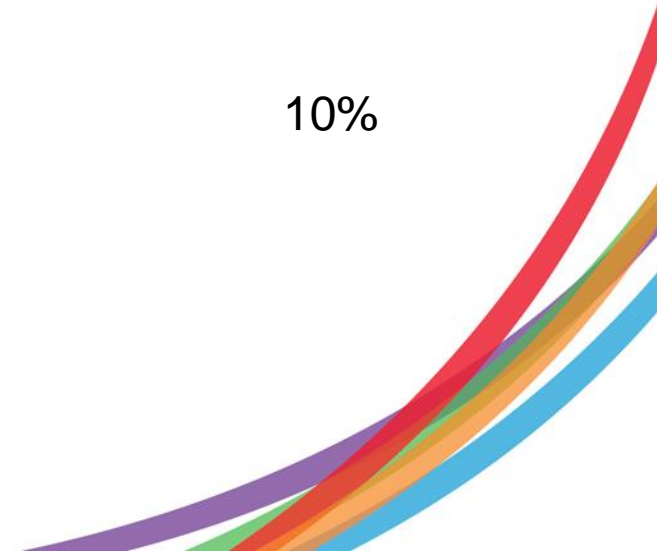
Action

70%

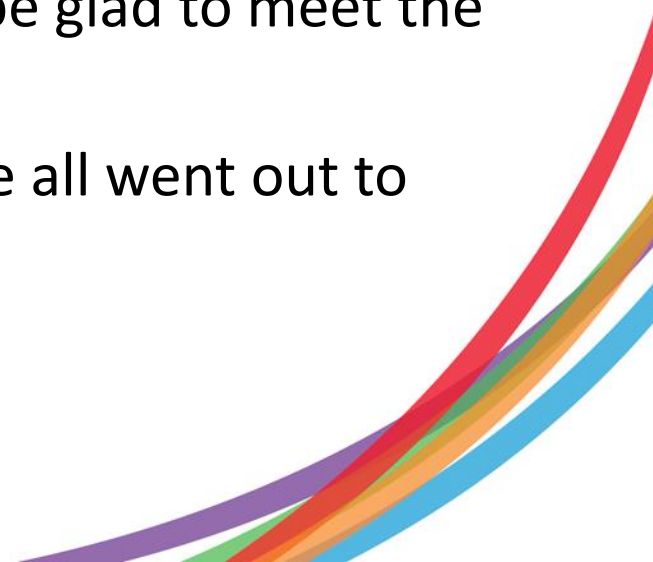


Result

10%



# STAR example

- **S** I was working on a project with a tight deadline and one of the team members got flu.
  - **T** I had to make sure that that person's section of the work was covered.
  - **A** I arranged a meeting with the whole team and before the meeting I came up with a plan to share out the work fairly. At the beginning the team were annoyed at the extra workload but I persuaded them that we would all be glad to meet the deadline.
  - **R** The task was finished to time and we all went out to celebrate that evening.
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# Difficult Questions

- What are your weaknesses?
- Can you mention a difficult situation and how you dealt with it?
- Can you give me an example of when you have realised you have made a mistake – what did you do about it? What would you do if the situation arose again?

.....*others?*....



# Answering Difficult Questions

- Anticipating them is useful
- Keep positive in your answer
- Show your working – think out loud

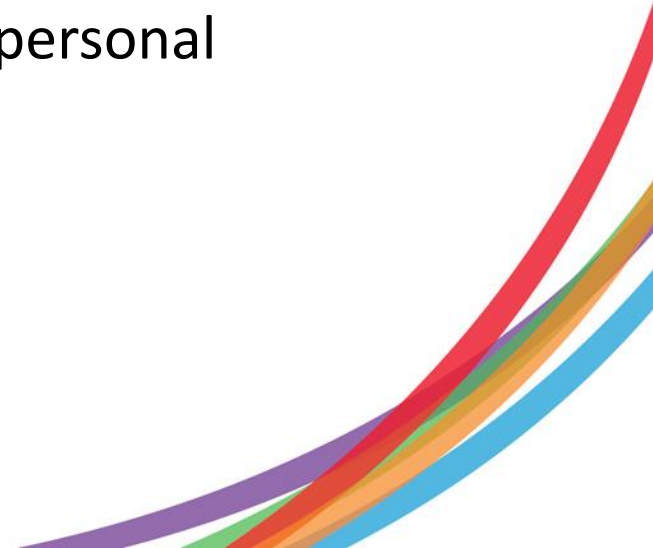


# Your questions

- Genuine
- Positive
- Broad – save details of your contract, pay, leave arrangements etc until after the offer



# On the day

- Dress appropriately
  - First impressions count – a firm handshake and a smile!
  - Make eye contact, be enthusiastic and positive, avoid drawing attention to negatives
  - Structure your answers – don't ramble
  - Listen carefully to questions and make sure you are answering the right one
  - Be specific, focus on outcomes, and your personal achievements
  - Think about what is **unique about you**
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# After the interview

- Make a note of questions – you'll soon forget
- If you don't hear by the suggested date, you can follow up
- If you are unsuccessful, ask for feedback, but don't expect too much
- Few interviews go 100% perfectly – learn from experience







# Resources and follow-up

- **Web information**  
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/CareersAndVacancies/careersService/PhDsResearchStaff/Home.aspx>
- **1:1 appointments** with LSE Careers, include practice interviews



