

HOW TO...

SUCCEED IN PGCE/PGDipEd INTERVIEWS

You will definitely attend an interview of some sort because all short listed candidates are interviewed. You might be involved in a group or individual interview or a combination of the two. Group interviews, where you are one of five- eight candidates are becoming more common. The observers will be looking to see that you can actively contribute, respect and encourage others, communicate clearly and appropriately and offer a rationale for your opinions. The wider selection procedure on the day could also include: group activity or discussion, a presentation (could be between five and twenty minutes long and the topic is often given to you in advance) reading and writing tasks, non- cognitive assessment and skills tests and planning and delivering a mini lesson.

They will be looking for :good interpersonal and communication skills, an understanding of the role of a teacher, evidence of relevant experience and your ability to reflect and learn from that experience, commitment and enthusiasm for working with children and young people, a strong knowledge base and resilience. You also need to keep up-to-date with current developments in education, policies and National Curriculum changes as there are nearly always questions on this. Good sources for research and background reading are: [TES](#), [BBC News:Education & Family](#) and [The Guardian](#) on a Tuesday and <http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching>.

EXAMPLE PGCE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: Examples below are from admissions tutors and recent students.

- Why do you want to become a teacher?
- How do you handle pressure and how will you handle the stress of this profession?
- How do you deal with very gifted children and how do you cope with the less bright children who have problems?
- Talk about a topic you have read about recently in the education press, what's your opinion?
- What aspect of teaching concerns you/worries you?
- What makes an effective teacher?
- How have your school experiences differed/ what have you learned/gained from them?
- Give an example from school observation of where you have observed a child learn
- What would you do in the case of a racial incident at school? How would you deal with it?
- If you overheard a child using racist/homophobic language, what would you do?
- What do you know about the National Curriculum?

Get more support from the College of Social Sciences careers team:
www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careers/coss

- Book appointments for 1:1 careers advice
- Book a CV check at the CV and applications clinic
- Attend careers events and workshops
- Get individual advice on internships /work experience

EXAMPLE PRIMARY QUESTIONS:

- Give an example of a good lesson which you have observed/what is a good lesson like/how do the children feel?.
- What do you think about the idea of having classroom assistants who can teach the class whilst the teacher does paperwork and prepares lessons?

- How is your subject helpful for a primary school teacher?
- How will you cope with teaching across the range of national curriculum subjects?
- What would your classroom look like? Which colours would you use and why?
- What do you think is the importance of playtime?
- Who is your favourite children's author and why?

EXAMPLE SECONDARY QUESTIONS:

- What is the point of your subject being taught in schools?
- Talk about your experience in schools; compare some of the behaviours you observed.
- How would you deal with a disruptive pupil?
- What would you say to a pupil in Year 9 who hasn't chosen to take your subject at GCSE and doesn't see the point in doing any work for the rest of the year?
- How would you place students in the classroom? Do you think this has any relevance to effective learning?
- Why do you want to work with young people?
- What do you know about different learning styles?
- What do you know about the current curriculum and qualifications reforms?

SELECTION PROCEDURES

The examples below are intended to show the variety of selection activities currently used at different institutions.

Primary examples:

- The day began with a check of documents- qualifications and ID, then a thirty minute presentation about the University and the course. A literacy task (details given in advance) then an observed small group discussion, a ten minute individual presentation (the topic had been sent to us in advance) and a twenty five minute individual interview.
- Required to complete pre- interview reading in advance, then on the day a check of ID and qualifications, a welcome talk, a timed written task (based on the reading) a mini teach delivered to other candidates, that had to involve the group, an individual interview and a campus tour.
- Presentation about the course, then three formal assessments: written, reading, numeracy skills followed by a group interview, in which each candidate led a professional discussion based on an article about a current educational issue. This was observed by two assessors who also asked questions to prompt professional dialogue.

Secondary examples:

- A course introduction talk, then an observed group task/discussion followed by an individual interview with subject specialists, then short written tasks, ending with a tour of the School of Education.
- **History:** Introduction, a reflective discussion based on observing part of a real lesson, a presentation using a visual aid you have chosen in advance, a written task based on an article in Teaching History (access to the Journal given in advance) followed by an individual subject interview of fifteen – twenty minutes.
- **English with Drama:** In advance candidates were asked to: complete an online initial needs assessment, which asks what you have studied e.g. prose, poetry, drama, biographies etc and about IT skills and grammar etc.; prepare a five minute presentation on a topic of your choice; write 500 words of reflective writing, on any experience that has affected you. On the day, candidates had a group interview for one hours thirty minutes and an individual interview of ten- fifteen minutes.
- Registration, then a check of ID and qualifications, an observed group task followed by a timed written test, then an individual interview during which you give a short, pre-prepared presentation.

For quick links, access the electronic version of this handout on
www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/careers/coss