

Year 13

Preparing For University Interviews

Tuesday 3rd November 2020

1. * Student Ambassador01 2: Hi, my name is Laura and I am currently in my fourth year studying French and German. The theme for today's forum is Preparing For University Interviews. For those of you who are new to the forums, you are welcome to ask me questions either directly related to the theme or about any other aspect of university life. Anything I can't answer I will refer on and someone from the Exeter Scholars team will get back to you with a response in the next few days. For those of you that have logged on before, welcome back!

2. * Student Ambassador01 2: Before we start I just want to give you a quick overview of how the session itself works in case you've not used one before.

When you post a message it will be sent to me to reply to and will show on your wall as awaiting reply. When I reply to your message it will then post to the public wall for you and everyone else to see. Until I have replied, no-one else will see your message. Bear with me, as when it gets busy it will take me a few moments to reply – but don't worry, you won't have been forgotten! I will start all messages with the name of the person I am replying to just to make the discussion easier to follow and if I'm posing a question to the whole group I'll start the message with 'Everyone'.

3. * Student Ambassador01: Hi, my name is Ellee and I am currently in my third and final year of studying BSc Mathematics with Economics. The theme for today's forum is Preparing For University Interviews. For those of you who are new to the forums, you are welcome to ask me questions either directly related to the theme or about any other aspect of university life.

4. Megan Whitefield: Hello, when attending a University interview, should I avoid repeating the points I made in my personal statement or will they use that as a starting point.

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Megan, all interviews will vary and your personal statement could come up. Instead of repeating exactly what you said in your personal statement, you could elaborate on your points you mentioned going into more detail bringing your personality across as you are now talking to someone rather than writing it down.

5. Anisha: Do you think there is any possibility that interviews at some universities will be actually on the campus?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Anisha, with the ongoing uncertain times due to COVID-19, it is most likely interviews will remain online especially before the new year of 2021. Make sure to stay updated with the University about the setting of the interview but at the moment, interviews will more than likely carry on being online.

6. Shimoli Shah: Will the interviews be virtual this year (for medicine)?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Shimoli, with the ongoing uncertain times due to COVID-19, it is most likely medicine interviews will remain online especially before the new year of 2021. Make sure to stay updated with the University about the setting of the interview but at the moment, interviews will more than likely carry on being online and virtual for medicine.

7. Chloe Somerwill: Hi Laura, how is the best way to prepare for an interview?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Chloe! I think the best thing to be before an interview is as confident as you can be, so there are some different ways to get to that point. I would recommend practicing with someone you feel comfortable with, whether that be a teacher or a family member. By practicing you will know what sort of answers to have for different possible questions, which will make you feel much more comfortable on the day of! You can get out all your nerves and then on the day of you will sound as confident as possible. I would also recommend doing some research on your course and the university - even if it doesn't get used in the interview, it will be useful to know.

8. Shimoli Shah: Will we get offered mock interviews as part of the Scholars programme?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Shimoli, I am not 100% sure so I have attached a link that allows you to contact the Scholars Team via a form or by calling them up. I would recommend you contact the team and ask this as they would be able to give you the information:
www.exeter.ac.uk/exeterscholars/contact/currentparticipants/.

9. Kieran Thornton: Hi, what sort of questions could I expect in a university interview? And how can I best prepare myself for them?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Kieran! Obviously this will vary from subject to subject, so I will give you a general idea of the best things to prepare for. Questions to think of some answers for would be: why that specific university? Why have you picked that specific course? Then I would make sure you know your personal statement inside and out - be prepared to elaborate on anything mentioned, especially if you include a specific book you've read or work experience you've had. In terms of how best to prepare for an interview, your end goal is to feel as confident as possible! Whether this be practicing in front of a mirror, with a teacher or a family member, make sure you feel comfortable answering these kinds of questions, and really selling yourself! This is an opportunity to show the university why they want to have you on the course. I hope this helps!

10. Millie H: Hi, what type of questions will we be asked and does the interviewer want short concise answers or detailed ones?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Millie! Obviously I can only give you a general idea of what the questions might be, but I would imagine they will ask you about your motivations to study the course, why you have picked the university, and to elaborate on various parts of your personal statement, such as previous experience and other things you have done to prepare to study the subject. I would say the best way to

approach answering interview questions, is to make sure they are detailed, but not too ramble-y – you want to show the interviewer you have thought about your answers beforehand.

11. Shimoli Shah: How do you suggest is the best way to prep for interviews?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Shimoli! The most important goal in preparing is to feel as confident as possible, so think about which method will work best for you. I do think practicing with someone you feel comfortable with is very important, whether that be a friend, family member or teacher. It can feel strange trying to sell your best bits at first, but the more you do it the more comfortable you will get! Think about the kind of answers you could have to typical questions, so that you have some answers prepared. Also make sure you know your personal statement inside and out so that you are ready to elaborate on those different things. I hope this helps!

12. freya wright: Hi! I was just wondering (I have no idea if you guys can answer this) if I meet the criteria for a contextual offer, will my application be based off of the offer for that or against the higher typical entry requirements? Thanks

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Freya, I am not able to answer this so I have attached a link that allows you to contact the Exeter Admissions Team via filling in an online enquiry form or by calling them up. I would recommend you contact the team and ask them this as they would be able to give you the correct information and answer any other questions you may have: www.exeter.ac.uk/admissions/.

13. Will Sherlock: Is it difficult balancing a part time job and studies at university?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Will, this choice will be entirely up to you. In my experience I wouldn't have the time to do a part time job that required long hours every week but through the Exeter Student Ambassador role, I am able to have a part time job that is flexible and works well with my degree hours. However, I also have friends who do longer shifts during the week at places like shops and restaurants in Exeter city that works with their degree hours. Therefore, I would say it isn't difficult if you pick a part time job that suits the contact and revision hours of your degree choice. Also, it can be a lovely way to meet new friends and get experience for your CV.

14. eleanor tucker: What is the most important thing to prepare for your interview?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Eleanor, I think the most important thing is to be as confident as possible, and so having answers prepared to typical questions will be really useful. If you know what you are going to say when you're in the interview, your answers will be clear, concise and to the point, and you will show you are taking the process seriously and are passionate about the opportunity. I hope this helps!

15. jessicapagano: what is in your opinion the hardest thing about preparing for uni?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Jessica, I would say this is down to each individual and their personal experience. For example, for me it was leaving my home and living by myself. Although I was excited, it was

also daunting. However, I know from other students that they couldn't wait to move to University and didn't find it difficult. Other things that can be hard is students worry about the jump from school/college to University courses. The work is a lot more intense and the difficulty increases but everyone will be able to get through that jump. Regardless, I would say that it is a lot more exciting preparing for University overall as it is a new chapter in a new place. Hope this helps.

16. freya wright: Whilst doing Exeter Scholars the suggestion of sending my Personal Statement to Exeter Uni to be looked at before applying has been discussed, I was wondering how I would go about doing this?
Thanks

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Freya, I am not 100% sure so I have attached a link that allows you to contact the Exeter Scholars Team via a form or by calling them up. I would recommend you contact the team and ask them this as they would be able to give you the information and send you the correct details of where to send your personal statement to: www.exeter.ac.uk/exeterscholars/contact/currentparticipants/.

17. Kristi Greenwood: What sort of questions should we expect in an interview?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Kristi, firstly this will vary from subject to subject but I will give you a general idea of the best things to prepare for on a wider scheme. Questions to think of some answers for would be: why that specific University? Why have you picked that specific course? Then I would make sure you know your personal statement inside and out. You must be prepared to elaborate on anything mentioned, especially if you include a specific book you've read or work experience you've had. This interview is an opportunity to show the University why they want to have you on the course. I hope this helps!

18. William Stokes: What are you looking for in an aspiring medical student when they attend an interview?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi William. Firstly this will vary from subject to subject and specifically to a medical student I am not 100% but I will give you a general idea of the best things to prepare for. Questions to think of some answers for would be: why that specific University? Why have you picked that specific course? Then I would make sure you know your personal statement inside and out. Be prepared to elaborate on anything mentioned, especially if you include a specific book you've read or work experience you've had. In terms of how best to prepare for an interview, your end goal is to feel as confident as possible! Whether this be practicing in front of a mirror, with a teacher or a family member, make sure you feel comfortable answering these kinds of questions, and really selling yourself! This is an opportunity to show the university why they want to have you on the course. I hope this helps.

19. William Stokes: Also, is there anything I can do to prepare for a medical school interview if I attain one?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi William, I think I answered this in your previous question. I would just emphasise that you want to make sure you know your personal statement off by heart, that you have researched the University regarding why you want to go there and researched your degree choice deciding specific modules or topics you are interested to learn about. This should differentiate you from other candidates.

20. mongairina: What is your t love kr to go to uni

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi, I'm sorry but I'm not quite sure what you're asking! If you want to send another message I would be more than happy to answer.

21. Stacey Cole: What is your best tip for university interviews?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Stacey, firstly when preparing for an interview make sure to understand what questions could come up within the interview. Of course this will vary from subject to subject, so I will give you a general idea of the best things to prepare for. Questions to think of some answers for would be: why that specific university? Why have you picked that specific course? Then I would make sure you know your personal statement inside and out. Be prepared to elaborate on anything mentioned and describe your points in more detail, especially if you include a specific book you've read or work experience you've had. In terms of how best to prepare for an interview, your end goal is to feel as confident as possible! Whether this be practicing in front of a mirror, with a teacher or a family member, make sure you feel comfortable answering these kinds of questions, and really make sure to sell yourself! This is an opportunity to show the university why they want to have you on the course. I hope this helps!

22. Anisha: how long do you have to wait to hear back from universities after an interview? (Thank you for your previous reply by the way)

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Anisha, I am not 100% sure about this so I have attached a link that allows you to contact the Exeter Admissions Team via filling in an online enquiry form or by calling them up. I would recommend you contact the team and ask them this as they would be able to give you the correct information and answer any other questions you may have: www.exeter.ac.uk/admissions/.

23. Abby McA: Are there any major faux pas with interviews? Normally I'd want to shake someone's hand etc. but obviously that isn't really an option now, so what do you think are the basic kind of 'small talk' things that you should or shouldn't do?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Abby, firstly as you will be doing an online interview you need to make sure regardless of being at home that you are dressed smartly and professionally. Secondly, make sure your background is appropriate and clear. As you can't shake an individual's hand, I would advise maybe asking them how they are or how their day has been. Also, make sure to ask questions at the end regarding the University or degree choice. This will let them know you are really interested in knowing more about the University as you have been restricted in visiting. Hope this helps.

24. Caitlin Wright: Do you have any good tips that could help with writing my final version of my personal statement?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Caitlin! From you saying your "final version" I'm guessing you already have a rough draft so I will tailor my tips to that - but do let me know if that's not the case! As you are finalising the

personal statement I would say to make sure every part of it is really selling yourself and helping to build a bigger picture of who you are. Some things can be really interesting, but might not be so relevant to this situation in particular. I remember struggling to cut down the words, so being concise is really important. If on the other hand, you're struggling to find things to fill it up, I would say to take some time to think about things outside of the box to include, especially if you think you don't have the "right" experience. People gain their interest in a subject from all sorts of different ways, and just because it is different to someone else, doesn't make it wrong! If anything, this will make you stick out when someone is reading them. I hope this helps!

25. Emma Lovering: Do you know any examples of courses at Warwick University which require an interview?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Emma! It has been a while since I went through the application process, and I did not look at Warwick, so I'm not too sure sorry! I would look on their website and the course specific pages and see if there is any info there. And don't be afraid to call up and ask! The universities want to have students, they're selling themselves to you as much as you are to them, and so they should be able to answer any questions like these.

26. Anisha: In regards to UCAS applications, how long on average would it take to know you have an interview or if you have been rejected?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Anisha, all individuals will hear back from UCAS at different times depending on their University choice, the degree they chose and when they submitted the application. Normally, you should have heard back from all your choices whether you were accepted, rejected or asked for an interview by the end of March, so for you March 2021. You can hear as late as the beginning of May but end of March is more likely. Also, each choice you applied for means you will hear back from them individually so will get the replies at differing times. Hope this helps!

27. Amina: Hi, if the university does not require interviews as a part of the process, would it be anything to worry about?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Amina - this is nothing to worry about! I know some universities just don't have it as part of their application process. It doesn't really say anything about the quality of the course or the chances of getting an offer – just that they organise things a little differently.

28. Abby McA: Do you think there's any difference, really, between Oxbridge interviews and those from other universities?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Abby, I am not 100% sure as I did not attend an Oxbridge interview but I would say the outline of the interviews are very similar. You want to sell yourself, elaborate on your personal statement and show you have researched the University and your degree choice. You could always email the Oxbridge Admission teams to see if their interview is different from other Universities. Hope this helps.

29. Sam de la Feuillade: What are common questions asked at these interviews?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Sam, firstly this will vary from subject to subject but I will give you a general idea of the best things to prepare for. Questions to think of some answers for would be: why that specific university? Why have you picked that specific course? Then I would make sure you know your personal statement inside and out. Be prepared to elaborate on anything mentioned and describe it in more detail, especially if you include a specific book you've read or work experience you've had. In terms of how best to prepare for an interview, your end goal is to feel as confident as possible! Whether this be practicing in front of a mirror, with a teacher or a family member, make sure you feel comfortable answering these kinds of questions, and really selling yourself! This is an opportunity to show the University why they want to have you on the course. I hope this helps.

30. Abby McA: How can I avoid sounding self-deprecating? I speak confidently but not downplaying myself is a lot harder - any ways to avoid that?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Abby! This is a really good question - it can be quite tricky at first to get used to this. I think practice is key in getting used to talking about yourself in this way. If you think about the skills you have and why you want/deserve to be on the course, and then write out some answers as if you were talking about your best friend or someone who you look up to. Remember - the interviewer wants to hear all your best parts, and they won't think it's strange or bragging for you to sell yourself in this way. I hope this helps!

31. Will Sherlock: is it better to have a broader personal statement or narrow it down to a specific subject?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi William, within your personal statement you want to be as specific as possible towards your degree choice. When writing your personal statement I would say to make sure every part of it is really selling yourself and helping to build a bigger picture of who you are. Some things can be really interesting, but might not be so relevant to this situation in particular. Remember to also be concise as that is really important. Make sure to discuss why you want to choose that specific course. If on the other hand, you're struggling to find things to fill it up, I would say to take some time to think about things outside of the box to include, especially if you think you don't have the "right" experience. People gain their interest in a subject from all sorts of different ways, and just because it is different to someone else, doesn't make it wrong! If anything, this will make you stick out when someone is reading them. I hope this helps!

32. Jayden Cox: How long should each interview take?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Jayden! I think it will really vary from place to place, so I can't give a definite answer. They won't be grilling you for hours though! They just want to hear more about you and what you have to offer.

33. Emily stent: Are there certain phrases we should avoid in an interview as they may have been overused?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Emily! I would say that it is less important if something is overused, and more important to make sure you back up everything you're saying! If the interviewer has heard "I'm really

passionate about this subject" all day, it won't matter if you say that too as long as you give personal reasons and evidence to help explain it. Make sure it is all personal to you. I hope this helps!

34. Angelica Almeida: Has the university started inviting medicine applicants for interviews? If not when do you think they will start?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Angelica! I'm not quite sure about this, but I would recommend contacting the department if you are worried about not having heard back so far. There's no harm in getting in touch, even if it is to ask any other questions too.

35. James Sullivan: Should you ask the interviewer any questions?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi James, this is a really great thing to think about. Coming up with some well thought out questions for the interviewer shows that you are serious about the opportunity and have done your research. Make sure that you don't ask questions that are easy to find online, but something more specific about the course, perhaps about opportunities for research with lecturers, the extra-curricular ways to build on your degree, or the department's plans in the future all show you are interested in the course and the university specifically.

36. Tilly Brambilla: What should be included in a personal statement?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Tilly! I think part of why the personal statement can seem tricky is it really is quite open - but hopefully I can still be helpful with my answer! You want to show your passion and interest for the subject, and show how you have demonstrated this in the past. This can be anything though, but examples could include a particular article you read, work experience you did, or even a conversation you had with someone who does something related to it, or something you've watched. As long as you can bring it back to the subject and show your interest, then that's great! If you can think of some of the things you are looking forward to doing more at university, this is also good to include, as it shows you've done some research into what actually studying the subject is like. I would also have a google on this, because there are loads of good resources online. I hope this helps!

37. Sam de la Feuillade: Should you ask any questions in your interview or should you only be answering questions?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Sam, during the interview I would answer the questions being asked towards you making sure to sell yourself as much as you can. However, at the end of the interview, they may ask you if you have any questions. If this is the case, I would definitely ask a few questions that I would prepare for the interview in advance as this makes you come across as interested in both them and the University. If they don't ask if you have any questions at the end, you can still ask them politely if it is ok to ask a few questions. Hope this helps!

38. Max Rickards: Hi Ellee, this isn't directly related to the topic but I was wondering what aspects you enjoy about your degree and what it is like studying a joint honours?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Max, I chose to study a degree with two subjects due to the variety of modules I would have. I knew I didn't want to study Mathematics full time so as I enjoyed Economics and it went well with Mathematics I knew it was a great option. The enjoyment of the degree is definitely the wide knowledge I gain from both a numbers and economical aspect. For example; I study the environment in both subjects but from different aspects. In Mathematics I cover the module "Mathematics of Climate Change" and in Economics I cover the module "Environmental Economics". This increased choice of modules is a big plus to doing a joint honours as it not only allows you to study two subjects but allows more variety within your degree.

39. Jayden Cox: Around when should interviews be taking place in the future?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Jayden, interviews can start as early as October 2020 but due these uncertain and complicated times due to COVID-19, this can change. All decisions by the University are set to be made by March 2021 regarding being accepted, rejected or asked to attend an interview. Therefore, interviews could take place any time from now but of course the interview will be online for the moment. Hope this helps.

40. jessicapagano: Hey, just wondering if my previous question has come through sorry I'm having some technical issues

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Jessica, I'm sorry to hear you're having problems! I have seen that your "hand is raised" but I'm fairly new to the programme myself so I'm not quite sure what I can do in response! I can't see any other questions though sorry - do keep trying though, hopefully they will come through soon!

41. Shimoli Shah: What sort of clubs and societies happen at Exeter that I can mention in why Exeter? Thank you

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Shimoli, there are over 300 societies and clubs at the University of Exeter. I have attached a link that allows you to look through the societies. I would definitely chose some societies that you would be interested in joining at the University and try to make sure to mention this. That would show you have done some research about University life and are proactively already starting to plan for if you got accepted into the University. Hope this helps. The link is: www.exeterguild.org/societies/.

42. Caitlin Wright: I still haven't even done my personal statement and I'm not 100% sure of the universities that I would like to apply to, should I be concerned that I'm behind?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Caitlin, I think part of why the personal statement can seem tricky is it really is quite open but hopefully I can still be helpful with my answer! Firstly, I would aim to have your personal statement and UCAS application completed and submitted by the end of December 2020. You want to show your passion and interest for the subject, and show how you have demonstrated this in the past. This can be anything though, but examples could include a particular article you read, work experience you did, or even a

conversation you had with someone who does something related to it, or something you've watched. As long as you can bring it back to the subject and show your interest, then that's great! If you can think of some of the things you are looking forward to doing more at university, this is also good to include, as it shows you've done some research into what actually studying the subject is like. I wouldn't be concerned as you still have time but I would say the earlier you start the more time you have.

43. Jayden Cox: Do any courses require any materials to be presented to the interviewers during the interview?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Jayden, I would say if any materials are required for interview they would be requested before so you are able to provide them during the interview. If you don't hear about anything then it is very likely you won't need any materials.

44. Kayleigh Chaffe: How long do the interviews go on for?

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Kayleigh! It's difficult to say for certain, as they may differ from subject to subject, or interviewer to interviewer. They just want to get to know you and hear more about why you want to study there, so they won't be grilling you for hours!

45. Caitlin Wright: Following from your answer to my first question about personal statements, no I do not yet have a rough draft, I am currently stressing about not doing it well to the point where I haven't even done it at all in the fear of doing it wrong and messing up my chances of getting into a good university

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Caitlin! I know that feeling - I still have it when it comes to writing essays at university! But that's completely ok that you haven't got a draft done yet, I would recommend getting started now though, and maybe speaking to a teacher you feel comfortable with about your worries. A great first step is writing out a mind map of all the reasons why you might be interesting in studying something - is it the content? What you want to do after university? Skills you want to develop? Maybe you haven't been able to study it before, and so that's why you want to do it at university. Then think about where this interest came from, and once you've got all those ideas, I would write them all out, as if you were talking to someone you trust about this. Once you've got your ideas on a page, it's much easier to refine it and make it sound good. Starting is the hardest part I promise - everything after gets easier! I hope this helps.

46. Abby McA: Is there anything good to make sure you mention when it comes to an interview?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Abby, firstly this will vary from subject to subject but I will give you a general idea of the best things to prepare for and mention in an interview. I would make sure you know your personal statement inside and out. Be prepared to elaborate on anything mentioned and describe it in more detail, especially if you include a specific book you've read or work experience you've had. In terms of how best to prepare for an interview, your end goal is to feel as confident as possible! Whether this be practicing in front of a mirror, with a teacher or a family member, make sure you feel comfortable answering these kinds of questions. During the interview, make sure you include anything you have that makes you stand out. For example some work experience, volunteering, research or a scheme you participated in. Elaborate and

say why this benefitted you and the skills you gained. Remember, this is an opportunity to show the university why they want to have you on the course so sell yourself!

47. Luiseach Gillespie: What's your advice on how to make personal statements not sound too wordy or waffle-y? I'm trying to perfect mine at the moment and need to condense it

* Student Ambassador01 2: Hi Luiseach! Whenever I'm trying to write something as concisely as possible, I always separate it up into individual sentences and go one by one. Each time I check to see if there are any sentences that say basically the same thing, or if I could make two sentences into one by connecting the two ideas. I did this for my personal statement and still do so today for university essays! I hope this helps!

48. Jayden Cox: Do Universities ever give conditional offers before offering an interview?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Jayden, I am not able to answer this so I have attached a link that allows you to contact the Exeter Admissions Team via filling in an online enquiry form or by calling them up. I would recommend you contact the team and ask them this as they would be able to give you the correct information and answer any other questions you may have: www.exeter.ac.uk/admissions/.

49. * Student Ambassador01 2: Thanks very much for taking part in today's online forum; I hope you've found it useful! Details of the next session can be found at www.exeter.ac.uk/exeterscholars/currentparticipants/liveonlineqaforums/. If you have questions in the meantime, please contact the Exeter Scholars team, who will be happy to help: www.exeter.ac.uk/exeterscholars/contact/currentparticipants/.