HOW TO...

SUCCEED IN PGCE INTERVIEWS

All short listed candidates are interviewed. The selection procedure could include group discussions, presentations, tests as well as individual interviews.

Information you should be aware of:

You need to keep up-to-date with current developments in education. You need to be familiar with proposals outlined in government documents. Recently the TDA website has been removed and all information regarding teacher training can be found on http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching

PGCE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Examples are from admissions tutors and students about interview topics and questions:

GENERAL:

- Explain more about why you want to teach
- Introduce yourself to me – what has brought you to this point of applying for a PGCE
- What is your understanding of the role of a teacher?
- How would you rate your personal organisation skills and give some examples?
- How will you be able to cope with the intensity of the PGCE course?
- 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.
- Talk about a recent educational issue, what's your opinion?
- What makes an effective teacher?
- What additional skills can you bring to teaching?
- 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
- Give an example from school observation where you have learned something
- What would you do in the case of a racial incident at school? How would you deal with it?
- What skills from your course can you bring to teaching?

Need more support from the College of Social Sciences careers team? See http://bitly.com/careersnetwork

- Access the electronic version of this handout
- Book appointments for 1:1 careers advice
- Book a CV check at the CV and applications clinic
- Attend a workshop on topics such as interviews and CVs
- Get individual advice on internships and undergraduate bursaries for unpaid experience

Updated August 2012
• In your work experience did you ever have an example of a child being racist or sexist? How did you deal with it?
• What strengths do you have to be a teacher?
• What are your areas of weakness in teaching?
• What do you know about the National Curriculum?
• What is your understanding of the big issues facing schools and teachers today?

PRIMARY:

• 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?
• How confident are you in maths?
• What do you think is the importance of playtime?
• Who is your favourite children’s author and why?

SECONDARY:

• 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?
• What would you teach as a first lesson to a year 7 class… how would you go about it?
• 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?
• What do you know about the exam specifications in your subject?

SELECTION PROCEDURES

The examples below are a guide only, intended to show the variety of selection procedures currently used. Admissions tutors change the process regularly, so do not expect selection processes to be the same next year.

University of Birmingham (secondary):

Varies with subject area:

**English**: Presentation to a small group of candidates, followed by a group discussion. 30-60 minutes interview. Written task.

**German**: 90 minute one-to-one, 30-40 minutes in German. Written tasks in both German and English.

**Geography**: 45 minute interview, by two tutors and a written task.

**History**: Students make a 5 minute presentation on an education related topic of your choosing, 30 minute written task. 30 minute interview.
**History with Citizenship:** Same as History

**Maths:** Dependant on the number of applicants, involves a group and an individual interview. Up to 60 minutes for the group interview and 20 minutes for the individual interview. Two tasks are given, one mathematical and the other related to an article on education.

**Modern Foreign Languages:** Normally a one hour one-to-one interview, conducted in the foreign language(s). Teaching related written tests in the foreign language and English.

**PE:** Usually includes a group talk and questions, presentations by candidates, written task and individual interview.

**RE:** 40 minute interview by tutor and a partner teacher, practical element and written task.

**Science: Biology:** One hour group interview, 30 minute individual interview. Other activities vary, writing task and discussion always involved.

**Science: Chemistry:** Candidate to teach a short lesson, participate in group discussion, individually answer some science problems and complete a written task. Half hour interview.

**Science: Physics:** Candidate to teach a short lesson, participate in group discussion, individually answer some science problems and complete a written task. Half hour interview.

**University of Birmingham (primary):**

Selection day: English test (half an hour on a given topic related to teaching), maths test KS2 Level, individual 30 minute interview. Questions: linked to personal statement, usually includes a question on contemporary issues, questions on your skills and interests, equality of opportunity and the suitability of your academic profile.

**Examples from other Institutions:**

**Primary examples:**

1. Individual (20 minute) interview. Written task – unseen question based on a press cutting (sent to the candidate in advance). ‘Write, from a teacher’s point of view about the arguments for and against national tests. Do you think parents and governors would agree with your points of view?’ (20 minutes) Group task: produce a chart poster to show your main ideas about the given book could be used to support teaching and learning in any area of the national curriculum. Groups of 4/5 – at the end each person has to give a 5 minute presentation to the panel and other candidates of how they would use the book.

2. Group discussion
Presentation – 2 minute talk on a worthwhile learning activity you observed. Explain the significant aspects of the experience and the implications for your own teaching in the classroom. Individual interview. Written task

3. Group exercise: Take an artifact from this or another country and discuss how you would use it in the classroom.

Updated August 2012
Secondary examples

1. As part of selection, candidates spend one day in a school and the school send an assessment form to University. A second day is organised, which includes an interview with a subject specialist and a local head, a short presentation to other PGCE candidates, a written test and an ICT audit.

2. Talk from admissions staff. English test – half an hour e.g. – write a piece, correct a child’s work. Group discussion e.g. what makes a good teacher in groups of 8. Five minute presentation in front of others candidates in the group of 8 e.g. a classroom encounter and what they learned from it. Tour. Individual interview with one of: tutor, local head, admissions tutor. PE candidates additionally have to take part in sports activities.

3. Geography: In advance:
Requested to bring notes/impressions of one Geography lesson from observations done in school. Complete a subject knowledge profile in advance
On the day:
- Information session/discussion – key features of PGCE
- Individual interview – 20-30 minutes. Interview themes to be covered:
  - Your view/experience of geography e.g. relevance of your degree to the National Curriculum
  - Other prior experience e.g. what skills have you developed that will be relevant to teaching/ your experiences with young people
  - Recent school experience e.g. your impressions of geography teaching in secondary schools
  - Your own ideas about teaching e.g. using a secondary class you observed recently suggest a topic which

4. English with Drama
Pre interview: Complete an online initial needs assessment, which asks what you have studies e.g. prose, poetry, drama, biographies etc and about your IT skills and grammar etc.) Prepare a 5 minute presentation on a topic of your choice. Write 500 words of reflective writing – on any experience that has affected you.

On the day – Group interview for 1.5 hours. Individual interview 10-15 minutes.

5. Secondary Drama/ Music/Maths
Selection day includes
- an introduction to the course,
- student presentation of subject knowledge (usually live presentations where you take the role of a new teacher and present to the class for 5 minutes - to 2 assessors who act as KS3 pupils),
- observation and reflection of subject teaching,
- written task,
- personal interview.

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

Updated August 2012