

NERC DTP PANORAMA PHD INTERVIEWS

COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS

During the interviews we are trying to assess the skills and attitudes of the shortlisted candidates. A recognized way to assess these is through the use of competency based questions that allow the candidate to describe a situation where she or he have shown the required skill/attitude, what the task was, how they acted in that situation, and what the result of the situation was and how they reflect on it. The method is based on the idea that previous behaviour is a better indicator for future behaviour than hypothetical situation.

This is sometimes summarized as the STAR interview technique (although it can also be applied by candidates to answer questions). The candidate is free to give examples from own experience.

During the interview the candidate should be asked about:

- A situation in the recent past where he/she demonstrated a required skill
- A defined role or task
- Actual behaviour
- With a probable and clear result

Situation

- Can you describe a situation where you have shown a certain attribute/skill?
- Who were involved?

Task

- What was your specific task or role?
- What was the (formal) goal?
- What did you want to achieve

Action

- What did you say?
- What did you do?
- What was your contribution?

Result and reflect

- What was the end result?
- What effect did you have?
- What would you change in the future?
- What did you learn?

Example

Skill to test: Perseverance

S: can you give an example of a situation where you wanted to give up, but persevered? This can be either in your studies or in your private life.

T: Can you explain what you wanted to achieve?

A: What did you do to achieve your goal

R: Did it work? Would you do the same in the future? What did you learn from this?

SKILLS

The required skill set for NERC facing students within Panorama likely vary widely, but can perhaps be generalized as

Scientific Knowledge	Educational and career background within the research field of the PhD project including technical and research skills. These can be assessed through previous degrees and relevant experience outside university, specific tests and the selection interview.
Analytical Thinking	Ability to divide a complex scenario into its constituent parts in order to study these parts and to come up with solution strategies.
Conceptual thinking	Ability to identify patterns and connections between facts and to identify underlying concepts.
Creativity	Ability to generate new and creative concepts and approaches.
Intellectual Curiosity	Intrinsic interest in the question at hand.
Project Management	Ability to plan and organise the PhD project.
Presentation and Communication	Ability to effectively transfer an idea to others.
Language	The level of spoken and written language to communicate.
Scientific integrity	Adherence to moral and ethical principles.

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

Each Panorama candidate will go through three 15-minute interviews. We have scheduled 20-minutes for each interview to allow for candidate change-over and some flexibility. Each interview panel will consist of 2 staff members who will assess the candidate independently. The scores of all interviewers will be combined to define the offer list for the studentships. We will apply a weighting to the different components of the interviews.

Theme Panel

This panel will test discipline-specific knowledge acquired through coursework and research in the discipline. While the results from previous degrees will be part of the assessment, research skills go beyond the performance in coursework. These interviews are likely not suited for the competency-based questions described above. The panel should probe:

- Ability to **communicate** effectively about their past research (e.g. UG or PGT research project, internships) – the interview invitation will tell students to prepare to talk about their current or past research project.
- Ability to **convey complex information** to a diverse audience
- **Specific knowledge/skills in the subject area** of the PhD project including specific approaches, the wider relevance of the project in the research field and the contribution this project could deliver
- **Motivation** to work on this project

This panel should also judge the previous qualifications regarding research potential based on the application documentation.

Skill Panels

Each candidate will have two interviews with skills panels that look for specific, non-project related personal attributes that are beneficial for a successful researcher.

Skill-Panel A

- **Analytical Skills** - Ability to synthesize and understand complex content, problem solve, consider the big picture while managing details, apply advanced research methods
- **Project Management and Resilience** - Ability to balance multiple tasks simultaneously, deal with project setbacks and manage supervisors
- **Communication**

Skill-Panel B

- **Creativity and Innovation** – Ability to find creative and innovative approaches to problem solving
- **Intellectual curiosity** – Interest in the wider impact of research and the research project
- **Ability/Willingness to adapt to skill requirements** – Ability to adapt to new challenges and accrue new skills and knowledge.
- **Communication**

Scoring

Each panel member should score the candidate independently on the areas considered by the panel.

The Theme Panel members should also score the previous achievements and research potential based on the application documentation, ideally before the interview.

Scoring should be reported through a provided online form to aid score collation.

Scoring will be out of 10 with 0 (unappointable) and 10 (outstanding). Please try to use a wide range of marks to allow differentiation of candidates. A panel will interview all candidates in a recruitment unit so scores should be consistent between competing candidates.

The individual weighting of the panels will be

Subject-specific skills	20%
Previous achievements	10%
Skill Panel A	35%
Skill Panel B	35%

Studentships will be awarded based on the cumulative score of the candidates from all panels. For candidates with the same combined score we will discuss with the interview panels and use shortlisting information if available. The ranking list will determine the order of the offers to the candidates.