

Devonshire Tips

Competency-based interviews

Competency-based interviews are increasingly used by companies wishing to gain a fuller insight into how well-suited an applicant is to their vacancy, in terms of their skills and demonstrable experience.

Traditional interviews focus on the past and prior experiences of an interviewee – competency-based interviews give an insight into an individual's preferred style of working and help to predict their future behaviour.

Competency-based questions are interview questions that require you to provide real life examples as the basis of your answers. You should avoid giving overly generalised or broad answers. Instead, you should use specific situations from your life as examples. You will need to explain why you made certain decisions, how you took action and why certain outcomes took place. These questions are particularly helpful for graduates who may lack years of work experience, but could use other real life examples (such as situations faced in university) to demonstrate their skills and approach to tackling situations.

A typical interview in this style will assess you against each essential criteria or competency in turn, posing questions about:

- **Past behaviours and performance**
- **Learning from past behaviours**
- **Future adaptability to new post**
- **Knowledge and understanding of issues in relation to the post**

Questions are likely to begin with “Give me an example of when...”, “Tell me about a situation where you...” or “Please describe an occasion when...”. You will need to go into detail in your answers – one or two word answers will not be enough! The type of competencies against which you will be assessed will depend upon the actual role and the priorities of the person interviewing you.

Some examples of competency-based interview questions:

- **Tell us about the biggest change that you have had to deal with. How did you cope with it? (assesses adaptability)**
- **Tell us about a time when you had to deal with a conflict within your team. (assesses conflict management skills)**
- **Describe a situation where you had to change your approach half-way through a project or task. (assesses flexibility)**
- **Have you ever been asked to do something illegal, immoral or against your principles? What did you do? (assesses integrity)**
- **Describe a project or situation where you had to use different leadership styles to reach your goal. (assesses leadership skills)**
- **Tell us about your biggest failure. How did you recover and what have you learnt from that incident? (assesses resilience)**
- **Describe a situation in which you were a member of team. What did you do to positively contribute to it? (assesses teamwork)**