

PREPARE FOR THE JOB INTERVIEW!

When you get invited to a job interview it means that the company is interested in you specifically as a potential candidate for the student assistant position or internship. Hence, it is important that you are well-prepared so that you can convince the company's employees that they made the right decision.

No two job interviews are the same

Job interviews differ widely, so it is important to check how your job interview will play out. Who will participate, and how many? If it does not say so in your invitation you should get in touch with the company and ask. It is perfectly fine to call the company and inquire about the job and the course of the interview to help you get ready. This also goes to prove your interest in the job, and that you are trying to prepare as best you can.

In addition, ask whether there is something in particular that you ought to prepare for, and whether the interview will involve any tests. This allows you to prepare in the best possible manner and organise your time most expediently on the day of the actual interview.

Often a job interview will include one or more of your future co-workers as well as a management representative.

Do some research

Gather as much information about the company and the job as possible through the media, your network and Google. Familiarise yourself with their products and core services so that you can talk to the representatives about what they do. Moreover, your knowledge demonstrates your interest in this company specifically.

Searching for information about the people you will be meeting at the job interview is also a good idea, e.g. on LinkedIn. Check whether they share your area of specialisation or not. This is crucial to the extent to which you may use technical terms during the interview.

Spot your strengths and weaknesses

Your research will also help you analyse your way to your three most important professional respectively personal strengths in relation to the job. Identify success stories that confirm these strengths from your academic projects, student jobs, volunteer work or similar settings. It may be situations/assignments during which you achieved good results and/or received positive feedback. Use this template for inspiration in order to facilitate your preparations:

Problem: What was the problem/the assignment/the situation?


Handling: What did you do to solve the problem? What was the solution? What role did you play?

Result: What was the result? What did your results yield, and to what effect?

Consider whether this scenario may be used in your presentation.

Rehearse your presentation

During most interviews the company will ask you to briefly talk about yourself. So



rehearse a brief presentation of up to a couple of minutes. Build up your presentation around your professional and personal strengths in relation to the job. Avoid going into detail about family, travels, primary school and other things that are not immediately relevant to the execution of the job.

Rehearse the difficult questions

Do not bring up your weaknesses during the job interview, but brace yourself that the selection board may inquire about them. During an interview at a Danish company it is perfectly normal to talk about weaknesses – for example to show that you learn from your mistakes. They may also ask, “Why are your marks in a certain course so poor?” or, “What is your motivation to work with us specifically?” Consider in advance what the worst thing they could ask about would be, and prepare your answer. Please bear in mind that searching questions may be a sign of interest.

- What would be your ideal monthly wage? At some point they will ask you. Contact IDA if you need to know the market price of student assistants.
- Bring along your diplomas, recommendations and statements, if applicable.
- Make a reference list, for instance with co-workers and managers from a previous position/student job, internship

(if applicable), etc. Your references should be able to talk about you as an employee and a colleague – make sure you choose the ones who will speak highly of you.

- Make a list of questions to ask during the interview. This will also allow you to demonstrate your interest in the job.

ENSURE A PROPER INTERVIEW COURSE

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Once the selection board has selected you for an interview, it is a sign that they consider you professionally qualified. However, your professional qualifications will only be decisive for a successful outcome in 20 per cent of the interviews. As far as the majority of interviews go, you will be selected because of your personality, that the manager likes you, and that you fit into the department. Hence, a good job interview is also about making a good impression.

Even though no two job interviews are the same, they often play out in four phases. However, the order may vary, so it is important to listen and be well-prepared for all the phases.

The contact phase

The selection board has often read your application and CV in advance and already then tried to form an impression of you. This impression will be confirmed or disproven during the interview. Hence, it is crucial that you confirm their positive impression of you from the start by establishing a good atmosphere. Analyses show that we typically hire people similar to us. Browse the company website for hints as to how the company presents itself. Is their style more laid back or formal? Adapt your appearance to their style on the day of the interview and make sure that you do not

overdress. This way you will already look like their future co-worker. Start out by cordially greeting the selection board, and be obliging to a bit of small-talk. The initial talk helps establish mutual trust, but after that you typically cut to the chase.

The information phase

The selection board will often present the company, the department and the job as they go. Pay attention to what they choose to emphasise. Inquire into details about the job. What assignments carry most significance? What challenges and goals will the company be facing during the year to come? As a candidate it is considered quite normal to ask questions and be proactive. This shows that you understand what the job entails. The purpose of this phase is to give you as much information about the job as possible. This information will make it easier for you to communicate in an appropriate and goal-oriented manner and to later argue that you are the one they are looking for.

The argumentation phase

The company wants to know how you can contribute value in your position. This is where you will need the good arguments that you have been rehearsing beforehand. They will probe into whether you have understood the job and are self-aware.

HOW COMPANIES ASSESS YOU

The company decides whether you are the right person for the job during the interview.

Of course several factors are at play – professional as well as personal, but it is as much a question of how you present yourself and your motivation for seeking the job.

In a survey conducted by the consultancy Ballisager on company recruitment trends, 70 per cent state that motivation for the job is the most significant asset. In addition, a number of factors influence the job interview. The most important thing is “that the candidate is able to communicate what they may contribute” (50 per cent) and “that the candidate seems open and obliging” (45 per cent).

The Ballisager survey is available at www.ida.dk





NNE Pharmaplan

MEET THE COMPANY FACE TO FACE

NNE Pharmaplan is an international consulting engineering company specialised in the pharmaceutical industry. Every year, the company hires many international and Danish students.

NNE Pharmaplan has around 2,000 employees and engagements all over the world, making it very popular with many students looking for a job, an internship or a partner for their final thesis. This also means that the company receives many applications annually from Danish or international students who wish to spend some time with the company to improve their skills.

“We would like to attract the talented students, and we do not distinguish between the Danish and the international ones. We are a very international company employing people from many countries”, says Jens Olesen, Vice President, Facility Design.

He feels that many international students are so eager to merely get a job that they send out standardised applications and CVs, but that is not the way to get on board with NNE Pharmaplan, he emphasises.

Standard applications – no thanks

“If it looks like a copy-paste application it is of no interest to us, but if you target your application towards our business, telling us why you want to work for NNE Pharmaplan and what you have to offer, it is a different matter. The best thing, however, is to meet in person”, says Jens Olesen.

Hence, he encourages international stu-

dents to show up for education and job fairs at DTU, IDA or other settings where companies and students have a chance to get acquainted. Here you can meet the company and their employees and have a chat before you apply for a position with them.

“It is an advantage to have met us and gotten a sense of what we work with and that we are not as ‘formal’ as at least some international students expect. As a rule, it pays off – also at the job interview – to lay it on the line and brace yourself that we will inquire into your strengths, but also your weaknesses. No one masters it all”, Jens Olesen emphasises.

Learn some Danish

In an internationally oriented company like NNE Pharmaplan a lot of communication is in English. Even so, Jens Olesen recommends that the international candidates learn some Danish. Partly because it signals interest and commitment, and partly because the ability to strike up a conversation with clients or co-workers in the canteen may be beneficial. In other respects an international background is only a plus.

“Operating all over the world as we do, it is an advantage that our employees speak

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Vice President, Facility Design, Jens Olesen



the language and understand the culture. It lends you that extra competitive edge on top of your professional competences which of course are still the main thing. And with so many nationalities in one company you will always feel welcome, and we can all learn from each other”, says Jens Olesen. He likes to encourage students to contact NNE Pharmaplan if for instance the topic of their final thesis may be relevant to the company.

“Work out a thesis statement to see whether it might be a suitable match for us. We are always open to young people with good ideas and a knack for spotting market trends – for example within new areas such as new technologies, social media, etc.” Finally, Jens Olesen points out that a great deal of the company’s recruitment for general positions happens among former student assistants and interns. Many of those who have done an internship or worked at NNE Pharmaplan during their studies will later be offered a permanent position.

Good advice from NNE Pharmaplan:

- Familiarise yourself with our company. Investigate whether we would be a good match.
- Target your job-seeking efforts. Why would you like to work for us specifically – what do you have to offer, and vice versa?
- Make an appearance at job and education fairs.