

POSTDOC AND FELLOWS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Tailored support and development for postdocs, fellows and clinicians

Guidance for panellists

Thank you for agreeing to be part of a mock interview panel. This is an invaluable learning opportunity for both the candidate and the panellists. To help facilitate a realistic and helpful mock interview, and to prepare panellists for understanding their role, we have created this guidance document.

Mock interview panels are chaired by a member of PFDC staff, who will be on hand to guide you through the process. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any queries.

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1. Before the interview

We will send out an email requesting panel members. This will contain a doodle link with the date and the time of the mock interview.

We aim to make efficient use of your time, so there is limited preparation required. Please read all the documents you have been sent, and take some time to think about what, in your opinion, the employers might be looking for. **There is no requirement for you to prepare any questions yourself.**

Please ensure, too, that you have sufficient time booked on the day. Our goal is that the whole mock interview process should take an hour and a half. Please allow time before and after the mock – either to get to the room or to setup the technology.

2. On the day

Getting set up

Please turn up promptly. The candidate will most likely be nervous and will want to get going.

The interview will be chaired by a member of PFDC staff. Mock interview panels consist of approximately three or four people. There will be a chance for you to meet the rest of the panel before the interview begins.

Online: The link for Zoom or MS Teams will be on the calendar invite. Please make sure your camera and microphone work well and that your connection is stable.

Face to face: Please bring a pen and be on time – instructions to find the room are on the emails and calendar invites.

Once everything is set up, the candidate will be sent out of the room/be put in the waiting room. At this point, interview questions will be divided up between the panel by the Chair. The PFDC will provide a list of prepared interview questions tailored to the candidate's job application, so there is no requirement for you to prepare any questions yourself.

The question sheet is a resource for you during the interview, and you are welcome to annotate it. Most panellists use the sheet to record feedback.

Note: if you print any of the applicant's materials you are required to shred it after attending the mock interview and you can leave them with the chair, and they will do that.

The interview

The candidate is then asked to enter the room and settle. The Chair will welcome the candidate and facilitate introductions. This creates a more formal atmosphere, to replicate what a real interview feels like.

If the candidate has decided to practice a presentation, this will be done first – up to a maximum of ten minutes. Please make a few notes to give the candidate feedback on their presentation.

The panel can now begin asking the prepared questions, and the Chair will keep an eye on the time.

During the interview it may be necessary to miss out questions if the candidate is giving full answers. Please follow the chair's instructions regarding follow-up questions.

Once all the prepared questions have been asked, the Chair will then ask the candidate if they have any questions for the panel. It is not expected that panellists will be able to answer them, but it is useful to know what, if anything, the candidate intends to ask at the end of the real interview.

Feedback

At the end of the formal part of the process, the Chair send the candidate out of the room/put them in the waiting room for a few minutes, so that the panel can coordinate their feedback.

The aim is for the panel to agree on two or three overarching points of feedback. For example, the candidate presents confidently, and their answers are well structured, but they need to do more background research on the employer.

The Chair will invite the candidate back into the room and start by asking them how they felt the mock interview went.

The Chair will provide the overarching feedback and then ask the panellists to **deliver specific feedback on the questions that they asked**. This might be done in sequence, question by question, or the Chair might choose to focus on priorities for discussion.

It is quite normal for candidates to find the mock interview tough, so please be mindful of this. Ensure that your feedback is specific and that you are clear **what you are asking the candidate to do differently** – panels can't just tell a candidate what they're doing wrong; they need to offer practical solutions as well. When you're delivering your feedback, remember to keep an eye on the candidate to check if they understand what you are saying.

Lastly, remember to wish the candidate good luck for the interview!

3. Why take part in PFDC Mock Interviews?

The Candidate - at the end of the mock the candidate will be better able to:

- Deliver their interview presentation
- Answer interview questions
- Recognise areas for improvements in presenting and answering questions through feedback from the panel
- Apply the feedback received in the next mock or real interview

A Panellist - the panellists will actively participate in the mock interview.

This will enable panellists to be better able to:

- Gain/improve awareness of the types of questions that are asked at any interview
- Evaluate the common mistakes made in answering interview questions
- Assess solutions to improve in answering interview questions
- Self-assess their own interview skills to identify how to improve
- Practice: how to give constructive feedback to the candidate

4. Expectation of the panel member and non-attendance of mock interviews

Our expectations for a mock panellist are that you commit to attend the full length of the interview (1h30), that you only sign up if you can make this commitment, that you keep all materials that you use confidential and that you arrive on time.

We understand that things change, and you might have unexpected things happening so please inform the PFDC team as soon as possible if you can no longer attend the mock interview you were scheduled for.

The PFDC will share the candidate's materials with the panellists – these documents are highly confidential, cannot be used for any other purposes and should be deleted after the mock interview. We ask you to please delete all documents for both data protection and fairness.

When you don't attend a mock interview:

- it is not fair for the candidate – who is expecting to be interviewed by a full panel
- it is not fair for the other members on the panel list that could have signed up in your place

If you fail to attend a mock interview which you signed up for (with or without informing the PFDC team) **three times** we will suspend you from the panel list for 3 months.

5. Key do's and don'ts for panellists

Do – be positive and constructive. If you're pointing out where improvement can be made, let the candidate know what you liked about their interview first, then tell them what could be improved, making positive suggestions on how to do this.

Don't – just list what you think the candidate did wrong.

Do – give one/two pieces of constructive feedback per answer.

Don't – inundate or bombard the candidate with criticism or point out more than they can take on board in the circumstances.

Do – communicate feedback in a measured tone to give candidates the best chance of being able to take in what you're saying.

Don't – rush feedback in order to communicate as much as possible.

Do – make sure that feedback stays positive. If it's necessary to give firm critique, try to ensure that one panellist continues to point out what went well.

Don't – play 'bad cop, bad cop'!

Do – respect the opinions of your fellow panellists.

Don't – talk over, disagree with, interrupt, or repeat the comments of fellow panellists.

Do – be mindful of the candidate's feelings. Think about how you like to receive constructive feedback and try to act accordingly. Try to read the mood of your candidate: some people respond well to a little 'tough love', others don't. Try to read the signals and back off if the candidate is beginning to look upset or flustered.

Don't – overwhelm the candidate.