

Nurses Thinking about your career: Interviews



Member Support Services



Royal College of Nursing

Professional care for
caring professionals

Interviews

An interview is essentially a performance with success depending on careful preparation and practice. The guidance to follow will help you with your preparation.

Be prepared for your interview

- Go through the person specification and job description carefully.
- Underline all the skills, experience and personal attributes required for the role. Look back on your training and experience and list examples that show how you meet the requirements for the post.
- Practice the possible interview questions within this publication.
- Use the STAR technique – Situation, Target, Action, Result – to help you reflect on examples that demonstrate you have the competences outlined in the person specification.
- Update your portfolio and take it to your interview.
- Familiarise yourself with the trust or organisations values and how you fit into these
- Arrange a mock interview with a friend, senior colleague or careers adviser. Ask for constructive feedback and practise again if necessary.
- Prepare some questions for the interview panel to demonstrate your interest in the role.
- Try to arrange an informal visit, where you can talk to staff, get some answers to your questions and assess whether the post and environment will meet your needs.
- Make sure you are up to date with national initiatives in health care.

STAR technique

Situation

Explain what the situation was

Target

What did you need to achieve?

Action

What steps did you put into place to make this happen?

Result

NHS - Value Based Recruitment (VBR)

NHS Employers in England are working on Value Based Recruitment (VBR) following the Francis inquiry. Values are beliefs about what is important. When preparing for your interview, it would be helpful to familiarise yourself with how your values and behaviours fit with the NHS organisational values. Employers are seeking recruits who can demonstrate values such as wanting to treat people with respect, kindness, compassion and dignity, as well as being passionate about quality. These values may be assessed in role play, written responses to scenarios or verbally. Further information can be found at:

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/features/2014/june/

Research

If you need to research information on relevant topics, the RCN Library can help. It is home to Europe's largest nursing specific collection of books, journals and journals and e-resources. The team can also do literature searches for you. See www.rcn.org.uk/library

Dealing with interview nerves

Whether you're going for your first or 31st interview, nerves affects us all. Your interviewers will understand this, but there are ways to lessen the symptoms and help ensure that you are able to give your best.

Preparation

The night before

Check you have all your paperwork and know your route to the interview venue.

Lay out your clothes and try to take some time before bed to unwind and get an early night.

The morning of the interview

- Try to eat some breakfast.
- Have one last look at your interview paperwork, but don't try to cram.
- Leave plenty of time to get to the interview.
- When you arrive, don't be embarrassed to ask for a glass of water or the opportunity to freshen up.
- Take deep breaths, filling your lungs, to help control adrenaline.
- Employ logic to beat nervous thoughts. Any interview question should be treated exactly as you would treat a job situation, because that's exactly what the question represents.



During the interview

- Remember to smile. Smiling releases endorphins, which make us feel better.
- Maintain open body language and eye contact and try to avoid nervous fidgeting.
- If you don't catch a question, ask for it to be repeated.
- Take time to consider your answers and don't be afraid of natural pauses in the flow of conversation.
- Speak slowly as nerves generally make us talk faster.
- Focus outward and not inward. The more you focus on what's going on in your body the bigger your worries become. Try looking at something ahead and notice the detail or concentrate on listening to the interviewers.

Example interview questions

Forms of assessment used by the interview panel

Employers may use other forms of assessment beyond the traditional interview format. These may include written tests, role plays, structured observations and group discussions. Please see the separate **Thinking About Your Career: Assessment Centres**.

After the interview

Don't over analyse – you have done your best. Dwelling on past performances can be detrimental to future interviews. Take some time out before returning to your normal routine.

Ultimately, even if you are unsuccessful this time, every interview is a learning process that helps you to improve in the future. Requesting feedback from the panel will help with this process.

Below are some questions that you could be asked.

- Why do you want the job/what attracted you to the post?
- Tell us about a recent situation where you were required to use your own initiative.
- How do you cope with pressure/stress?
- What makes a good team player/ what role do you play in a team environment?
- Please give an example of a situation where you have collaborated with the multidisciplinary team.
- How would you ensure you provide high quality care?
- Please describe your involvement in teaching/ how would you help to create a learning environment?
- How do you keep up to date?
- What do you think are the main risks in this area of nursing? How could you minimise those risks?
- How do you resolve frustrations at work?
- Tell us about a national government initiative in nursing and how it could apply to this role.
- What do you think is the biggest challenge facing nurses in the NHS today? How can we deal with this?

You don't need to be an expert on every aspect of health care development and policy. Read summary documents on major initiatives and get help from the RCN. See www.rcn.org.uk/library and www.rcn.org.uk/publications for a range of clinical publications.

Scenario questions

- What would you do if you found a patient in cardiac arrest?
- During the medication round you see that several of the drugs on the previous drug round have not been signed for. What would you do?
- What would you do if you visited a vulnerable client at home, who was unable to get out on their own and you were unable to get a response when you knocked on the door?
- How would you deal with a relative who was aggressive and verbally abusive?
- What would you do if you visited a family at home and were concerned about the safety of a child?
- What would you do if a patient told you he wanted to make a complaint about their nursing care

- What would you do if you were the only nurse on duty when:
 - > a patient falls out of bed
 - > a member of the domestic staff cuts themselves on broken glass
 - > you notice that drugs are missing
 - > a patient complains that their belongings have been stolen?
- What would you do if a colleague told you they had made a drug error?

Difficult questions

Example:

“What is your weakness?” / “Describe a time when things haven’t gone to plan.”

Try to turn a negative into a positive. Demonstrate insight and reflection, whilst focusing on the past rather than the present. Finish with what you learned from the experience.

Example:

“In the past, I have had a tendency to try to take on too much, but I have dealt with this by learning how to delegate responsibilities, prioritise by writing lists, planning my day in advance, and attending a time-management course.”

Remember, as you will be new to the job, you can discuss possible weaknesses in terms of support that will help you adapt, such as a good induction programme, or a short course on skill development, such as IV administration.

Example:

“What is the difference between Equality and Diversity? / “What does equality/diversity mean to you?”

Try to avoid saying, “treating everybody in the same way,” as this can appear over-simplistic. This question is usually about equality of access to services and treating patients and colleagues with support and respect. It is also about being self-aware; how your own background, upbringing and culture may affect your interactions with those who are different from you in any way.

Try to get hold of the organisation’s equality and diversity policy or statement so that you can refer to it. Have a basic understanding of equality legislation around gender, sexuality, age, race and disability discrimination.

Example:

The interview panel will want to know that you have common sense, and that patient safety and wellbeing are your priorities. For many scenarios there is a similar process that involves:

- assessment of the situation
- taking appropriate action/following procedures and guidelines
- appropriate communication
- record keeping
- evaluating and learning from the situation.

Questions to ask at interview

At the end of a job interview a good interviewer will offer you the opportunity to ask questions. Having survived the interview, your first temptation may be to say that you don't have any questions and make a bolt for the door. Remember that an interview is a two way Process; you want to know whether this is the job for you. Questions that may help you to find out more about the organisation and also impress the employer include.

How would you describe the work culture?

What do you offer in terms of continuing professional development?

I notice that you have recently introduced... How will this impact on the ward/unit/organisation?

What are the most significant issues that the ward/unit/organisation will face over the coming months?

Are there any further questions you would like to ask me that we may not have covered during the interview?

This can be a useful question to ask if you are applying for an internal role.

Useful resources

RCN Direct

www.rcn.org.uk/direct

RCN Direct is the gateway to the RCN and provides comprehensive information and advice on a whole range of issues including:

- careers
- employment
- nursing
- membership
- journal subscriptions.

Advice: 8.30am-8.30pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year

Membership: 8.30am-8.30pm, Monday-Friday (excluding bank holidays)

Tel: 0345 772 6100 **Overseas:** 00 44 20 7647 3456

RCN online

www.rcn.org.uk/advice

www.rcn.org.uk/guides

www.twitter.com/thercn

The RCN Learning Zone can help you improve your numeracy skills.

See www.rcn.org.uk/learningzone

The RCN Library has several drug calculation and numeracy skills books which RCN members can borrow: www.rcn.org.uk/development/library

The Graduate Careers web site, Prospects, provides guidance on preparing for assessment centres at: www.prospects.ac.uk/assessment_centres.htm

Careers support An RCN guide for health care assistants and assistant practitioners.

See: www.rcn.org.uk/publications

See: www.rcn.org.uk/careers for more information, resources and advice on careers.

Visit RCNi at www.rcni.com for continuing professional development (CPD) resources, articles, online training and more.

Country specific careers services

England www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

Wales www.careerswales.com

Scotland www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk

Northern Ireland www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/

