

PGCE Interview Day Guidelines

The basics

Plan your journey – know your route and arrive early. Have the relevant contact numbers in your mobile or at hand to call in if you are unavoidably late.

Dress appropriately and ensure you are comfortable as most interviews may last for most of the day. It is not necessary for ties to be worn but you should be smart and look professional.

Be calm. Some interviewers will intentionally put you under pressure to judge how well you cope and conduct yourself.

Familiarise yourself with the personal statement you wrote on your application form. Be prepared to discuss this in more depth.

Get at least 5 days work experience of observing lessons in a secondary school. If you know anyone who works in a secondary school, whether in or out of London, this could be the easiest way to arrange this time. Be able to talk about your experiences at both. How did you find your experience at secondary school? Be able to draw upon your experience at secondary school.

Be aware of the current education matters in the press as well as any recent developments. Consult publications such as the Times Educational Supplement/Guardian/Independent/TDA website (most are available online). The BBC website has an education section which is particularly useful too. Be prepared to discuss the proximate educational issues and give your own opinion.

The Institute of Education website has an area where applicants awaiting interviews can find further information. It lets you know the criteria that will be used to assess you. Since these are not secret think hard about how you will show you meet each one.

There are many self-help books on preparing for interviews and any reading in this area will help. Positive body language, confidence... but not overly confident, being well prepared, communicating effectively and giving other applicants air time are all essential interviewee characteristics.

Possible interview questions to prepare for:

(Ensure that wherever required that you are able to give recent examples to back up your answers.)

Why have you chosen the IOE, especially over other institutions?

Why do you want to teach?

Why do you want to teach your chosen subject area? How can you demonstrate that you are passionate about it?

Do you enjoy working with children? Why? Do you have experience of working with children?

What challenges do people working with children face today?

How have schools changed since you were a student?

Why are you suited to teaching? Why do you think you would be a successful teacher?

What are your strengths/weaknesses? How do you deal with your weaknesses?

How will your life/work experience thus far help to prepare you for a career in teaching?

London schools are diverse and you will be in multicultural settings. How have you prepared to teach young people from a range of cultural and other backgrounds?

What ability are you best suited to teach?

How do you take criticism?

How would you describe your subject knowledge?

How would your friends describe you?

Interview activities

These do vary because subjects vary in their requirements and the numbers of applicants attending varies. Remember there is usually no limit to the places offered and all applicants on a day may be accepted... or all may be rejected.

Teamwork task. This varies subject to subject. The interviewer will be looking out for a number of different skills not just teamwork. These may include how well you communicate and listen as well as the role you assume when working with others i.e. leader, facilitator, observer etc.

Group presentation. This is normally a follow on from the teamwork task. It is an opportunity for you to demonstrate how confidently you can present in front of groups, a skill essential for teaching at any level.

One to one interview: This will delve deeper into some of the questions listed above as well as your skills and experience. It usually lasts no longer than 20 minutes but varies according to subject area. It is also the time for you to ask questions specific to your own needs.

Discussion/Presentation of your lesson plan (should you be asked to prepare one).

Post interview

You should receive notification from the IOE direct (phone call/letter).

You will be required to accept/decline your place within a certain date. It is important you do so.

If you receive and accept a place you will then be given additional tasks and reading to do over the summer in preparation for when you start the course in September. This is useful because the PGCE is so tightly packed some early reading in more relaxed circumstances can be very useful.

If you are not offered a place you can contact the IOE and ask for feedback as to why you weren't successful.