



## Sample Questions – Person and Position Based Interview

Prior to your informational interview, you may wish to prepare a list of questions to help guide your conversation. Think about the information that you'd most like to find out about the organization, the particular career field, or the person. **Do not feel limited to the sample question lists.** You may have other questions and some of the sample questions may not apply. Do your research and remember to ask open-ended questions to encourage and facilitate a fruitful conversation.

These sample questions represent different levels of inquiry. Develop your questions based on your overall goals and what you are most interested in learning. The intent of informational research is to understand how your interests, skills, and value align with the goals and tasks of an organization, department, or career field.

We have broken the questions up by theme – questions about the person you are interviewing, questions about a career or field, and questions about a specific department. In addition, we recommend asking for referrals and suggestions for further research.

### Referrals/Suggestions

- I've built a list of target organizations in this field to research. Would you be willing to look at my list and give me any suggestions you might have? Are there any departments or organizations you would recommend as part of my research?
- Based on my interests, are there professional organizations that you would recommend?
- Can you suggest others that I might contact? May I use your name

### Questions about the individual you are interviewing

#### Individual's Background

- What is your background (both academic and experience)?
- How did you become interested in this type of work and how did you get your present job?
- How long have you worked in this field?
- What is the most challenging/rewarding aspect of your work/position?
- Describe some of the most challenging situations you've faced in this career.
- What part of this career do you find personally most satisfying? Most challenging? Least satisfying?
- What projects have you worked on in your career that have been particularly interesting?

#### Current Role/Position

- What are the functions and responsibilities of this job role on a daily basis?
  - What is unique about your job compared to other similar positions?
  - Approximately what percentage of time is spent on each of your job responsibilities?
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- What kinds of problems and challenges do you face in this role?
- What constraints, such as time and funding, make the job more challenging?
- What kinds of decisions do you make on a daily basis?
- To what extent do you interact with customers/clients?
- With which other departments & functional units do you regularly interact?
- How autonomous are you in your role? Can you manage your own workflow, or does the nature of your work dictate the pace?
- Do you work individually or primarily in groups or teams?
- How are work teams or groups organized?

### Questions about a career or field

#### Job Field Outlook

- What are typical job roles available in this profession? Entry? Mid-Career? Late Career?
- What are typical career paths in this field?
- What opportunities for advancement are there in this field?
- What trends would likely to affect someone just entering this profession? At mid-career?
- What changes in demand have you seen in the profession and where do you see the growth opportunities in the field?

#### Career or Position

- What experiences, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for anybody pursuing a career in this field?
- What specific skills and knowledge are critical to this work?
- What are the educational requirements for this position or field? Is graduate school recommended/ required?
- What jobs and experiences have led you to your current position?
- What did you do to make yourself marketable?
- What particular advice would give a person entering this field? At mid-career? Late career?
- What do you wish you had known about this field or organization before you entered it?
- How can I learn more about positions and skills in the field (e.g., journal, publications, professional associations, workshops, seminars, conferences, etc.)?

#### Culture/Lifestyle

- What type of person is best suited to the work in this area?
  - What are the typical salary ranges in this profession? Entry? Mid-level? Senior level?
  - Aside from such tangible compensation as money, fringe benefits, travel, etc., what kinds of satisfaction and reward does this profession yield?
  - How does this career affect your lifestyle and work/family balance?
  - What sacrifices may be necessary to be successful?
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## Questions about a specific department

### Department Outlook

- How would you describe the overall mission and goals of your department?
- What are the challenges facing the department?
- What are the key strategic initiatives?
- What are some interesting projects in the department?
- What are the core activities and services of this department?
- How would you describe the internal or external clients? What is important to them?
- Where do you see growth or change occurring in the organization?

### Job Roles

- What skills and knowledge are most critical to success in this organization?
- What are some typical job roles in this department? Entry? Mid-Level? Senior roles?
- What do you see the opportunities for growth and development?

### Culture/Lifestyle

- What is the management style in this organization?
  - How are decisions made? Do people feel included in the process?
  - Is there a dress code?
  - What is a typical day like? Do people work long hours? Is there flexibility?
  - How would you describe the pace and cycle of work in this area?
  - I've built a target list of organizations in this field to research. Would you be willing to look at my list and give me any suggestions you might have?
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