

# Higher Education Interviews

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Your resume did it! It got you the interview, you are dressed for success, and you are engaging with your interviewers. You have made them laugh a bit, gotten personal, and answered all the questions they asked with confidence and professionalism...but then they ask you if you have any questions. Questions...for them? Other than when will they make a decision, you don't really have any. Then you panic and say, "I think I'm done." And leave the interview on that note. This is NOT the thing to do. Even if every part of your interview was wonderful the questions at the end are probably the most important part of the interview because it's your lasting impression that is going to matter when hiring managers are making their decision. The last thought of you seeming unprepared to ask them about items isn't the best final impression. Don't let this happen to you! If you have researched the institution, the role, and working in Higher Education in advance, you will have questions. Here are some tips on what to ask and how to present them during an interview.

## Questions that keep them coming back for more

At this stage in the process, the questions you ask should signal to the interviewer your true interest in the position, and that you have done your research on working in Higher Education and the institution, especially if you are new to the field. Questions should also demonstrate that you have the "soft skills" they are looking for, while also capturing information you may need for any next potential steps, and to help make sure the opportunity is right for you

## Questions that show you have been thoughtful about the role and the institution.

- What are the most important things you would like to see your new hire accomplish right away? In the first 30, 60, and 90 days?
- How would you describe the culture of your institution?
- As you think about individuals you have hired in the past, what attributes have been of greatest importance in their success?
- If hired, what can I do to better prepare for this role before the start date?
- What does the training for this role look like?
- What would the reporting structure look like, and would there be engagement across different departments?
- I read the goals of the institution, and I am wondering how you see this team supporting those goals and how does this role support the team?
  - Actually, talking about a specific goal or two can show you did your research.

## Questions that get the information you want,

- Is there anything about my experience that you would like clarification on?
- Would you consider me to be a strong candidate for this role and why?
- What is the average tenure in your institution?
- Is there room for promotion/advancement in this role, and what soft skills and experience does the institution tend to prioritize when considering advancement?
- What are the next step in the hiring process?

- What brought you to this institution and what has kept you here?

## Asking about compensation in an interview.

Prior to addressing compensation in general, it is important to outline etiquette in compensation discussions between full time and contract/contingent positions. Traditionally, if you applied to the role directly and it is a full-time position, compensation conversations will happen directly between you and the institution. If you were presented to a full-time role by an agency, it is likely that initial compensation expectations have already been shared when you have been submitted, and there should be a general understanding of compensation requirements on both end, which can be clarified as you move through the interview process as referenced below.

If you are being represented by a third party for a contingent role compensation is usually discussed and aligned upon with the entity that is representing you, especially if they will be your employer of record. This is typically done in advance of you meeting the institution you will be doing the work for, and is reconfirmed again after the interview if there will be an offer.

Compensation is an important topic that is typically brought up at the end of the first or second interview if you are advancing through the process. If nothing is brought up by the end of the second interview and you are wanting to know the compensation your **final** question could be "...and what does compensation for this role look like?"

**Remember:** Compensation should be thought of as all benefits (if applicable), any programs or support offered by the institution, and salary. Non salary items usually appear at the end of a job description.

**Remember:** In many states, including New York, Colorado and Nevada, employers are required by law to disclose salary ranges to candidates, this list of states is growing and it is becoming more common for salary ranges to be in job descriptions even if not required. Keep in mind the salary range is a range, most candidates are aiming for the top of the range, and it is important to have an understanding that your offer could be anywhere within the range, even at the lower end. Also keep in mind that compensation may differ for remote, in-office and hybrid positions.

Consider the following recommendations:

- In all circumstances, make sure to consider the total compensation package (if applicable) not just salary.
- Keep in the forefront of your mind why you are looking for a new job. It can be salary, more stability, work culture, or even wanting to be in-person or remote/hybrid. Sometimes, if you are transitioning industries or fields, you may need to adjust expectations. There are many types of higher education institutions (public, private, community college, etc.) and the compensation and "benefits" can vary greatly depending upon the role and demand.
- Check salary ranges at similar jobs at other local and similar types of institutions.
- If asked about your requirements, give a range, be direct and make sure to share your bottom line so they know what you would and would not accept. Share your own research diplomatically if you have done it, if you feel the rate is below market. Do not try to negotiate until you have a formal offer for the position, or if it was made clear that negotiation was not going to be considered.

The best advice to take away from this is to **be prepared** in advance. The last thing you want to do is be caught off-guard and have nothing to say or miss out on the opportunity to ask something you needed to know before moving on to the next steps of the hiring process.