

Sample Academic Interview Questions

Possible Questions asked by Deans, Chairs and other Faculty

General Questions

1. Tell us about your background (your education, experiences, interests).
2. Tell us why you think that _____ is an effective theory/technique.
3. What/who influenced you to pursue this field of study?
4. What direction do you think our field should be moving in over the next 20 years?
5. What do you think are some of the critical advances in our field in the past 50 years?
6. Who do you think is the most overrated and/or underrated theorist/researcher/professional in our career field?
7. What have you learned by watching other junior faculty succeed and fail?
8. What would your supervisor/colleagues/students say is your greatest strength/weakness?
9. How long are you planning on staying at our institution? (until my tenure review)
10. What does your family think about moving here? How do they feel about all the time you will spend focussed on your work?
11. What courses have you enjoyed teaching the most, the least? What do you like most/least about working with undergraduate students?
12. What is your experience managing conflict (with supervisors, colleagues, students)?
13. Talk about your most recent failure? Why did you fail? What did you learn?

Research Focused Questions

1. Tell us about your current work, area of study or research, referred publications?
2. How does your work contribute to the field or society or community or university?
3. Why and how did you choose your dissertation/thesis topic?
4. What theoretical framework did you use when developing your research?
5. How did you conduct your research and interpret your data?
6. What is your experience working with funders and other research stakeholders?
7. What do you think about other researchers in your field, their journals/research/books and your opinion of their work, who do you think is leading edge, who do you disagree with?
8. What have you learned from your research and how, if at all, you could have approached your research differently?
9. What are your current and future publication, presentation and conference plans?
10. What are your research plans for the next 3-5 years?
11. Discuss past and future funding sources and how you have/would acquire funding?
12. What equipment (facilities, staffing, etc.) will you need to pursue your research agenda?
13. Outside academia, who do you think is interested in your research and why?
14. In what journals do you hope to see your work published?
15. What is more important, the work or the application of the work?
16. Your subject area is obscure or limited, what relevance is it to our institution and why would we allocate resources to it?
17. What resources (dollars, equipment, students, staff) would you need to set up your research?

Teaching and Classroom Questions

General

1. What is your teaching philosophy? How does it influence your approach in the classroom?
2. Tell us about your teaching experience - what did you like, not like; were there any problems, what did the student evaluations say and what did you learn from your teaching experience?
3. How have you managed difficult or ethical issues while teaching (cheating, inappropriate student behaviours and so on)?
4. What is the proper relationship (balance) between classroom instruction and professional life?

Students and Classroom Management

1. How do you feel about teaching undergraduates compared to graduate students?
2. What do you see as the difference between undergraduate and graduate education?
3. What do you think is the fairest way to evaluate students; straight scales, curves, exams or papers? What do you think about supervising undergraduate or graduate students?
4. What was the best and the worst teaching experiences you have had?
5. What are some techniques you use to motivate students and connect them to the material?
6. How do you feel about establishing ongoing relationships with students? Do you enjoy mentoring and advising? What do you see as the challenges?
7. How will you deal with students who are less talented or interested than others?
8. What do you think the challenges would be when working with older students, students with learning challenges, and teaching evening courses?

Course Delivery/Development

1. How would you structure a course on _____ (often a required or introductory course, but it could be any course you have indicated you could teach)?
2. What texts and resources would you use in your classes or seminars?
3. How would you teach a course on _____ (what teaching method would you employ or offer in a course)?
4. How will you use technology and the internet to enhance your student's learning experience?
5. How does technology expand and limit teaching effectiveness?
6. What would be your 'dream' course to teach (topic, style, student population). How would you teach it? What texts, assignments would you offer?

Participation in Department and/or Academic Community

1. What do you think are the challenges and the pros and cons of working in this environment, location, community (larger, smaller, rural, urban)?
2. Why are you interested in our type of school in general and our school in particular?
3. What kind of service/support do you expect to do when you arrive?
4. We encourage close connections between faculty and students. How important do you think this is and how would you find the balance between close relationships and professional distance?
5. Why do you think you are suited to this kind of environment?
6. Have you been actively involved in committee work in the past?
7. How well do you interact with others in your field? How well do you get along with those who have very different opinions and/or who's work you do not respect?
8. How do you manage criticism from colleagues and supervisors?
9. How important is being part of a community to your survival in your career?
10. Tell us about your administrative skills?
11. Have you supervised TAs and RAs before? How have you managed these relationships?
12. Describe any disputes you have had with supervisors/colleagues, how have you managed these?
13. What are you looking for in a supervisor (department chair) or department?
14. What would you do to recruit top students to our program?

Questions asked by Students

1. What opportunities would you create for graduate and undergraduate students to participate in your research?
2. How will you help graduate students with the development of ideas or get involved in research?
3. What meetings, journals, conferences have you been involved in, what would you recommend to other graduate students?
4. How active do you plan to be at the university (on committees, working with graduate students, conducting research)? Will you offer to supervise graduate students?
5. How much input do you think students should have in faculty reviews and tenure?
6. How valuable have you found student evaluations? What is the best comment you received on a student evaluation? What was the worst? What was the most accurate and what was the most unfair?
7. What do you think causes some (contributes to) graduate student's failure? What would you do if you were working with a student who was failing or contemplating dropping out?
8. Have you ever worked with a student in crisis?
9. How much are you willing to accommodate students with special needs? Would you modify your teaching style or requirements? Have you worked with students with special needs?
10. Describe your best experience with a mentor? Describe your worst?
11. What surprised you most about your graduate school experience?
12. What have you learned from the students you have taught? What surprised you most about teaching?
13. Do you like lecturing or would you rather hold discussions?
14. How much freedom do you allow your students to be creative with their assignments and presentations? How much direction do you like to provide?

Questions to Ask During an Academic Interview

Topic Areas

- Big picture (future planning)
- University community
- Community life
- Teaching experiences
- Research (environment, support and opportunities)
- Professional development opportunities/advancements
- Industry partnerships
- Students and colleagues

General Questions for the Interviewers

1. What is the reputation of the university with . . . the local community, educational community, students, faculty, and business partners
2. What areas of this institution would you like to see changed or improved?
3. What do you look for in a new hire (colleague, teacher/advisor, staff)?
4. Where is the money being spent in this institution? Where do you think the money needs to be spent? Where would you spend the money?
5. How modern are the facilities and equipment? Is this changing or keeping pace with need?
6. Is the faculty to student ratio appropriate? Is this expected to change?
7. How has class size affected . . . teaching experience and effectiveness, student experiences and effectiveness, funding, business partnerships, and so on
8. What is the relationship like between administration, faculty and students?
9. What is the greatest challenge facing this university in the next 5 years?
10. What is the local community like? (If you have not worked in a 'small town' or 'large city', you may want to find out about the local community and if it will meet your needs)

Questions to ask Chairs/Deans

1. I have read the university's strategic plan. What is the current strategic/development plan for the department? (If you can gather this information ahead of time, ask a specific question based on what you read in the plan.)
2. Based on my research, I think there are several courses I could teach immediately and a few I would be interested in developing; what courses do you see me teaching?
3. I am interested in _____; what opportunities are provided for new faculty to _____
4. How will recent changes in _____ (the industry, field, funding, students) impact on the direction the department or institution is moving?
5. What types of teachers/researchers does the institution usually hire?
6. I understand that the institution has several international connections in terms of study abroad programs for students; how can new staff become involved in this?
7. I see that _____ (another) department is working on _____. I am interested in cross-discipline connections; does the department have a plan for interdisciplinary relationships?
8. In the future I would like to _____. What is the process for establishing new courses or new areas of research?
9. I know your department is looking to recruit more students (increase funding dollars or corporate partnerships); what role would new faculty have in this process?
10. What proportion of new hires obtain tenure with the university and in what timeline; what is the retention rate of new hires?

Questions to ask Chairs/Deans continued

11. How many courses and which courses does a new faculty member usually teach in each of the first 1 - 2 years?
12. What ratio of graduate students successfully complete their degrees at this institution? How many of these go into business?

Questions to ask Faculty (colleagues)

1. What types of support and mentoring opportunities are there for new hires?
2. What is the working atmosphere, colleague support and workload like around here?
3. How have you had to change your teaching style as a result of larger (or smaller) class sizes?
4. What strategies and technologies have you found of particular use with your students?
5. How much emphasis is there on bringing in research partners and dollars versus teaching?
6. Is compensation in this department appropriate when compared with other departments?
7. How supportive is the university of your family life? Is there an on-site daycare? Committees and clubs for family members to join if they are new to the community?
8. Is your research supported? How is new research introduced and supported?
9. **How involved are faculty in recruiting students?** Are there always enough high quality students to act as TA/RAs or graduate students to support your research?
10. What committees are available for new faculty to join? Do these committees have much of a voice in the department or on campus?
11. Is there enough administrative (secretarial) support to meet your needs?
12. How unified is this department? Are there splits within the department? If so, are these usually along theocratical, political or personal divisions?

Questions to ask students

1. How have you found the faculty as mentors/teachers? Are they approachable and supportive?
2. Why did you choose to attend this university? Was it your first choice?
3. How does the university support your experiences? What services (supports) are provided and where are they lacking?
5. Were there enough TA/RA positions and grants to support most students?
6. What courses did you find the most valuable? What faculty were the most informative?
7. Would you recommend other students make this institution their first choice? Why or why not?
8. What type of training did you receive as a TA/RA? Was it sufficient?
9. How much do you interact with students from other faculties?
10. Is there enough diversity (of people and ideas) to encourage and support students with diverse or unique areas of interest?
11. What input do students have in course development, selection and introducing new courses? Do you think students have enough input? Is the university responsive enough to changes in the field or in the market place outside academia (in terms of offering proper training and opportunities)?
12. Have you noticed any tension between faculty? Is there a division based on theory, politics or people?