

1/23 Psi Chi General Body Meeting Minutes
Interview Tips & Tricks w/ Graduate Student Rosie Peterson

Intro: I'm a 2nd year clinical psych grad student here at UCF. I have experience publishing papers and interacting with patients. When I was applying to grad schools I interviewed at three different schools and got into two schools.

What advice would you give to someone in the interview process?

My number one advice is to be yourself and treat the other grad students as your oldest friends so you can eliminate some of the awkwardness. Don't try to be that overly competitive person that no one likes because this is also a networking opportunity so try not to step on anyone's toes.

Do grad schools typically give group interviews?

The interview process is different depending on the school. For UCF I interviewed with 5 different faculty members, but there were no group interviews with other applicants.

How should you best answer the question what are your weaknesses?

I would frame the weaknesses aspect of the question to mention qualities that are inherently positive. An example would be I am very detail oriented which sometimes translates into creating additional work for myself.

Do you have any tips for professional body language?

If you fidget with your hands sit on your hands, like I do. It's best to figure out what you tend to do when anxious and find a way around it/to calm yourself down.

About how long did each interview last & what was the structure of the interviews:

The interview process can last a while depending on the school and how many people are involved in the interview process. I think it is best to take a binder with several copies of your CV that you can take out if the conversation during the interview is lackluster. If your research interests don't align with the person who is interviewing you, you should use that opportunity to ask general questions such as what is the work-life balance like, what do grad students tend to do for fun, etc.

Is it important to send a thank you note after an interview?

Yes, I sent a thank you email to every person that I interacted with while on campus (i.e. those who picked me up at the airport, gave a tour, etc.) It shows that you are a compassionate person and helps them remember your name.

Can you give us an example of some of the questions that were asked during your interview?

The most common question asked was “what do you want to do after you get your degree.” For this type of question they are looking for a solid answer, so make sure you have thought about this. If you come across a question that you do not know the answer to you can say something along the lines of “I am not quite sure of the answer at this time, but I would love to learn more about this if you have the time.”

Should you read the journal articles that interviewing faculty members published?

Yes, you should read some of the articles and mention in your interview how you would add/move forward with their project along with your thoughts on the research article.

Do you get an option of a phone interview or a in-person interview:

It depends sometimes phone interviews are for the people placed on the waitlist, but if you are given the chance of an in-person interview I would go to the in-person interview because you might have a better chance of getting in compared to the phone interview.

Should you email a faculty advisor before the application process begins?

Yes, I would reach out to potential advisors beforehand to ask if you would be a good fit for their research lab and if they are currently accepting students. In the email it is best to include a CV and a brief description of yourself/research interests, you should start this process in August.

How long after applying to PhD programs did you hear about an interview?

If you are granted an interview, you should hear by mid January.

Do most programs provide transportation for out-of-state applicants/compensation for travel?

Most programs provide transportation to/from the airport to the university. There is typically no compensation for travel expenses.

What do you think is a realistic number of grad schools to apply to?

For PhD programs you should apply to about 10-12 schools, I am not that familiar with masters programs but the number should be about the same.

What do you do to prepare for an interview? How do you gain your confidence?

I try to concentrate on my breathing and staying calm by not drinking too much coffee beforehand. It's really important to remember that you belong there and not compare yourself to other applicants.

What should you put in your personal statement?

Use your personal statement to highlight your accomplishments. It is best to use it as a way to summarize your CV with more details present. Be cautious using personal stories as it may give

the reader the wrong impression. Try to have an advisor read over and edit your personal statement.