



THE ENGINEERING SOCIETY  
OF QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

# Interview Guide

## For EngSoc Interviews

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# Table of Contents

Introduction: Interviews & Involvement.....	3
Interviews: An Overview .....	3
Pre-Interview .....	4
Consulting .....	4
Preparation .....	5
Notes .....	5
Dress.....	6
Pep Talk .....	6
Interview .....	7
The First Meeting .....	7
Introduction .....	7
Situational Questions .....	8
Experience Based Questions .....	8
Characteristic Based Questions.....	9
Funny Questions .....	9
Conclusion.....	9
Group Interviews.....	10
Interview Structure.....	11
Team Work Questions .....	11
Problem Based Questions .....	11
Personality Based Questions.....	11
Post-Interview.....	11
Conclusion .....	12
Contact Information .....	12



# Introduction: Interviews & Involvement

They say variety is the spice of life, and getting involved definitely adds variety to your university education - there is more to do here than go to class! I am a firm believer that the more you put in, the more you get out, and your university experience is no different! By getting involved you'll learn new things and meet new friends. I want to encourage all of you to find something you are passionate about!

The involvement opportunities that the Engineering Society provides are designed to enhance your university experience. Queen's Engineering has a fantastic academic program, but the Engineering Society allows you to work on important skills that are not necessarily taught inside the classroom, and have fun while doing it!

Developing your interview skills is a key part of your personal and professional development, you'll need to have an interview to get any job in industry. Many of the involvement opportunities we offer here require an interview. This provides our students real interview experience before they have interviews in industry. This document is designed to give you more information on the EngSoc interview system and help you prepare for interviews. Best of Luck!

Taylor Sawadsky

EngSoc President, 2016/2017

## Interviews: An Overview

Interviews can be scary, especially if you've never had one before. This section is going to guide you on how to prepare for an interview and provide you with some tips and tricks for during the interview. No matter how many times you study these tips and tricks, the real key to a successful interview is practice. Have a friend practice interview you, practice answering questions in the mirror, think about your interview question answers in the shower! The interview is a small window for the panel to get to know who you are as a person, so show them what you've got. The goal of your interview is to show the panel why you are the strongest person for the position. Make yourself shine!



Every fall the Engineering Society hosts an interview workshop and provides students opportunities to be practice interviewed. Take advantage of this, learn from the people who have done it before!

## Pre-Interview

### Consulting

Before going into an interview, you should ensure you have a strong knowledge of the position and the skills that the hiring panel is looking for. You can do this in three ways:

- Meet with someone who has held the position previously, and ask them about their experience. Learn about the tasks they had to perform, and the skills they felt they needed to be successful. Some things you can ask them are:
  - o Why they feel the position is important
  - o What about it was meaningful to them
  - o What they learned from the experience
  - o What difficult situations they encountered in the position
  - o What tasks they would have liked to accomplish if they had more time
  - o What their favorite and least favorite parts of the position were

This will give you information on the position and will prepare you to provide insightful answers through out the interview.

- Meet with someone who is on the hiring panel. The hiring panel will consist of the person directly supervising the position and at least two other people. Ask the hiring panel what they're looking for in a candidate, and their ideas and expectations of the role. This will give you an idea of the skills and experiences you should display in your interview, as well as paint a picture of what the job will look like if you are hired. If you have a meeting with someone, and realize that the job isn't for you that is also okay.
- Consult the EngSoc position description for the specific job you're applying for to ensure you fully understand the role and to see what skills and experiences are needed for the position.

Everyone who is and was involved in EngSoc is very friendly and wants to see you succeed. If you feel confident enough to ask a person to meet with you, that's awesome! To have an



effective meeting, make sure you have questions and/or discussion topics planned out before the meeting occurs. If you're uncomfortable asking someone to meet with you or meeting with someone we believe you still should have the opportunity to be considered for the position. The position descriptions are designed to help you prepare for your interview without a face to face meeting

Now that you have a notebook full of good ideas for the job and a general idea of what this position is, you can move onto compiling this information!

## Preparation

### Notes

Its time to prepare the content of your interview! Based on the information you learned about the position, you can create notes to bring into your interview.

Notes serve three purposes:

1. It shows the panel you put in time to plan out your interview
2. They help you form intelligent and thoughtful answers for questions
3. They can help you ensure you don't forget to talk about anything you feel is important to a position.

You can bring in a pen and check off topics on your notes as you speak about them. This way, at the end of the interview, when the panel asks you if there is anything you'd like to add, you can speak about the points you haven't hit yet.

It is useful to lay out notes in the following way:

- Relevant experience
  - Skills and characteristics you learned from the experience
    - How the experience and the skills and characteristics you learned relate to the position you're interviewing for.



Here is an example of how you can lay out your notes:

Relevant experience:	Skills	How these Skills relate to the position:	Mentioned?
Lifeguard	Interpersonal Skills	I can work in a team well, and get along with people	
	Communication	I can effectively get my ideas across to people	

Note that there is no “formula” for a successful answer, and this is just a guideline. If you feel a story of your experience is best told in another way, tell it that way!

## Dress

Ensure you have something smart to wear to your interview! The panel will likely be wearing EngSoc ruggers or a uniform for their specific business or initiative, but you should dress nicely. The age old tip “dress for the job you want” is great advice. Business casual or business semi formal both work. There are great descriptions of these dress codes online. Its always better to be over dressed than under dressed.

The dress for interviews for different positions can vary, generally, the more senior the position, the more is expected out of the dress for the interview. It is also important to ensure your notes look professional for the interview.

## Pep Talk

Immediately before your interview, it is great to give yourself a pep talk and make sure you’re pumped up for the interview. This will be different for every person, some people like to listen to some music that pumps them up, others may like to quietly mediate. Do whatever you need to do to make sure you feel your best before your interview.

Be yourself! You’re good at being yourself, you are yourself, and you’ve been yourself your whole life!



## Interview

Try to be confident in all your answers. You are always allowed to take a moment to think about your answer before you speak, if you find it helpful, you can also quickly jot down a few ideas relating to the question on your notes before you begin speaking. If you realize that you started answering the question incorrectly it's okay to say "actually, now that I've thought a little more thoroughly I'd like to change my answer". If you find yourself struggling to answer a question, or get nervous, having a water bottle to take a sip and calm your breath can help and eliminate an awkward pause!

## The First Meeting

You will be met for your interview by the chair of the panel who is interviewing you. It's a great idea to shake their hand and introduce yourself. They'll guide you to the room where the interview is taking place. Be friendly during the transition time, this is often their first impression of you. They are not looking for the best candidate on paper, but for someone that they can work with. Engage in conversation such as classes or current events. Whether it is conscious or not, the panelist is evaluating you during this time.

## Introduction

Start your interview with a handshake. When you shake hands look them in the eyes, and look friendly. Interviewers will not remember you so much for what you say, but more so how you say it.

If you are having an EngSoc interview (with the exception of FREC interviews), you are virtually guaranteed to have the first question of the interview be something along the lines of "Tell us a bit about yourself and why you would be a good candidate for the position". Ensure that you have a solid answer prepared for this. This is an introductory question, so use it as an opportunity to provide a summary of your key characteristics and experiences that you think make you best for the position. Remember to relate your experiences back to the position you're interviewing for!

It is usually expected that the answer to this question will be several minutes long, so don't be afraid to take your time explaining the experiences and characteristics you have that make you



great for the position. If there is something that you feel makes you stand out this is a great time to note it.

## Situational Questions

Sometimes during an interview you will be asked a question about a situation that you may encounter in the position. When answering a situational question, you should have three parts to your answer (sometimes this is called a “three dimensional” answer):

1. Your immediate response
  - How will you handle the situation as soon as it happens?
2. Short – term response
  - What will you do in the hours following the situation?
3. Follow up
  - Who will you follow up with after the situation is passed?
  - What measures can be taken to prevent the situation from happening in the future?

You are always able to take a moment when you are asked a question to think about your answer. Take time before you answer a situational question to consider the situation and think of it critically. Your answer should encompass all aspects of the situation.

Although a “formula” is provided for the answer for the question above, it is important you answer the question in your own words and avoid sounding scripted. This outline this is just a guideline. If you can relate the situation to an experience you’ve had, it is a good idea to work that into the answer.

## Experience Based Questions

Sometimes during an interview you’ll be asked about an experience you have had. This usually comes in the form of “Tell us about a time where...”. Your notes are very useful for this question. Try to use one of your relevant experiences to the position to answer this question – don’t worry if you’ve spoken about it already in your introduction. Expand on what you said in your introduction (if you mentioned it) and relate this experience back to the position you are interviewing for. Connect the skills you learned from the experience to skills that are valued in the new position. Make sure you say what you did, what you learned, and why it’s relevant to the position and question.





## Characteristic Based Questions

These are similar to the experience based questions. This usually comes in the form of “What is the most important characteristic for...”, or the dreaded “what is your greatest weakness”. Take a moment to consider your own characteristics, and try and come up with an experience you can relate to the characteristic in discussion. If the question is asking you what is the most important trait for someone in the position to have, think about a trait you think is important, and use an example of a situation when you used that trait. Make sure you relate the trait or characteristic back to the position you’re applying for!

If you are asked for a negative trait about yourself, make sure you explain to the panel how you are working to improve on this trait, or how the new position will help you improve in this area.

## Funny Questions

Sometimes at the end of an interview the panel will ask you a funny question. Funny questions can be difficult, especially if humor isn’t your strong suit. You will never be hired based on the content of your funny question, but if you are rude, crude, or inappropriate in your funny question, you may not be hired based on the content of your funny question. Keep in mind this question is usually intended to leave the interview on a high note, take this time to make yourself a memorable candidate. Try to keep your humor PG, and do not be racist, sexist or homophobic.

When answering a funny question, try to be yourself, and don’t be embarrassed. Everyone else who has interviewed for this position has also had to answer a funny question. This is a great time for you to let your personality shine through!

## Conclusion

At the end of the interview, the panel will ask you two questions

1. Is there anything else you would like to add that wasn’t mentioned in the interview?
  - a. It is a good idea to skim over your notes and see if there are any other skills or experiences you did not get to mention in your interview
  - b. If there are anything else you would like to add, mention it here



- c. It can be beneficial to summarize the key skills you mentioned in your interview. You can think of this as the conclusion to the essay that is your interview, and reiterate the points you discussed in your introduction question.
2. Do you have any questions for the panel?
  - a. This is a great time to shine. Come up with an insightful question to ask the panel that will make you memorable.
  - b. You should always have a question prepared for the panel. Try to ask a question that will make the panel think. Avoid asking questions along the line of “describe the ideal candidate for this position” – if you did your proper research you should know that information already.

Sometimes you may be asked these questions at the same time.

Just as you started your interview with a handshake, you should also shake the panelists' hands on the way out. It is great if you can thank them for their time by name.

## Group Interviews

For some positions in EngSoc, the interview processes involves a group interview. Group interviews are used to hire Tea Room baristas, Clark pub staff, iCons, EngLinks tutors, and FRECs. There are many different aspects of FREC interviews, and this guide does not cover all those aspects.

Group interviews will happen in the exact same manner as explained above for one on one interviews. The only difference will be there will be more than one person being interviewed at once.

Group interviews are used for hiring for two purposes, to allow the panel to interview a large amount of people in a short amount of time, and to assess team work skills.

Be confident in a group interview. Don't let the answers of others throw you off. Say what you had planned to say. It's important to show that you can hold your own in a group setting, but it's important not to dominate the group.



## Interview Structure

When you arrive to the room your group interview is occurring each seat will be labeled with a name. Sit at the seat with your name. All candidates in the room will answer the same questions, and the order in which people answer questions will rotate. This means that everyone will have a chance to answer a question first and a question last.

## Team Work Questions

During group interviews you may be asked questions that involve working with a team or working with the person next to you. These questions are meant to assess how you work in a team. There are two kinds of team work questions you can receive

### Problem Based Questions

In these questions, you and your team will be faced with a problem, and you will have to work together to find a solution. The deliberation within the team is just as important as your answer or solution to the problem. It is important to try and be a good team member in these situations. Your answer should follow the three dimensional approach, as detailed in [Situational Questions](#) above.

### Personality Based Questions

Sometimes you will be asked to get to know the person next to you during an interview, and present them to the panel. This question analyses your listening skills, and shows the panel your attention to detail. You should connect the skills and traits your partner describes to you to the position, as described in [Experience Based Questions](#) and [Characteristic Based Questions](#) above.

## Post-Interview

It can be a nice gesture to email the chair of the interview to thank them for their time after the interview. Let them know you are excited to hear from them.

During the interview you will be asked how you would like to be contacted for the results of the interview (either phone or email). The panel will contact you in this way. You will be contacted



regardless of the outcome of your interview. You are usually contacted within 3 days of interviews concluding.

If you got the position: congratulations! You did it!

If you did not get the position: this was a great learning experience, and now you have an interview under your belt! It is important to note, you are in the vast majority of people if you have an unsuccessful interview. Do not let this get you down!

If you are unsuccessful in your interview, you can request an interview review, where two members of the interview panel will sit down with you and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your interview. This is a great way to learn from your interview and improve. I would highly recommend you take the opportunity to participate in an interview review.

## Conclusion

It can be very disheartening to not get a position, especially if you spent a lot of time and effort preparing for your interview. Every engineer at Queen's is a valuable member of the Engineering Society, and everyone can bring something to the positions we offer. I want to encourage you to continue applying for positions and participating in events. As I mentioned at the beginning of this guide I am a firm believer that the more you put in, the more you get out, and your university experience is no different. By getting involved you'll learn new things and meet new friends. I want to encourage all of you to find something you're passionate about and get involved!

Taylor Sawadsky

EngSoc President, 2016/2017

## Contact Information

If you have any questions about the interview process or this document please contact:

The Engineering Society President: [president@engsoc.queensu.ca](mailto:president@engsoc.queensu.ca)

The Director of Human Resources: [hr@engsoc.queensu.ca](mailto:hr@engsoc.queensu.ca)

If you have had an interview, and have any concerns about it, you can contact the Engineering Review Board at [erb@engsoc.queensu.ca](mailto:erb@engsoc.queensu.ca)