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# Social Work Careers Pack

## Interview Tips

**Start practising your interview skills now.**

Careful preparation is the key to making a positive and professional impression.

Ensure you are using the free account with [Big Interview](#) provided by the Flinders Careers and Employability Service to help improve your general interview skills and build your confidence.

### Top 10 Interview Tips

1. Research the organisation, their mission, their values, clients, model of service delivery, their news and so on.
2. Reflect on what skills, qualities, experiences and knowledge the organisation is looking for.
3. If you are applying for a job, review the job advertisement and any supporting documentation. Let your Referees know you have an interview and the details.
4. Review your knowledge, skills and experiences. Know your skills and strengths.
5. Reflect on areas for development that you are working on.
6. Think about likely questions and prepare answers.
7. Have example stories ready for the above.
8. Practise (not memorising!) your responses before you go to an interview.
9. Check your interview invitation letter for any documents you might be required to bring.
10. On the day, present yourself as enthusiastic, competent and professional – someone who would be an asset to the employer.

### Prepare

Using the STAR Method to develop examples of skills that illustrate your skills and successes. Review each situation, noting who was involved, what your role was, the order of events and the outcome. Be concise but descriptive in your storytelling and explain both your thinking and behaviour, application of relevant models/theories/frameworks and the outcomes.

- \* **S** Situation: What was the context? Who was involved? Where? When? Use a specific example
- \* **T** Task: What Task did I perform and the problem I needed to solve? What was my role?
- \* **A** Action: What Action did I take? What did I do? How? What obstacles did I overcome?
- \* **R** Result: What was the result? What did I learn? What feedback did you receive?  
What might you do differently?

Use the framework on the next page to prepare STAR examples.

Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

* <b>S</b> Situation	
* <b>T</b> Task	
* <b>A</b> Action	
* <b>R</b> Result	

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### Practise

Imagine you are attending an interview for a Social Worker role. How might you respond to the following?

**Can you tell us why you decided to apply for a Social Worker position at 'Organisation' and what skills and knowledge you will bring to this position?** *Tips: Focus on what will interest the listener in relation to what they are offering. Start by quickly summarising where you are now, key details of your studies, placements, employment/other experiences, then conclude by what this means in terms of your career motivation and focus.*


**Why are you interested in working with us? What do you know about us?**

*Tips: show you have conducted some research into the organisation, understand their mission and values, have read their latest news, understand the target setting and your role there and so on.*

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**Why have you chosen to study Social Work?**

*Tips: show you have reflected on your purpose in pursuing this career, what you have found rewarding, what you look forward to/wish to be a part of, your knowledge, skills, goals and considered how this relates to the organisation and the opportunity they are offering.*


**Give me an example of a time you worked effectively in a team.**

*Tips: Use the STAR method (Situation – explain the context, being specific; Task – what was your responsibility in this situation?; Action – How did you respond to/resolve the situation, focusing on what you did rather than everyone else involved; Result – What was the outcome, what did you accomplish, what did you learn?)*


**Tell us about a time when a positive outcome has been gained from providing consumer- centred practice.**

*Tips: Use the STAR Method to relate an example, showing how you went about responding to the situation.*


Use this approach to identify possible questions the interviewer may ask, and to reflect and plan how you might answer them.

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**Also have a few questions ready that you may like to ask them.**

*Tips: make sure the questions aren't already covered by the information provided– focus on using this as an opportunity to show your enthusiasm and motivation for the role.*


## **Interview Questions Bank**

There is a wide variety of different question styles which can range from opening questions on 'why you' (tell us about yourself) to 'why them' (why you wish to work for them, where you need to have researched the organisation and reflected carefully on this) to behavioural questions '(tell me about a time when...)', situational and scenario questions ('what would you do if...'), questions relating to your experience in casework in the context of the organisation, values based questions and so on. We illustrate some examples on the following pages.

### **Assessing candidate's motivation/commitment/career direction**

- Tell us a bit about yourself and why you applied for this position?
- Why did you choose Social Work as a profession?
- What do you know about this organisation?
- Our values are XYZ: which one do you relate to most and why?
- What attracted you to the position, and especially a position in XYZ?
- What skills, qualities and experience would you bring to this position?

### **Inviting candidates to indicate their abilities and competencies**

- Which frameworks, theories or models of practice would inform your practice at this organisation?
- How do you propose to put the theory you have gained into practice in this setting?
- What areas do you feel you have strengths in? Are there any areas you wish to develop further? What methods would you use to address these?
- Other than your social work skills what workplace skills & personal attributes would you bring to the XYZ Department?
- Tell us about something you are particularly proud of in your social work experiences to date?

### **Client service/interaction/intervention/assessment**

- Talk us through how you would approach the following case (note: case details would be provided at interview...explain what you would do and why. Show that you have researched this particular field of social work, including its relevant policies and evidence-based practice.)
- How do you include parents/family/care givers in your work with clients?
- How would you prioritise your caseload?
- Tell me about a time when a client disagreed with your approach or treatment plan.
- Could you give me an example of a complex XYZ case you were involved with? What actions did you take?
- What strategies would you employ to ensure that parents feel empowered to make decisions about therapy issues regarding their child?
- Briefly outline the areas you may investigate during the case history and initial assessment of a client presenting with XYZ (consider this in relation to clients served by the organisation)

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### **Conflict resolution, problem solving and team skills**

- Tell us about an experience of conflict and how you managed this.
- A member of a client's family starts to verbally attack you, saying that you/other staff are incompetent etc. What would you do?
- Who do you see as key members of a multi – disciplinary team? How do you see your role?
- What skills and abilities in working in a team do you bring to this position and how would you use them in establishing yourself in a team?
- Can you give us an example of how you have contributed to a multidisciplinary team recently?
- If a client complains about the service you are providing what strategies would you use to resolve this?
- How do you prioritise tasks? Give me an example to demonstrate this.
- Describe a challenging problem you faced on one of your placements. How did you solve the problem?
- What is a situation where you had to prioritise tasks or navigate a stressful situation?

### **Scenario Questions**

These can vary from 'What would you do if...' style questions to more detailed scenarios/cases.

- Imagine a client walked into a session with you and appeared to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. What would you do?
- What would you do if a client had a psychotic episode in the waiting room?
- What techniques do you use in crisis intervention?
- If a dementia client became aggressive what would you do?

#### *Example One*

A two and a half year old, Jake, is referred by his mother Kathy, at the suggestion of his Child Care Centre, as he is not yet talking. Jake's parents are separated and they are currently involved in court proceedings to decide custody and access issues. Kathy described these proceedings as "messy". Jake presents as a silent child who offers only fleeting eye contact with you on your first encounter and is reluctant to interact with you.

Briefly describe what considerations you would make in planning assessment and intervention strategies with Jake.

#### *Example Two*

During a visit to a local kindergarten, the Director mentions in passing that many children are arriving at kindy without having had breakfast. She says that it is a problem commonly reported by a number of other Directors in the region.

- How would you respond to the Director's comment at the time?
- How would you follow up with this issue when you returned to work?

### **Professional Self Management Skills**

- How do you make sure you are on top of your continuing professional development (CPD)?
- Tell us about a stressful situation you have been involved in and how you dealt with the situation?
- What do you think are the main stressors associated with Social Work practice?
- Everyday we have to juggle the demands of caseloads, meetings, education, administration and quality management activities. What strategies do you use to balance these demands?
- Tell us about how you have improved a skill you thought needed developing.
- What do you expect from a supervisor?
- Can you tell us about a case that you were responsible for where you felt unsure about what to do next? Tell us how you dealt with this.

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### **Relevant Legislation/Workplace practices/Workplace Health and Safety**

- Describe your understanding of The Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics and how it would inform your daily work with us?
- Give some examples of Workplace Health & Safety risks faced by Social Workers? How would you minimise these risks?
- What is Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement? Give an example of a Quality Assurance activity a Social Worker may be involved with?

### **Invitation to applicants**

- Are there other things you feel you would like to tell us about yourself which may help in our consideration?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?
- Do you have any questions you would like to ask us?

### **Questions you may want to ask**

- What opportunities are there to participate in professional development?
- When do you expect to reach a decision about my application? How will I be notified?

*(Ethical Jobs also have tips on questions to ask at the end of the interview:*

*<http://www.ethicaljobs.com.au/blog/20-smart-questions-to-ask-at-the-end-of-your-next-job-interview>)*

### **After the interview**

Make a few notes about the questions you were asked and your responses. Think about what went well and what you could do even better next time. Consider how you might do things differently. This will help for interviews with other organisations and agencies. Don't be afraid to ring up and ask for feedback. It is not always given but if you're lucky it can be really helpful and even establish a valuable future contact. Most importantly, learn from each interview experience.

## **Finally**

Reflect on everything you have achieved to date whilst studying at Flinders University. We wish you every success with your Social Work career.