

# Internship Information for GJU Students

## Part 4: The interview

### The preparation

#### **Inform yourself about the potential employer**

It is necessary to inform yourself more precisely about the potential employer. Almost all companies do have web pages on the internet where you can collect introductory information on them. You can also inform yourself about the company with the help of search engines on the internet. It is useful to collect current information on problems and projects of the possible employer to be able to add something to these topics. "I could demonstrate specific qualifications for the project XY because during my studies/internship I..." ("Für Ihr Projekt XY könnte ich besondere Qualifikationen vorweisen, da ich in meinem Studium/bei Praktika...").

#### **Conversational tone**

It is important to know the company's environment. Depending on the branch there is often a different conversational tone to be expected. A conversation in a "young" internet company is going to be different than the talk in a traditional bank. You should adapt to this.

#### **Clothes**

You should think about adequate clothes for an interview early enough. You should dress rather conservatively in a traditional company. In creative and "young" companies you can also wear comfortable clothes. Maybe it is also necessary to buy adequate clothes for the interview. In any case, the clothes should be clean and neat and you should feel comfortable in them.

As a rule for women: no belly top and no strapless top, no transparent blouse and no mini skirt. Many human resources experts (female or male) refuse that.

#### **Hairstyle and accessories**

The hairstyle should be well-kept. Men with long hair could give a negative impression especially in traditional companies.

Remarkable jewellery (for example big ear rings, many bracelets, piercing in the face), but also too much make up or a heavy perfume should be avoided.

Like always, these rules do not apply for all companies. In a young advertising agency you can also for example wear a curious hairstyle or remarkable jewellery. You should not pretend to be another person and feel comfortable.

#### **Journey**

Punctuality is very important at an interview. The journey should be well-planned and you should consider that there could be a traffic jam or an unpunctual train and this could lead to delays. Try to be there about 15 minutes before the interview starts. Being too late doesn't make any good impression, but being two hours too early doesn't either.

#### **Have the documents ready**

You should bring all important documents to an interview: A copy of your application, the invitation to the interview as well as copies of your certificates and references.

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### Appearance at the interview

#### **Start – greeting**

- Knock on the door self-confident that they can hear you. But not as hard that the door starts shaking. Wait for the persons inside to open you the door or to ask you in.
- Introduce yourself with first name and last name.
- If the hand is stretched out to you at the greeting you should react with a strong handshake. Do not exaggerate (depending on your counterpart), but also not too weak as this could be interpreted as a weak will. Do not force a handshake, some human resource managers avoid that.
- Basically pay attention to a sufficient distance without appearing aloof. A person who is too pushy might cause aggressions.
- Just sit down after the demand.
- Try to notice the contact person's name and bring it in during the dialog. If you do not understand the name in the beginning you should ask for it immediately.
- Refuse an offered cigarette without fail politely. It is not usual in Germany to smoke while a job interview.
- You can accept an offered drink without hesitation.

#### **In the conversation**

- Listen actively and clearly talk more than 50%. It is an interview and so the employer wants to know something about you and does not want to talk all the time. However, you should also let the employer say something.
- Even an applicant who does not say that much does not need to get an increasingly bad feeling. Some human resource managers just like to talk. If you give them the feeling that you listen carefully, some wise comments might be enough to convince them.
- If something is incomprehensible just ask for it politely. This is better than to sit there uncertain and shows interest.
- Avoid set phrases like "I would say..." ("Sag ich mal...") or words like "one" ("man").
- Watch your own body language. Do not fold your arms or build up barriers of coffee cups, writing pads or other things. Both things seem protective.
- You can also show self-confidence by holding eye contact, but do not stare.
- Sit relaxed but not with your legs apart and do not cross your legs either. It is better to place the soles of your feet fixed on the floor and to sit on the entire seat of the chair. Do not sit on the chair's edge or tilt the chair!
- Keep your hands still. When you necessarily need to move your hands try to make notes (ask in the beginning whether it is allowed to make notes!).
- Watch your rate of speech, neither talk too slow and nor too fast (what can happen due to the excitement).

### Interview: Possible questions and possible answers

To successfully endure an interview you should be prepared for possible questions. In the following you will find a few questions that could come up. You should also react self-confident when it comes to awkward questions. The intern should also use the interview to ask a few questions. Clever questions underline that you wondered about things. You should not learn formulations by heart, but roughly have questions on your mind. You can practice the conversational situation with your friends.

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### Employer's questions

You cannot be prepared for everything and you do not need to be. But you should be prepared for some “standards”.

Especially in the beginning of a conversation it is helpful to present your own CV briefly. Thereby you can mention your interest in the advertised job and connect it to your own qualifications which fit to the employer’s performance profile.

*Why do you want to do an internship in our company? (Wieso möchten Sie ein Praktikum bei uns machen?)*

In this point you have to meet the company's characteristics, e.g. all the great things about the company. Maybe mention which field you are really interested in and what you want to learn there.

*What do you expect from this internship? (Was erwarten Sie sich von diesem Praktikum?)*

Tell them what you want to learn during this internship and which fields you want to get to know.

*What are your strengths/weaknesses? (Was sind Ihre Stärken/Ihre Schwächen?)*

Think carefully about what you want to say about you before the conversation.

It is important: everyone has strengths, not only weaknesses. You can e.g. say that you often expect too much from yourself. Therefore you put yourself under pressure, but in exchange you achieve good results due to your own expectations. (But that one is a standard phrase, so you should say something different.)

It is also good to mention that your German is not perfect, but that you study very hard and become better and better.

Be honest, but do not emphasize your weaknesses too much. It is always good to confront a weakness with an adequate strength.

*Where do you see yourself in two, five or ten years? (Wo sehen Sie sich in 2/5/10 Jahren?)*

What are your hopes and wishes for the future? The best is to present yourself ambitious and to tell what you are planning for your life. Maybe you want to do your masters degree in Germany or anything similar. In this case you can maybe refer to the company and the faculty.

*What do you know about the company? (Welche Kenntnisse haben Sie über das Unternehmen?)*

You should always read lots about the company beforehand. Check the internet and also the newspapers. You should know e.g. how many employees the company has, the existing areas of this company and the current projects they are working on.

Some companies (banks, authorities, journalistic area) ask for politics and economy just out of interest. You should regularly read daily newspapers and the latest online media to be able to join conversations. First you should only show that you are informed and only express your own opinion carefully as long as you are not asked to do so.

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*What background knowledge do you bring to this internship? (Welche Vorkenntnisse bringen Sie mit?)*

What have you done so far, why do you fit to this company perfectly? Always refer to the particular area you want to work in.

You are explicitly given the opportunity to ask own questions (again) mostly in the end of the dialog. You should use this offer. So you should keep one or two questions for the end. Therefore, it might be helpful to make notes during the conversation.

### **A few questions**

You should generally avoid “why” questions, that could sound like critics. Instead of this you should ask open questions (“who?”, “what?”, “how?”) which cannot be answered in one sentence. This gives the dialog partner the chance to be more detailed.

You should not start the conversation with own questions as most of them will be answered during the interview. Only ask questions when you have comprehension difficulties or when it suits.

You can prepare a list with own questions. This does not testify uncertainty; it is in contrast rather professional. While preparing these questions you can also think about whether you can or should sort out questions before the conversation.

The following question topics are unproblematic:

- Questions on the working method (proportion individual work or team work)
- What is going to happen during the introductory phase?
- How are interns supervised in your company?
- Which departments am I going to get to know?
- Which tasks are going to be assigned to me?
- Who are the other supervisors, colleagues and employees?
- What does my workplace look like? Can I eventually have a look at it?
- On your web page you mentioned a new product/project: xy. Can you tell me something more about this?
- Can you help me to find a flat in...?

Before signing the labor contract, but not necessarily at the first conversation you should sort out the following aspects:

- Amount of payment, possible special services payment
- Working time regulation and vacation

### **What you do not need to reveal**

At an interview you do not need to answer all questions.

Mostly it is forbidden to ask for:

- Financial circumstances
- Marriage
- Desire to have children
- Pregnancy
- Illnesses
- Religion

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Depending on the job and the branch there are a few exceptions where the employer is allowed to ask questions.

You might be asked for *current illnesses* if they are relevant for the future job. That would be the case if an applicant was not operational in the same way as a healthy colleague. Contagious diseases must not be kept secret either. If the disease could result in an inability of work (also only temporarily) in foreseeable future you need to admit that on request.

As an applicant you are generally obliged to inform the employer about all circumstances which could be relevant for the completion of the labor contract as far as they are recognizable to you.

Generally, questions which do not have any relation to the employment relationship do not need to be answered.

### **Avoid disappointments in the interest of full disclosure.**

You should not conceal things that might be interesting for the employment relationship. It does not help you if it comes to a disappointment later on which could lead to a notice of quit.

### The interview – an exemplary procedure

An invitation to an interview is already a first success. The company liked the application; they are interested in your person and want to get to know you better. The conversation normally lasts one hour (maximum) and proceeds to the following sample with these questions.

#### **Phase 1: Begrüßung und Einleitung**

Haben Sie gut hierher gefunden?

Wie war Ihre Anreise? (This does not apply for a telephone interview)

#### **Phase 2: Kennenlernen des Bewerbers und seiner Motivation**

Wir möchten Sie gerne kennen lernen, erzählen Sie uns bitte etwas über sich und Ihren bisherigen Lebenslauf/Werdegang.

Warum haben Sie sich für ein Studium der/des ... entschieden?

Warum haben Sie sich für das Studium an der GJU entschieden?

Warum sind Sie zum Studieren nach Deutschland gekommen?

Was ist Ihr berufliches Ziel? Was tun Sie, um dieses Ziel zu erreichen?

Was sind Ihre Stärken? Und ihre Schwächen?

Was machen Sie in Ihrer Freizeit?

#### **Phase 3: Gespräch über das Unternehmen und Praktikumsinhalte**

Was wissen Sie über unser Unternehmen? / über unsere Produkte?

Warum haben Sie sich gerade bei uns beworben?

Was erwarten Sie von Ihrem Praktikum?

Welche Bereiche unseres Unternehmens interessieren Sie?

Gibt es besondere Anforderungen einer Praktikantenverordnung?

Welche Fragen haben Sie an uns?

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### Phase 4: Vertragsverhandlungen

Wann soll das Praktikum anfangen?

Wie lange soll es dauern?

Was für eine Praktikantenvergütung stellen Sie sich vor?

### Phase 5: Abschluss

Danke für das Gespräch.

Wie geht es weiter?

Bis wann ist eine Entscheidung zu erwarten?

Abschied

It is important to be prepared for these questions and to know as much as possible about the company.

### Application: the phone contact

Telephone interviews are part of the selection procedure in many companies. Applicants can also call the company. Any initiative is worth it!

### Early touching benefits both sides

Companies can inform which qualifications are the most important. Applicants can arrange their documents custom-fit and so increase their chances.

### Introduction for the written application

A first phone contact is a good preparation for the written application:

"Sehr geehrte Frau Müller, herzlichen Dank für das nette Gespräch vom vergangenen Freitag, bei dem Sie mich ermutigt haben, meine Unterlagen einzureichen" is a better subline than the still widely-used "hiermit bewerbe ich mich als...".

### Please do not bother them

Human resource managers are often stressed and are contacted by many people. You should make sure that the phone call does not take too long and be well-prepared.

Therefore, say your name distinctly, ask three smart questions with a fresh voice. Be motivated, good-humored, short and precise and then hang up. „Super, vielen Dank, ich schicke Ihnen gerne meine Unterlagen."

### Opposite scanning

Surely the applicant has to expect to be "scanned". Human resource managers often ask for professional education or further education and where you work at the moment to see whether the applicant fulfills the absolute must. It is good to have the CV, certificates and the job advertisement ready.

Some questions on the telephone are standard questions. Why do you think you are the right one for this job? Who are your role models in your job? What are your weaknesses? The goal is not to collect significant statements, but rather to test the caller's motivation and communication skills. Spontaneous and outspoken answers have the biggest effect.

Source: [www.karriere-journal.monster.de](http://www.karriere-journal.monster.de); [www.praktikum.info](http://www.praktikum.info)

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### On the internet you can find many more tips for the interview...

- <http://www.bildung-news.com/bildung-und-karriere/bewerbung/10-fragen-und-antworten-beim-vorstellungsgesprach/>
- <http://www.bewerben.de/informationen/vorstellungsgespraech.htm>
- [http://www.focus.de/karriere/bewerbung/vorstellungsgespraech/schwierigefragen/vorstellungsgespraech\\_aid\\_26803.html](http://www.focus.de/karriere/bewerbung/vorstellungsgespraech/schwierigefragen/vorstellungsgespraech_aid_26803.html)
- <http://karrierebibel.de/gegenfrage-was-sie-im-vorstellungsgespraech-fragen-sollten/>
- <http://www.karriere.de/>
- <http://www.bewerbung-tipps.com>
- <http://www.telefoninterview.net/>