

Questions that might be asked at post graduate course interviews

Why do you want to do the course?

Try to convey your enthusiasm and motivation. Don't try to write what you think they want to hear: write your real reasons. Write about any relevant projects or dissertations you have done. Mention any prizes you have won, travel or study abroad and relevant employment. Describe anything that shows creativity, dependability or independence. Think hard about your reasons, is it a continuation of your undergraduate course, or skills you think would be good for your career goal, or something you think you'd really enjoy.

Why this subject?

Be clear about the reasons for your choice. When did you become interested in this subject and what have you learned about it? What insights have you gained? How have you learned about this field?

Why this college?

Be specific: is the programme noted for a particular emphasis, specialty or orientation? Are there specific academic staff you want to do research or study with? What is it about the structure of the course, or the choice of modules, that appeals to you? Also, maybe identify how impressed you are with the successes and achievements of the department or a particular academic, or the college.

Tell me about yourself?

This doesn't mean your personal life. Tell them why you are passionate about the area of study you want to do, tell them about any professional experience you have. Keep the answer relevant and concise; facts and figures are really helpful for doing this. Extracurricular and volunteering activities are great examples of how you can include your personal achievements while staying relevant to the question.

What skills can you offer?

They may ask about academic skills (e.g. computing skills, knowledge of relevant scientific techniques, research skills) and transferable skills (e.g. team working, communication, working under pressure, time management). They may also ask what personal skills you can offer, so you'll need to demonstrate that you have done your homework about the course/research and that you have considered your own strengths and weaknesses.

Have you had to overcome any obstacles or hardships in your life?

This may show evidence of determination and resilience.

What are your strengths?

This is a 'why you?' question. If you can't answer this, don't expect the selectors to answer it for you! Focus on 3 or 4 skills and provide examples and evidence.

What are your greatest weaknesses?

Think of what you feel you need to work on to help get you to where you want to go, but show then that you've put something in place to change it.

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What is the relevance of your first degree to this study?

If necessary, point out any circumstances that may have affected your academic results.

What is your career aim?

You may not have a very clear focus on what you want to do afterwards, but you should have some ideas. A clear direction will strengthen your commitment to do well in your studies. Also a time line of within the next 5 years would be also useful.

Are you applying for other courses?

Be honest if you are. But be sure to say why this course is the best one.

Other questions you may be asked that feed into this are:

- Have you considered potential areas of research?
- Tell me about your project/dissertation. How did you choose it? What have you learned?
- How do you intend to fund your study?

If you're not accepted on this course, what are your plans?

At undergrad, what subjects did you enjoy most/dislike most?

At undergrad, what area did you find most difficult?

Describe your greatest accomplishment.

Tell me about your experience/work placements - what was your contribution?

Questions for you to ask:

What do the recent alumni do and where are they employed?

Any financial aid offered if so, what's the criteria?

What opportunities is there to get some practical work experience?

What's the selection timeline?

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