

Additional Interview Help and Resources

Below you will find extra guidance and resources on preparing for an interview that we hope will help you demonstrate your suitability for the programme.

Preparation

If you prepare well, you'll be able to answer most questions that you're asked. We recommend that you:

- Know the UK Food Systems CDT, what makes it special, why it is a good fit for you, etc.
- Understand the framing of the UK Food Systems CDT ([Mapping the UK Food System](#) and [Transforming UK Food Systems SPF Programme Purpose & Aims](#)) and understand how your career aspirations are fitting in.
- Understand the key challenges involved in doing a PhD and how you would deal with them.
- Make notes, drawings or similar to help you commit key points to memory. They also serve as a handy review tool right before the interview.

Know yourself

- Remember your application (re-read it!) and be able to expand on what you wrote about yourself, particularly any relevant experience.
- Know what skills make a good food systems researcher and think about how you can demonstrate them.
- Be clear about the skills, personal qualities and experience that make you a good candidate for the UK Food Systems CDT programme and have examples to demonstrate them. It can be helpful to discuss these with a friend, teacher or careers advisor.
- Know your key strengths and weaknesses – think of 3 or 4 strengths and 1 or 2 weaknesses. For weaknesses, choose things you're working on so you can demonstrate that you're learning and moving forwards.
- Be clear about your aspirations and where you want this to take you.

Prepare questions for the interviewer

Have two or three questions prepared for the interviewers. This is important, because it allows you to show your motivation and engagement with the programme. Ask about the programme, the kernels (e.g. technical aspects), the available funding, what they think are the biggest challenges, opportunities to publish during your PhD.

Answering questions: articulating examples from your own experiences

It's important to be able to articulate examples from your own experiences (university, research projects, work roles, work experience, hobbies/interests etc) that demonstrate how you've gained relevant skills, strengths and qualities. Even write down examples under core competency based questions. For example:

- a methodical approach to analysing and processing data
- interdisciplinary food systems thinking
- problem-solving skills
- time management and organisational skills
- the ability to work independently as well as collaboratively in a (diverse) team
- communication skills for writing papers, reports and for giving presentations and engaging with people who may have different perspectives
- tenacity and patience, to see work through from design to completion
- conflict resolution

An excellent structure to help describe how you've gained key skills is STAR = Situation, Task, Action, Result. Click here for a wider range of examples of using [STAR](#).

Dealing with PhD interview nerves

- Do the research and preparation, it will help you feel more confident before you go in.
- Make sure your tech set up is working ok the day before. Also make sure that you are in a space that will not be disturbed for the duration of the interview. Here's some tips on how to set up your room on [YouTube](#).
- Some nerves are normal in this situation – think about the positive effects of the extra adrenaline you're experiencing.
- Reframe any negative thoughts and go into the interview with a positive mentality. Remember, you are being interviewed because you have the potential and attributes for the PhD programme.
- If you don't feel confident, act like you're confident. Think about how a confident person appears – smile, make eye contact (or look into the camera in a virtual interview), speak calmly.
- Before the interview begins, take two or three deep breaths, stretch and do a positive mind exercise to help you focus.
- Rather than rushing to answer a difficult question, it is okay to ask for a moment to think about how you would like to answer. This can give a few seconds to relax and gather your thoughts.

For more tips on dealing with pre-interview nerves, visit this [jobs.ac.uk webpage](#).