

The Sheffield Professional

Draft interview questions

Statement	Draft question	Positive indicator	Negative indicator
Building trust			
Open and honest	If you discovered that something was being changed which directly affected your work but you hadn't been told about it what would you do?	Gather as much genuine evidence, rather than gossip or anecdote then find a good time to raise it in a structured way: 'I've heard that this might be happening and I'd like to be involved as I think I might be able to help ensure we have the right solution'.	Immediately assume there is some 'secret society' going on from which they've been deliberately excluded and make accusations about being left out in front of everyone based on unsubstantiated rumour. Do nothing but moan about it in private.
Good listeners	You're in the middle of a very difficult job requiring concentration when a colleague who is clearly upset asks for your help – how would you respond?	Ask the colleague to explain briefly their problem, assure them you will help but just need to get to a point where you can stop and concentrate fully on their need. Agree a timescale for this and stick to it. Suggest someone else who might help – as long as you've listened carefully and are sure they're the right person. Suggest a quick fix which will allow them to solve the problem themselves.	Tell the colleague to go away until you've finished what you're doing or that you're too busy to help so find someone else without checking what the issue is. Drop what you're doing to help them immediately without checking what their actual need is and then letting down another colleague or missing a deadline. Let them tell you all about it but without concentrating as you're thinking about your other task and are unable to help them at the end. Take the work off them and leave it till you've finished your other task.
Effective communicators	A colleague shares a sensitive and confidential piece of information with you as part of a project	Explain to the colleague why you need to share the information, the benefit to them and who you need to share it with – obtain their permission for this course of action	Say nothing to anyone – after all it's their issue to deal with and not yours. Ask the candidate what the outcome of this course of action was – did it come out later? How did they feel afterwards? Were they able

	you're working on. In order to complete the project and also to help your colleague you need to talk to someone else about it. How would you proceed?	but still maintain the confidentiality and only share it with agreed recipients. Don't use email for this sensitive communication, arrange to talk to people face to face or by phone and make sure that others don't either. Keep the other person in the loop.	to complete the project successfully without sharing it and how? Or/ go and tell the other person without first asking permission but ask them not to say it was you who told them. Ask them about the outcome of this action – how did it effect their relationships with the other people involved.
Prepared to challenge and be challenged	You witness a colleague, who works part time, getting a tough time from a manager for not having done a piece of work which they would have had to do on their non-working day but without them getting the chance to explain. What action would you take?	Discuss the situation with the colleague and see how they feel about it. Encourage them to challenge the manager's behaviour and offer to support them in a positive way. Follow up and make sure that you are doing all you can to help but don't inflame the situation or criticise the manager to others. Suggest they talk to HR if it is a very difficult situation which happens regularly and which the colleague has tried to raise with the manager in the past.	Do nothing but sympathise with the colleague and then criticise the manager to others inside and outside the department. Rush off and complain to the manager about their treatment of the colleague and make a big issue out of the situation. Complain to HR or a staff representative with the colleague's permission or without discussing it with the manager.

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Playing our part – we care about doing the right thing for student's and colleagues, valuing everyone's contribution			
Being the best we can be	If you were to join the department/team how would you go about looking for ways to improve the service? N.B. This question is about testing a candidate's desire to improve and be the best and the ways in which they would go about it.	Find out as much as possible about the success of current ways of doing things by sensitive questioning of colleagues and service users. Talk to people about suggestions and ideas and think about what would help them to be put in place and what the barriers might be which would get in the way. Create advocates who share a desire to	Suggest to managers and team members that they adopt ways of working which worked in their last job. Learn about how things work and assume that nothing needs to change.

	It's not about what they would actually do to improve things in a specific situation.	be the very best and use their experience to champion the new ideas. Put forward carefully thought through suggestions to key stakeholders or managers. Ask for examples of where they have done this and what was improved.	Question whether it would be part of their role to change things.
Creating opportunities for everyone	You notice that someone in your team is really struggling with the new system which it is their responsibility to update. You know that one of your other colleagues has experience of using this in another department but it no longer falls to them to look after it. What action would you take?	Engage with the colleague who has the experience and talk to them about the best way to support your other colleague to learn the system. Work together to ensure that everyone in the department has the opportunity to learn about the system and find out who is naturally good at this kind of thing. N.B. Look for experience of engaging with colleagues to ensure that everyone plays to their strengths and is included in decisions about sharing tasks and responsibilities.	Ignore the problem – the person will need to ask for help if they need it. Or/ tell the person to go and ask your other colleague for help. Not be prepared to find out who has experience of expertise and find ways to make use of it and include people.
Embracing and welcoming diversity	Have you worked with people from different cultural backgrounds from your own? Can you provide an example of how you were able to develop relationships with colleagues who were different from you in any way?	Remember that diversity is not just about working with people from different ethnicities or religious groups. Examples could be related to understanding the needs of colleagues who work part time or belong to different age groups – respecting people as individuals with different needs. You might also look for examples outside of work if a candidate hasn't had a lot of experience in the workplace.	Not understanding that people have different needs and should be treated as individuals. It's likely that if someone can't think of examples despite general probing that work would need to be done in this area.
Taking personal responsibility	A colleague from another department asks you to help them with something which is outside your responsibility but the person who would deal with this isn't around. What would you do in this situation?	Although they may not be able to help they should take responsibility for ensuring that it is going to be sorted out and not pass this person on or brush them off. Find out as much as possible about the problem and when it needs sorting out by. Explain what action they plan to take and who and when they will get back to the person. Follow up to	Tell the person to call back on another way when the right person will be in the office. Take details from them and pass them on to the right person but don't follow up to ensure the issues have been resolved.

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One team – we create a working environment based on mutual respect, trust and team spirit			
Supportive of each other	You notice that a colleague's attitude has changed suddenly and they frequently snap at other members of the team which is unusual. It's creating a difficult working atmosphere. What would you do?	Ask other members of the team discreetly if they've also noticed the change – if they say they know about it then leave it until the team member introduces the subject but let your other team members know that you're happy to get involved and offer support if it would help. Offer the team member the opportunity to share what's worrying with them in a supportive way 'I've noticed you don't seem quite yourself lately – can I do anything to help and support you?' However, if they don't want to discuss it don't push.	Challenge the person openly about their behaviour and ask them why they're in a bad mood in front of everyone or in public. Ignore the person completely – it's none of your business so just avoid working with them until they get over whatever it is that's bothering them.
Collaborative	Can you think of an example where you worked on a project or piece of work which involved working with teams outside your own department or your organisation? Describe how you built a good working relationship with them.	Depending on what role they were in before this could be an example of working with another organisation, a customer organisation or an internal department. The key things to look for in their example are: Did they seek to understand where the other group were coming from? Did they get to know people well? How did they work with the external group (what was their role?) How did they communicate? What was the outcome? You could also ask what the best thing about it was and if there's anything they might do	Finding it difficult to work with a department or organisation other than their own. Evidence of taking a back seat on the project and just letting others tell them what to do. Evidence of not building up relationships with the external people or getting to know them. Not being able to come up with any positives or any learning from the experience.

		differently another time? (This last point shows good learning rather than being a negative indicator).	
Have fun together	Can you talk through one or two activities which you think make work an enjoyable place to be?	This doesn't have to be about social events or socialising with people outside work. These are often positive indicators but people may have personal situations which don't make this possible. Having fun in a work situation might be about genuinely finding work enjoyable and fulfilling. Positive examples might be: Getting to know work colleagues well and enjoying working with them Solving problems together to deliver a successful result Celebrating success together Learning new skills	Comments like 'you don't come to work to have fun' would suggest a negative approach – if you get this response talk about the things they enjoy about their work in order to probe more deeply. Part of making Sheffield a 'great place to work' means recruiting people who will enjoy working here.
Celebrate success	In your last role how did you respond when people you were working with did a particularly good job or achieved something successfully?	Evidence for this could be very simple – just remembering to say 'thank you' or 'well done' as well as more formal approaches like voting for them in employee of the month competitions or nominating them for an award. They may also use technology to 'like' or 'favourite' or send 'Facebook flowers'.	Not recognising when colleagues have gone 'over and above' and just assuming that people don't need to be thanked for doing their job. Assuming that thanking people is the only the job of a manager or the organisation and not realising the importance of individual recognition.

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Creating knowledge – we are committed to developing our own knowledge and skills as well as supporting world class teaching and research			
Imaginative	Have you ever used a different approach to solving a problem? Can you talk through an example where you did something different to find a solution?	You are looking for people who use imagination and creativity to solve problems. This could be in the way they mobilise other people or using technology or simply taking a different approach to the way things have	Don't see the need to find new ways of doing things or new approaches. Struggles to think of examples and can't demonstrate creative or innovative thinking. Examples are just tried and

		<p>been done before. The response doesn't have to be about using imagination to solve problems – it could be about thinking in an innovative way or generally been keen to create new things. If this is an important indicator you could go on to ask them about thinking creatively or give an example of where they've done something in a different way or taken a new approach.</p>	<p>trusted approaches or process driven without exploring new or different options.</p>
<p>Inspired by working in excellence</p>	<p>Why do you want to work in a University environment? How do you think this role will help the University to develop as an excellent institution?</p>	<p>Positive responses would be about playing a part in helping people learn, making sure students have a great experience, being proud of working for an organisation which is making a difference to the world or to the local community. Try and find out how much they've found out about the University and how much they know about the role it plays in society. Whatever role they are applying for will contribute to the University, even if they're not in direct contact with students or academics. Try to find out whether they can connect their role with the wider organisation and see how important everyone is to achieving goals.</p>	<p>Haven't found out much about the University and don't appear to have much knowledge about it and what the organisation is achieving. Give answers which are purely role related and don't show any connection to the bigger picture. Don't see this role as having any bearing on the wider University community. Can't see a connection between what they do and the overall goals or objectives. It's just about the role and it could be any company or organisation.</p>
<p>Open to new ideas</p>	<p>You attend a meeting with the Registrar who talks to a large number of staff about some new approaches which the professional staff are going to be taking to their work. Not everyone in your department is able to attend this meeting. How do you respond to these new ideas when you get back to your department and what action do you take?</p>	<p>See whether they talk about taking a real interest in the meeting – making notes, thinking about how this will affect their work and that of the team they work in, thinking about what questions the team might ask and getting answers to take back. Do they think about who to talk to in order to get more information if their team has further</p>	<p>Don't feel it would be their 'place' to tell the team about changes or new approaches – that would be the job of the manager or someone else in the team. Don't take an approach which would engage people – it would just be about reporting back or emailing some notes.</p>

		<p>questions? Do they take the initiative to talk to the team about it and create actions as well as listening to people's responses and thinking about helping to make it real for people?</p>	<p>Can't think about how the new approaches would work or find ways to understand them. Just waiting to be told what to do.</p>
Keen to learn and share knowledge	<p>In your last job you developed an understanding of a number of systems which we are planning to implement here. How would you help us to learn about these? How would you go about finding out about your new employer?</p>	<p>First of all do they start by finding out about the systems which are currently in use and how these operate at present? The best response would be understand current working and the people in the team and then thinking about how their own knowledge could be useful and easily taken on board in order to improve things. It's about seeking to understand first and then supporting people to learn and make use of their experience. There are lots of ways they might go about finding out about Sheffield and what you are looking for here is proactivity in whatever way best suits their personality and the way the team functions. This is likely to be a mix of talking to people, making time to interact with a wide range of colleagues, using the intranet and the web site, reading literature and publications as well as looking for things to join and get involved with.</p>	<p>Either doesn't show an interest in how to share knowledge – not their responsibility or wouldn't have expertise or experience which would be useful to others. Or/ talks too much about 'in my last job we did it like this' so not prepared to listen and understand how to put their knowledge to good use. Constantly talking about how good their last organisation was and expecting everyone to do it that way without exploring the best options first. Is reactive about finding out about Sheffield – expecting people to tell them about it and provide all the help and guidance they need rather than going out to look for it.</p>