

# HINTS AND TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS

Inspired by a popular online #IBMSchat about applying for a band 6 position, **Jo Horne** wrote the following article.

**P**reparing for an interview can be challenging, especially if you haven't attended one for a while. Have you ever wished that you could have some hints and tips for success from those more experienced?

## General hints and tips

Regardless of what position you have applied for, there are some general points to remember when preparing. Most importantly, read the job description and person specification, as these will give you additional clues as to what will be expected of you in the role. Does the post include

management or supervision? If so, think about examples of how you have coped under pressure, worked with a difficult colleague, or managed conflict.

Does the post include a quality role? If so, ensure that you have extensive knowledge of ISO 15189 and any quality management systems used in the department. If the post is in a different trust, find out what their current UKAS status is. If they are not accredited, think of examples to describe how you can contribute to achieving accreditation. If they are accredited, think of examples of how you can maintain the current standards as part of the team.

Many trusts also include "values-based recruiting". It is



important to know what the trust values are, as you may be asked what they are, how you meet them, and how they translate to your role.

### Back to basics

It's easy to focus down on the specifics of the post you are applying for – but don't forget about the basics. The panel may use a points-based system and so it is important to describe the basics that any laboratory professional should know. Make sure you are familiar with quality management and document control, internal and external quality assessment schemes, health and safety, risk management and IT systems. Questions may relate to knowledge of UKAS, its place in the laboratory and your involvement, and how to encourage compliance with use of the quality management system. You could also be asked about external or internal quality assurance schemes relating to your specialty, or key performance indicators.

You should also be aware of issues and bodies relating to specific disciplines and roles, for example, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, Serious Hazards of Transfusion, or Human Tissue Authority.

It is important to come across as passionate, with appropriate levels of confidence. But equally, be considered and don't rush in. If you don't know, say so, but offer an educated answer (with the caveat that you'd check). Show the panel that

you would be a safe pair of hands, with the patient at the centre of everything you do.

### Different examples

It is important to go into the interview with prepared examples, but ensure that you have a few in mind, so that you can give a different example, which can be frustrating for interviewers. A good way to prepare examples is by using "CAR stories". CAR stands for "context", "action" and "result", and is essentially a short story based around the following: What was the context? What was your action? What was the result?

Be aware that you may be asked to do a written or practical activity relating to your role, such as a film test on the microscope in haematology. In case of a written activity, take a pen with you – as it may feel better to be prepared with your own stationery.

### CPD is core

CPD and reflection is a core part of our practice as biomedical scientists. It is commonplace for interviewers to ask about recent examples of CPD, so always have some ready. Think about the last

*“Show the panel that you would be a safe pair of hands, with the patient at the centre of everything”*



piece of CPD you did, why you did it, and how it changed your practice. Have you done a piece of CPD that has resonated with you? Why? Interviewers want to know that you are developing professionally and are passionate about what you do. Other reflective questions include giving an example of a mistake or disappointment, and how you overcame it. When giving examples, try to put patients at the centre of your answer. The panel may wish to know about your professional development, so be ready to describe your career to date, with key highlights that demonstrate the strengths and qualities that you can bring to the role.

### Banding questions

Sometimes you may be asked questions relating to the banding. It is important to have a firm idea in your head of what the difference is

between your current band and the band you are applying for. A band 6 job is more likely to involve supervision, management and training, and the panel will look for examples from your experience as a band 5 to see whether you have the skills to act at a more senior level. For example, you may be asked to give an example of how you have dealt with a difficult member of staff or an episode of conflict. Another common question, to show that you can cope under pressure, is to ask what you would do if an essential piece of equipment within your section failed. Many of us have experienced this, so think back to what you or your team did – would you do the same again? What would you do differently next time? For a training role, you might be asked about examples of previous supervision and training, or perhaps what you think makes a good trainer.

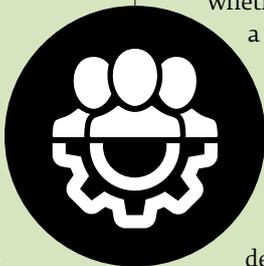
A band 6 or 7 post is more likely to involve working within a specialised area, and so you may be asked more specialised scientific/technical questions, as opposed to general questions – so know your theory. When applying for more senior roles, it is

### WHAT IS #IBMSCHAT?

#IBMSchat is a twitter discussion on the first Wednesday of every month, between 8pm and 9pm, with various themes and hosts – why not join in next time? @CDBeckett @IBMScience.

important to be aware of your expectations, but also your limitations. The panel are not expecting you to know everything when you start in a role – but they want to see that you have initiative and the ability to develop yourself personally and professionally.

At a senior level you are likely to be asked about harmonisation, and working with others as part of a team. Remember to



use examples of your previous experience, and to always put the patient at the heart of your answer.

Think about the changes that are happening in pathology. Know about NHS Improvement Networks, and whether the trust is to be a hub or spoke. How will this affect the running of the department, and how will you contribute to maintaining and developing the

service so it is fit for the future? What changes would you suggest within the department and how might you go about implementing them?

Be aware of strategic documents from NHS England and other stakeholder organisations, e.g. “Five Year Forward View”. How will it effect pathology and your specialty? What are the opportunities for service improvement and innovation? It may also be useful to have some knowledge of finance

and cost improvement programmes, and the strategic plan of the organisation.

With all of these hints and tips in mind, the most important thing to do is to remain calm. Remember that the panel are interviewing you because your application was good and you have earned your opportunity. Now you just need to go and grab it! 

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**HEALTH SERVICES LABORATORIES**

## BIOMEDICAL SCIENTIST OPEN DAY - MAY 2019

**HSL are delighted to open their doors to newly-qualified and experienced Biomedical Scientists for an open day event at our laboratories at The Royal Free Hospital.**

The session will comprise of a tour of our laboratories showcasing our hospital based services as well as the chance to learn about HSL's training and development opportunities. Heads of Department from our hospital sites across the region will be on hand to answer your questions.

Applicants must be HCPC registered. We welcome Biomedical Scientists from all disciplines however the event will be specifically focusing on our Biochemistry, Haematology and Blood Transfusion departments. If you would like to register your interest please do so using the email address below. HSL is a partnership with two of the leading teaching hospitals in the United Kingdom - the University College London Hospital and the Royal Free Hospital. Research, innovation and staff progression is at the heart of everything we do - visit us to see this for yourself.

**To register your interest in attending or for further information, email: [OpenDay@hslpathology.com](mailto:OpenDay@hslpathology.com)**