

# Interviews for Scholarships

Judith Mudge

Email: [jmudge@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:jmudge@waikato.ac.nz)

Gwenda Pennington

Email: [gwenda@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:gwenda@waikato.ac.nz)

Kelly Devoy

Email: [kmdevoy@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:kmdevoy@waikato.ac.nz)

Website: [www.waikato.ac.nz/scholarships](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/scholarships)



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

If you have been short-listed for an interview for a scholarship, you have already done very well. First of all, congratulations! Only a few people applying for a scholarship will be invited to attend an interview, so you have obviously already impressed the Selection Panel with your application. However, every interview will go better with a little forethought and preparation. Here are some handy tips to help you prepare for this interview.

1. Treat an interview for a scholarship very similarly to the way in which you would treat an interview for a job. A little effort goes a long way.
2. Reread your application in the days preceding your interview. Months may have passed since you submitted your documents. It is good to remind yourself of the key points of the regulations and of your own application.
3. Dress neatly. First impressions may be based largely on what you are wearing, so we recommend that you dress in a manner which shows respect for the Selection Panel and/or sponsor. Wear smart, presentable clothes that you feel comfortable in. As a general rule, ripped jeans are not a good look!
4. Arrive early. If you do not arrive with time to spare, you may add to your own stress and, worse still, cause inconvenience to the Selection Panel.
5. Speak clearly and at a moderate pace. Beware of speaking too softly; even young Panel members may be hearing impaired. Nervousness can sometimes make us speak too quickly. If you speak at a more measured pace it will make the Panel's job easier, and will also give you more time to formulate your answers.
6. Be ready to update the Panel. You may be asked if your circumstances have changed. For example, if you have won other funding since you submitted your application, you may not need as much funding as you had originally thought. It is also possible that your study plans may have changed in some way. Be ready to explain any/all changes in a clear, concise, and respectful manner. Your candour is likely to make a good impression.
7. Some awards have special instructions about the interview. Search the Scholarship regulations, and any advice you receive when you are invited to an interview. For instance, the William Georgetti Scholarship application states that 'If you are invited for an interview you will be required to bring updated budget information on the day'. Likewise, Fulbright interviewees can be asked to bring a one-page summary of their study to their interview. As a general rule, unless you are asked to bring documents, you should **not** bring a CV or journal article, etc., expecting the Panel to read it then and there.

8. Practise talking about your study/research plans before the interview. Do not worry if those you rehearse with are not experts in your field. Indeed, this may be helpful, as the Selection Panel may be non experts too. You should be able to speak about your study/research in a way that will be comprehensible and memorable for those listening. You should also be ready to talk in more depth and detail, in case your Panel does include experts in your field.
9. Do a little research into the Scholarship before your interview. If your interview invitation tells you who the Panel members will be, some Internet searching may be useful. Also, try to learn something about the sponsor(s) of the Scholarship. At the very least, make sure you are aware of the regulations of the Scholarship and, if possible, a little of its background. The fact that you have bothered to do some homework may be appreciated (and could help you avoid the dreadful embarrassment of being asked about the sponsor(s), and having to admit to knowing very little or, worse still, saying something incorrect!).
10. Beware of exaggeration and/or error. A Selection Panel can often tell whether or not you are answering accurately. For instance, they may have access to a summary of your academic history, or relevant comments from your referees. If Panel members gain the impression that you are not being honest, they are unlikely to be impressed! Even a lack of clarity can count against you; if your answers are so complicated that you get confused, chances are the Selection Panel members will be confused too.
11. Expect the unexpected. You may be quizzed about a recent item of national or world news, or be asked what books you are reading for pleasure. An interview may become sidetracked if, for example, mention of one of your hobbies engenders an animated discussion that threatens to use up your remaining interview time; you may need to be ready to diplomatically lead the Panel back to their key task.
12. Interviewees are often asked if they have something to add, or if they have any questions. An excellent interview can fall flat if your response is "Umm ... no ... not really". It is advisable to have a comment or question or two at the ready, just in case.
13. Above all, try to relax and enjoy this valuable life experience. You can even feel a bit confident. After all, you have reached the interview stage because the Selection Panel is already impressed with your application. This is your opportunity to show the Selection Panel what a worthy recipient you would be.