UNIVERSITÄT BIELEFELD

GrACe | Graduate and Academic Career Development Centre

Exemplary Interview Script with Sample Questions for a Career Development Discussion (approx. 60 minutes)

How should this discussion guide be used?

This **exemplary conversation** has been deliberately kept detailed in order to provide a comprehensive overview of various ways in which questions can be phrased, and is intended to serve as **inspiration** for your own conversation.

It is not advisable simply to read out all the questions; the conversation would likely come across as artificial and become too long. Please familiarise yourself with this guide in the run-up to the conversation and **select suitable questions**, or **add your own questions and phrasing**.

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1. Opening the Meeting and Clarifying Objectives (approx. 5 mins)

Icebreaker, e.g.:

- Thank you very much for taking the time for this meeting.
- I look forward to a constructive discussion with you.

Clarifying objectives, e.g..:
"Together, we will reflect on your progress to date, discuss your career goals and prospects, and agree on possible support measures and next steps."

"The aim is for you to gain greater clarity, transparency and certainty in planning your skills development phase."

Clarification of roles, e.g.:
"I have prepared some guiding questions and will lead the discussion, but this is 'your' discussion – you are welcome to raise other or additional topics and do not have to answer every question."

"Everything we discuss today will be treated in confidence and will remain between us, unless we agree otherwise."

"I specialise primarily in academic careers within our discipline. Depending on your interests regarding career development outside academia, it may be useful for you to seek additional advice from our Career Service."

„“Please feel free to ask questions if anything remains unclear, or to give feedback if you disagree.”

Clarifying the framework, e.g.:
“We have an hour; I’ll make sure we don’t get stuck on any one topic for too long.”

“I suggest we take a few notes to document the outcomes of this discussion, which we can refer to during our next meeting. Are you happy with that? Which of us should take these notes?”

“Do you have any questions about this format? Shall we get started?”

2. Review of the past year (approx. 10 mins)

Reflection on your career development to date, e.g.:

“Looking back over the past 12 months, what developments have there been, particularly in the following areas?”

➡ ***Depending on relevance:*** *research projects, publications, applications for external funding or scholarships, lectures and conference presentations, teaching activities, academic self-governance, supervising students, leadership experience, science communication, interdisciplinary qualifications / further training, ...*

- Which of these developments, achievements or experiences were particularly significant for you? Which achievements or progress are you particularly proud of
- Where might things have ‘stalled’? Were there any milestones you were unable to reach as planned, or where do you yourself still see potential for development?
- What reasons do you see for the course of your development so far? Are there any conditions that are particularly conducive to or hindering your development?

Constructive feedback, e.g..:

“In my view, the following strengths and positive developments are particularly evident: ...”

“From my perspective, the following areas could be developed further in future to support your career goals: ...”

Guidance on conducting the discussion:

Formulate feedback as **specific**, **observable** and **development-oriented** as possible.

Example:

"Your conference presentations were very convincing from a professional point of view. To continue profile building, it might be helpful to build up your international visibility in a more targeted way in future, for example through presentations at international specialist conferences."

3. Career goals and professional prospects (approx. 15 mins)

Individual career goals, e.g.

- Are you sufficiently clear about possible career options, or would you like more information on the various career paths available after completing a PhD?

➡ *The overview sheets on career options (Toolbox) and, where appropriate, advice from GrACe / Career Service can help here!*

- Do you already have an idea of the direction you'd like to take / what professional goals are you currently pursuing?
- *Also, if relevant: Have your career aspirations changed since our last meeting? If so, why?*
- Do you currently see your professional future more within or outside academia – or are you deliberately keeping your options open?
- *Also, if relevant: What do you need to develop a (clearer) vision of your career?*

Academic career options, e.g.:

- You are aiming for an academic career: What position or role would you like to achieve in the medium to long term?
- What requirements do you consider particularly important for this?

Non-academic career options, e.g.:

- You are (also) considering career paths outside academia: Which fields of work or organisations do you currently find particularly attractive?
- What skills or experience might be helpful in these areas?

A realistic assessment of your career prospects, e.g.:

- What opportunities and challenges do you currently see for your intended career path?
- Are the requirements and next steps towards your desired career path sufficiently clear to you?
- In terms of your career goal, where would you say you are already on the right track, and where might there still be room for improvement?
- • Are there any uncertainties or unanswered questions regarding your professional future that we should discuss?

Assessment by the supervisor, e.g.:

"Based on my experience and my assessment of your development to date, I see the following potential career options in particular: ..."

"To help you achieve your goals, the following steps in particular seem sensible to me: ..."

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4. Developing your individual profile (approx. 10 mins)

Profile analysis, e.g.:

- What subject-specific and cross-disciplinary strengths currently set your profile apart?
- In which areas would you like to further develop your profile in a targeted manner (with a view to your career goals)?

Profile building and visibility, e.g.:

"What measures could help to further refine your academic or professional profile?"

➡ ***e.g. on the following topics**: publication strategy, ability to secure external funding, international networking, teaching profile, leadership skills, knowledge transfer activities, science communication, interdisciplinary collaboration, ...*

Assessment by the supervisor, e.g.:

“In my view, the following activities would make the greatest contribution to achieving your (professional) goals: ...”

5. Funding opportunities and support needs (approx. 10 mins)

Resources and funding, e.g.:

“Are there any funding opportunities, scholarships or programmes that might be of interest for your further development?”

“What kind of support would you like to receive for your future career development?”

Counselling and training opportunities, e.g.:

“Are there any counselling or further training programmes that might be helpful for your current situation?”

Work-life balance, health and working conditions, e.g.:

“Are there any circumstances that currently support or hinder your career development?”

“Would you like to discuss any aspects of balancing work and family commitments?”

“Are there any issues relating to health, workload or inclusion that we should take into account?”



Guidance on conducting the discussion:

It may be useful here to highlight relevant support options, for example from the following areas:

Career advice at the Graduate and Academic Career Development Centre (GrACe) and the Career Service (ZLL)
Mentoring programmes (Movement)
Points of contact for third-party funding
Points of contact for equality, diversity, inclusion and family support
Health and (psychological) counselling services
An overview of counselling services can be found in the Toolbox.

6. Summary and agreement on specific measures (approx. 10 mins)

Joint reflection, e.g.:

“What do you take away from today’s discussion as the most important insight?”

“In your view, which topics should be a particular focus in the coming year?”

Agreement on specific actions

The following should be defined for each action:

- Objective (*e.g. submission of a first-author publication*)
- Person responsible (*e.g. PhD student*)
- Specific next step (*e.g. completion of the manuscript*)
- Timeframe or deadline (*e.g. 30 November 20XX or by event XY*)

Closing question

“Are there any other topics we haven’t discussed today that are important to you?”

Appreciative conclusion to the meeting

“Thank you very much for this open discussion. I greatly appreciate your commitment and your achievements to date. I look forward to supporting you as you continue on your career path and to working with you to take the agreed steps forward.”