

Remote interviews and online recruitment

The Coronavirus pandemic has already had an impact on recruitment practices. Some employers may be slower to respond during the hiring process as they adapt to working remotely and thinking about how they can shift to online application and selection processes; and some candidates have had scheduled interviews postponed.

This guide outlines some practical advice, information and resources about preparing for and performing well at online recruitment activities and interviews.

Remember, you can book a remote **mock interview** (phone or video chat), or get advice on [how to prepare for an interview](#), by emailing careers@stmarys.ac.uk.

Remote interviews

When you reach interview stage, it is incredibly likely that these will be held online, rather than face-to-face, as the government has put social distancing measures in place and advised against all but essential travel. This may take the form of a [video interview](#) or a remote interview via phone or video conferencing software, such as Skype.

Do your research

Just as with face-to-face interviews, the first step in preparing for remote interviews is do as much research and preparation ahead of an interview as possible. Research:

- The **organisation** (e.g. their mission, values, activities, products or services, who they work with/for, latest news and developments, what makes them different, etc)
- The **role** (e.g. the skills, and attributes required and how you will apply these in the job, who you will be interacting with, etc)
- **Yourself** (e.g. examples you can use as evidence that you have the skills required for the role, your strengths and weaknesses, why you are interested in *that* role at *that* organisation, etc)
- The **landscape** they operate in (e.g. latest developments in the sector, external factors that might influence their business, what makes them different to their competitors, etc).



You even do some research into who will be interviewing you (if you know); for example, by looking at their [LinkedIn](#) profile) to see if you can find conversation topics or areas of mutual interest.

After doing your research, think about which questions they might ask you and try to prepare some key points that would aim to include in your answers. You should also prepare some questions that you would like to ask *them*, to show your genuine interest in the role/organisation.

At the present time, you might also want to ask for about the company's hiring timeline, as well as whether the job position can be done remotely until the pandemic is over.

Practice

As well as making a remote appointment with a Careers Consultant for advice on interview prep or a mock interview, you can also practice by signing up to [Interview Stream](#) – our online software that gives you free access to an excellent range of resources, allowing you to:

- **Practice whenever, wherever** – using a MAC, PC, Android or IOS device.
- **See and hear yourself online** – record, review, retry... practice at your own pace.
- **Watch, assess and share interviews** – review your video responses and share interviews via email.
- **Choose from 7000+ questions** – or select a predefined question set designed for you.

Prepare your space and dress the part

Dress for your remote interview in the same way as you would if it was face-to-face. If you're in doubt about dress code check out the company website, and if it's still not clear, dress smartly.

Check out the background that your interviewer will see. Look at it on your practice recordings or take a snapshot of what's behind you. A relatively uncluttered, neutral background is best. Make sure the lighting is good enough that the recruiter can see you clearly and try to have the camera at eye level to avoid any unflattering angles!



If necessary, shut out the wandering cat, silence the dog and warn your flatmates or family that you'll need some peace and quiet for a while. If the interview is via Skype, make sure your Skype name is professional.

One benefit of video interviews is that you can have notes in front of you or around your workspace, to use as prompts. Keep them out of sight of the interviewer if you'd prefer them not to see.

Further tips

You can find more information, advice and resources on our '[Interviews Assessment Centres](#)' page and on the [Prospects website](#). TargetJobs also offer expert tips on [video interviews](#).

Online assessments

Some recruiters also use online assessments (such as [psychometric tests](#)) as part of their selection process. You can practise for these by signing up [Graduates First](#) – our online practice assessment tool. To create an account, you will need to contact the Careers team at careers@stmarys.ac.uk.

Assessment Centres

Some employers use [assessment centres](#) as part of their recruitment process. This usually comprises a set of activities over a day or two that have been designed to see how you deal with a range of work-related situations. Activities might include an interview, group activity, case study task, presentation, in-tray/e-tray exercise or similar scenarios that simulate things you might have to do in the job.

For employers that use assessment centres, the group work aspect is proving to be one of the more challenging parts of the recruitment process to move online. Some are using video conferencing software to deliver this, and alternating between activities in a large 'room' and breakout activities in smaller 'rooms' (potentially followed by a presentation back to the whole group).

If you are invited to a virtual assessment centre, [prepare in the same way you would for an in-person assessment](#). Remember that you still need to speak in the activities so that the assessors can score what you say and how you interact with others. So be prepared to contribute your own ideas, but also be open to the thoughts and opinions of others. This doesn't necessarily mean you have to agree with what everyone else says! But you should be sensitive and diplomatic in the way you challenge other people and always explain your rationale.

For more advice, please see the resources on our '[Interviews and Assessments Centres](#)' page. You can also book a careers appointment to discuss strategies by emailing careers@stmarys.ac.uk.

If your job interview has been postponed or cancelled

If you had already secured an interview before the Coronavirus lockdown, it's possible your interview might be postponed whilst the employer shifts from face-to-face to online interviews.

If your interview is cancelled altogether, your first priority should not be to 'change the mind' of an employer to host you at interview, but rather to establish why your interview was cancelled and

what any other arrangements will be. This is the perfect time to show what an understanding and well-organised employee you would be if taken on. Follow up with a polite email to reiterate your interest in the role and the employer, explain that you understand the extreme circumstances acting on the hiring process at the moment and state your availability to be contacted at a later date if things change. Be patient if they take some time to respond.

You may be offered a video interview at another stage, or the interview could be deferred until a later date. In case of a deferral, ask whether you will need to reapply or whether your initial application will be valid.