

UVA STUDENT CAREERS CENTRE

Questions for an informal talk

Introduce yourself: tell something about who you are and what you're curious about, and why this conversation is valuable to you. Thank the other person for investing time and energy in the conversation.

Questions about the **other person**

How did you end up in this job? Have you always wanted to work in this field?

This gives you an idea of how career paths can develop, which decisions were important and how (and why?) they were made. It provides insight into the process of finding a job and important key elements.

Which other steps did you take in your career path that lead you to this position?

It shows how alternative routes and skills gained in previous positions influence career choices.

What do you like best about your work? What is your favourite moment or activity during a workweek and why?

It can be interesting to hear what motivates people in their work, what drives them.

Questions about the **position/job**

What are your specific activities, tasks and responsibilities?

This will tell you why the position exists in the first place. What does this person add to the company, or what does this person do for the clients of the company?

In every position one has formal responsibilities, but everyone has a personal approach on how to execute those. It is interesting to gain insight into both of these, by asking the next question as well.

What does a typical workday/week look like?

This answer gives you an impression of the amount of time that goes into email, writing reports, clients, meetings, admin, and other things. Pay attention to what is emphasized and what is left out in the description, compared to the question before this one. Ask other - open - questions if you are curious.

What are the challenges you face in this role?

Gives you a sense of what can be difficult in a job, and of current trends in the field.

Which competencies/skills or degree are a necessity for this position?

This will inform you of the hard requirements necessary for this specific job. You can also ask tips on how to develop these skills or competencies.

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When something doesn't go as planned, how does the team respond? / When was the last time something went wrong? How did your team respond?

This will give a realistic idea of how an organisation functions under pressure. In any job or organisation, an inevitable situation occurs from time to time.

Questions about the **organisation/field/industry**

What do you do for lunch? In what way is this an example of the company's culture?

This is an informal way to discover the culture within an organisation. It's better to ask specific examples, such as lunch, than to ask a broader question like; 'What is the culture of your organisation?'. When you have lunch with colleagues in a canteen or perhaps outside the office, it gives a different feeling than eating a sandwich at your desk during lunch time.

What do you think will be the most important developments in this field in the coming years?

This will give you an idea of the opportunities and challenges this field faces, which jobs or activities could disappear and what new roles, experience or skills are needed in the future?

What are useful or even necessary skills when working in this organization/industry? Which skills are becoming more and more important in the future within the industry?

You can use the information to reflect on your own skills set and on how you could develop these skills in the future. You can also ask the other how they have developed these skills over the years.

Closing questions

Do you have any tips for me for my next informal talk?

Provides you feedback on attitude, knowledge and communication skills in these kind of conversations. It's something you can get better at, always. So don't be afraid to ask for feedback.

Can you recommend somebody else to talk to, or an organization that might be interesting for me to look at?

Continue your search, orientation process for new information and a potential internship or job. Get to know new people with similar interests.

May I mention your name in future appointments or application procedures?

This is as a 'warm welcome' to someone you haven't met yet. It works, so try it out.

It's nice to send a **thank you note** afterwards.