



COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CANDIDATES



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INTRODUCTION

Competency-based interviews (also called behavioural interviews) assess how you've approached real situations in the past. Employers use them because past behaviour is often a strong indicator of future performance.

These interviews use prompts like "Tell me about a time when..." and rely on real examples rather than hypothetical answers.

WHAT IS A COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEW?

A competency-based interview explores key behaviours such as:

COMMUNICATION

STAKEHOLDER
MANAGEMENT

PROBLEM-SOLVING

RESILIENCE

TEAMWORK

DECISION-MAKING

LEADERSHIP

ADAPTABILITY

ORGANISATION AND
PLANNING

ANALYTICAL THINKING

The interviewer wants specific examples, not general statements.

COMMON COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Below are common questions with examples particularly relevant for finance roles—but still applicable to any professional environment.

TEAMWORK

- Tell me about a time you worked as part of a team to achieve a goal.
- Describe a situation where you supported a colleague who was struggling with a task. Example: collaborating with colleagues to meet a month-end deadline.

COMMUNICATION

- Give an example of a time you had to explain something complex to someone.
- Tell me about a time you resolved a misunderstanding. Example: simplifying financial data for a non-finance stakeholder.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

- Describe a time you identified a problem and took action to solve it.
- Tell me about a situation where something went wrong and how you handled it. Example: spotting an error in a forecast or reconciliation and correcting it before submission.

LEADERSHIP

- Give an example of when you motivated or guided others.
- Tell me about a time you delegated work effectively. Example: leading a small team through budget preparation.

CUSTOMER / STAKEHOLDER SERVICE

- Tell me about a time you delivered excellent service.
- Describe a situation where you had to handle a difficult stakeholder. Example: supporting internal teams with urgent financial information.

ADAPTABILITY

- Describe a time you had to adjust quickly to a change.
- Give an example of when you learned something new under pressure. Example: adapting to a new finance system implementation.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Describe a time when you resolved a disagreement at work. Example: conflicting views over financial assumptions or report formats.

RESILIENCE

- Tell me about a setback you faced and how you recovered from it.

ORGANISATION & PRIORITISATION

- Give an example of how you manage multiple tasks or deadlines.
- Tell me about a time you reorganised your workload to handle competing priorities. Example: balancing daily BAU work with quarterly reporting.

We encourage candidates to prepare 6–8 strong examples that can be adapted for multiple questions.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE DAY

Research the Company

Candidates should know:

- What the company does
- Its mission, values, and culture
- The role requirements
- Recent news, funding rounds, acquisitions, or financial announcements
- Key competitors

Study the Job Description

Identify:

- Skills
- Tools or systems (e.g., Excel, SAP, Power BI, ERP systems)
- Required behaviours
- Key responsibilities

This helps tailor answers to what the employer prioritises.

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Prepare Questions for the Interviewer

Good options:

- "What does success look like in this role?"
- "How does the team collaborate?"
- "What opportunities are there for development?"
- "How does finance work with other departments?"

Prepare Examples

- Examples should demonstrate:
- Challenges overcome
- Achievements
- Use of initiative
- Ways they added value. Examples: improving a process, reducing errors, supporting decision-making with data.

Tip: Strong examples can answer several different questions.

Plan Logistics

- Know the route and travel time
- Arrive 10–15 minutes early
- Charge devices for virtual interviews
- Test technology
- Have water nearby
- Bring printed or digital copies of your CV and notes

BODY LANGUAGE, TONE & COMMUNICATION TIPS

Competency interviews assess both what you say and how you say it.

BODY LANGUAGE

- ✓ Sit upright and look confident
- ✓ Natural eye contact
- ✓ Nod when listening
- ✓ Use open, relaxed gestures

Avoid:

- ✗ Fidgeting
- ✗ Looking down too much
- ✗ Robotic gestures

TONE OF VOICE

- ✓ Speak clearly at a steady pace
- ✓ Avoid monotone speech
- ✓ Sound positive and engaged
- ✓ Be concise
- ✓ Pause if you need a moment to think

Avoid:

- ✗ Overusing phrases like "I think" or "maybe"
- ✗ Being overly casual
- ✗ Speaking too fast
- ✗ Using technical jargon without explanation

COMMUNICATION STYLE

- ✓ Use "I" to describe your part
- ✓ Be honest and authentic
- ✓ Keep examples structured
- ✓ Professional but approachable
- ✓ Use clear language

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR SUCCESS

BE SPECIFIC, NOT GENERAL

Use real examples.

SHOW YOUR THOUGHT PROCESS

Explain why you did what you did.

USE METRICS WHEN POSSIBLE

- "Reduced reconciliation errors by 15%"
- "Saved 12 hours per month through process automation"
- "Supported a £2m budget review"

SHOW YOUR THOUGHT PROCESS

Explain why you did what you did.

HIGHLIGHT LEARNING

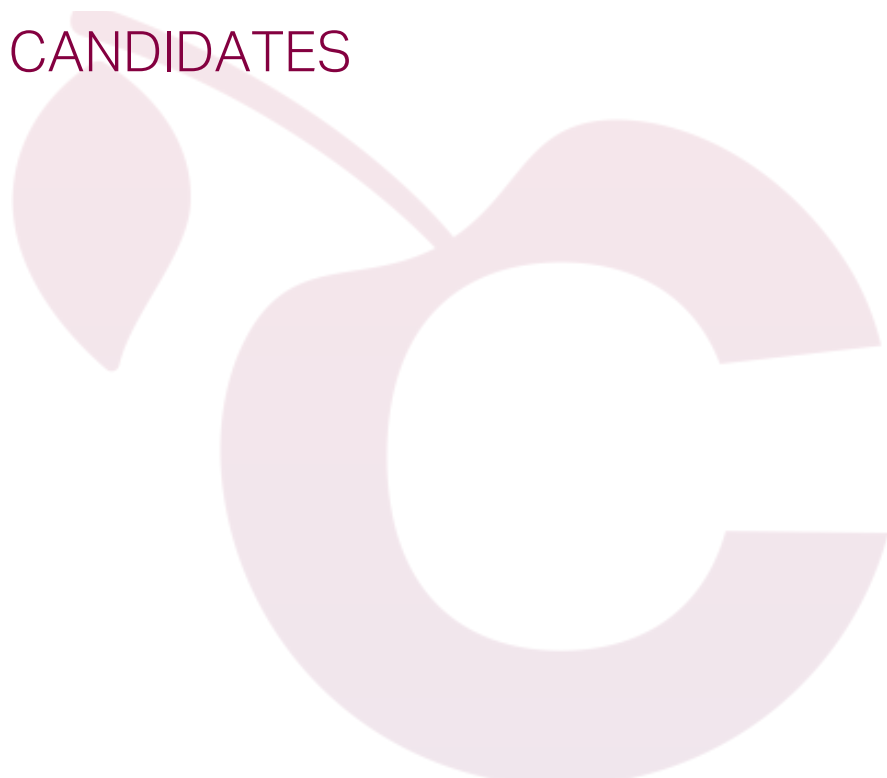
Discuss improvements after setbacks.

STAY POSITIVE

Even when describing challenges or conflict.

FINAL CHECKLIST FOR CANDIDATES

- 6–8 examples prepared
- Job description reviewed
- Understanding of company values
- Questions prepared
- Professional appearance
- Confident body language
- Travel and tech setup sorted
- Strong closing statement ready



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