

Effective Interviewing Skills in the UN

17 June 2025
1500-1600 New York
Day 2 Session 9



Today's hosts



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Manager, Learning & Development
UN Women



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House Keeping Rules

- You are muted by default. The chat function is disabled.
- If you have any questions, please submit them through Zoom Q&A button.
- The session will be recorded. The recording and presentation will be available on: Inter-Agency Career Week webpage



Due to the large number of participants in this session, we might not be able to respond to all of your questions.

Thank you for your understanding.



Our exploration today



Understand the key elements
of a UN interview -
Competency Based & blended
approaches



Explore tips and strategies for
preparing for an interview



Identify essentials of an
effective interview



How do you feel before an interview —
in *one* word?

<https://www.menti.com/ale58a4wtfds>



UN Interview Structure

Often a blended approach with Competency based interviewing (CBI) a core component

May be preceded by a **technical test** as a prerequisite for gaining an interview or require a **pre-recorded video**.

Types of Interview Questions

Motivation: Why do you want the job & what makes you the best / unique candidate (90 sec -3 min)

This is about your fit / qualifications & unique brand or value add that will help the organisation achieve its results.

IT IS ABOUT THEM NOT YOU!

- **Align your answer with the organisation's mandate, strategy, priorities and challenges**
- What is their mandate, their current goals, challenge/context, priorities, values? What is about the organisation & role that excites you?
- What is your unique value add / brand – skills, mindset, purpose, impact) that will help them achieve this?
- Showcase your top 3-5 strengths that directly relate to the job requirements & give examples of where you have used these (and impact / results)
- How do your values and strengths align with what they are looking for and their values?

Tell me about yourself / your background (90 sec - 3min)

- **Share a compelling story of your career journey** – who you are (your brand), how you got started, where you are now and why this is the logical next step (ie why you want the job and what makes you a unique fit for this job)
- Focus on your skills, experiences, results / accomplishments / impact – relevant to the job
- Highlight why you are passionate about this opportunity and connect it to your previous experiences.

UN Interview Structure

Competency-focused 3-5 questions about your experience with specific competencies

- Competencies: combination of skills, knowledge, and behaviours
- **CBI** uses competencies as a critical measure of fit for a job and seeks examples to demonstrate the competencies that are necessary to be effective in doing the job
- “Past performance is the best predictor of future performance”
- Dependent on job competencies – but commonly have questions related to technical competencies, core and managerial competencies
eg leadership/management; working / co-creating with others/team; planning & organizing; and managing conflict / difficult situation; working under pressure/stress/uncertainty; communication with others; ability to learn (eg new technology UN 2.0 skills); critical thinking & problem solving.

Refer to the Job description

eg “Describe a time when you had to resolve a difficult interpersonal situation in your team which was impacting on the delivery of your results”

May be follow-up or probing questions from panel

UN Interview Structure

Values & ethics A question about values (your values, the organizational values, their importance, impact and application) or ethical dilemma often drawn from the UN Values as articulated by the UN entity.

- Know the values of the organisation with who you are interviewing. Be able to connect your personal values with those of the organisation & give examples of how those values / ethics have been applied in your previous work and how you have resolved ethical dilemmas.

What are your greatest strengths?

- Talk about strengths related to the job role.
- Lead with the strength you're proud of / known for, tell a concise story about a time you used it with positive results, and then summarize the impact you had.
- Connect it with how you see your strength brings value to the organisation

Weaknesses/ Areas for development?

- Requires an honest calibrated response tailored for the job (one that is not critical to the job) & reflect what you are doing to grow and learn, & any feedback you may have received before / after.

UN Interview Structure

Hypothetical situation asking you to explain how you would go about solving a specific problem, challenge or goal.

- Requires a response to explain what you would do, drawing upon your past experience & learning, your current role & connecting it to specific relevant competencies (to the job) that relate to this.

Ask for a presentation on a topic (usually notice is given before interview for this)

You may have to present to the panel on the specific topic, or to the panel (as part of a hypothetical scenario with the panel representing different stakeholders).

Questions you have for the interview panel

Ask at least 1 or 2 in-depth question about the organization / job (is it new/ existing position?) / strategy / goals / challenges that demonstrate your knowledge & interest about the organisation.

Follow-up interview or conversation – to check your fit, could be more informal.

For non-UN jobs – may be other questions that do not fit in the typical “ UN interview structure”

Eg There are many highly qualified candidates for this job, what do believe will be your legacy if you were to be hired? What do you think you are worth? What attracts you to our business compared to others? What would be the 3 top things would you focus on in your first 30 days if you were hired?

Competency Based Interview (CBI) questions

Use the STAR MODEL

STAR + L Model is a structured way to answer CBI questions:

- **Situation**
- **Task** (10%)
- **Action** (70%)
- **Result** (10%)
- + **Learning** (10%)

(ALSO applicable for hypothetical questions)

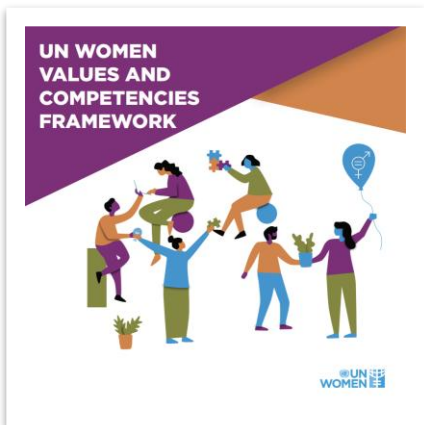
Preparing for competency-based questions

- **Review the competencies outlined in the job & what are the elements of each competency (outlined in the **relevant UN framework** available)**
- Create a list of examples of your competencies
 - Review your job application for examples of achievements
 - Reflect on your professional history
 - Match duties / functions of jobs with competencies
- Identify which competencies your stories demonstrate (2-3 from different jobs)
- Write out your stories in bullets. Be concise and complete.
- Chose examples that are relevant and of sufficient complexity to match the requirements / duties of the job and that you are willing to talk about in detail
- Explain your achievements in clear and concise language. **Describe what “I” did (my role) rather than what “we” did.**
- Use **STAR + L**

UN Competency Framework



In many interviews with Competency-Based questions, there is often a question on values, **at least two or three on** core competencies and managerial / leadership questions as applicable.



Examples of CBI questions

COMMUNICATION

Give me an example of when you had to explain something difficult/complex to an audience who did not have your background /knowledge.

What was the outcome? If you were delivering a similar message today, what would you do differently in your communication?

Tell me about a time when you delivered a presentation to persuade or influence a key stakeholder's opinion or decision.

What challenges did you face, and how did you address them? What was the end result? What did you learn from this experience?

ACHIEVE RESULTS

From your experience, can you give us an example of a project where you set goals with clear deliverables and how you were able to deliver the relevant results, with competing priorities?

What lessons did you learn from this?

There is sometimes a trade-off between quality and quantity of our work product. Please describe a time when you had to meet a tight deadline yet delivered a high-quality output/product.

What was the situation and which steps did you undertake to achieve the planned outcome? Did you encounter any challenges?

Assessing Teamwork / Connect and Collaborate



Positive Indicators

- ✓ **Actively listen to and take an interest** in the views, expertise, experiences and feelings of others
- ✓ **Seek out opportunities for collaboration** with others, using language and technology skills to the fullest
- ✓ Demonstrate ability and willingness to **identify with emotions and perspectives of others**
- ✓ Seek opportunities for **partnerships and collaboration** within and across different teams, thematic pillars and UN System organizations
- ✓ **Work collaboratively** with colleagues to achieve organizational goals
- ✓ **Place team agenda before personal agenda**
- ✓ Support and act in accordance with **final group decisions**
- ✓ **Share credit** for team accomplishments and accept joint responsibility for team shortcomings

Assessing Teamwork / Connect and Collaborate

Negative Indicators



- ✗ **Rarely offers support** to others
- ✗ Prefer to **work alone**
- ✗ Emphasize **achieving personal goals**
- ✗ Show limited consideration of the ideas of others
- ✗ **Take credit for team accomplishments** and pass on responsibility for team shortcomings
- ✗ **Place personal agenda before team agenda**
- ✗ Mostly **ignores emotions and perspectives of others**

Assessing Teamwork / Connect & Collaborate

Sample CBI Questions



Success & Strengths

“Describe a time when you worked in a really effective team.”

□ Follow-up: *“What made the team so effective?”*

□ Follow-up: *“What was your particular contribution to the team?”*

Setback & Reflection

“Tell me about an occasion when you had difficulties working with a team.”

□ Follow-up: *“What caused the problems?”*

Sample Answer – STAR + L

eg “Describe a time when you had to resolve a difficult interpersonal situation in your team which was impacting on the delivery of your results”

Situation

What was the specific event or task?

“I was working on a project with two colleagues who didn’t get along. The situation escalated and they were not communicating.

This was affecting the quality of the work and the atmosphere in the team. ”

Task

What objectives did you see as the key issues to resolve?

“If I didn’t do anything, I knew that the project would fail. Even though I wasn’t in charge, I decided to see if I could assist my colleagues work through their differences.”

Action

What did you actually do?

“I first spoke to each of my colleagues over coffee.

I then realized each felt the other one was not pulling their weight.

I revisited the work plan with them & noted some of the roles & responsibilities were not clearly defined.

I submitted the revised work plan to the project manager & asked to call in for a ‘clear the air meeting’ to share the updated plan.”

Results

What did you actually achieve?

“Once agreement had been reached on the defined roles & responsibilities, some tensions dissipated. The team slowly began to communicate more effectively & collaborate better. This improved the collective ability to achieve the KPIs.”

Learn

What did you learn & apply?

“In the next project I was team lead, I led a meeting at the outset to clarify responsibilities, roles, strengths, results & agree on how we would work and communicate with each other.

I had weekly meetings to review progress, ideas with shared ‘chairing’ & celebrate success

Practice...Practice...Practice...

Content, Structure, Style, Delivery

- ☐ Turn your content and structure into a story
- ☐ Tell this story out loud to yourself without timing yourself
- ☐ Time yourself to 3-5 minutes with an alarm; stop at 3-5 minutes (for Motivation questions **90sec-3 min**)
- ☐ Repeat until your story fits comfortably in 3-5 minutes
- ☐ Audio-record yourself and listen for style, volume, articulation, pace
- ☐ Video-record yourself and look for gaze, body language, calmness

Get feedback

- ☐ Find someone who does know about the area to tell your example and give them guidance on what to look for
- ☐ Ask for feedback on
 - Content & Structure, Clarity and Impact
 - Style: delivery, timing, pacing, voice, body language, vocabulary
- ☐ Repeat practice with someone who does not know your work

PREPARATION FOR INTERVIEW DAY

What should I do? (Before)



Choose a quiet room



Test your audio-visual tools



Find uninterrupted time to complete the interview



Check or Install
Software in your device



Tidy up your
background



Get pen and paper
to take notes

INTERVIEW DAY – What do I need to do?

- ✓ Listen carefully to the question. Ask for clarification if needed
- ✓ Consider writing the question down and repeating it back
- ✓ It is OK to pause for a second while preparing your response to a question
- ✓ Keep your answers brief (3-5 minutes). For questions “Why do you want this job, tell me about yourself (recommended 90 sec - 3 minutes)
- ✓ Keep your answers concise, specific and relevant to the point **(STAR+L)**
- ✓ Wherever possible, finish your response (to a question) by telling the panel what you **learned** from that experience & how you applied it in other contexts / current job
- ✓ Do not, under any circumstances, make up an example!

Look at the camera. **Speak slowly and clearly.** **Speak with confidence and conviction.**

Making quality CB responses

Effective

- ✓ Uses past tense e.g., **I designed....**
- ✓ Concrete and contextualized
- ✓ Uses examples that indicate high visibility/high risk related to the complexity of the job/function
- ✓ Explains '**How**' you did something (**Behaviour/Action**) e.g., **I facilitated a workshop.....through the use of participatory learning methods ...**

In-Effective

- ✗ Uses present tense
- ✗ Uses past tense in general e.g., I supported/helped....
- ✗ Telling '**What**' you did without the '**How**' e.g., **I facilitated a workshop.**

Interview Preparation Checklist

Checklist

- ☐ I researched the organization I'm applying to
- ☐ I can confidently answer “Why do you want this job, tell me about yourself.”
- ☐ I have 2-3 STAR+L examples ready for any competency questions.
- ☐ I know how to talk about my strengths and weaknesses.
- ☐ I have a strong closing question for the interviewer.
- ☐ I have practiced out-loud my responses to possible questions
- ☐ I have visualised my interview taking place and how I might respond to different types of questions confidently with conviction

Visualise your successful interview



- Pause, move & stretch
- Take 3 deep breaths
- Observe body, thoughts, feelings without judgement
- Check and suspend fear, doubt, assumptions, negative self-talk you may have
- Create a positive intention of what you will do in the interview (feel, say, do)
- Visualise yourself in the interview being confident, calm, answering questions, and the environment you wish to create

Using AI for interviews



#Presentation

CAREER WEEK

A Mind-Blowing Tour of AI Tools
to Accelerate Your Career

16 June, Monday

New York 13:30-14:30
Copenhagen 19:30-20:30
Nairobi 20:30-21:30
Bangkok 00:30-01:30


Rishan Mohamed
Founder of HiringCoachAI

Register from the Inter-Agency Career Week 2025 page

Questions?



#Career Clinics

Demystifying Networking for Career growth

18 June, Wednesday

New York 07:30-08:30
Copenhagen 13:30-14:30
Nairobi 14:30-15:30
Bangkok 18:30-19:30

Betty Almonte
Talent Management and Career Specialist, UNHCR

Lucrezia Pala
Talent Management Specialist, WFP

Mian Nabeel Ahmad
Lead, Strategic Talent Sourcing, WFP

Register from the Inter-Agency Career Week 2025 page

DAY 3/SESSION 4 - DEMYSTIFYING NETWORKING FOR CAREER GROWTH (UNHCR, WFP)

🕒 Wednesday, June 18, 2025 - 13:30 to 14:30

CEST

🌐 English

📄 Career Clinic

🏢 UNHCR, WFP

#Keynote Session

A Holistic Approach to Career Development

18 June, Wednesday

New York 09:00-10:00
Copenhagen 15:00-16:00
Nairobi 16:00-17:00
Bangkok 20:00-21:00

Michael EMERY
Director of Human Resources, IOM

Register from the Inter-Agency Career Week 2025 page

DAY 3/SESSION 5 - A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT (IOM)

🕒 Wednesday, June 18, 2025 - 15:00 to 16:00

CEST

🌐 English

📄 Keynote Speakers

🏢 IOM

#Presentation

Resilience and Adaptability in times of change: "Bending without breaking"

18 June, Wednesday

New York: 13:30-14:30
Copenhagen: 19:30-20:30
Nairobi: 20:30-21:30
Bangkok: 00:30-01:30

Ekin Dolu
People and Culture Specialist, UNICEF

Godwin Otim
Career Development Specialist, UNICEF

Register from the Inter-Agency Career Week 2025 page

DAY 3/SESSION 8 - RESILIENCE AND ADAPTABILITY IN TIMES OF CHANGE: "BENDING WITHOUT BREAKING" (UNICEF)

🕒 Wednesday, June 18, 2025 - 19:30 to 20:30

CEST

🌐 English

📄 Presentation

🏢 UNICEF



DAY 4/SESSION 4 - CAREER PIVOT INTO THE PRIVATE SECTOR (UNDP)

🕒 Thursday, June 19, 2025 - 13:30 to 14:30

CEST

🌐 English

📄 Career Clinic

🏢 UNDP



DAY 5/SESSION 6 - CREATING YOUR PERSONAL LEARNING STRATEGY (UN WOMEN)

🕒 Friday, June 20, 2025 - 16:30 to 17:30 CEST

🌐 English

📄 Presentation

🏢 UN Women

UN Inter- Agency Career Week 2025 Agenda

16 - 20 June



	Monday, 16 June	Tuesday, 17 June	Wednesday 18 June	Thursday 19 June	Friday, 20 June
03:00-04:00 (New York) 09:00-10:00 (Europe) 11:00-12:00 (Nairobi) 15:00-16:00 (Bangkok)	Pres (E) - Embracing Your Career Journey in a VUCA World - Unlocking the Power of Learning Agility	Pres (E) - Your career is more than your next job	PD (E) - Career Conversations with colleagues on Inter-Agency mobility	Pres (E) - Skills for the Future of Work	Pres (E) - NextGEN Talent Acquisition: Insights from Recruiters
04:30-05:30 (New York) 10:30-11:30 (Europe) 12:30-13:30 (Nairobi) 16:30-17:30 (Bangkok)	Pres (E) - Charting your Blue Ocean: Identifying Emerging Opportunities and In-Demand Roles	PD (F) - Conversation de Carrière (Parcours Leadership)	Pres (E) - Navigating Inter-agency moves: key questions to consider	PD (F) - Conversations de carrière avec des collègues sur la mobilité inter-agences	Pres (E) - Demystifying Job Searching in the UN System
06:00-07:00 (New York) 12:00-13:00 (Europe) 14:00-15:00 (Nairobi) 18:00-19:00 (Bangkok)	Clinic (F) - Optimisez votre PHP : Clés pour une Candidature Réussie	Clinic (F) - Entretien basé sur les compétences pour les candidats	Clinic (F) - Réseautage Stratégique : Créer des liens, créer des chances	Pres (E) - Your application and the process	PD (E) - Recruitment for Global Impact: Insights from Non-Governmental Organizations
07:30-08:30 (New York) 13:30-14:30 (Europe) 15:30-16:30 (Nairobi) 19:30-20:30 (Bangkok)	Clinic (E) - Successfully crafting your Personal History Profile / P11	Clinic (E) - CBI for applicants	Clinic (E) - Demystifying Networking for Career growth	Clinic (E) - Career Pivot into the Private Sector	PD (E) - How Volunteering Shapes Future Careers
09:00-10:00 (New York) 15:00-16:00 (Europe) 17:00-18:00 (Nairobi) 21:00-22:00 (Bangkok)	Keynote Speakers (E) - Pursuing your Success : Skills for Career Development	Keynote Speakers (E) - Unlocking Career Potential: The Power of Continuous Learning and Training	Keynote Speakers (E) - A holistic approach to career development	Keynote Speakers (E) - Onto the Balcony: Leadership Insights from a Personal Journey	Keynote Speakers (E) - Keynote Address by David Bearfield (UNDP)
10:30-11:30 (New York) 16:30-17:30 (Europe) 18:30-19:30 (Nairobi) 22:30-23:30 (Bangkok)	Pres (E) - Your Personal Journey	PD (E) - The Leadership Equation: Integrity, Innovation, and Impact	PD (E) - Getting into the international professional category - Moving to a different UN Organization	PD (E) - Career Conversations with colleagues on Interns and Fellows	Pres (E) - Creating Your Personal Learning Strategy
12:00-13:00 (New York) 18:00-19:00 (Europe) 20:00-21:00 (Nairobi) 00:00-01:00 (Bangkok)	Pres (S) - El CV como herramienta de impacto	Pres (E) - Branding from the Inside Out: Authenticity and EQ in Action	Clinic (S) - Desmitificando el Networking para el Crecimiento Profesional	Pres (E) - From Federal to Civilian: Resumes & Job Search Strategies	Clinic (S) - CBI para solicitantes
13:30-14:30 (New York) 19:30-20:30 (Europe) 21:30-22:30 (Nairobi) 01:30-02:30 (Bangkok)	Pres (E) - A Mind-Blowing Tour of AI Tools to Accelerate Your Career	PD (S) - Voces de Impacto: Liderazgo que Transforma	Pres (E) - Resilience and Adaptability in times of change: "Bending without breaking"	PD (E) - Navigating and supporting the careers of women in the UN system	Pres (E) - CV writing - transforming tasks into achievements
15:00-16:00 (New York) 21:00-22:00 (Europe) 22:00-23:00 (Nairobi) 02:00-03:00 (Bangkok)	Pres (S) - Entrevistas de trabajo eficaces en el sistema de las Naciones Unidas	Pres (E) - Effective Interviewing Skills in the UN	Pres (S) - Cómo completar un perfil para solicitar un puesto de manera efectiva	Pres (E) - Step Into your Future: How to set big goals and unlock your potential as a leader	Pres (E) - Reset and Recharge: Reconnecting with what grounds us

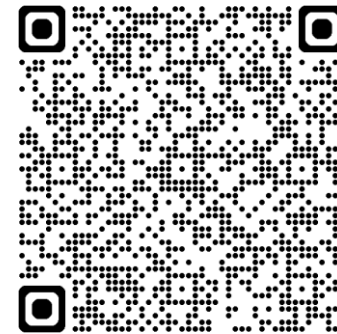


THANK YOU! MERCI ! ¡GRACIAS!

The presentation, recording and other resources will be shared on our dedicated Inter-Agency Career Week Page.

Please fill out the **Evaluation Survey**.

Your feedback matters to us!



If you have any questions, please reach out to
Gabriel.tuan@unwomen.org & hrlearning@unwomen.org