

# Competency Based Interview

Instructions and Questions Booklet

# Instructions

These competency based interview questions are based on a typical competency framework. The basis for all competency based interviews (CBIs) is a list of key competencies which the recruiting organisation holds as important for the role. For example the competencies we have used here are:

**Organisational Ability**  
**Interpersonal Skills**  
**Problem Solving**  
**Judgement**  
**Innovative Thinking**  
**Integrity and Ethics**

We have selected these competencies because they are some of the most commonly used, however bear in mind that each company will have their own list of competencies they are looking for.

Targeted questions are then constructed in order to measure these competencies. In this document we have given three questions per competency, which is typical of a real CBI. Within each competency based question, a list of possible probing questions is given which the interviewer can use to appraise the interviewee. A second column titled Evidence is also provided which enables the interviewer to record evidence of competence gained from the interview. Evidence has to be provided for each competency, otherwise marks cannot be awarded.

This document could be used for a mock interview, with the interviewer asking competency based questions, probing questions and recording evidence of competence. You could then swap roles if you are using this with a friend or colleague. Equally, candidates might like to use this document on their own to identify the types of questions and probing questions which may come up during a competency based interview.

After you have completed this exercise, review our **Scoring and Candidate Guidance Booklet** to see example answers to these questions. The guidance booklet will suggest answers that may be suited to a competency based interview, how to structure your responses in an effective way, and general tips on how to perform well during your competency based interview.

**Key Competency: Organisational Ability**

**Competency Based question:** Tell me about a time in which you were required to produce something to a high standard, within a fixed period of time.

**Probing questions:**

- What did you need to produce?
- How long was the fixed time period?
- To what standard did it need to be produced to?
- What was the result?
- How close were you to failing your goal?
- If you were asked to do this again, what would you do differently?
- How satisfied were you with your outcome?

**Evidence:**

**Competency Based question:** Describe a time when effective time management skills were the key to success.

**Probing questions:**

- What did you need to achieve?
- How much time did you have to meet your goals?
- What were the obstacles to success?
- What time management strategy did you implement?
- What was the result of your time management strategy?
- How much time did you have left to spare?
- What factors interfered with your time management strategy and how were these overcome?

**Evidence:**

**Competency Based question:** Give me an example of where a strict, challenging deadline had to be met.

**Probing questions:**

- What needed to be achieved?
- How much time was provided?
- How strict was the deadline?
- What made the deadline challenging?
- How did you meet the deadline/why did you not meet the deadline?
- What was the result?
- What was the quality of the work produced within the deadline?

**Evidence:**

**Key Competency: Interpersonal Skills**

**Competency Based question:** Tell me when you had to manage or resolve a conflict between two or more co-workers.

**Probing questions:**

- What was the conflict regarding?
- How serious was the conflict?
- What were the likely repercussions of the conflict escalating
- What interventions did you make?
- How were these interventions received by the other parties?
- Did the parties involved perceive you as neutral?
- What was the result of your interventions
- Did this conflict arise again after your intervention?

**Evidence:**

**Competency Based question:** Describe a situation which required you to be sensitive to the needs of fellow co-workers?

**Probing questions:**

- Why were you required to show sensitivity?
- In what way were you sensitive to the needs of the co-worker?
- How was your sensitivity received by the co-worker involved?
- Did your sensitivity encourage other co-workers to follow suit?
- Was sensitivity reciprocated by the co-worker? (if appropriate)
- Looking back, how would you act now in that given situation?

**Evidence:**

**Competency Based question:** Tell me about a disagreement had between you and your manager/supervisor.

**Probing questions:**

- What was the disagreement regarding?
- How the disagreement was initially raised?
- How did your manager/supervisor react?
- What was the result of the disagreement?
- How was your relationship with that manager/supervisor afterwards
- How would you act differently if presented with this situation again?

**Evidence:**

**Key Competency: Problem Solving**

**Competency Based question:** Describe a situation in which the cause of a problem was not initially clear.

**Probing questions:**

- What was the problem?
- What impact was the problem having?
- What information did you need?
- How did you utilise the information?
- What technology was used (if any)?
- When did you identify the cause of the problem?
- In retrospect, how clear was the cause of the problem?

**Evidence:**

**Competency Based question:** Tell me about a time where practical improvements needed to be made based on large amounts of data.

**Probing questions:**

- What was the issue that needed improving?
- What type of data was used to make improvements?
- How did you use the data to make decisions?
- What practical improvements did you suggest?
- How did you communicate key points of the data?
- To what extent did the practical improvements reflect the data?
- What was the result of the practical improvements?

**Evidence:**

**Competency Based question:** When have you needed to solve a problem using abstract, lateral thinking?

**Probing questions:**

- What was the problem?
- Why was conventional thinking not appropriate?
- How did you come to your conclusion?
- To what extent did your conclusion run counter to traditional thinking?
- Did your idea solve the problem?
- Has your idea since been incorporated into common practice?
- Have you used this type of lateral thinking in your work since?

**Evidence:**

**Key Competency: Judgement**

**Competency Based question:** Provide an example of when you made a decision based on logical, rational thinking.

**Probing questions:**

- What did you need to decide upon?
- What were your potential options?
- What made you decide upon your course of action?
- How difficult was it to reach a decision?
- What was the result of this decision?
- To what extent did rational thinking improve the result?
- Would you make this decision again if in a similar scenario?

**Evidence:**

**Competency Based question:** Describe a situation which required you to adopt multiple points of view.

**Probing questions:**

- What was the situation?
- How many points of view were involved?
- Why was adopting multiple viewpoints necessary?
- How significantly did points of view differ?
- Did others recognise you as adopting their points of view?
- What was the result?
- How has adopting multiple viewpoints in this instance effected your future decisions?

**Evidence:**

**Competency Based question:** Tell me about a decision you had made objectively, despite your own personal bias.

**Probing questions:**

- What decision needed to be made?
- In what way were you personally biased?
- Why did you need to be objective in your decision making?
- What made your decision making objective?
- What was the result of your decision?
- How did you prevent acting on bias?
- Has personal bias influenced your decision making since?

**Evidence:**

**Key Competency: Innovative Thinking**

**Competency Based question: Tell me about a time which your creative ideas were ignored.**

**Probing questions:**

- What was your creative idea?
- Why was your creative idea necessary?
- Who did you raise your idea to?
- Why did you consider your idea to be more effective than traditional practice?
- Why do you think was your idea ignored?
- What were the other barriers involved in preventing your ideas being realised?
- Given the chance, would you still want those ideas implemented?

**Evidence:**

**Competency Based question: Describe a situation which called for your creative and original input?**

**Probing questions:**

- What was the situation?
- Why did the situation require your creative input?
- Why was conventional practice no long appropriate?
- How did you come up with your ideas?
- How well received were your ideas?
- What was the result of your input?
- Were you called upon to provide creative, original ideas afterwards?

**Evidence:**

**Competency Based question: When have you managed to convince conventionally minded people into adopting new ideas?**

**Probing questions:**

- Why was a new idea needed?
- What was the accepted practice at the time?
- What ideas did you provide/generate?
- How much convincing did the conventionally minded people require?
- What approach did you adopt when convincing them?
- What was the result of convincing these people?
- How did they react to new and original ideas since suggesting the initial idea?

**Evidence:**

**Key Competency: Integrity and Ethics**

**Competency Based question:** Describe a time which a manager or co-worker made a decision which you disagreed with on moral terms?

**Probing questions:**

- What decision was made?
- How did this decision deviate from accepted practice?
- What negative implications could have arisen from this decision?
- What were your actions after discovering this decision?
- What was your relationship like with this person subsequently?
- How would you have made the decision in their position?

**Evidence:**

**Competency Based question:** Tell me about a time you had felt guilty at work.

**Probing questions:**

- What was the context?
- What course of action caused you to feel guilty?
- How does this differ from how you would normal act?
- Why did this make you feel guilty?
- What was the result of your action?
- How would you change your actions if presented with the opportunity again?
- Have you acted similarly since first feeling guilty?

**Evidence:**

**Competency Based question:** When have you experienced a potential conflict of interest at work?

**Probing questions:**

- What was the situation?
- Why could this have been a conflict of interest?
- At what point did you identify the potential for conflict of interest?
- What were your actions after identifying the potential for a conflict of interest?
- What was the result of your actions?
- What measures do you take to avoid conflicts of interest since this event?

**Evidence:**

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