

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW

Read this in conjunction with the [official Victorian Training Award resources](#).

Congratulations on being short-listed for the Victorian Training Awards. That's an achievement to celebrate.

The interview is the next stage, and this guide offers general advice that's relevant for any award category.

It can be hard to talk about yourself. Many people get nervous. Others find the talking part easier than writing. These tips are designed to support you to meet the panel and confidently put yourself or your organisation forward. Good luck.

AGENDA ITEMS

Consider what the awards hope to achieve for the VET sector and how your work supports that strategic goal. Brainstorm a bank of 'go to' anecdotes, stories or examples you can draw on to flesh out answers to potential questions Read over your submission. Think about the application as the agenda for your 'meeting'. You've been to a meeting before. It sounds less confronting than 'interview'!

PRACTICE RUN

Think about what you'd want to learn about you, if you were the interviewer. Write practice questions on cards. Pull one out, set the timer and answer it out loud. Speak to the dog or find some colleagues, friends or family to throw a few questions at you. You could stage a mock interview to practice thinking on your feet. Get constructive feedback from the people who prompt you.

SCRUB UP

Make an effort to look presentable (no spinach between your teeth). The best 'look' is a balance of professional and comfortable. If you've got a work uniform that can be an easy option. Aim to feel as natural as possible so you can talk easily. If the interview is online, make sure your background space is clear and clean and that you've got access to a quiet space where you won't be disrupted.

BREATHE

You might experience nervous energy before the interview. That's normal. Deep breaths can help to slow and calm down. Feel your feet on the ground. A few star jumps or dancing in the corridor beforehand can help to move the energy through your body. You could also release a few random sounds to get your voice flow happening. Talking is thirsty work, so drink water to remain hydrated.

CLAIM IT

The judges want to meet so you can verify and expand on your written submission in person (but not regurgitate it). They've already decided you're good. This is a chance to claim your excellence. Sure, they are assessing your capability to be a state finalist on the national stage. But try and think of this as a more of a conversation than interrogation. Be professional, but let your confidence flow.

NO SCRIPT

There are topics you can anticipate but you can't know what the questions will be. So don't prepare a script or rehearse answers. An interview is interactive. You have to be responsive and honest. Make eye contact. The judges want to engage with real people, not robots. Trust that you know your stuff. You are representing your TAFE institute, so be polished and professional. But mostly, just be yourself.

ANSWER THE QUESTION

That sounds obvious but it's easy to be overwhelmed and to waffle without directly responding to what's been asked. Offer context, depth and breadth but make sure you hit the mark. Ask for clarification if the question is unclear. Also, don't be too brief or assume that the judges will know what you're talking about. They want to hear your take. Take a few minutes to respond and explain.

BIG & LITTLE

The judges want to learn about you and your work, and how that relates to the broader context. Familiarise yourself with the keywords and objectives of the VET sector, your industry and TAFE institute so you can have the conversation. But don't just throw buzzwords around; show understanding. Link the big picture and strategy to your own experiences by using specific and concrete examples.

TAKE YOUR TIME

It's ok to pause and gather your thoughts instead of blurting out random words. Jot down prompts if it helps; just like you might do in a meeting. You can ask for clarification to grab a little more thinking time. If something important comes to mind that relates back to a previous point, it's ok to weave that in as long as you don't jump around too much. Try to remain clear and logical.

USE 'I'

If your application is from a team, then 'our' and 'we' is appropriate. But if you're an individual, don't shy away from saying 'me' or 'I'. The judges' goal is to declare a winner who is confident enough to stake their claim. Show some humility by acknowledging mistakes, collaborators or mentors along the way. But don't undersell your own hard work, commitment and outstanding impact.

SAY THANKS

At the end of the interview you may be asked if you have any questions. It's okay to not have any, but it can be handy to have one or two up your sleeve. Questions suggest that you're interested and engaged. Consider what might be useful to know about the next stage if you win. Before you leave the interview, thank the judges for their time, and the opportunity to talk with them as a finalist.

*We've also developed specific role play resources for **Teacher/Trainer** and **Industry Collaboration** interviews.*