

TOP 8



Tips for the Mature Student Interview

1 Who will I meet?

Typically, it is the programme's Course Director who will interview you, sometimes along with another academic colleague. The Course Director is the academic staff member who is responsible for the overall organisation and management of a particular degree programme.

2 What is the interviewer looking for?

Each degree programme in UL has set out general criteria against which mature student applicants are assessed at interview. These are available from <http://ulsites.ul.ie/admissions/node/29831>. Simply put, the Course Director is looking for evidence of your motivation, ability and desire to complete the course. All mature student interviews revolve around three basic questions:

- **Can you do the course?** - Are you academically able for the course? What is your educational background like? Do you like learning? How will you cope with the amount of independent study required?
- **Will you do the course?** - How motivated are you? How interested are you in the subjects on offer? Is this course just one of a number of options for you?
- **How will you fit in?** - Do you understand the realities of being a full-time UL student? Can you attend classes every day? Have you fully considered the impact on your home life and work commitments? How will you cope with being in classes with mostly younger students?

3 How long will the interview take?

Typically, mature student interviews take 15-20 minutes. They are usually quite informal and conversational. Remember, the Course Director is simply trying to find out why you applied for this particular course, what you know about it, and how ready you are to take it on. Think of the interview, not as something to be nervous about, but as an opportunity to talk about yourself and to convince your interviewer that you are ready for this challenge.



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How should I prepare for my interview?

The same way you would for any interview:

- **Research the course** - Does your course offer different study options? You may be asked what your preference is in an interview - have some idea of what these options are but you don't need to have made a decision on it at this stage. Do you know when your course goes on cooperative education or teaching or clinical practice? Do you know what graduates of that course typically go on to do?(Hint: visit this page: <http://www3.ul.ie/careers/yourdegree/>)
- **Review your application** - You may have applied for more than one course on your CAO form and might have been unsure at the time how much information to include. Information which you may have left out could come up in the course of the interview conversation. It can be useful therefore to bring other documentation or samples of your work (if relevant) with you.
- **Reflect** - Think about what you would like to say about yourself, or what else you would like people to know about you, which may not be evident from your CAO application. Ensure that you get the opportunity to say everything that may be relevant.
- **Ask questions** - If you have any questions about the course, the mature student interview is an ideal opportunity to ask these, so have your questions ready.

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How important is my educational background?

While you do not need a full Leaving Certificate, your educational background is important for the reason that a Level 8 degree is a significant undertaking. What Course Directors are looking to assess from your educational (and/or work) background is "how close to the 'starting line' of the course are you?" In other words, have you engaged in formal learning recently or how far did you get in your formal education? The average Leaving Cert student coming straight out of school is already at the starting line i.e. is 'brain fit' and is ready to hit the ground running.

Think of a rugby player being chosen to start a game. If that player has not been training, or is only returning to playing after a long period of time, they may not be fit enough to last the pace of a full rugby game. A degree programme in UL takes four years to complete. The Course Director has your best interests in mind and wants to be sure that you are close enough to that starting line to be able to cope with the demands of a degree programme so that you can get to the end of it in four years' time.

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Do I need to know what I am going to do with my degree?

It's great to say that you want to study a particular subject for four years because you love it, but it is good to have some idea as to how this degree course will benefit your life. Will it enhance your career? Are you doing it for personal fulfillment? Do you want to get a job at the end of the four years? Course Directors may be interested to know where you think this course is going to take you. At the end of the day, a degree course is an investment by you in your own future. Making a decision to invest in anything requires doing research beforehand as to what your investment might yield you - so know what this will be for you personally from a degree course.

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How many places are available?

That very much depends on the degree course you have applied for. Some of the smaller courses are a bit more competitive because there may be a limited number of mature student places available. Degree courses with large overall intakes (e.g. Business) may have more flexibility as to the number of mature students they can offer places to. However, this is not like a job interview where there might be 15 people being interviewed for one job. There is always more than one mature student place available on a degree course.

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Why might I not be successful in getting a place?

It may be that there are simply limited places available on the course and too many applicants. You may have been deemed eligible for a place after your interview, but be placed (ranked) on a waiting list.

If you have been deemed ineligible for a place, the Course Director may think for example that the timing is just not right for you. Or that you are a little bit too far back from the 'starting line' and that they would prefer to see you more prepared to take on the challenge of a degree course. They may advise you that you should undertake some formal learning before starting a degree e.g. completing the Mature Student Access Certificate or a Further Education and Training (FET) course because it will take you closer to the 'starting line' and will give you a much better chance of getting to the end of the 4 years.

 *Good Luck!* 

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