

PSC INTERVIEW:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(seniors' edition)



BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Q: What will the interview format be like?

Your interview appointment email will state if your interview will be virtual or in-person. In either case, you'll need to report to the PSC office in the National Library Building.

During the interview, you'll face a panel comprising members of the PSC. Typically, only one or two will take charge of asking questions for each interviewee, so don't worry if it seems that other panel interviewers are not speaking up. All interviewers will have your personal essay and application information on hand.

In a virtual interview, you'll be in a boardroom speaking to a laptop setup with a webcam and video conferencing software. You'll be able to hear the interviewers through speakers, and there will be a microphone to speak into. In an in-person interview, the panel interviewers will be seated opposite you across the board table.

Interviews typically last between 15-30 minutes.

Q: How should I prepare for the interview?

The interview is a chance for the PSC panel to understand you, so honesty and authenticity is the best trait you can bring to tackle any interview question. 'Studying' interview questions might be tempting, but the last thing you want is to sound rehearsed at your interview.

That being said, it might be stressful to spontaneously self-reflect while facing the interview panel. It's important to have self-reflection and soul-searching before your interview, so that you can represent yourself most accurately at the interview without nerves getting in the way.

Know yourself, know about the organisation you're applying for, and how those fit together. We've provided two areas for reflection in the next page which might be helpful in guiding your own self-reflection journey.



Alyssa Loo, 2020 PSC Scholarship,
Linguistics

"Before my interview, I spent a long time drawing some mindmaps linking facts about myself to what I knew about PSC. I tried to ask myself: how do my strengths, values, and goals match up with the needs of the public service? Knowing that a scholarship is also a big commitment, I also thought about how the public service is uniquely suited to me as a career, rather than any other profession. Working through these questions made me feel more ready for the interview, but also helped make me more sure that this was a career I wanted."

Q: How should I prepare for the interview? (cont.)

1. Knowing Yourself

◦ Personal Motivations

If serving the public is not a motivation to apply, then the scholarship is most likely not suitable for you. You might want to reflect on your motivations to apply for the scholarship and why you want to pursue a career in public service. Motivations are personal to you and there's no right or wrong answer, and so honesty would be best. The last thing you'd want to do is to leave the impression of not being sincere.

◦ Personal Experiences

While having a clear motivation to serve is important, your actions need to demonstrate that you are driven by those motivations. After all, actions do speak louder than words! Moreover, many important skills are honed through experiences. You might consider reflecting on concrete experiences (e.g. from school or extra-curricular activities) and how they drive or shape your motivations/skills.

◦ Personal Character

It is no secret that the PSC looks out for candidates with good character. You might want to reflect on your own character, consider your strengths and weaknesses, and explain how they would translate in practice when you work in a team or as a leader.

"Before the interview, I thought hard about what drives my passion for engineering and why I wanted to join the public sector. In doing so, I spent some time reflecting about how my past experiences have shaped my personality, interests and motivations. Going through these exercises helped to consolidate my thoughts and also reassure myself that this was the path I wanted to take. At the interview, I found that being able to articulate my experiences and tie them to my motivations, helped to reinforce the narrative I was putting forward."



Koo Wei De, 2020 PSC (Engineering) Scholarship, Electrical Engineering

2. Knowing the Public Service

Just like in any other interview, it's important to know who you are interviewing with and the role you are interviewing for. Hence, we recommend understanding more about the PSC (such as by reading the PSC Chairman's Open Letters) and the public service, and how you might be a good fit. In particular, if you are applying to a specific sector/ministry, it's fundamental to know what the ministry is doing, their future plans, and the challenges ahead for them. You could also think about how the public service should adapt to meet new and unpredictable challenges in our ever-evolving world.



Weiyang Toh, 2021 PSC (Master's) Scholarship, Mathematics

"As someone whose experiences are mostly in the area of tech, it is natural that I have an interest in how tech could be leveraged in the public sector. To better understand how the government has been employing tech in public service, I researched some of the policies like the Digital Government Blueprint, and also several projects by GovTech and Open Government Products. Through this research, I was able to think about how my experiences and interests could potentially make me a good fit with the Government's drive to become a Digital Government."

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Q: How should I dress for the interview?

Your attire should be smart-casual; uniforms are also acceptable. As the interview room might be cold, you might want to keep a jacket or blazer handy. As in any interview, please keep a tidy appearance.

Q: What if I am asked a question I cannot answer?

It's perfectly normal to feel daunted by the interview. However, it's also important to keep yourself calm and collected before and during the interview, so that you can perform at your best.

Here are some ways to calm your nerves:

- Take deep breaths regularly.
- Take the interview one question at a time. Don't think of the whole interview at once!
- Remember that you do not have to answer the questions immediately after they are asked. You have a bit of time to pause, take a breath, and think about your response.

It may be especially difficult to remain calm when a difficult question is posed to you. What is crucial here is that you ensure that you still maintain clarity in thought and confidence in expression.

If the question seems complex or vague to you, start by breaking the question down into parts. To buy yourself a little bit more time to collect and frame your thoughts as you go along, you can slightly reduce your speaking pace.

If a question is rooted in a current affair that you are insufficiently informed about, it's better to admit it to the interviewers rather than waffle on aimlessly. The interviewers might be able to provide you with guidance to help you tackle the question in a more enlightened way.



Sarah Lok, 2021 PSC (Legal Service)
Scholarship, Law

"When a challenging question was asked during my interview, I paused for a moment to calmly collect my thoughts. In my response, I first focused on broadly defining the key terms in the question before constructing different lines of reasoning from there. After that was done, I then reconciled these various points to help me form a balanced and nuanced opinion in response to the question."

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Q: When should I expect an update from the PSC Secretariat?

As updates may come on a rolling basis, please don't be anxious if you haven't heard from the Secretariat even though your peers might have received their application results. You will definitely receive an update from the Secretariat, so don't worry!

Q: Should I expect any further interviews?

Your panel interview may be followed up with additional interviews and tea sessions from various agencies for them to get to know you better and for you to understand them better. If you're taking a specialized track such as PSC (Engineering), one of these agencies can be your parent agency.



Suriya, 2021 PSC (Engineering) Scholarship,
Engineering

"I made use of all the tea sessions and talks to further discover my interest and passion in Public Service. Additionally, I took up an internship in an agency which was in my field of interest. During the internship, I developed a deeper understanding of what a career will be like in the public service. The exposure and knowledge that I gained through the internship eventually served me well during my interview."

This guide has been entirely designed by senior PSC scholarship holders in the hopes of helping aspiring applicants navigate the scholarship journey. The guide is updated as of Dec 2021.

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INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

(too long, didn't read edition)



Reflect on your
personality
& past experiences



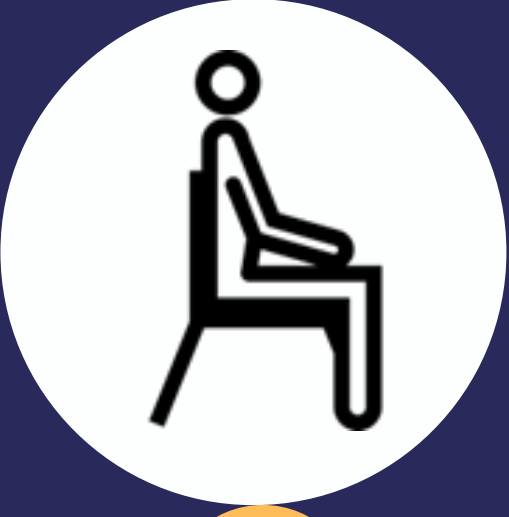
Do your research on
the statutory boards &
ministries of interest



Dress
Appropriately



Speak
clearly



Be mindful of
your body
language



Be
punctual



Remain calm even if
you are asked a
difficult question



Smile during the
interview!