

Arts in Context *Educator/Administrator/Faculty/Arts or Design Professional* Interview Assignment

Interview Description and Method:

The goal of the professional interview is to learn more about your own art/design/educator interests and goals through examining goals and practices of professionals in your field. After developing an academic cv, an artist/designer/educator statement, one can move toward opportunities for your future. Research and select a person of interest in a foundation, residency program, non-profit or institution that connects to your goals. Consider the results of the SWOT and PEST Analyses and individuate this research through a careful in person or online interview. By doing a reflective interview, one may learn effective methods and models of practice, a trajectory example of an individual artist, designer or educator in combining practice and teaching, or just a general inspirational story of balance and creativity based in arts and design fields. You may select a person you have known from undergraduate, summer or graduate or work experiences or a person or agency that you want to know more about. Research online profiles and the attached guidelines for this assignment and plan an effective interview strategy. Then introduce yourself to the person you want to interview, setting up the context of the interview within Arts in Context seminar. Share preliminary questions you want to broach and then prepare for an online or in person interview. It may take several back and forth questions and responses or up to an hour in person interview.

Goals:

- To discover pathways and transitions in art and design from successful professionals.
- To understand the range and types of positions within specific institutions.
- To learn and transpose effective elements within non-profits to your own learning and professional goals.
- To create a profile of a relevant educator, designer, administrator, entrepreneur or artist today.
- To familiarize oneself in new venues that may become sites for future internships, jobs, or continuing education.

Learning Outcomes:

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| An in-the-round view of a professional practitioner. | 25 % |
| Establishing a relationship in the sphere of your goals. | 25% |
| Preparation for meaningful and unbiased interview questions that may be used in future times and in different ways. | 25% |
| A 3 to 5-page summary of the interview that may also contain a short bio, images of work or excerpts from writings, or examples of outcomes. | 25 % |

Basic Competency:

- Minimal preparation and rote and predictable questions. No real connection to one's own questions or research.
- 2-4 pages without revisions or insights. Seems to exist separate from one's own interests.
- A cursory summative reflection is done. Minimal sense of engagement in the project.

Advanced Competency:

- A proactive interest is displayed in the written assignment and summary presented. The interview has a form and structure, transitions to different topics, and includes a reflective summary. It may be divided into special content areas, there may be questions that the interview sparked as an ending reflection, or images supporting the interview add valuable information. A focused conversation reveals ready to apply abilities and ideas for the graduate's future endeavors.

Resources:

View sample interviews at: <https://wordpress.com/page/collegiateteachinginartanddesign.com/1515>

Read Professional Interview Guide for Qualitative Questions and Unbiased Questions attached.

Please share any discipline-specific teaching and learning blogs that your interview may expose.

An example is: <https://www.photopedagogy.com/teaching-photography--teaching-photography.html>

Read:

1.

OWL Purdue University

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/conducting_research/conducting_primary_research/interview_and_survey_questions.html

When creating questions you want to avoid:

Biased questions: Biased questions are questions that encourage your participants to respond to the question in a certain way. They may contain biased terminology or are worded in a biased way.

Biased question: Don't you agree that campus parking is a problem?

Revised question: Is parking on campus a problem?

Questions that assume what they ask: These questions are a type of biased question and lead your participants to agree or respond in a certain way.

Biased question: There are many people who believe that campus parking is a problem. Are you one of them?

Revised question: Do you agree or disagree that campus parking is a problem?

Double-barreled questions A double-barreled question is a one that has more than one question embedded within it. Participants may answer one but not both, or may disagree with part or all of the question.

Double-barreled question: Do you agree that campus parking is a problem and that the administration should be working diligently on a solution?

Revised question: Is campus parking a problem? (If the participant responds yes): Should the administration be responsible for solving this problem?

Confusing or wordy questions: Make sure your questions are not confusing or wordy. Confusing questions will only lead to confused participants, which leads to unreliable answers.

Confusing questions: What do you think about parking? (This is confusing because the question isn't clear about what it is asking--parking in general? The person's ability to park the car? Parking on campus?) Do you believe that the parking situation on campus is problematic or difficult because of the lack of spaces and the walking distances or do you believe that the parking situation on campus is ok? (This question is both very wordy and leads the participant.)

Revised question: What is your opinion of the parking situation on campus?

Questions that do not relate to what you want to learn Be sure that your questions directly relate to what it is you are studying. A good way to do this is to ask someone else to read your questions or even test your survey out on a few people and see if the responses fit what you are looking for.

Unrelated questions: Have you ever encountered problems in the parking garage on campus? Do you like or dislike the bus system?

2.

https://sociology.fas.harvard.edu/files/sociology/files/interview_strategies.pdf

3.

Are you really listening? Tips for conducting qualitative interviews

25 APRIL 2017 - BY KATH MCNIFF

As a qualitative researcher, you wear many hats. For any given project, you need to:

- Read widely and have a thorough grasp on what's happening in your field
- Understand and choose between research methodologies
- Come up with a focused yet flexible research question
- Manage the paper-work involved in getting research approved
- Organize a timetable and potentially manage team members

- Design the research; including data collection, management, coding and analysis
- Recruit and manage participants

All of the above before doing a single interview.

Much of this work is procedural or administrative and tends to be a conversation between you and your computer. It requires efficiency, organization and a methodical approach. But when it comes to interviewing flesh and blood participants, you need to switch gears and focus on social skills like active listening, rapport and empathy. The transition can be a little daunting and it pays to be prepared.

These simple strategies will get you up to speed in no time:

Make a Plan Start out by creating an interview guide. This guide spells out the questions or type of questions you want to ask. It provides a space to think carefully about your overarching research goals and the data you need to support them. It also helps you avoid “awkward, poorly timed, intrusive questions that you may fill with unexamined preconceptions”. (Charmaz, 2014, Kindle Location: 2116)

The guide shouldn’t stifle productive conversation, but a focused approach to questioning can pay off when it comes time to analyze the results.

Ask the right kind of questions. Not all questions are created equal. During a qualitative interview, you want to elicit detailed and thoughtful responses, so try to

- Ask open-ended questions – “What attracted you to this area?” rather than “Did the lifestyle attract you to this area?”
- Avoid leading questions – “How did you feel about the treatment?” rather than “How good was the treatment?”
- Encourage story-telling – “Tell me about that day” or “Can you describe that process?”
- Acknowledge emotion – “You seem passionate about that issue; can you tell me more?” or “That seems to upset you, can we explore it further?”
- Avoid interrogation – instead of making the participant defensive by asking “Why did you do it that way?” try “Can you take me through your decision process?”

Practice: Run a pilot interview with a friend or colleague. This can help you gauge the effect of different questioning styles. Consider recording the pilot interview to evaluate your own performance. Are you listening and responding in ways that encourage participation and elaboration? Do you interrupt too often or have any annoying verbal tics? Ask your pilot participant for honest feedback and take it on board. Also, practice active listening in your day-to-day conversations. See if you can keep your ego in check and really focus on what the other person is saying.

Use active listening techniques:

Active listening means giving the participant your full attention:

- Make eye-contact, nod, smile and lean-in attentively.
- Don’t fiddle with your phone, computer or other device.
- Use occasional and well-timed verbal encouragement like ‘Uh huh’, ‘yes’ and ‘I see’.
- Paraphrase your participant’s words and reflect them back...”So what you’re saying is...”
- Refer to something your participant said earlier – this shows you are paying attention and is a good way to seek clarification or keep the interview on track.
- Avoid interrupting or completing your participant’s sentences.
- Give participants time to think and embrace the productive pause.
- Be prepared to challenge inconsistencies.
- Stay in the moment – don’t spend time planning what you’re going to say next.
- Assess what you’re hearing to make sure there is enough detail but don’t mentally criticize or judge.
- Strive for empathy – let go of preconceived ideas and try to understand your participant’s unique perspective.

Remember that your job is to listen, not to educate, correct, console, advise or commiserate.

Listen between the lines

While you’re engaged in active listening you also need to aim for a “deeper understanding that deconstructs and challenges the surface account.” (Bazeley, 2013, p. 203)

Pay attention to body language and the words your participant is using to describe their experience.

During an interview, participants might be on their best behaviour and use words like “challenging” and “fascinating” when they really mean “totally impossible” and “it makes no sense at all”.

Seidman calls this the “outer voice” and you need to be on the lookout for it. (Seidman, 2013, Kindle Location: 1758)

By developing a sensitivity to the language of your participants and the effect that the interview process has on their responses, you’ll know when it’s appropriate to dig deeper.

Consider the setting. What do Jerry Seinfeld, James Corden and parents of surly teens have in common?

They appreciate the beauty of a car-based interview.

Subjects can feel more relaxed sitting beside you than facing you across a meeting room table. Other contexts can work too - Annabel Crabb interviews politicians in the kitchen while they cook and Louis Theroux talks to his participants as they go about their daily lives.

While it’s not always practical, you may want to consider alternative settings for your interviews. Particularly if you’re working with kids or participants from cultures where continuous eye-contact may be problematic.

Respect participants

This may seem like a no-brainer but respect can easily get lost in the excitement of data gathering. Make sure you:

- Handle issues of informed consent and tell participants how the results will be shared.
- Keep things formal until you get more familiar with a participant; ask if you can use their first name, hold the door, offer a cup of tea, don’t sit until they are seated - all hallmarks of common courtesy but they go a long way to developing trust and rapport.
- Ask delicate or difficult questions by prefacing them with “May I ask you” or “Is it ok if we talk about...”.
- Be conscious of and sensitive to issues of race, gender, age and power.
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Keep control of the interview

Conducting a great interview is a delicate balancing act.

It requires active listening, empathy and a detective’s instinct. At the same time, it demands that you keep track of time, stay focused and respond to shifts in energy.

Luckily, you’re a qualitative researcher and swapping hats is what you do best!

What do you think makes a great interview? We’d love to hear your tips, ideas or experiences in the comments below.

NVivo can help you organize and analyse your interview data. Download a trial to find out more.

References

Charmaz, Kathy. *Constructing Grounded Theory (Introducing Qualitative Methods series)* (Kindle Locations 2121-2122). SAGE Publications. Kindle Edition.

Seidman, Irving. *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 4th Ed. Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

Bazeley, Patricia. *Qualitative Data Analysis: Practical Strategies* (p. 203). SAGE Publications. Kindle Edition.