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Interview Preparation for Boston University School of Hospitality Administration (SHA) Students

Preparation is one of the best ways to build confidence and perform well in an interview. Whether you're interviewing for a hotel, restaurant, event management company, luxury brand, travel organization, consulting firm, or hospitality leadership program, taking the time to prepare will help you present yourself professionally and showcase your unique experiences.

Interviewing for Hospitality Careers

Hospitality employers look for more than technical knowledge—they want candidates who demonstrate professionalism, adaptability, emotional intelligence, leadership, and a genuine commitment to service.

As a BU SHA student, draw on your classroom learning, internships, academic projects, student organizations, leadership experiences, and customer/client service roles to demonstrate these qualities throughout the interview.

Common Interview Questions

While every interview is different, many hospitality employers ask similar behavioral and industry-specific questions. Prepare your responses without memorizing them so they sound authentic and conversational.

Common questions include:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in our company and this role?
- What interests you about the hospitality industry?
- How has your experience at SHA prepared you for this position?
- What hospitality experiences, internships, or customer service roles have helped you develop your skills?
- Tell me about a time you delivered exceptional customer service.
- Describe a challenging guest or client situation. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time you worked with a diverse team.
- Describe a situation where you demonstrated leadership during a class project, internship, or student organization.
- Tell me about a time you had to solve a problem quickly while maintaining excellent service.
- What are your strengths and areas for professional growth?
- Why did you choose hospitality as your career?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- Is there anything else you'd like us to know?

Answering Behavioral Questions: The STAR Method

Many hospitality interviews use behavioral questions. Organize your responses using the STAR method:

- **Situation:** Briefly describe the context.
- **Task:** Explain your responsibility.
- **Action:** Describe the specific steps you took.
- **Result:** Share the outcome and what you learned.

Great examples can come from:

- SHA team projects
- Internships (HF140/240)
- Hotel, restaurant, or event experience
- Part-time jobs
- SHA or BU student organizations
- Competitions
- Volunteer experiences
- Other group assignments

Employers value examples that demonstrate service excellence, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, communication, and problem-solving.

Discussing Salary

Some hospitality interviews may include questions about compensation, although many employers wait until later in the hiring process.

Before interviewing:

- Research salary ranges for similar hospitality positions.
- Consider the location, cost of living, and industry segment (hotels, restaurants, luxury, travel, events, hospitality RE development, etc.).
- Understand that entry-level positions and management development programs often have established salary ranges.

Useful resources include Indeed, Salary.com, Glassdoor, LinkedIn Salary, industry salary reports and the SHA Career Services Office.

Professional Attire

First impressions matter in hospitality.

Dress professionally and in a way that reflects the organization's brand. Luxury hotels, consulting firms, and corporate hospitality employers typically expect business

professional attire, while some restaurants, entertainment companies, or tourism organizations may have a business casual culture.

When in doubt, dress one level more professionally than the organization's everyday dress code.

Remember to:

- Wear clean, pressed clothing.
- Keep accessories simple.
- Maintain polished grooming.
- Wear comfortable professional shoes.
- Don't overdo make-up or perfume/cologne
- Bring copies of your résumé in a professional folder.

Check [this page](#) for visual examples on what the various business attires look like

What to Research before Interview

Hospitality employers expect candidates to understand their company and brand.

Research:

- The job description and required qualifications.
- The organization's mission, values, and service philosophy.
- Hotel brands, restaurant concepts, or hospitality portfolio.
- Recent company news, openings, renovations, acquisitions, or awards.
- Sustainability, DEI, and guest experience initiatives.
- Company culture and professional development opportunities.
- Your interviewer(s) on LinkedIn.
- BU alumni working at the organization through LinkedIn or BU Connects.

Think about how your SHA coursework, internships, and leadership experiences connect directly to the organization's goals.

Questions to Ask the Interviewer

Prepare thoughtful questions that demonstrate genuine interest in the organization.

Examples include:

- What does success look like in this role during the first six months?
- What qualities distinguish your strongest team members?
- What training and mentoring opportunities are available?
- How does your organization support career growth within hospitality?
- How would you describe your service culture?
- What challenges is the team currently working to solve?
- What do you enjoy most about working here?
- What are the next steps in the hiring process?

Avoid asking about salary or benefits during the first interview unless the interviewer raises the topic first.

Planning For Each Type of Interview

In-Person Interviews

- Plan your travel route in advance.
- Arrive 10 minutes early.
- Bring extra copies of your résumé.
- Turn off or silence your phone.
- Greet everyone professionally, from reception staff to hiring managers, as hospitality employers often evaluate every interaction.

Phone Interviews

- Choose a quiet location.
- Ensure a strong phone signal.
- Fully charge your phone.

- Keep your résumé, notes, the job description and a pen nearby.

Video Interviews

- Test your technology ahead of time.
- Sit in a quiet, well-lit location.
- Position your camera at eye level.
- Use a clean, professional background.
- Dress professionally, just as you would for an in-person interview.
- Maintain eye contact by looking into the camera.

SHA Interview Success Tips

As a BU SHA student, highlight experiences that demonstrate the skills employers value most:

- Delivering exceptional guest or customer service
- Leading teams in class projects or student organizations
- Solving problems under pressure
- Working effectively with people from diverse backgrounds
- Managing multiple priorities in fast-paced environments
- Demonstrating professionalism and attention to detail
- Applying hospitality principles learned through SHA coursework and experiential learning

Remember that hospitality is a people-centered industry. Employers hire candidates who not only possess technical knowledge but also communicate effectively, build relationships, remain composed under pressure, and consistently create outstanding experiences for guests, clients, and colleagues.