

# NEAG GROUP INTERVIEW TIPS

## General Overview

Admission interviews for Neag's five-year integrated bachelor's/master's program in teacher education are group interviews that last approximately 45 minutes and include two interviewers and three to four interviewees in single room. The group interview counts for 25% of the Neag admission criteria, so it is very important to do well!

## Preparing for an Interview

- Research the teaching field and industry.
  - Look up current events, legislation, etc. so you are well versed and knowledgeable, and have your own thoughts and questions prepared to share with interviewers.
  - Make sure to be familiar with the specific subject area you are looking to teach. It's important that you can show why you are interested in that area and why you would be a good fit.
- Practice talking about your skills, experiences, and ideas. Do this by yourself in front of a mirror, using a recording device that you can play back afterwards, or with a friend so you can either see or get feedback about your posture, facial expressions, hand gestures, and other components of your non-verbal communication. This will help you to become more confident and familiar with your answers.

## The Day of the Interview

- Wear an outfit that would be appropriate for your prospective placement
  - You don't need to wear a full suit. Dress pants/slacks and a nice shirt are acceptable.
  - Be especially careful of wearing anything too low-cut, revealing, tight, etc.
  - Shoes should be professional, close toed, and no higher than two inches.
- Arrive early for the interview (about 10 minutes) so you have a little extra time to settle in, become comfortable with the atmosphere, and review your experiences.
- Introduce yourself to your peer interviewees before the group interview begins. You'll be more comfortable asserting yourself as well as supporting their ideas or thoughts during the interview, which will also lead to more effective teamwork among the group.

## Interviewing in a Group Setting

- It's really important for the interviewer to see how you interact in a group setting, since teaching is all about working with other people. Make sure you show good teamwork and group communication skills. Do not "compete" with the other students in your interview.
  - Be courteous. Don't answer every question first, while also making sure you give yourself the opportunity to comment on each question you are asked.
  - Interviewers may be looking for leadership skills, but this does not mean you should talk over others or try to be the loudest. Instead, act as a facilitator and/or equal team player. This shows that you are confident and willing to listen to others.
  - Praise others for their good ideas. This is a good way to seem friendly and a little authoritative at the same time. Be sincere with compliments and offer them sporadically.
- Make eye contact with both interviewers evenly throughout the interview.

Useful answer beginnings to promote teamwork and overall interview flow:

- "That's a good idea - I agree with that and also think..."
- "I understand what (candidate's name) said, however I feel differently because..."
- "I also would like to add that..."
- (To a quiet person) "What's your opinion on this?" or "What is your perspective?"
- "I had a similar experience, but...." (explain how yours was different and what you learned)

## Answering the Interview Questions

- Make sure you come into the interview able to describe what you think makes an effective educator. Think about how your skills and background fit in well with your description.
  - You really need to convey to the interviewers WHY you want to go into teaching. This answer must go beyond, “I love working with kids” (almost everyone says that sentence) and should really explain your teaching philosophy and the experiences that led you to want to become a teacher.
  - Convey what you know about teaching. This includes the challenges and benefits of teaching as well as the impact it can have.
  - It is okay to answer a question with experiences discussed in your essay if you elaborate, not repeat directly.
- Be alert and ready for anything. These interviews are interactive, so listen closely to the question, pay attention to others as they answer, and expect to participate.
- Prepare to summarize and apply your education, your experience, your career goals and explain how the Neag program will fit into your future plans.
- You will only be answering about 3-4 questions or so throughout the interview, so you want to make sure each answer is complete and thorough.
- Be familiar with the specific subject area you are interested in teaching. You may be asked a question related to that subject area – not necessarily a knowledge-specific question, but something along the lines of why is that area important.
- Smile! This will help to convey your genuine enthusiasm and excitement for teaching. It will also help you to relax and converse more easily during the interview.
- Neag is known for working with diversity and reforming schools in urban environments. Be prepared to talk about related experiences you’ve had and what you have learned from those experiences.
  - Be careful of the terminology you use, and make sure you never say anything derogatory about a certain group or population.
- Back up all statements with concrete knowledge and experiences.
- Be sure to act in a mature manner, and always use professional language and examples.

## Questions to Ask the Interviewers

- Make sure to come prepared with questions to ask the interviewers at the end of the interview. This will show that you are interested and have done your work in anticipation of the interview process.
- Below are some possible topics to consider. Remember, make the questions your own, rather than just using verbatim what is listed.
  1. The interviewer’s teaching career
  2. Any program-specific requirements or classes that you’d like to learn more about
  3. Research projects being completed by Neag students, faculty, staff, and/or alumni
  4. Student teaching placement options for the 5th year
  5. Most popular geographic locations of where alumni teach
- Avoid asking about any content that can easily be found on the Neag program’s website.

## After the Interview

- Be sure to get contact information for each of your interviewers.
- Send each interviewer a unique thank-you note via email within 24 hours of the interview.
  - In your thank-you note, you can include a connection you made with that specific interviewer, back-up information for an answer you may have stumbled on, and a personalized, genuine thank you for their time.

**UConn**

CENTER FOR  
CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Wilbur Cross Building 202  
860.486.3013  
career.uconn.edu



Updated Spring 2017