

## Format of the interview at the FAO

- It will take around **20 minutes**.
- You will be interviewed on **Skype** by a panel (usually without video).
- The **panel** will consist of 3 to 5 members – usually including your future supervisor, someone working closely with your supervisor, someone from the HR unit, and someone from a different department. They will have someone there to take notes.
- You will be asked **± 5 questions**. The panel has prepared them, agreed on them and written them down.

Subconsciously the panel is looking for people that are:

- conscientious (*wishing to do one's work or duty well and thoroughly*)
- emotionally stable
- likeable and agreeable
- good fit for the position and a good fit for the organization

Not a lot of people are good at answering the question **directly**. People talk too much without really addressing the issue. Keep in mind that the panel has a short amount of time. If you need clarification on the question itself, ask for it.

If you cannot name an example, you can say, I have no experience with X, but I have another example that might be relevant.

If you are unsure if your answer is what they were looking for, feel free to say something at the end of your answer to give the panel the opportunity to direct you (“Does that answer your question?” / “Is that sufficiently detailed?”)

## Likely questions you will be asked

You will most likely get five questions. These are the general categories of questions they ask:

1. About your motivation, general experience or added value
2. A competency /skills based question
3. A competency /skills based question
4. A question on the multicultural or site-specific context
5. A technical question

### 1. Motivation, general experience or added value

The first question is an important question because the panel makes up their mind at the start of the interview.

Focus on the value proposition that you bring to the organization and to this role → highlight what the panel should hire you for.

Examples of questions:

- Tell me about yourself

#### Motivation

- Why were you interested in applying to this job?
- What particular aspect of this job appealed to you when you applied?

#### General experience

- What do you know about FAO?
- What do you know about this department?
- What do you know about the team?

#### Added value

- Tell me about yourself.
- Walk me through your cv.
- How can you contribute in this position?

#### Values

- What are the three values that are most important to you? And how do these values translate into your work?

## 2. & 3. Competency /skills based question

The questions will generally relate to the competencies listed in the Vacancy Announcement (VA). Usually they are listed explicitly.

This is part of a VA for a consultancy at FAO:

**FAO Core Competencies**

- Results Focus
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Building Effective Relationships
- Knowledge Sharing and Continuous Improvement

**Selection Criteria**

- Extent and relevance of technical work experience in one or more of the main areas of CCR's work programmes.
- Extent and relevance of work experience in one or more regions, especially in developing or emerging countries.
- Demonstrated ability to formulate, draft and finalize clear technical and policy documents, guidelines and manuals, in English.
- Extent of knowledge and experience to conduct (global) technical and policy analysis in topics related to CCR's work programmes.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Knowledge management experience, especially related to sustainable forest management, may be considered an asset.

*In this case, the questions often relate to whether you 1) focus on results, 2) work well in a team, 3) can communicate effectively (which includes drafting policy documents), 4) can*

*build effective relationships (with people from a variety of regions and developing/emerging countries), and 5) can share knowledge effectively and continuously improve your professional qualities.*

## The FAO core competencies

See the **FAO Competency Framework** (available online)

### Results Focus

- **Includes:** developing an understanding of client(s)' actual needs, contributing to work planning and anticipating obstacles, managing time efficiently, monitoring progress, meeting deadline, taking accountability for the delivery of results
- **Examples of questions**
  - Tell us about a situation when you went above and beyond your manager's expectations.
  - Give an example of a time when you used your problem solving abilities to resolve an issue?
  - Tell us about a time where you had a number of demands being made on you at the same time? How did you handle it?

### Teamwork

- **Includes:** Soliciting input from others, putting team agenda before personal agenda, building consensus, acting according to the group decision even if you disagree, accepting responsibility for team's success and shortcomings, offering support to colleagues
- **Examples of questions**
  - Tell me about a time when you were part of a successful team. What made that team successful? What was your role in that team? How did you overcome problems in that team?
  - How have you resolved a problem within a team?
  - How do you function in a team?

### Communication

- **Includes:** Writing and speaking clearly, tailoring message to audience, listening to others, asking for clarification, sharing information and keeping others informed
- **Examples of questions**
  - What positive things have people said about your ability to communicate with others?
  - What development areas have been highlighted for you (eg speaking skills, listening skills)?
  - Compared to others, how would you rate yourself as a communicator? Why?
  - What could you do to become better at communicating with others?

### Building Effective Relationships

- **Includes:** building positive working relationships with trust and empathy, seeking opportunities to collaborate, developing networks with people outside of your immediate team, anticipating conflicting interests and finding solutions
- **Examples of questions**
  - o Tell me about a person with whom you worked that you found difficult to trust. Why did you not trust them? How did you deal with them? How trusting are you compared with your colleagues?

#### Knowledge Sharing and Continuous Improvement

- **Includes:** Keeping up with news on one's field, developing one's self, helping others learn, seeking feedback from others
- **Examples of questions**
  - o How have you gone about keeping your technical knowledge up to date in the past?
  - o In what areas of technical knowledge do you want to become more competent?
  - o How does your technical knowledge compare to that of your colleagues?
  - o Which areas in your profession/occupation are the most challenging for you? What are your strengths/weaknesses in this area?
  - o Describe an occasion when colleagues (others) sought your advice or experience. What had you done to be an authority? How accurate was your advice? What have you done since to acquire extra knowledge? To what extent could you answer all their questions? How did you know that the information you gave was up to date? What was their reaction?
  - o Describe an occasion when you felt that your level of technical knowledge was insufficient. What made you think this? What action did you take since?
  - o How have you contributed to the learning of others?

#### How to answer competency/skills based questions

You will also be judged on how well you have prepared for questions and whether your answers are brief, clear, relevant, and eloquent. Focus on your own role in the situation.

Never give two examples from the same job experience, even if it's relevant.

The panel is looking for:

- The depth and the complexity of the example (like Olympic diving, the higher the drive, the better the marks)
- The examples that you give have to be attributable to you. You need to be honest about your own role, because FAO may verify your examples.

Answer according to **CAR(L)**:

- context
- action (attributable to you)
- results/impact of your action
- learning

#### 4. Question on the multicultural context

“Respect for Diversity”

- **Includes:** working effectively with people from all backgrounds, treating people with dignity and respect, showing respect for diverse points of view (incl. in decision-making), examines own biases, does not discriminate
- **Examples of questions**
  - What experience do you have with working with people from diverse backgrounds?
  - Describe a specific situation where you have had to relate to others from a different background from yours?
  - How could you improve how you interact with people from different backgrounds?
  - Based upon your experience, what advice would you give to someone having difficulty working with people from different backgrounds.
  - Describe an occasion when you found it difficult to work with someone from a different background. What caused the problem, how did you respond, and what would you do differently next time?
  - When you are liaising with colleagues or others from different cultures, what sorts of issues do you need to take into account?
  - Describe a situation that required you to consider a different perspective from your own when exploring an issue. What did you learn? What do you see as being the key to effectively viewing issues from an alternative perspective?
  - What opportunity have you had to examine your own biases and behaviours when dealing with people? What observations have you made? Give me an example of when you have attempted to avoid a stereotypical response?

#### 5. Technical question

Check the technical aspects of the Vacancy Announcement and make sure to be prepared for any questions related to the subjects mentioned in the VA, especially on recent developments on these subjects.

This is part of a VA for a consultancy at FAO:

**Technical Focus**

The consultancy aims to provide support to the team's work on climate change adaptation, forest and landscape restoration, drylands forest management, forest fires, forest health (insect, diseases and invasive species control), and Mediterranean forests. The consultant will be involved in cross-sectoral work that includes forestry, agriculture, and fisheries and aquaculture, contributing to FAO's strategic objectives of making agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable.

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Below is the list of programmes within the CCR team:

- Forests and climate change
- Drylands
- Forest and Landscape Restoration
- Forest Health and Protection (from pest, disease, and invasive species)
- Forest fires
- Mediterranean forests

**Cross-cutting themes covered by the roster:**

- Technical expertise for general or narrow specialties in functional areas (e.g. dryland and Mediterranean forest experts, forest and land restoration specialists, monitoring experts)
- Policy Advice and Governance
- Statistics
- Geographical Information Systems
- Information Management
- Outreach and advocacy
- Programme/Project Development and Management
- Monitoring and Evaluation

*In this case you may expect “technical questions” related to the subjects listed above, including for example on how FAO’s work in the AFLOU sector contributes to climate change mitigation or the priorities of FAO for tackling forest fires in the Mediterranean.*

Examples of questions:

- What is the difference between a project and a programme?
- Name three things that the Uganda country office is doing? (for a position in the Uganda country office)
- How should FAO implement the Voluntary Guidelines on the responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGTs)? (for a position in the VGGTs team)
- What do you know about the Legal Office, Development Law team? What are their priorities? Who are their main clients?

## List of physical notes to keep handy during the interview

- Vacancy announcement
- Organisational chart (of the entire organisation and of the relevant department)
- My cv
- Notes:
  - Motivation / response to the question “Walk me through your CV”
  - Response to the question “What are your top 3 values”
  - Response to the question “What do you know about the organisation/the department/the position?”
  - Examples for behavioural questions (esp. on the top 5 qualities they might be looking for)
  - Notes for technical questions
- List of questions to ask the panel/interviewer

