

Interview tips for non-native speakers

Investment Banking › Interview Preparation



International students, particularly those not perfectly fluent in English, face some additional challenges when applying and interviewing with London investment banks. Nonetheless, many have successfully been able to frame their international experience into a selling point during investment banking interviews.

Practice is even more important.

Try to practice with native English speakers. For improving your English, there is no time like the present to start speaking English more often with native speakers.

Don't assume the interviewer knows about your university or the education system in your country.

If your university is the best or among the top in your country, say so. Providing too few details may confuse the interviewer. Having said that, giving too many details will bore them. Try to read the interviewer's body language and tone.

Become familiar with some of the finance and banking terminology.

Keep reading the news (Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, Bloomberg News, The Economist etc.) as well as some [financial books](#), so that you get familiar with business talk and expressions. For bankers, keep reading broker reports, especially those with "initiate coverage", and other finance reports and industry reviews.

Be more direct and succinct.

Bankers have a reputation for being direct and to the point, whereas some international students and professionals have been criticised for being too long-winded in their answers. Avoid putting the answer of a question to the back of an explanation - just give the answer first and explain later.

Provide positive rather than negative answers.

For example, "I love Barcelona" is better than "I don't like Real Madrid".

If you don't understand, ask for clarification.

Seeking a clarification on a question is much better than providing an answer that does not match the question. Useful ways to ask for clarification are, "Could you please clarify your questions?" or "Could you please be more specific?", or "Could you please re-phrase the question?"

Don't be apologetic for your accent

If the interviewer has not understood your answer because of your accent, simply re-answer, making a greater effort to be more clear.

Make the fact that you are international a selling point

Most employers are looking for diversity of thought, [languages](#) and experience. As such, they want to hear about your relevant international experience. Make an effort to find the right spin for yours story and then practice delivering your message with confidence. Don't be seen as shy or unsure of yourself - particularly as it relates to being an international student. Even if you don't speak any relevant language for the job, your diversity remains a strength – just find the right story. As there are a lot of very successful Asian and Middle Eastern Finance professionals in Europe, so you can make it there too.

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