

# University Lecturer interview questions

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## What to expect

Interviews for university lecturer roles are usually run by a panel that includes the head of school or discipline lead, alongside a human resources representative and sometimes a peer academic. Expect a mix of teaching philosophy, research track record and practical scenario questions, and for research-active roles, a request to present or discuss your research agenda.

- **Teaching philosophy:** Questions about how you approach curriculum design, student engagement and assessment across different cohort types.
- **Research track record:** Questions probing your publication history, grant experience and research direction, and how it fits the school's priorities.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Situational questions about handling difficult student, moderation or academic integrity cases.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about supervision, teamwork with teaching staff, or managing competing teaching and research demands.

Panel interviews typically open with background and motivation questions, move into teaching philosophy and a walk-through of your curriculum or assessment approach, then shift to research questions including your publication plans. Many panels close with a scenario question on academic integrity or student support, followed by time for the candidate to ask questions about workload, research support and progression.

## 1. Walk me through how you would design a new unit from scratch, from learning outcomes to final assessment.

### Why they ask

Curriculum and assessment design is core to the role, and panels want to see a structured process rather than a list of activities.

### How to structure your answer

Walk-through: describe the sequence you follow, from setting learning outcomes, to mapping content and activities against those outcomes, to designing assessment that tests them, to building in moderation.

### Example answer

*"I start with the learning outcomes the unit needs to meet against the course accreditation requirements, then work backwards to decide what content and activities actually build toward those outcomes. For assessment, I try to spread the weighting across a few tasks rather than one final exam, so students get feedback they can use before the stakes get high. Once a draft is in place I bring in a colleague to sanity-check the marking criteria and moderate a sample of borderline scripts before results go out, which has consistently reduced the number of grade queries I get afterwards."*

## 2. Tell me about a time you had to manage a difficult moderation or grading dispute.

### Why they ask

Assessment moderation is a routine but high-stakes part of the role, and panels want evidence you can handle it fairly and calmly.

### How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

### Example answer

*"A student appealed a grade on a major essay, arguing the marking criteria hadn't been applied consistently across the cohort. I pulled the marking rubric and re-read the essay against it myself, then compared it to two other scripts marked by the same tutor at a similar grade band. The tutor had been slightly harsh on one criterion, so I adjusted the mark and used the case as a talking point in our next marking calibration meeting. The student accepted the outcome, and the calibration session meant we didn't see the same inconsistency again that semester."*

### **3. How do you balance teaching load with your research output?**

#### **Why they ask**

Career progression in this role depends on research as much as teaching, so panels want to know you have a realistic strategy for both.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Direct response with a concrete example: state your approach, then illustrate with how you've actually managed the trade-off.

#### **Example answer**

*"I block out fixed research time each week rather than treating it as whatever's left over after teaching, because teaching tasks will always expand to fill available time otherwise. During intensive marking periods I lean on that protected time less and make it up in quieter weeks between teaching blocks. It's meant I've kept a steady, if modest, publication output even in semesters with a heavier teaching load."*

### **4. A student in your unit is clearly struggling and their work has dropped off sharply. How do you handle it?**

#### **Why they ask**

This tests judgement on student support and knowing when to escalate versus handle directly.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Scenario response: state your immediate action, the reasoning behind it, and where you'd draw the line on escalation.

#### **Example answer**

*"I'd reach out to the student directly, about the grades, and to check whether something outside the unit is affecting them, since a sudden drop-off often points to that. If it seems academic, I'd offer a short catch-up on the specific gaps in their work. If it seems personal or ongoing, I'd point them to the university's student support or counselling services and let my unit coordinator or the associate dean know, since that's outside what I can fix in a tutorial."*

### **5. What's your current research agenda, and how does it connect to this school's priorities?**

#### **Why they ask**

Research fit matters for hiring decisions and future collaboration, and panels want to see you've thought about the school specifically rather than giving a generic answer.

#### **How to structure your answer**

Direct response: summarise your research focus concisely, then connect it to what you know of the school's existing strengths or gaps.

#### **Example answer**

*"My research sits in [discipline area], with recent work focused on a specific methodological question in the field. I noticed the school has strength in adjacent areas but a gap in this particular method, which is part of why I think there's room for genuine collaboration rather than just adding another research stream that runs parallel to existing work."*

## **6. How would you use tools like Canvas or Turnitin in your teaching, and what are their limits?**

### **Why they ask**

Panels want confirmation you can use the university's core teaching systems effectively, and that you understand where technology doesn't replace judgement.

### **How to structure your answer**

Direct response covering practical use and a caveat: describe how you use the tool day-to-day, then note where it falls short.

### **Example answer**

*"I use Canvas to structure the unit week by week so students always know what's due and when, and I post lecture recordings there for students who can't attend live sessions. Turnitin is useful as a first pass for flagging similarity, but I don't treat a similarity score as proof of misconduct on its own. I always read the flagged sections myself before raising anything with a student, since the tool catches quoted material and reference lists as often as it catches actual plagiarism."*