



2026 Interview Guide

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About Us

Penn International Impact Consulting



Penn International Impact Consulting (PIIC) is a student-run organization at the University of Pennsylvania focused on providing pro-bono consulting for NGOs around the world through year-long partnerships and on-site engagements. Since our founding in 2005, we've worked with over 90 NGOs in over 45 countries. To learn more about our organization, check out our website at www.penniic.org and our instagram [@piic.upenn](https://www.instagram.com/piic.upenn)

Why We've Put This Guide Together

We understand that for many applicants, this may be their first formal interview. Furthermore, the recruiting process can be a stressful experience for students. For this reason, we've done everything we can to assemble resources to make the process as transparent as possible. We want to ensure that everyone knows exactly what to expect during the interviews so that you can present your most genuine and best self. The goal of this guide is to ensure that all applicants feel confident going into the interviews and are able to perform to the best of their abilities.

Overview of the PIIC Recruiting Process

1) Info Sessions

Showcase the organization, our members, and our projects to students interested in joining PIIC. Elaborate on the structure of the club, the associate consultant (AC) experience, and provide an opportunity for interested students to ask questions and talk to senior consultants and board members about their experiences with the club.

2) Application Tips and Q&A

Members of PIIC will demonstrate how casing for consulting, specifically impact consulting is generally done, offering an opportunity for potential members to learn more about consulting frameworks and strategies to employ during the interviews.

3) Coffee Chats

The coffee chats are in no way evaluative. Coffee chats will be conducted during the period applications are open. The goal of the coffee chats is to provide applicants with an opportunity to ask questions about the club, its members and culture, learn more about past projects, and learn more about life at Penn in general.

4) Interviews

Interviews will be conducted after all written applications have been submitted. All applicants will be notified of whether they have made it to the first round of interviews or not. The invitation email will include a link to a sign-up form for the first round interviews. Zoom links for interviews will be sent out by the club shortly after. Interviews will last approximately 30-45 minutes, and applicants are encouraged to test out their audio and video quality before joining the room. Special accommodations can be made, just let us know! Interviews will be conducted by a pair of interviewers consisting of a board member and a senior consultant. For examples of interview questions used in previous years, check out Page 4 and 5.

Tips for PIIC Interviews & Example Questions

NOTE: Questions on this guide are merely to give a better picture of the types of questions we will be asking and will not be the questions we ask in the interviews. Try to get a better sense of how you would answer similar questions, but do not create any prepared answers.

First Round Interviews

- Interview Tips
 - Think of the interview as a casual conversation, and try your best not to be too nervous.
 - Present your most genuine self and answer all questions honestly.
 - There is no correct answer to the questions.
 - Remember to give both interviewers a firm and confident handshake at the beginning, and end of your interview (if in person).
- Example Questions
 - Tell me a bit about yourself.
 - Tell us about your proudest accomplishment.
 - Tell me about a challenge you ran into while working with a team. How did you overcome it?
 - Why do you want to be a member of PIIC?
 - You have 5 hours to kill for a layover with us. We're stuck in the middle of nowhere. What should we do?
 - Teach me something I don't know.
 - Are you more of a hunter or gatherer?
 - Tell us about an initiative you started.
 - What's your spirit animal and why?

Second Round Interviews

- Interview Tips
 - It's okay to ask for time to collect your thoughts before jumping into your response.
 - If you aren't sure if you heard the question properly, don't be afraid to ask the interviewers to repeat the question.
 - Don't be afraid to ask the interviewers follow-up or clarifying questions if there is something you're not sure about. They are there to help and guide you in the right direction.
 - Although we try our best to avoid using unfamiliar vocabulary, you will not be penalized in any way for asking clarifying questions about terminology or concepts mentioned in a question.
 - Try your best to always justify your responses. For example, if you think a particular aspect is important to make a decision, explain **why** you think so.

It is important to understand the rationale behind your reasoning as you should be prepared to have the interviewers push back on all of your responses.

- If the interviewers ask follow-up questions or push back on your responses, do not feel discouraged, as that is to be expected.
- It is usually helpful to summarize your response in a succinct conclusion.
- Example Questions
 - An NGO in South East Asia has come up with a new method to protect their crops. How would you measure the effectiveness of this method?
 - An educational NGO relies upon volunteers to staff its center. How does the NGO keep volunteers coming back? How should the NGO differentiate itself from other international education programs?

Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

1) Are the casual coffee chats evaluative?

No. The casual coffee chats are not evaluative in any way. First round interviews will be conducted by senior consultants as well as board members, and second round interviews will be conducted only by board members. The casual coffee chats are meant to be an informal event where applicants can receive feedback on their first round interviews and constructive criticism, tips for the second round interviews, learn more about PIIC and our projects, and get advice about life at Penn in general.

The casual coffee chats are meant to be an informal event where applicants can receive feedback on their first round interviews and constructive criticism, tips for the second round interviews, learn more about PIIC and our projects, and get advice about life at Penn in general. An applicants candidacy will not be affected in any way whether they decide to have a coffee chat or not

2) Do I need to know how to do a case interview/ know any frameworks?

No, applicants will NOT be expected to have any case interview experience or formal business knowledge. Memorizing frameworks will not give an applicant an advantage. We are primarily looking for potential in applicants-- once admitted, associate consultants will develop a functional understanding of case interviews and frameworks from the training we provide and on the job learning.

During interviews, we are looking for passion, interest in the club, leadership, clear communication skills, structured analytical and critical thinking skills, and an interest in social impact and NGOs. We don't expect applicants to formally prepare for our interviews, and advise against practicing case interviews or memorizing frameworks. The interview is not meant to be stressful, and the interviewers will help guide the interviewee through the situational responses.

3) What is the acceptance rate of PIIC/ How many applications does PIIC receive?

The number of applicants and our acceptance rate is not publicly available. While we are a relatively competitive club similar to many other consulting clubs at Penn, we want to emphasize that students should not be discouraged from applying because they perceive they lack adequate "experience" or "skills." We have members from colleges across Penn with diverse academic interests and backgrounds.

4) Do I have to be a Wharton student/ have business experience?

You do not have to be a Wharton student or have formal business experience. We have members from colleges and programs across Penn with very diverse academic interests and backgrounds. We provide all of the training and resources you need to actively contribute to your project teams as an Associate Consultant, and applicants are not expected to have any formal business knowledge or experience.

5) Do I have to have NGO-related experience?

No, you do not necessarily have to have NGO-related experience. However, we look closely for genuine interest in social impact in our applicants.

6) What does PIIC look for in the interviews?

The main characteristics we will look for during the interviews include, in no particular order: passion and commitment to social impact, interest in the club, critical thinking skills, structured analytical abilities, strong communication skills, leadership and initiative, personable character, and creativity.

7) Where are the interviews held?

Interview logistics are still being finalized. All interviewees will be notified before their interview with more details on where the interview will take place. They are usually conducted in person in Huntsman.

8) How many interviewers will there be/ are there any group interviews?

No, there are no group interviews. Interviews are conducted by two senior PIIC members and one applicant.

9) What if I can't make the interviews?

PIIC board will try our best to accommodate every applicant's availability. If you are not able to make an interview, please indicate it on your application and contact us as soon as you are invited for the interview so we can make alternative arrangements.

10) What is the dress code for interviews?

You are expected to dress business casual for interviews. You do not have to wear a jacket and/or a tie.

11) What should I bring to an interview?

You are not required to bring anything to your interview.

12) Do you recruit in the Spring Semester?

Because our projects are year-long, we only recruit during the Fall semester of each year.

Don't see your question on this list? Feel free to reach out to piic.upenn@gmail.com or contact us via our Instagram and we'll get in touch soon