# Government of South Australia LogoSACE Board LogoGuidelines/techniques for conducting student-led interviews/conversations

The informal or conversational interview is particularly useful for gaining an understanding of the story behind a student’s experiences. The student is in control of the interview and the interviewer should remain as open and adaptable as possible to the student’s responses; in other words, the interviewer ‘goes with the flow’.

Preparing for the interview/conversations

* Choose a setting where the student is comfortable and there are minimal distractions.
* Ask the student ‘how can we ensure your cultural safety during this interview?’
* Consider conducting interviews in pairs. You will often get higher quality answers when both interviewers are asking the questions.
* Ensure that your equipment works, and you know how to use it.
* Explain the purpose and format of the interview/conversation.
* Indicate the probable length of the interview/conversation.
* Address terms of confidentiality and remind the student they may have an advocate with them.
* Ask the student if they have any questions before you get started.
* Before the interview, spend time establishing a rapport with the student.
* Have a set of prepared questions that you might want to ask. This is useful as it can ensure the discussion flows well, they can be used to transition between topics within the interview, provide some guidance for students who may not be responding effectively and ensures that all relevant learning criteria will be addressed.
* Remind the student that there can be multiple interviews/conversations that can contribute to their recognition credits.

During the interview

Once a rapport has been established, the next step is to explore with the student what has been learnt as a result of their experiences. Important considerations:

* Engage the student in the interview as soon as possible.
* Being a good listener is crucial. For a successful interview or conversation, it is important to show your genuine interest in and care for the student and what they have to say. Use both verbal and non-verbal cues to encourage the student to respond and share more.
* Start with questions related to knowledge and application before asking questions that require reflection and critical thinking.
* Questions should be open-ended, allowing the student to choose their own terms when responding.
* Avoid closed and leading questions.
* Be comfortable with silence, allow the student time to think about and formulate their answer.
* Questions should be as neutral and unbiased as possible, worded clearly, and asked one at a time.
* Ask questions about the present before questions about the past or future.
* Provide transition between topics e.g. ‘We’ve been talking about *(topic*) and now I’d like to move on to (*another topic*)’.
* Take cues from the student’s responses – be prepared to take the conversion in unanticipated directions.
* At the conclusion, thank the student for talking with you.

The primary role of the interviewer is to listen to the messages and cues that the student is giving during the interview, to be flexible, and to adapt the questioning to the circumstances. This flexibility in questioning requires a broad perspective on what learning is and how it can be demonstrated.

Each interview is unique. Be prepared to **think on your feet!**