

Head of Faculty interview questions

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What to expect

Head of Faculty interviews are panel based and lean heavily on leadership judgement. Panels want to see how you think about curriculum, staff and students at the same time, and they will test whether your claims about improving teaching and learning hold up under follow-up questions.

- **Process and planning:** How you would approach a curriculum review, a budget cycle or a timetabling problem, usually asked as a walk-through rather than a hypothetical.
- **Behavioural:** Past situations involving staff performance, conflict, difficult parents or competing priorities, answered with specific examples.
- **Scenario and judgement:** A live problem such as a disputed result or a staffing shortfall, used to see how you weigh options and when you escalate.
- **Technical and data:** Curriculum design, assessment moderation, syllabus compliance and how you use student data to change teaching practice.
- **Compliance and safety:** Child safety, registration obligations and the standards that sit behind every decision a faculty leader makes.

Most panels run for around 45 to 60 minutes and include the principal or a deputy, a head of department or peer leader and sometimes a staff or parent representative. You may be asked to present to the faculty or complete a short written task before or after the interview, and reference checks with your current principal are standard. Expect the panel to move from your leadership history to a live scenario and then to questions you have for them.

1. Walk us through how you would lead a faculty through a major curriculum review.

Why they ask

Curriculum leadership is the core of the role. The panel wants to see a repeatable method, not just good intentions.

How to structure your answer

Give a staged walk through: how you scope the review, who you consult, how you map current programs against the syllabus, how you trial and moderate changes, and how you monitor impact. Name the checkpoints where staff and senior leadership see the work.

Example answer

"I start by gathering the evidence. That means looking at registration and syllabus requirements, previous assessment data, student feedback and the patterns teachers are already noticing in their classes. Then I map every unit of work against those requirements so we can see where the gaps are. I bring the faculty together in a planning day to agree on the priorities, because a review nobody owns will not stick. From there I nominate small working groups to rewrite or resequence units, with one teacher taking the lead on each year level. We trial the changes in one term, moderate the assessment together and adjust before full rollout. I report progress to the deputy principal each term against a short set of measures, including whether marking and moderation are happening on schedule and whether the work is landing with students. I keep the review going as a standing item in faculty meetings so it stays live rather than becoming a document on a shelf."

2. Tell me about a time you managed a teacher whose performance was not meeting expectations.

Why they ask

Heads of Faculty carry performance review responsibility. The panel is testing fairness, evidence and whether you can hold a difficult conversation without avoiding it.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR. Be specific about what you observed, what you did, what the teacher did and what changed. Be clear about the point at which the matter moved beyond informal support.

Example answer

"A teacher in my faculty was consistently behind on marking and had withdrawn from moderation meetings, and student complaints had started coming through. I went and observed a lesson first so my feedback was based on what I had seen rather than what I had heard. In our first conversation I described the pattern plainly, asked what was getting in the way, and we found the issue was partly workload and partly uncertainty about the new assessment schedule. We agreed on a short plan: a fortnightly check-in, a shared template for marking, and pairing them with a more experienced colleague for one planning cycle. I documented each meeting and told them clearly what improved practice would look like. Within a term the marking was back on schedule and they were presenting at moderation again. It did not become a formal process, but I was prepared for that step and would have taken it if the pattern had continued."

3. A parent disputes a Year 12 assessment result and escalates to the principal. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests judgement under pressure, your knowledge of assessment policy and how you protect both the student and the teacher.

How to structure your answer

Work through it in order: listen, gather the evidence, apply the school and syllabus policy, communicate clearly, and escalate where the policy requires it.

Example answer

"I would contact the parent within a day, thank them for raising it and hear the full concern before responding to any of the detail. Then I would pull the task, the marking guide, the student's response and the moderation record, and check whether the judgment was consistent with how the rest of the cohort was marked. If the marking holds up, I would explain the criteria and how the result was reached, and show the parent what the student needs to demonstrate to reach the next band. If there is an error or an inconsistency, I would correct it and tell them that directly. Where the parent remains dissatisfied, I would follow the school's complaints and appeals procedure, make sure the principal has the full record, and keep the classroom teacher informed but not exposed. Throughout, I would keep the student's interests at the centre and make sure they were not caught in the middle of the dispute."

4. How do you use student data to improve teaching across a faculty?

Why they ask

The role owns academic standards. Panels want to know you can turn data into changed practice rather than just reporting numbers upward.

How to structure your answer

Explain the cycle you use: what data you collect, how you analyse it with staff, what changes you make and how you know it worked. Use a concrete example from your own faculty.

Example answer

"I treat data as a starting point for a staff conversation, not a report card. At the start of each term I bring together results from common assessment tasks, standardised testing and moderation records, and I look for patterns across classes and year levels rather than just the headline figure. I present what I have found to the faculty and ask each teacher to identify one thing they will change. Last year

the pattern showed that students were handling comprehension tasks well but struggling with extended response under time, so we built more timed writing into the middle years and agreed on a shared marking guide so we could compare results properly. We checked the same task the following term to see whether the change had made a difference. That loop, look together, change one thing, check it, is what keeps data useful rather than decorative.”

5. Staffing is tight and you have to allocate resources across the faculty for the year. How would you approach it?

Why they ask

Heads of Faculty manage budgets and timetables, and this question tests whether you can make defensible trade-offs and explain them to people who will not get what they asked for.

How to structure your answer

Show your method and your priorities, then show how you communicate the decision. Be explicit about what you would cut and why.

Example answer

“I would start with the non negotiables: class coverage, syllabus requirements and any specialist equipment students genuinely need. Then I would map what each subject area actually requires against what we can fund and staff, and look for where classes can be combined or where a shared resource can serve two areas. Where there is still a shortfall, I would go to the deputy principal with options rather than a complaint, showing what each option costs in student experience. Once the allocation is settled I would tell staff early and explain the reasoning, including what I could not fund and why. People accept hard decisions far better when they can see the logic and know they were consulted before the decision was made, not after.”

6. How do you meet your obligations under the Child Safe Standards in a faculty leadership role?

Why they ask

This is a compliance question with real consequences. The panel wants evidence you treat child safety as a leadership responsibility, not paperwork.

How to structure your answer

Cover the practical side and the cultural side. Name the standards and reporting duties, then explain how you build a faculty where staff and students speak up early.

Example answer

“I make sure every staff member in the faculty has current training and knows the reporting obligations that apply to them, and I check that at the start of each year rather than assuming it. That includes the Working with Children Check requirements, the school's reportable conduct policy and the process for raising a concern on the same day it arises. Beyond compliance, I look at the culture. I raise safeguarding as a standing item in faculty meetings, I make sure students know who they can go to and that concerns are followed up visibly, and I model that reporting something is expected rather than a sign of trouble. When a concern does arise, I follow the policy, document what I did and escalate immediately. My job is to make sure nobody in the faculty is ever unsure about what to do or worried about the consequences of speaking up.”