

How to Get a Job in Development Economics without a PhD
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The Point of This Document

I teach the module EC982: Development Economics at the University of Warwick. This 10-week optional module is part of the MSc programme in economics, and I tell students it is designed to help them get a job at J-PAL. Very few of our students complete PhDs after the module is over, but many want to work in development. I have put this document together so that I have something to share with my students, and that they can improve every year as they find jobs and share their experiences with me. I want it to contain a list of places that hire individuals to work in development economics, even without PhDs. I want it to list where these places advertise, and what preparation is needed to get through the recruitment process. My target is students like those who take EC982 – students who are likely from India or China, who will soon have a master's degree, and who are interested in working in development, but who are not about to start a PhD right now.

Acknowledgement and Sources

I have relied for this draft on advice past students and colleagues have shared with me, as well as online advice, such as:

- <http://bloodandmilk.org/2009/04/18/the-bare-bones-of-prepping-for-an-international-career/>
- <https://chrisblattman.com/2009/04/20/getting-a-job-in-international-development/>
- <https://chrisblattman.com/2009/02/21/getting-a-job-in-development-msf-edition/>
- <https://chrisblattman.com/2009/02/11/getting-a-job-in-development-un-edition/>
- <https://chrisblattman.com/2011/07/14/aspiring-phd-students-should-you-become-a-field-research-assistant-for-an-rct/>
- <http://www.danrogger.com/teaching.html#economist>
- <https://anahita-rkarandikar.medium.com/insights-from-a-survey-of-research-associates-assistants-in-economics-and-development-in-india-a9c964daf1dc>

If you have this document, I am seeking your advice. Please let me know what I need to add to it or what I need to change. I can credit you if you want, or keep it anonymous.

A caveat: I can't promise that what I have written here is accurate. If a former student tells me that the FCDO doesn't recruit externally, I put it in this document. If he's wrong, I'll find out when someone else corrects me. And institutions are constantly changing their policies and procedures. So: if you find anything here that's wrong, tell me.

Who Hires Economists to do Development Economics without a PhD, and Where They Advertise

By "economist" I mean someone with a master's degree in economics, and by development economist I mean an economist who wants to work in the field of development using at least some of the tools gained in that degree. Note: some big organizations require a master's degree at minimum, and say that a PhD is "preferable." For any job that lists a PhD as preferred but not required, being clear about your relevant publications and papers will help a lot.

Before listing specific employers, let me start with some job aggregators. Tom Wein has pasted an aggregation of job boards here:

<https://tomweinresearch.me/job-boards/>

In addition, here is a Twitter handle (@econ_ra) that constantly posts RA positions worldwide:

https://twitter.com/econ_ra?lang=en

This link lists RA positions, pre and post-doctoral fellowships:

<https://www.nber.org/jobs/nonnberjobs.html>

So does this one:

<https://predoc.org>

This link is mostly for PhD economists but has some non-PhD jobs:

<https://econjobmarket.org/market>

The Platform Impact Pool is a recruitment system for international organizations:

https://www.impactpool.org/employers/impact_recruit

At the risk of redundancy, my own list is below. These are sorted roughly by how often I hear about them hiring development economists.

- The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab
<https://www.povertyactionlab.org/careers>

J-PAL is a research centre with locations around the globe that runs randomized control trials in order to evaluate policies in development. RA is a common role here.

- Innovations for Poverty Action
<https://www.poverty-action.org/work-with-ipa/current-opportunities>

IPA is a non-profit that brings researchers and decision-makers together to design solutions to poverty problems and evaluate them using RCTs. RA is a common role here.

- International Growth Centre
<https://www.theigc.org/about/careers/>

The IGC is a research centre based at the LSE in partnership with Oxford's Blavatnik School.

- Overseas Development Institute
<https://www.odi.org/about/jobs>

The ODI is an independent think tank focused on development. The most common option for people with master's degrees in economics is the ODI Fellowship, which involves working directly with governments in Africa, the Pacific, and the Caribbean.

- Center For Global Development
<https://www.cgdev.org/page/job-opportunities-0>

The CGD is a think tank based in both DC and London.

- Centre for the Study of African Economies
<https://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/vacancies>

The CSAE is a research institute at the University of Oxford.

- IDinsight
<https://www.idinsight.org/careers>

IDinsight is a research organization that provides advice and data analysis to governments, multilaterals, foundations, and non-profit organizations in developing countries.

Some advice from an IDinsight insider: most students want to go for Associate or Senior Associate roles, and a few more experienced students may go for the Manager role. The main difference between IDinsight and J-PAL/IPA RA roles: IDinsight has more emphasis on communications in addition to project management (e.g. field work) and data analysis, since their work is client-facing. Associates who leave after 2-3 years for another career or grad school typically end up in a management position in development, a policy or business degree (e.g. MPA-ID from HKS, MBA), and sometimes a law degree, in addition to those who do an economics PhD. They could also get promoted within IDinsight to Manager etc.... A J-PAL/IPA RAship is probably better for those who are more certain they want to go for an economics PhD after.

- International Initiative for Impact Evaluation
<https://www.3ieimpact.org/about-us/jobs>

3ie is an NGO that promotes evidence-based development policy.

- Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office/about/recruitment>

Formerly known as DFID, this is a government department. Its former chief economist wrote the textbook for EC982. But: graduates can't directly get economist roles with the FCDO. The only way in would be to apply to the UK Civil Service (<https://www.faststream.gov.uk/>). Then after two years of being attached to an initial department (which is allocated randomly so could be the FCDO if you have an Msc) you are free to apply to any economist jobs advertised at the FCDO. They have very high demand among existing civil servants so they never recruit externally (someone like Rachel Glennerster is a rare exception). An MSc degree is also the minimum requirement.

- The World Bank

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/careers>

The World Bank is an international financial institution. It both funds development and does research. Consultant is a common role here.

Advice received: The World Bank Young Professionals Program is good, but more for PhD students, or masters graduates with a couple of years of work experience.

More generally, the World Bank Group includes the IBRD and IFC.

- The International Monetary Fund
<https://www.imf.org/en/About/Recruitment>

The IMF is like the World Bank but more focused on macroeconomics. RA is a common role here.

- The Development Data Lab
<http://www.devdatalab.org/careers>

The mission of the Development Data Lab is to “develop cutting edge data sources and harness the latest analytical tools to help people in poverty around the world achieve their true potential.”

- International Food Policy Research Institute
<https://www.ifpri.org/careers>

IFPRI is a research institute focused on agriculture in developing countries.

- The Inter-American Development Bank
<https://jobs.iadb.org/en>

The IDB is like the IMF or World Bank, but regional. RA jobs with the IDB/WB are designed for individuals between an MSc and PhD, and so are capped at 2 years without renewal. Some are capped by age. Some RAships can be done remotely, which can lead to a generous wage if you're in a developing country.

- Yale Tobin Center
<https://tobin.yale.edu/tobin-predoc-fellows>

This is a pre-doctoral fellowship program affiliated with the Yale Economics Department.

- Yale Growth Center
<https://egc.yale.edu/opportunities>

The Growth Center is a research institute affiliated with the Yale Economics Department.

- The Good Business Lab
<https://www.goodbusinesslab.org/careers>

The GBL uses “research to find that sweet spot where worker wellbeing and business interests intersect” (ugh... Ach writes like this in his emails too...).

- The Behavioral Development Lab
<https://behavioraldevlab.org/index.html>

The BDL “focuses on integrating behavioral economics and development economics to understand the causes and consequences of poverty.”

- The Energy Policy Institute at UChicago
<https://epic.uchicago.edu/>

EPIC works on “uncovering the true costs of the world’s energy choices through data-driven research.”

- GiveWell
<https://www.givewell.org/about/jobs>

GiveWell evaluates the cost-effectiveness of charity interventions in global health and development. Note that some of the better charities they rate tend to be good organizations to work for, and are evidence-based, cost-effective, small, and efficient:

<https://www.givewell.org/charities/top-charities>
<https://www.givewell.org/charities/other-charities>

You may also consider Founder’s Pledge, a smaller organisation in the effective altruism/development field doing similar work to GiveWell.

- GiveDirectly
<https://www.givedirectly.org/join-us/>

GiveDirectly is a charity that gives money directly to poor people in Africa.

- 80,000 Hours
<https://80000hours.org/job-board/global-health-poverty/>

80,000 Hours comes out of the Effective Altruism movement, and gives career advice to individuals who want their careers to have maximum impact.

- The Global Priorities Institute
<https://globalprioritiesinstitute.org/>

“They basically do Effective Altruism research but they don’t call it that.” They have had a predoc fellowship program in the past.

- Oxfam
<https://jobs.oxfam.org.uk/>

Oxfam is a confederation of charities focused on poverty.

- The United States Agency for International Development
<https://www.usaid.gov/careers>

USAID is the American version of the FCDO.

- United Nations Development Programme
<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/jobs.html>

The UNDP is the United Nations' global development network.

One bit of advice I have received: If you are looking to start a career with the UN, focus on exploring UN Volunteer positions, specifically the National or International Youth volunteerships, which are especially geared towards master's graduates. UN internships are good, but you aren't guaranteed an offer to work there, or you may have to wait 6 months before you can join one after you finish your internship. But you want to keep an eye out for those opportunities. Applying early is the best chance to get them.

A more general link for UN jobs is <https://www.unjobnet.org/>

- Evidence Action
<https://evidenceaction.bamboohr.com/jobs/>

Evidence Action works to scale up poverty interventions that past evidence, largely from RCTs, has shown to be effective.

- Development Data Lab
<http://www.devdata.org/careers>

They hire Pre-Doctoral Research Associates, and are ideal for someone that wants to work with big data tools. The main drawback is that they require a US work authorisation.

- The Center for Evaluation and Development
<http://c4ed.org/jobs/>

This centre shares a similar mission to that of J-PAL. They have an internship program, and they also publish RA positions. The main drawback is that they require an EU visa.

- Dalberg
<https://www.dalberg.com/join-our-team>

This is a development management consultancy.

- Oxford Policy Management
<https://www.opml.co.uk>

- The Busara Center
<https://busaracenter.org/>

This is a research and advisory firm that applying behavioral science to poverty alleviation.

- The Institute for Fiscal Studies
<https://www.ifs.org.uk/jobs>

The IFS is an independent research institute that seeks to inform debate on economics and promote effective fiscal policy.

- Transparency International
<https://www.transparency.org.uk/careers>

Transparency International is an NGO that aims to fight corruption.

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<https://oecd.taleo.net/careersection/ext/joblist.ftl?lang=en>.
<https://www.oecd.org/careers/young-professionals-programme/>

The OECD is an intergovernmental economic organisation. The easiest route into the OECD may be via their young professionals programme. This is open every two years to economists with a master's degree and minimum two years' work experience.

- TERI - The Energy and Resources Institute
<https://www.teriin.org/careers>

TERI's mission is "creating innovative solutions in energy, environment and sustainable development to accelerate India's transition to a cleaner future."

- Postgraduate Training Programme - German Development Institute
<https://www.die-gdi.de/en/training/postgraduate-training-programme/>

Trainees from this program mainly go on to work at the FCDO equivalent of Germany, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and Germany's Development Bank KfW.

- Volunteering positions at SDSN Youth
<https://www.sdsnyouth.org/join-the-team>

They aim to empower the youth and promote integrated approaches to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. They also have programmes and projects, e.g. teaching children about these Goals. They do not require a PhD, but instead proficiency in English, a passion for their mission, and experience working in a team in a professional or volunteer setting.

- Center for International Development
<https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/cid>

In addition to Evidence for Policy Design (EPoD), the CID operates the Growth Lab and Building State Capability, which provides advice for governments.

- The Development Innovation Lab at the University of Chicago
<https://bfi.uchicago.edu/development-innovation-lab/>

Headed by Michael Kremer, this lab uses tools from economics to develop innovations that may benefit people in developing countries.

- Precision Development
<https://precisiondev.org/whowe-are/job-openings/>

Precision Development uses ideas from behavioural economics and data science to identify information and delivery systems that work.

- Opportunity Insights
<https://opportunityinsights.org/joinourteam/>

Run by Raj Chetty, John Friedman, and Nathaniel Hendren, with a focus on educational and income mobility. Hires pre-docs.

- Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago
<https://epic.uchicago.edu/about/jobs-fellowships/>

Headed by Michael Greenstone, EPIC has a focus on energy, pollution, and climate change. They run RCTs. They hire pre-docs. They have an India office.

Another recommendation I have received is working as a research assistant directly with a senior academic.

In addition to the above, private institutions are also happy to hire non-PhD development economists. Deloitte, for example. A lot of development people overlook options other than the standard international organizations and research institutions. Further, there are many opportunities in the charity sector, including the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), or the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. And: there are many other options about which I know little, but can list on the suggestion of former students (and which I think has substantial overlap with the list Dan Rogger has posted):

- “There are a few Indian development consultancies like Samhita, Dasra, Sattva, Swaniti, Nudge foundation etc...”
- The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- International Initiative for Impact Evaluation Washington
- US Department of Labor
- International Centre for Research on Women
- Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- Institute of Economic Growth (India)
- NITI Aayog (India)
- National Council of Applied Economic Research
- Institute for Social and Economic Change
- Centre for Development Economics, Delhi School of Economics
- Centre for Development Studies
- Centre for Economic and Social Studies
- Indian Council of Social Science Research
- Ministry of Rural Development (India)
- Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria
- Regional trade organisation, China

- Department for International Development Graduate Scheme
- Researcher for a Member of Parliament
- Bureau of African Affairs, US Department of State
- Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations
- Programme Associate, United Nations Development Programme
- United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
- United Nations Volunteer (Private Sector Engagement)
- Research Assistant Program, International Monetary Fund
- Junior Professional Associate, World Bank
- International Trade Centre
- African Development Bank
- European Commission
- Researcher, Overseas Development Institute
- Researcher, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex
- Researcher, Centre for Democracy and Development
- Intern, World Agroforestry Centre
- Analyst, Accenture
- Women's Campaign International
- Action for Southern Africa
- Assistant to Secretary General, Alliance for Rural Electrification
- Other UN organizations such as UNICEF
- INSTIGLIO
- IMAGO
- IFMR
- Urban Institute, Washington DC
- Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, Hyderabad, India
- Council for Energy, Environment and Water, India (<https://www.ceew.in>)
- Centre for Policy Research, Delhi, India (cprindia.org)
- International Water Management Institute (<https://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/>)
- Integrated Research and Action for Development, New Delhi, India (<https://www.irade.org/>)
- Centre for Economic and Social Rights, New York
- Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, India
- Development institutes in Pakistan: CERP, PIDE, CBER, IPRI
- Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- <https://www.trif.in/>
- <https://www.pradan.net/>
- <https://imagogg.org/>
- <https://sambodhi.co.in/>
- <https://60decibels.com/>
- <https://epod.cid.harvard.edu/>
- <https://www.theconvergencefoundation.org/>
- <https://www.devnetjobsindia.org/>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nicholascmartin/>

Other Indian Policy Think Tanks

- <https://www.cprindia.org/jobs>
- <https://www.cppr.in/careers>
- <https://www.nipfp.org.in/about-us/careers/>
- <http://icrier.org/careers/>

How to Get Through the Recruitment Process

tl;dr – Do all the work in EC982 and treat it as interview preparation.

And you don't have to just trust my advice. The OECD has a nice guide to interview preparation here:

<https://www.oecd.org/careers/Shortlisted-Candidates-Advice.pdf>

Before the interview

To get an interview at, say, the World Bank or a private sector company outside of an official “young professional” program, it can be important to contact people in the organization directly. Get information from them before you even apply. You can gain insider knowledge of where you might actually fit in the organization, and access to internal job postings. Many external postings will be symbolic only, i.e. already filled by an internal candidate.

You can increase your chances of getting an interview in many ways. Good grades and past internships are two of them.

Look up basic information about the prospective employer on the internet – if it is public knowledge, you should know it.

I have also written this without saying almost anything about visas: I am not competent to advise anyone on immigration law, except to say that the sooner you look into what rules apply to you, the less chance you'll find out you were supposed to do something six months ago or that you have wasted time applying for a job you cannot accept.

The normal interview

For the initial interview, an agency like J-PAL will want a very clear understanding of impact evaluation techniques, as well as a good master's thesis that you are able to discuss with them. On impact evaluation techniques, you may get questions about their advantages and disadvantages, or the contexts in which they are or are not useful. The review questions I have prepared for Glennerster and Takavarasha are designed to prepare you for this, and some have indeed been used as J-PAL interview questions in the past. You may be asked detailed questions about your thesis on identifying assumptions, limitations, and the like, so you should brush up on them in advance. The interview process may have several rounds, with research managers, project directors, and well-known principal investigators (e.g. people cited in Glennerster and Takavarasha or whose papers I put on the reading list).

Indeed, there is even an online course from MIT with Glennerster and Esther Duflo as instructors:

<https://mitxonline.mit.edu/courses/course-v1:MITxT+JPAL102x/>

For field RA jobs, you may be evaluated on your understanding of the key steps in conducting a study that involves fieldwork, even if these steps don't happen in the field. These can include how to design a project, what administrative data sources to use, power calculations, IRB

approval, how to select a sample, how to randomize, when and how to collect baseline and endline data, what to control for (and how), and how to interpret results. Data gathering, presentation, and analysis using basic tools of survey methodologies and statistical analysis like regressions are all important. Typically, senior staff at these institutions need help with these aspects of their work, and if you are good at these tasks, and fast, you can quickly become indispensable.

In addition, questions you may be asked include questions about papers you have read recently, your knowledge of the work of the principal investigators, and the advantages and disadvantages of the specific project on which they are considering hiring you. These questions can be very project specific: one candidate was asked “if we were to implement a remote survey for this project with a target sample size of N , what method would you think is the best for asking questions related to well-being?”. Certain parts of EC982 (e.g. the essay + the lectures on recent research papers) are designed to prepare you for this. The EC959 thesis and the EC982 essay are also useful for you to demonstrate your ability to conduct literature reviews and to synthesize the results. 3ie uses a software called “EPPI” for systematic reviews and screening papers.

You are likely to be asked about all prior research projects on which you have been involved, including the research question, data, method, results, and interpretation of the results. I cannot do anything to prepare you for this part of the interview.

A development-focused agency might also ask about general economics knowledge. At least one former classmate with a J-PAL affiliation has told me they demand a decent econometrics background and some microeconomics with decent grades. One candidate I know, for example, was asked to explain the pros and cons of carbon taxes, the relative merits of fixed and floating exchange rates, and why developing countries often choose floating rates. Some sample ODI questions:

- Talk about the Dutch disease
- Talk about the problem of debt in Developing Countries.
- What is the difference between a Free Trade Agreement and a Customs Union?
- How would you reduce tax evasion in a Developing Country?

You should be able to competently discuss old problems like the importance of economic growth in poverty alleviation, constraints due to poor governance, and new problems such as how to promote environmental goals through market-friendly policies, how to reduce gender bias in development, how to address inequalities in income and wealth, or how to develop a robust public health and education system. Some discussion of how different countries addressed these issues, what worked, and what didn't can also help you. If your prior degree is not in economics, doing your “Independent Readings” from the de Janvry and Sadoulet textbook, rather than journal articles and literature reviews, might help fill gaps in your knowledge.

Questions may be tailored to your claimed strengths – if you say you're passionate about environmental economics, expect questions on environmental economics.

Some entities that hire development economists are beginning to get RCT fatigue, and want to you also be able to competently discuss general development challenges. Indeed, two recent pieces by Jean Drèze on the limitations of RCTs have generated a lot of discussion in India:

<https://www.ideasforindia.in/topics/miscellany/evidence-policy-and-politics.html>
<https://www.ideasforindia.in/topics/miscellany/on-the-perils-of-embedded-experiments.html>

Similarly, knowledge of the local context helps. Do you understand the constitutional constraints on the policymaker who will ultimately receive your report? Do you know the relevant laws? This contextual knowledge is also important in quantitative work – do you actually understand the definitions of the variables you have put in your regressions? Knowledge of the local language and customs will benefit you.

Be prepared to appear motivated. Ask a question about why you want a job in development, and not another field. You may need to demonstrate knowledge of the history of the field, of famous development economists, of the main trends in current research, and how these trends have changed over time. The de Janvry and Sadoulet textbook will be more useful than the Glennerster and Takavarasha book here.

While being as prepared as possible is ideal, if you do not know the answer to a question or have no idea what the interviewer is asking about, asking smart clarifying questions and providing a good intuitive answer (while not looking like you are trying to pretend you really know) shows that you can solve problems, and articulate your thoughts clearly. This is much better than an arrogant or “BS” answer.

Hard Skills

Many places do additional screening over and above the standard interview. These may include a coding test, in which you are asked to analyse data. You may need to clean the data, demonstrating the ability to import, merge, create variables, and label variables. You may need to generate random samples in these data. You may need to analyse the data, for example computing balance tests, running regressions, interpreting regression results, exporting regression results into excel, and formatting results in tables that follow standard conventions in economics. This portion of the interview is very important: PIs will rarely look at CVs of candidates who do badly on the Stata test.

The CSAE, for example, has a Stata test that demands you submit a log file, do file, final dataset and other deliverables in a single zip file. It includes tasks such as: import data from excel, create identifier variables, create indicator variables from categorical variables, merge baseline and endline data, append additional data, check variables for consistency across datasets and correct them where they are inconsistent, do balance tests, run regressions that analyse an RCT, output the results, report hypothesis tests, annotate tables, and create bar graphs that represent differences between treatment and control. They expect you to complete these tasks in three hours. The empirical portion of EC982 (the Stata portions of the lectures + the replication assignment) is directly designed to help prepare you for this. In addition, J-PAL puts several training modules on their website:

<https://www.povertyactionlab.org/research-resources/software-and-tools>

I have been told that Stata 101-104 are particularly helpful.¹

¹ <https://sites.google.com/povertyactionlab.org/2021jpalurst/course-content/stata-r-and-surveycto>

Most RA jobs for the IDB or WB in DC require Stata or R if you do micro, and Matlab or R for macro. Jobs that don't need these skills "are mostly filled through recommendations / networking."

Different J-PAL offices have different specialties. Many of the people hired in South Asia, for example, will be field RAs. For these jobs, demonstrating an interest in public policy and political science is helpful, and having past fieldwork experience (e.g. surveys, focus group discussions, talking to public officials) is very helpful. Prior RCT experience is very very helpful. They may be particularly interested in students who wish to apply for a highly ranked PhD afterwards.

Jobs in Europe are more likely to be data focused. For these, knowing the difference between ITT, TOT, and ATE, and how *precisely* to implement these in Stata will be critical. J-PAL does have a coding test.

In research recently, data scraping with programs like R and Python has become especially useful, and I have had some feedback that younger colleagues can become indispensable because of these skills.

If you lack coding experience, being able to credibly say that you are capable of teaching yourself can help; some agencies may care as much about how quickly you can learn as what you know. Hopefully the empirical assignment, replication assignment, and some of the resources above will help you put together a credible answer.

For these evaluations, your code needs to do more than work. It needs to work well, and it needs to be usable by others. So, make sure it is "clean, efficient, and reproducible." Comment it clearly and often. Give variables intuitive names. Use if statements, loops, and macros in order to increase efficiency.

Soft Skills

In addition to "hard" skills (knowledge of how RCTs work, of the development literature, and of Stata/coding). PIs are also increasingly demanding "soft" skills. These include ability to manage others, ability to learn quickly, ability to think on your feet, your communication skills, and your personality.

Look at the job description. What skills do they demand? Prepare for interview questions testing these skills. For example: if they say in the ad they want you to multi-task, in the interview they ask you about how you deal with multiple bosses making different demands at once.

Interview questions that test these skills may be of many forms, e.g.:

- Being given a list of responsibilities that come with the job (e.g. "Providing timely updates and responses to partner organizations, and participating in meetings with key stakeholders"), being asked which are more aligned with your strengths and on which ones you would need more support. Being asked how your past experience has helped you develop your strengths.
- Being asked how you would deal with hypothetical situations:

- Training needs to start in 2 days, but the person responsible for putting together the training materials hasn't done it, and it will take 4 days to put together.
- You are on the way to the survey site, without internet access, and you find out that the field team did not download the most recent questionnaire.
- You find out the field team isn't reading the informed consent form to participants.
- You find out the field team has interviewed many households from outside the sampling frame.
- You might also get much more standard questions common in private sector interviews, and which are widely available online, e.g. "Where do you see yourself in 3 years?" or "What is a time when you have been challenged?". Some specific examples I have heard:
 - Describe a time you have worked in a team when another member did not do their share of the work. How did you get over this?
 - What are two soft skills you have picked up from a past position that you can use in this position?
- You may get analytical questions of the sort asked in McKinsey-type interviews. For example:
 - A version of the "German tank problem": Here are five numbers taken at random from a uniform distribution. What is the maximum of the distribution? (The real world version was: you're the Allies in WW2, and you've captured some German tanks at random. You know their serial numbers. How many tanks does Germany have?).
 - "The sunrise problem.": Given you have observed an event N days in a row. What is the probability it will happen tomorrow? This is an application of Bayes' rule.
- Have a good answer explaining your motivation for applying to the position. Indeed, for some employers (e.g. J-PAL), wanting to do a PhD can be a good signal of motivation, as can showing a strong interest in the context (e.g. being a person who personally cares about Ethiopia).
- One way to think about these sorts of interview questions is to divide them into "people management questions" and "project management questions."
 - People management: How would you deal with people's egos – bureaucrats, surveyors who may be older than you (a problem very relevant in India)? How would you deal with other people who haven't done their work properly? A classic version of the question is "Think of a time that you dealt with a challenging situation working with at least one other person and how you dealt with it?" Being able to comment on working with diverse teams also helps.
 - Project management: e.g. Training needs to start in two days but the person responsible hasn't put it together. What do you do?

As another example, the Good Business Lab want: "effective time management, the ability to meet deadlines in a high-pressure environment, consistency regardless of project size, good organizational skills that support the rest of the team, the willingness to listen to feedback and be open to areas of work that don't necessarily fall within your core area of responsibility, to represent the GBL ethos of efficiency, professionalism, graciousness and spirit of collaboration in all tasks, to embody GBL's core culture values of responsible work, being flexible, respectful, and approachable, communicating with empathy, and taking care of your and your team members' physical and mental wellbeing."

The first part of the ODI interview takes the form of a group work assignment. Roughly 10 shortlisted candidates work together to solve fictional but realistic problems. E.g. “There was a coup in the country to which you have been posted. What do you do?” or “There has been a case of misconduct reported in your team (e.g. bribery, sexual harassment). What do you do?” They are observed in how they interact and cooperate towards as solution. Advice: never interrupt. Give everyone a chance to talk.

For field RA positions, since you are basically running a team, you’ll be asked about team management. You will likely get standard management questions:

- Tell me a time you worked with a team and it went wrong. How did you deal?
- Tell me about a time you worked with a team effectively and what made it work effectively?
- Talk about a success and a failure.

Experience outside the classroom is a positive.

The ability to communicate ideas in non-technical ways matters. Sample questions:

- Describe an RCT to me as if I knew nothing about what one is and knew no stats. How would you convince me that this is a good thing to do? Why can’t I just compare before and after?
- Explain your thesis as if I don’t know any economics or statistics?

Big organizations will want other sorts of soft skills – e.g. organizing a conference that includes thinking on your feet and knowing who to contact for contacting attendees, hotels, arranging air transportation, catering, etc...

Languages can matter: at the Inter-American Development Bank, it helps to speak Spanish.

For jobs in partnership, marketing, or funding, you need excellent written and verbal communication. Experience managing external partners is also helpful.

Imparting Soft Skills is currently a weakness in EC982. The essay and the group discussions of Glennerster and Takavarasha will improve your communication skills. Forcing you to work in groups that are mixed in national origin will improve your communication and interpersonal skills. Having a lot of assignments with short deadlines will improve your “ability to meet deadlines in a high-pressure environment.” But I am quite open to suggestions for activities that in later years will improve my ability to teach soft skills in EC982.

Other Notes

For students from outside Europe and North America, finding jobs in Europe and North America can be very difficult, since it involves visa sponsorship. This may be possible with J-PAL Europe, but not J-PAL North America.

One decision that students might wish to make early on is whether they want to eventually do a PhD from a top-20 US economics department, in which case, J-PAL, IPA, EPoD, or working with a senior academic makes a lot of sense, or whether they want to explore non-PhD options (or do PhDs in non-economics fields), in which case, the ODI Fellowship, OPM etc... make more sense. In some organizations, e.g. IDinsight, most associates have chosen a more “practitioner” career.