



NATIONAL INTERCOLLEGIATE  
FLYING ASSOCIATION

## **ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS**

Interview Questions & Guidebook

## Purpose

This guidebook will outline example interview questions and the preferred response format for the NIFA achievement awards. While the interview questions are not meant to be an exclusive list of questions that may or may not be asked during the interview, they will serve as an example of the format and types of questions that the interviewers will be asking. Additionally, the preferred format for answering questions, as outlined below, is not a requirement but a recommendation to help ensure your response follows a logical format to answer the question and provide you with the most likely outcome for success. Good luck!

## TMAAT Questions

The primary format for asking questions during the interview will be in the industry standard layout of Tell Me About A Time (TMAAT). These questions are designed to prompt the interviewee to tell a story instead of simply answering direct questions. While the result of any situation is important, the explanation of how you got to the result is equally, if not more important, and the interviewers want to know about it. The questions will be divided into sections listed in subsequent pages, but an example of this style is seen below:

*Tell me about a time you helped a fellow student pilot?*

## STAR Answers

The industry standard format for answering interview questions, especially those asked in the TMAAT format as described above, is known as the STAR format. STAR is an acronym that helps the interviewee develop answers that flow logically and address the full scope of the interviewer's question. STAR stands for:

**Situation:** The first portion of your answer should describe the situation that sets the stage for the rest of your answer. To use the example above, your answer might start like this, *"I was fortunate enough to come to college with my private pilot certificate. As all freshmen in the aviation program stayed on a specific floor in the dorms, I was surrounded by a lot of new student pilots, many of whom were going to take their first flight within the first week of school."*

**Task:** The second portion should explain the task you were either charged with completing or elected to pursue based upon the above situation. Continuing on with the example, *"My roommate was one of these new pilots, and I noticed after the first week of school, they were struggling with many of the topics that the instructors were discussing. I asked if they had any questions about the material*

*and they proceeded to ask me about a lot of the material they were having trouble digesting.”*

**Action:** The third stage is all about describing your action to the first two sections. Continuing on further, *“I decided then, that every night my roommate and I would go over the material they had just covered as well as prepare for the next lesson. Soon, other pilots on the floor were stopping by and asking similar questions. I wound up running a study group session for all the new pilots.”*

**Result:** The final section is your chance to explain how your tasks and actions turned out. Lets wrap up our example above, *“I wound up mentoring and tutoring most of the freshman class that was in our dorm and built many great friendships. Our class had the highest private pilot checkride pass rate the school had ever seen!”*

The above is simply an example of how the STAR format works. As you can see, the format ensured you answered every part of the question while also providing insight into how you operate as a person. This makes the answer far more insightful and powerful than simple “yes/no” answers.

## **Interview Layout**

The interview portion of the achievement award process is your time to convey to the NIFA judge why you stand apart from your peers. Our goal, as judges, is to help make sure you are given the best opportunity to convey that message to us. Please feel free to take your time when formulating your answers and ask for clarification when needed. If you are unsure of what we mean by a specific question, or you need time to think about an answer, let us know and we can move on to the next question and come back to the previous one.

Our judges will be asking a mix of direct questions related to your resume and application as well as questions in the TMAAT format. If it sounds like a question requires a yes/no answer, then please answer as such and we will prompt you if we are looking for more. We do NOT require the STAR format to answer direct questions, or questions that do not specifically start with “tell me about a time.”

We will be asking questions that cover areas related to your specific experience as well as TMAAT questions that cover areas such as; Accountability, Judgement, Communication, Development, Inclusiveness, Leadership, and Problem Solving.

## **TMAAT Question Bank Examples:**

### **Accountability:**

- TMAAT you made a difficult commitment.
- TMAAT you had to communicate standards to your teammates.
- TMAAT you made a workplace/team/volunteer/school commitment that was difficult to keep.
- TMAAT that you had to break a commitment.

### **Judgment:**

- TMAAT you did not have all the information you needed before having to make a decision.
- TMAAT when you were unsure if you should take an action due to short and long-term effects.
- TMAAT you had to make a decision in the airplane that your checklist or school procedure didn't address.
- TMAAT you saw a procedure/rule being violated.

### **Communication:**

- TMAAT your message to your team/family/friend was being misunderstood. What did you do?
- TMAAT you adjusted your message to better inform your team/family/friends.
- TMAAT you had to explain aviation/flying to a non-aviation individual or group.
- TMAAT you had to deal with a miscommunication between your team/family/friends.
- TMAAT you provided excellent customer service. Remember, customers can be internal or external.
- TMAAT you disagreed with a superior's decision or viewpoint. How did you handle it?

### **Development:**

- TMAAT you created an environment that encouraged team development.
- TMAAT you had to provide feedback to a teammate/student/peer.
- TMAAT you helped someone who was struggling to perform a task.
- TMAAT you had to learn a new skill quickly, what did you do?
- TMAAT you struggled to learn a new concept; how did you overcome it?

### **Inclusiveness:**

- TMAAT you had to help your team share information amongst themselves.
- TMAAT you had to solicit multiple viewpoints for a project.
- TMAAT you collected and acted on information from team members.
- TMAAT you saw someone who was not actively participating in a group task. What did you do?
- TMAAT you witnessed people being excluded from a group task or situation. How did you handle it?

**Leadership:**

- TMAAT you had to learn from failure.
- TMAAT you assumed a leadership role unexpectedly.
- TMAAT you changed your style of leadership to address a situation.
- TMAAT you made a decision you regretted.
- TMAAT your team disagreed with your decision as a leader.
- TMAAT you disagreed with a leader's decision or process/plan. How did you handle it?

**Problem Solving:**

- TMAAT you were assigned a task that you did not know how to accomplish.
- TMAAT you were faced with adversity.
- TMAAT you had an emergency situation in the airplane.
- TMAAT you had a non-emergent situation in an airplane that required a deviation from the plan.
- TMAAT you had to work with a difficult co-worker/teammate.