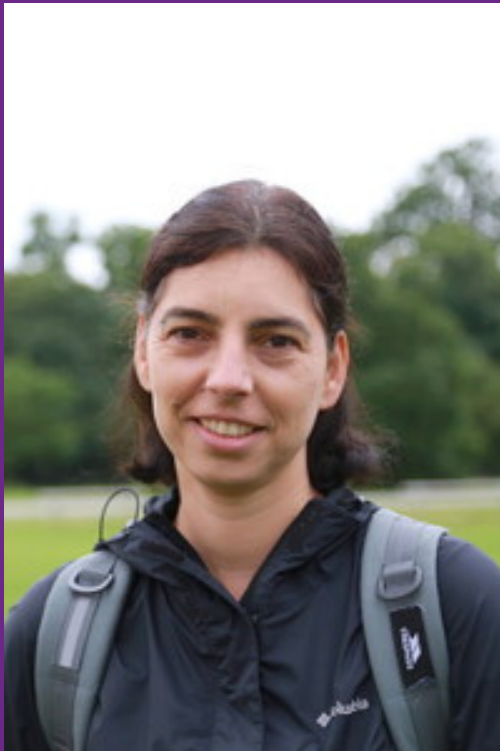


TR4: The 4-week returner launchpad



Your Interview Guide

In partnership with  AJBell

Interview guide

Congratulations on starting our application process for the TR4 programme. It has been a pleasure to assess your application and learn about your technical journey so far. Here is an overview of what you can expect in the upcoming interviews.

We hope you find this guide helpful and supports you throughout your application journey with us.

Interviewers you might meet:



Mili Velikova, Career & Mindset Lead

[Connect with Mili on LinkedIn](#)



James Hegg, CTO and Co-founder

[Connect with James on LinkedIn](#)

Location

All our interviews are fully remote. Depending on the interview type, they will either be via a phone call, or via Zoom.

Sign up for Zoom

Firstly, you will need to sign up to zoom by visiting their website: [a free Zoom account](#) is absolutely enough - no need to purchase anything!

After you sign up, it should prompt you to download the free desktop client for your computer. If it does not, simply head to the following page to download the "Meetings Client": [a free Zoom account](#)

Questions? Email our team today:

hello@techreturners.com

Our application process

Our programmes provide the support and coaching you need to get back to a career in tech. You may feel a bit 'rusty' or low in confidence but that's why we're here – to catch you in, not catch you out!

Our application process, if successful throughout, is as follows:

01 Complete the application form

Apply to the programme via our website. After submitting your application, you can relax! Our team would look to match you with one of our hiring partners, who are looking for someone with your technical expertise.

02 Complete a short 'Motivations' form

Once we've identified a programme you'd be suitable for, you'll be invited to fill out our 'Motivations' form. This is so we can find out what motivates you to sign up to this programme and why you are interested in working for AJ Bell.

03 Introduction call

This will be a short 10-15 minute phone call with Mili Velikova to your confirm details and to introduce ourselves.

04 Final interview

This Zoom interview with James Higgs and Mili Velikova will last approximately 30-45 minutes, and will focus on behavioral questions (some of them will ask about how you've worked in tech in the past)

Start the programme

If you've been successful in our application process, you'll receive an offer letter to join the TR4 programme!

Motivation form

After submitting your application, you can relax! Our team would look to match you with hiring partners who are looking for someone with your technical expertise. Once we've identified a programme you'd be suitable for, you'll be invited to fill out our 'My motivations' form. This is so we can find out what motivates you to sign up to this programme.

01 Read the job description

Make sure to spend a few minutes looking at what AJ Bell are looking for. Pay attention to things such as 'work location' (whether it's in office, hybrid or remote), and any additional aspects that may be important to you.

02 Check out AJ Bell

Spend some time looking at AJ Bell's website. Understand their values, what industry they work in, the company size - and see if you'd be interested in working for them. Even 10 minutes of research will help you answer the question of 'Why do you want to work for Company AJ Bell' in better detail.

03 Submit the 'Motivation' form

Inside your invitation to apply email, you will find a link to the 'Motivation' form for AJ Bell. Please make sure to answer all questions, giving us enough details - and then click 'submit'.

That's it! Then wait to hear from us - successful candidates will be invited to an Introduction call.



Mili's top tip

Think of a friend asking you these questions: give an honest answer that explains your reasoning behind it! Give us enough details so we can learn more about you, your motivation and goals.

Introduction call

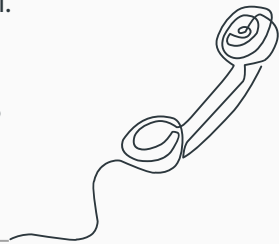
If you're successful at the 'Motivation' stage, we'll invite you to a short 15-minute phone call with Mili Velikova, our Career and Mindset Lead.

This call is mostly to confirm we have the correct information, ask you about any further information we might need, and ask a few questions to get to know you a bit better.

01 Book an Introduction call

In the 'Invitation to Introduction call' email, you will receive a link to book a call with Mili.

Once you click it, it will take you to a scheduling page where you can pick a slot for the upcoming 2 weeks. Pick a time that works for you, and when you think you'll be able to have a comfortable phone conversation without interruptions.



02 Think about these questions

We practice an 'open interviewing' policy, so we like to share what questions we might ask you in advance to help reduce any anxiety you might have.

Please note - depending on time, we might not ask all of these questions.

- What motivates you to do well?
- What is your biggest strength?
- What is an area of development for you?
- Having read the job description, why do you think you'll be a good fit for the role?
- Which elements of the role might you require development in?

03 Be ready on the day

We'll send you a reminder a day before the call, so please make sure to book it in your calendar. Then wait for Mili to call you!



Mili's top tip

These are not tricky questions! We just want to understand how you see yourself. We are not looking for a 'perfect' candidate - we know everyone would have strengths and areas of development, and we want to know how we can best support you if you get a place on the programme.

Final interview

If you're successful at the 'Introduction call' stage, we'll invite you to a final interview on Zoom with Mili and James. This video call is your time to shine! We'll ask you a mixture of tech-related questions that are here to understand your tech background, how you've previously used tech, and how you think about technology. It will also have a few 'behavioural' questions, which aim to understand your communication and working style.

You'll find some help on how to answer 'behavioural questions' on the next page.

01 Book a Final interview slot

In the 'Invitation to Final interview' email, you will receive a link to book a Zoom call with Mili and James.

Once you click it, it will take you to a scheduling page where you can pick a slot for the upcoming 2 weeks. Pick a time that works for you, and when you think you'll be able to have a comfortable video conversation without interruptions for 30–45 minutes.

02 Think about these questions

We practice an 'open interviewing' policy, so we like to share what questions we might ask you in advance to help reduce any anxiety you might have.

- What projects/problems have you worked on with language X and what was your role on it?
 - What happens after you commit your code?
 - What processes did you follow as a team?
 - What was the impact of your role/work?
 - Can you describe what happens when you click a button on a website?
 - What would you do if you reviewed your work and found that you'd make a mistake?
 - How would you handle a situation where stakeholders have conflicting priorities?
 - What would you do if you're falling behind on a piece of work with a tight delivery timeline?
 - How do you think the Career and Mindset coaching will support you on the programme?
-

03 Show up on the day

We'll send you a reminder a day before the Zoom call, so please make sure to book it in your calendar. Then be on the Zoom link at the given time.



James's top tip:

Being a great engineer encompasses not just writing code but also the environment in which that code is considered, managed, deployed and observed. Have a think about past environments you've worked in and some of the processes or tools you worked with or supported you with getting your code out into production and in front of customers.

Answering behavioural questions

What is a behavioural interview?

Behavioural questions (also known as competency-based questions) focus on a candidate's past experiences by asking you to provide specific examples of how you have demonstrated certain behaviours, knowledge, skills and abilities throughout your career.

Competency-based questions are often focused on assessing one of the following skills:

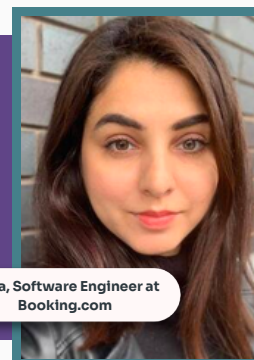
- Communication - Empathy, adaptability, influence, understanding
- Collaboration - Effective teams, influencing, cooperation, and partnerships
- Problem Solving - Solutions, implementation, analysis, learning, improvement
- Growth Mindset - Openness, willingness, diversity, empathy
- Negotiation - influencing, listening, questioning, learning

How to answer a competency-based question:

An example of a framework for developing a structured competency-based answer is the STAR model. Briefly, think about the following questions:

- Situation: What was the situation you were in?
- Task: What task needed to be accomplished? Why was it important?
- Action: What were the actions you took to accomplish this task? Why did you choose this approach?
- Results: What were the results of these actions? Did you achieve what you were trying to accomplish? What did you learn?

“ The programme not only helped me revise my previous knowledge and provided me with a bunch of new tech skills but also helped me believe in myself again. ”



Saira, Software Engineer at Booking.com

STAR model example

Question: Can you tell me about a time when you suggested an improvement at work?

S: "When I was working as a software engineer for a pipeline inspection company, I wrote software that allowed the company to inspect defects along the pipeline."

T: "The client wanted to see a report with the location of all pipes and any potential defects. There was an excel spreadsheet which stored that information - it was functional, but it was slow to print because it was printing row by row- the report took 10 minutes to print, because the longer the pipeline, the more rows there were. I wanted to automate the printing process."

A: "To do this, I decided to print the report column by column, so it would print consistently regardless of the length of the pipe. I reorganised the code I wrote in Matlab to allow for this."

R: "As a result, every single report would print within one minute, regardless of the length of the pipe. This allowed the client to see the report faster and give us feedback, as well as review for any inconsistencies. This experience taught me that I could use my existing skills even if they're not something that is considered 'technical', to propose solutions that benefit the entire team. "

It's great to practice this with a friend or family member before the interview. Don't worry too much though as a lot of this comes naturally when answering a question. If we ever feel you have not covered a section fully we will always prompt you to make sure we get it. Remember - we are here to support you.

Got questions? Email our team today:

hello@techreturners.com

Interview scoring

Interview scoring

- Each question you answer will be reviewed and scored on a 1 - 5 scale, where 1 is the lowest score and 5 is the highest possible score when measured against our criteria for each question.
- Each score will then be combined to give an overall score of the interview which will be used to discuss your suitability for the programme.

Overall tips for the interview

- Choose a location that is not likely to be in the way of family, housemates, or pets.
- 01 Hang a sign on the door asking those delivering post or packages not to ring the doorbell.
-
- 02 Avoid public places such as coffee shops which can be loud and have distractions.
-
- 03 Make sure the background is free from clutter. Set up lighting that is bright but not glaring, illuminating your face from the front - natural light is best.
-
- 04 Turn off email, text and social media alerts, software updates and other notifications that may show up on the screen during the assessment. Turn off programmes that might interfere with the webcam and close browser tabs.
-
- 05 Log in 5 minutes early so you can be calm and centred when the video call begins.
-

A message from AJ Bell

Paula Wharrier's top tip:

In-house Recruitment Manager, AJ Bell



Interviews are not just an opportunity for us to learn about you, but your chance to evaluate if AJ Bell aligns with your values and career goals too. Come prepared with thoughtful questions about our culture, team dynamics, and the projects you'll be involved in. This not only shows your enthusiasm for us and the role, but allows you to subtly showcase your research whilst allowing you to make an informed decision on whether AJ Bell is the right fit for you. Treat the interview as a collaborative conversation, your questions and insights matter as much as ours!



Chris Everett's top tip:

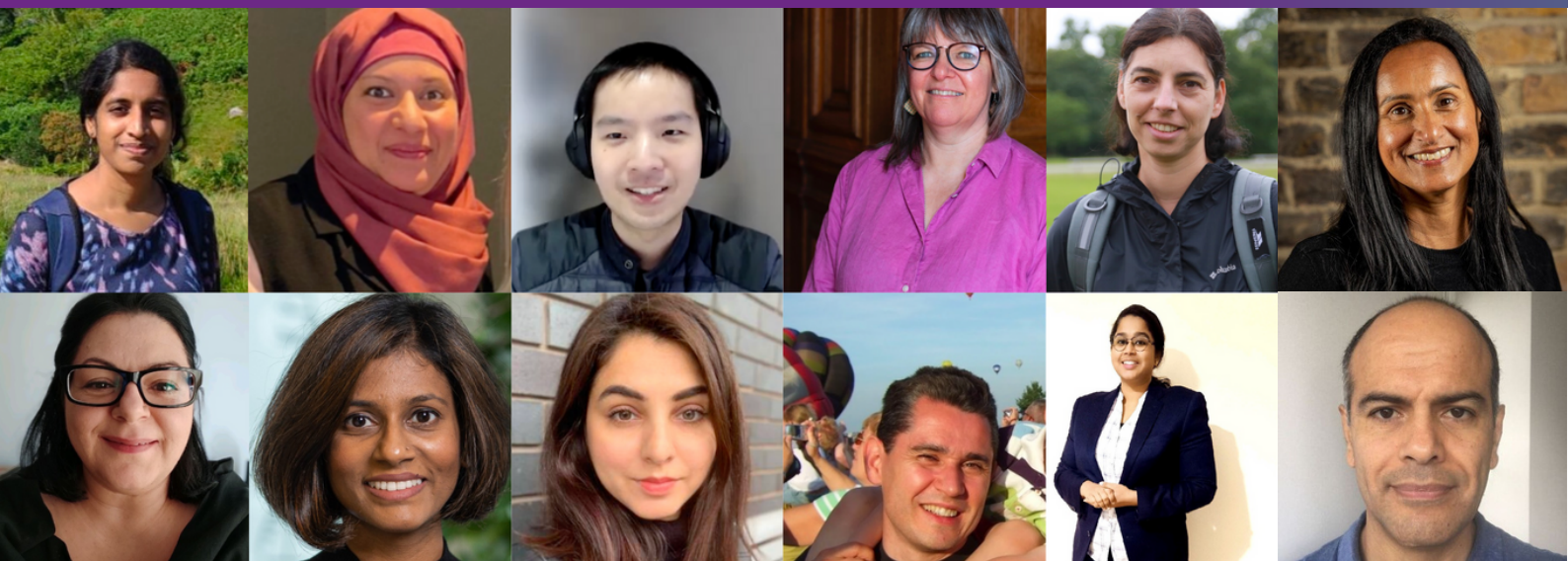
Operational and Regulatory Tech Lead, AJ Bell

We love it when candidates show the 'why' and the 'how'. Why do they do things in a certain way? How can we make improvements? For us, this demonstrates a curiosity in technology and questions why we do what we do, and how

Get in touch

If you need more information, we're here...

TR4: The 4 Week Returner Launchpad



Want to learn more?

[Watch our webinar](#)

Speak to our team

www.techreturners.com

 [0333 050 9138](tel:03330509138)

 hello@techreturners.com

 www.techreturners.com

[Email us](#) or call us to reach the Tech Returners team to get the questions you want answered.

 **Tech Returners**

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