

Mock interviews and CV clinics: the career workshops that set AELO Swiss Academy students apart

There is a moment in every mock interview cycle at AELO Swiss Academy that regulars recognise. A student gives a technically correct answer, the panel nods politely, and then one interviewer leans forward and asks the question nobody prepared them for: "You told me what you did. Tell me what changed because you did it." The pause that follows is uncomfortable, deliberate, and useful. It is the exact pause a hiring manager will create six months later, and the point of the whole exercise is that by then, the student will have already lived through it in a room where the stakes were low and the feedback was honest.

Most institutions treat career preparation as an afterthought. A leaflet about internship fairs, a template CV buried on a portal, a fifteen-minute talk in the final term. AELO Swiss Academy takes a different position: the ability to present yourself under evaluation is a teachable skill, and like any skill it responds to structured practice, expert feedback, and repetition. That position shapes two workshops in particular, the CV clinic and the mock interview programme, and they have become the reason employers comment on how prepared the academy's students seem before a single line on their CV is discussed.

Why career skills are taught, not assumed

The gap between academic strength and hiring success is well documented anecdotally by anyone who has sat on a recruitment panel. Capable students with genuine experience routinely lose out to weaker candidates who simply interview better, not because the job demands performance skills, but because the evaluation format does. A first CV screen often lasts somewhere between thirty seconds and a minute. A first-round interview frequently forms its impression within the opening exchanges, long before the candidate has demonstrated the depth they actually possess.

None of this is fair in the abstract, and the academy does not pretend otherwise. What it does is refuse to let its students be disadvantaged by a format they were never taught to navigate. The assumption behind the workshops is blunt: nobody is born knowing how to write a CV that survives a skim, or how to answer "tell me about a time you handled conflict" without rambling. These are learned behaviours, and the earlier they are learned, the more natural they look.

There is also a confidence dimension that matters more than people admit. Students who have been interviewed badly, by a nervous classmate or a distracted coach, in front of a camera, and have survived it, carry themselves differently in the real thing. The nerves never fully disappear, and nobody would want them to. What disappears is the panic of encountering the situation for the first time with a job offer attached to the outcome.

The CV clinic: a working session, not a lecture

The CV clinic runs in small groups, rarely more than a dozen students per session, and every participant arrives with a current version of their CV, printed. That last detail matters more than it sounds. On screen, a weak CV hides behind scroll speed. On paper, in the hands of someone who reads hundreds of CVs a year, the weaknesses sit exposed on the page.

Each session pairs students with a career coach and, at least once per term, with an external guest: a recruiter, an alumnus now in a hiring role, or a department manager from a partner company. The guest does not give a

presentation. They read. They mark. They ask questions out loud, the same questions they would ask silently in a real screen: "Why is this here?", "What did this achieve?", "Would I call you based on this line alone?"

The first pass is humbling by design. A typical draft loses between half and two thirds of its content in the first rewrite. Course descriptions come out, because the reader can find those in the prospectus. Duty statements come out, because "responsible for social media accounts" says nothing about reach, growth, or judgement. In their place go short, evidence-backed statements of outcome: what was done, at what scale, with what result. A line like "helped organise the school's cultural festival" becomes "coordinated volunteer scheduling for a 400-attendee festival, cutting shift gaps to zero over three days." Same event, completely different signal.



Students then swap CVs and review each other against a fixed set of checks. The checks are deliberately few, because a CV is not a legal document, it is a filter. The five that anchor every clinic are:

- A reader skimming the top third of the page can say who you are and what you want
- Every claim carries evidence: a number, a scale, a result, or a named responsibility
- Anything the reader already knows about your school or role has been cut
- Dates, titles and gaps reconcile with your public profile, because they will be checked
- The whole document survives a thirty-second read with the core message intact

The clinic does not end when the session ends. Students submit a revised version within a week, receive written comments, and, if the changes are substantial, book a short follow-up. The discipline of iterating, rather than

polishing once and forgetting, is itself part of the lesson. A CV is a living document, and the habit of revisiting it quarterly is one alumni report using for years after graduation, often through every promotion and move.

Mock interviews: pressure with a safety net

Where the CV clinic teaches compression, the mock interview programme teaches recovery. Each student goes through at least three full interview cycles per year, and the cycles are engineered to feel different from one another, because real interviews do.

The first cycle in any year is a standard behavioural interview with an internal panel of two. The format is familiar: structured questions about teamwork, failure, initiative, and values, answered in the student's own framing. The panel is instructed to be fair but not generous, to let answers run long enough to expose their weaknesses, and to probe the vague parts. Most students discover in this round that their answers have a common flaw: they describe activity without consequence.

The second cycle raises the difficulty. Panels include an external guest, questions go deeper into the student's intended field, and the interviewers are briefed to interrupt once, mid-answer, with a follow-up. The interruption is not an accident of bad manners. It simulates the reality of panels with limited time, and it tests something no rehearsed answer can show: whether the student can listen, absorb a redirect, and land the original point without losing the thread. Students who have only ever practised uninterrupted monologues find this the hardest round by far. Students who have practised it twice find it routine.



The third cycle is deliberately unpredictable. Curveball questions, a panel of three or four, occasionally a role-play or a short case to work through out loud. The goal is not to teach the student to expect chaos. It is to teach them that their preparation holds even when the question does not, because the underlying skill, structuring a thought quickly and supporting it with evidence, transfers to any prompt.

With the student's consent, sessions are recorded. The review afterwards is where much of the learning happens, and it happens in a specific way. Coaches do

https://www.reddit.com/r/flyingeurope/comments/1nnhrnv/anyone_from_aelo_swiss_any_advices/ not ask "how do you think it went?" and leave it there. They replay moments. The fidget two minutes in. The answer that started strong and dissolved into three hedged endings. The final question of the interview, "do you have anything to ask us?", answered with a flat "no", which every coach in the building treats as a small tragedy because it wastes the one moment where the candidate controls the conversation.

Written feedback reaches the student within two working days, while the memory is fresh, and it is organised around observable behaviour rather than personality. Nobody is told they "lack confidence". They are told their answers averaged ninety seconds with the key evidence arriving at the seventy-second mark, and that moving the evidence to the first twenty seconds would change how every answer lands. Specific, actionable, and impossible to take as a verdict on their character.

Two students, two turning points

Anecdotes carry the usual caveat: names changed, details generalised. But they illustrate what the workshops actually do better than any description of format.

Lena, a hospitality management student, came into her first clinic with a CV she was quietly proud of: two pages, detailed descriptions of six part-time jobs, a colour scheme she had spent a weekend on. The guest recruiter flipped past the colour, stopped at a bullet about a summer internship, and asked what the hotel's occupancy problem had been before she fixed it. Lena could not answer precisely. She knew she had "helped improve the booking process", but not by how much, or against what baseline. The clinic sent her away with one instruction: go back into your own history and find the numbers. She returned with before-and-after figures for booking errors and guest complaints, and her rewritten CV, now a single page, read like a different person had written it. In her second mock cycle, the panel noted that she answered with evidence first and narrative second, the exact inversion of her first attempt.

Marco's problem was the opposite. A business student with a lean, well-edited CV, he interviewed like a press release: fluent, pleasant, and oddly anonymous. His answers were all structure and no self. The coaching intervention was uncomfortable but precise. He was told to keep his structure and delete every sentence that could have been spoken by any other candidate in the building. What survived was a set of answers with actual opinions in them, including one about a group project he had handled badly and would now manage differently. He described that answer later as the first interview question he had ever "won". The panel's written note was shorter: "finally sounds like someone we could put in front of a client."

Neither story is unusual in kind. What varies is which specific weakness the process surfaces, and the programme is built on the expectation that every student has at least one.

What employers actually say

The most credible signal comes not from the academy but from the people who interview its graduates. Hiring managers from partner companies, invited back as panelists, repeatedly make the same observation in different words: candidates from AELO Swiss Academy rarely need the warm-up questions. They arrive with a CV that answers the obvious screening questions in advance, they answer with examples rather than assertions, and they ask closing questions that suggest they have researched the organisation rather than the vacancy.

The practical consequence shows up quietly. Internship supervisors report that students need less coaching on workplace communication because the interview process has already surfaced their habits. Conversion from internship to offer, the metric that eventually matters to everyone involved, tends to run favourably, though the academy is careful not to over-claim causation. Good students convert well everywhere. What the workshops do is remove the self-presentation penalty that would otherwise sit on top of any other weakness.

The honest limits

A programme this intensive carries real risks, and the faculty discuss them openly rather than pretending the format has no downsides. The first is over-coaching. Students who internalise a framework too literally start sounding identical, delivering STAR-shaped answers with the warmth of a compliance training video. The countermeasure is deliberate: as students progress through cycles, coaches push them away from structure toward voice. The framework is scaffolding, and scaffolding is meant to come down.

The second risk is false confidence. A student who performs brilliantly in a supportive room may misread that as readiness for a hostile one. This is partly why the third cycle exists, and why external guests are briefed to vary in style, including some who are brusque by design. The academy would rather a student be rattled by a simulated difficult interviewer than discover that temperament in a final round.

The third limit is the simplest: no workshop guarantees an offer. Markets shift, visas complicate, and some hiring processes are arbitrary in ways no preparation can fix. What the workshops guarantee is narrower and more honest, that when the opportunity appears, the student's preparation will not be the reason it is lost.

A practice that outlasts the programme

The clearest evidence that the model works arrives years later, in the alumni room. Former students return as guest panelists with noticeable frequency, often citing the mock interviews as the reason they volunteer. They remember the interruption drill, the two-day feedback, the recruiter who gutted their first draft. More tellingly, they report behaviours that persisted: the quarterly CV review, the habit of logging outcomes at work so the next "tell me about a time" question has fresh material, the instinct to ask real questions at the end of every meeting that resembles an interview.

That is the quiet ambition underneath both workshops. Not to produce students who can pass one interview, but to produce professionals who treat self-presentation as a maintained skill rather than a crisis response. The job market will keep changing, the platforms will keep shifting, and the specific questions will evolve. The underlying discipline, knowing exactly what you have contributed and being able to say it under pressure, does not expire. Students at AELO Swiss Academy start building it early, in rooms where failure costs nothing, and they carry the habit out the door with them.