

Health Professions Program Interview Tips and Preparation Guide

Adapted from Virginia Tech Smith Career Center Mock Interview Guide

Preparing for Your Interview:

- Understand and be able to express your attributes/personality in relation to the graduate or professional school program.
- Research the graduate program and the field you are trying to pursue.
- Know your goals (professional and education) and be able to express them to the interviewer(s).
- Think of stories and examples you would like to highlight during the interview.
- Practice telling your stories to smooth out the details.

How You Will Be Evaluated:

- Appearance
 - Attire should be interview/business professional dress
 - Dress neatly and appropriately (conservative, not trendy)
- Greeting/Introduction
 - Stand to greet interviewer(s) with a firm handshake/professional greeting
 - Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer(s) and smile
- Body Language
 - Maintain good eye contact and good posture; avoid fidgeting
 - Use subtle but effective gestures when speaking
 - Pay attention to your non-verbals (voice projection, nervous habits)
- Attitude About Work/Working with Others
 - Demonstrate enthusiasm and sincerity in your answers
 - Be genuine; do not say what you think the admissions committee wants to hear
 - Stay positive; when talking about challenges, do not blame or judge
- Responses to Interview Questions
 - Demonstrate research conducted before the interview
 - Speak with confidence
- Oral Communication
 - Speak clearly and concisely; be polite and tactful
 - Include detail to give a clear picture of your experiences, but not too much that your answer is unfocused
 - Be sure to answer the question first, then provide an example/story to support answer
 - Try to think through your response before answering a question
- Preparation
 - Prepare questions for the admissions committee based on research
 - Practice answering interview questions ahead of time (schedule a mock interview at the Career Center; 207-581-1359)

Prepare Yourself - Worksheet

1. Personality traits or skills I have related to this graduate or professional program include:

2. My experiences that demonstrate the above traits and skills are:

3. 3-5 accomplishments:

4. What are the 3 most important things I want the admissions committee to know about me?

5. What concerns might the admissions committee have about me and what will alleviate them?

6. What are my short-term and long-term goals? How will this program help me achieve them?

7. What about this program excites me the most?

8. Why am I the best applicant for this program? What makes me unique?

Do Your Research (Some Things to Think About) – Worksheet

General Research:

1. How long has the program been in operation?

2. Where is the program located? What are these locations like?

3. Has the program been in the news lately for a major event/project/etc.?

4. What are the strengths of the program, in my eyes?

5. What is the program's short-term goals? Long-term goals?
6. What challenges does this program face?
7. How does this program compare to the other programs you are applying to?

Program Specific Research:

1. What features (resources, opportunities, extracurriculars, etc.) does this program provide?
2. What is this program known for and how does that relate to what I am looking for?
3. What do I know about this program?
4. What are alumni from this program doing now? How involved is alumni with this program?
5. What opportunities are there for students (first-fourth year)?
6. Anything else important?

The Interview: Questions to Prepare For

Sample of Standard Questions to Practice:

- About Yourself
 - Why do you want to be a doctor? Describe yourself for me.
 - What will you do if you don't get into med school?
 - Were your college courses challenging?
 - Tell me about your community service experiences.
 - Do you feel your grades reflect your ability? Your MCAT's?
 - What do you do for fun?
 - What's your worst quality, what's your best?
 - How did you get interested in medicine?
 - What alternative careers have you investigated?
 - Is there anything weak in your record? Why?
 - What has been the most difficult challenge in your life?
 - How do you plan to combine the responsibilities of a family and a medical career?
 - What were your favorite courses? Least favorite?
 - Tell me about your most influential professor.
- Ethics
 - If you had a choice between one liver transplant or a thousand vaccinations which would you choose and why?
 - If you could find a cure for AIDS or for cancer, which would you choose and why?
 - What do you think about condoms being distributed in high schools?

- Should people have the right to sell their own organs?
- Do you think it's ethical to take the life of a fetus for a cell line to save the life of a sibling with cancer?
- You have to amputate one of the legs of an eight-year-old child. How would you tell them?
- Would you give a transfusion to a child whose parents were Jehovah's Witnesses?
- What are your views on euthanasia?
- What do you think about euthenics (not euthanasia)?
- How do you feel about animal research?
- Should we spend so much time and effort trying to keep premature infants alive?
- About Healthcare
 - What do you think is the primary reason people don't get into med school?
 - What one characteristic must a doctor possess?
 - If you were called to congress to come up with the perfect healthcare system what exactly would it be?
 - Do you actually know what a doctor's day is like?
 - Why would someone from Canada come to the U.S. to receive healthcare and why would somebody from the U.S. go to Canada for health care?
 - What have you recently read in the media about medical issues?
 - What is the greatest problem facing medicine today?
 - What would you do about the alcoholism problem in this country?
 - Is health care a right or a privilege?
 - How would you organize health care in a perfect world?
 - What do you think should be done with patients who can't pay for treatment?
 - As a physician, would you perform abortions? Under what conditions?
 - What should a physician's role be in the politics of abortion?
 - What is the difference between Medicare and Medicaid?
 - What is the biggest problem family practitioners face?
 - What do you consider the most important thing medicine has done for humanity?
- Behavioral Based Questions
 - Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to solve a problem.
 - Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to successfully work with a wide variety of people, situations, or environments.
 - Describe a time you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
 - Tell me about a time in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
 - Give me an example of an important goal which you had to set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
 - Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person when the individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).

Tips for Standard Interview Questions:

- Be specific and detailed in your responses using a particular, specific situation. Use the SAR method (see next page) to form your answers.
- Interviewers may probe further into your stories, therefore be prepared to respond.
- Listen carefully to the question and ask for it to be repeated or for clarification if needed. Make sure to answer all parts of the question; answer the question first, then provide an example.
- A good answer is focused and directly related to the question but also tells the admission committee many other positive qualities about you.
- Before the interview, prepare success stories from a variety of experiences that highlight your skills, qualities, strengths, and characteristics.

Practice Your Stories and Examples - Worksheet

S - Situation (Describe the situation)

A - Actions (What did you do?)

R - Results (What happened?)

Teamwork	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Decision Making	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Persuasion	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Communication Skills	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Time Management	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Multitasking	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Leadership	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Problem Solving	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Adaptability	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Creativity	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:

Multiple Mini Interview Questions:

Overview of MMIs:

- The Multiple Mini Interview (MMI) came from McMasters in Canada. They were interested in using a more objective way to evaluate their medical students for the interview process, as well as be able to assess the characteristics they deem important for a successful candidate.
- The MMI is designed to evaluate you on one certain characteristic (as well as communication skills) per room. Scenarios may be looking at integrity, judgment, team work, ethics, problem solving, critical thinking, or more. HOWEVER, what may seem as an ethical scenario, is really possibly a critical thinking scenario, this is purposeful!
- It is suggested NOT to try and decide what characteristic the scenario is evaluating, but instead to take your time, answer the scenario to the best of your ability and truthfully! Do not choose what you “think” the evaluators want to hear but instead what you feel and believe.

Structure of MMIs:

- Typically, you will have 2 minutes to prepare and read the scenario on the outside of a door. Use this time wisely to make notes, create an outline, write down key words, and decide on your stance as well as think of the opposite side of the issue, both what you used in considering the scenario and also what the proctor in the room may use to challenge your thoughts and decisions.
- THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWER.
- Once in the room, you have 6-8 minutes talk through your thought process-similar to a math problem where you have to "show your work" Don't just talk about your conclusion, but what the process was to get there. Discuss the opposing views and anything you took into consideration.

Sample of MMI Questions to Practice:

- An undergraduate college is under financial pressure to increase revenue by increasing class sizes that could potentially reduce the teacher to student ratio. What would you be concerned with as a student? As a teacher? As a college administrator? What do you think should be decided?
- “Liberation Therapy” (LT), a vascular operation developed to potentially cure multiple sclerosis (MS) in certain patients, has recently come under very serious criticism – delaying its widespread use. Among other experimental flaws, critics cite a small sample size in the original evidence used to support LT. As a healthcare policy maker, your job is to weigh the pros and cons in approving novel drugs and therapies. Please discuss the issues you would consider during an approval process of LT.
- You are a university student are about to embark on a social trip to an art gallery with the university arts society. You allow the rest of the group to go ahead and you wait for Helen, who is running late. She finally arrives and the two of you are at a station and about to get on a train together. Helen has a phobia of trains ever since a friend of hers was badly injured in an accident on a train. She is finding it difficult to face getting on the train.
- You are faced with an actor playing a 65-year-old man who has just been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. He is coming to his GP for advice on how to cope with his diagnosis as he has heard a lot of stigma over the years about dementia and its burden on both his family and the healthcare service. Whilst talking to you he breaks down into tears.
- An actor hands you a card which states that you are playing the role of a GP and they are a 16-year-old girl who has come to ask for information about getting tested for STIs but is worried about her parents finding out.
- Two applicants will collaborate to create a paper-folding (origami) project. One applicant who has a depiction of the final product will verbally guide the other who has a blank sheet of paper to

completion of the origami project. The applicants will sit with their backs toward each other. After 5 minutes, they will have 3 minutes to discuss the product.

- You are part of a committee that decides where the money for health care in Maine is spent. What would you tell the committee is the single most important area of requiring funding? Please write and reflect.
- Every week, your classmates gather at the local coffee house to review the lessons from that week. In the last month, everyone has been working on a major paper on Roman history which accounts for 40% of the course grade. One of your classmates has copies of two of the papers that last years' students wrote for the same course. Your classmate has emailed copies of the papers to you and the other people in the group. What would you do in this situation and explain why?
- You are going on holiday and lose your phone and money. What are the next three steps you will take to resolve the issue in the most effective manner and why?
- Why do you want to be a doctor? What got you interested in medicine?
- You will have a medical history report read to you and will be asked to recite what you heard

Questions I Could Ask My Interviewer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Asking the Interviewer/Admissions Committee Questions:

General Advice:

- Ask genuine, thoughtful questions to show you are knowledgeable, interested, and evaluating the program.
- Listen during the interview and clarify things you may need more information about.
- Ask questions based on your research before the interview.

Sample Questions to Ask an Interviewer:

- What makes this program different than others in the same field?
- What are some research projects current students are pursuing?
- What have recent graduates done after completing this program (residency, work, etc.)?

Overall Tips and Suggestions for Your Health Professions Program Interview:

Before the Interview:

- Confirm the date, time, and location for your interview.
- Review your resume and think of key talking points you hope to highlight during your interview.
- Research the company/ school/ organization/ agency. Prepare questions to ask your interviewer.
- Bring a portfolio to store notes, resumes/ reference sheets, and questions for your interviewer.
- Make sure your clothes are ironed, your hair is neat, and your shoes are polished.
- If you must cancel your interview, contact the employer promptly. Don't be a "no-show."
- Do not be late unless there is an emergency. Always contact the company as soon as possible if an

3 New Ideas to Implement in my Interviews:

1.

2.

3.

interviewer talked about and remind them of your key qualifications and interests.

How to Use the Career Center to Prepare for Health Professions Program Interviews:

- Schedule an appointment with a Career Counselor or come in during Walk-In hours for an interview prep appointment.
- Schedule an appointment with Samantha for a Mock Interview on both standard questions and MMI questions.
- If you feel it is necessary, schedule an additional Mock Interview appointment with someone other than Samantha.

To schedule an appointment with the Career Center, call the front desk at 207-581-1359.

Walk-Ins are Mondays (9-12), Tuesdays (1-4), Wednesdays (1-4), Thursdays (9-12), Fridays (9-12)