



# From Start to Finish: Things to Consider when Interviewing for Professional School

## Personal Preparation: Grooming and Dress

- Look professional: wear a suit that fits you well and make sure it is pressed
  - Make sure your dress shoes are polished and comfortable to walk in and that your socks match your shoes (no white socks!)
  - No perfume or cologne!
  - Ladies: wear minimal makeup and jewelry. If you wear a skirt get nylons in skin tone or black (make sure you have extras!)
  - Make sure your hair is neat and out of your face
  - SMILE! Look confident and excited to be there
  - Practice your handshake. It should be sincere, not limp (don't crush their hand either). Practice on friends, faculty, and family and ask for feedback
  - Look organized with a nice folder or portfolio
- \*Remember, it is better to look too formal than to dress down\*

## Mental Preparation

- Think about what information you want the interviewer to know about you when you leave the interview—what impression do you want to leave with them?
- Do your research beforehand—what do you know about the school you are interviewing with and their program? Your knowledge will come through in an interview. Look through the school's catalog and write down any questions you have for the interviewer (there should be some questions).
- Search “Medical School Interview” and read sample questions (search specific to the type of school you want to attend). Think through your answers to these questions and come up with EXAMPLES to back up your answers

## Travel Arrangements

- If you live more than 50 miles away, it is recommended to stay over in a hotel the night before.
- If the school has offered to put you up for the night on campus, take the opportunity. It can be beneficial to meet students and get a feel for the campus environment.
- Be prompt, but not more than 15-20 minutes early. Walk around campus or review your secondary application if you are earlier than that.

## Ethics and Health Care

- Think about your stance on various medical issues before entering the interview
- There could be questions based on very controversial issues or about healthcare rationing
- Be prepared to answer questions regarding specific scenarios and how YOU would respond
- Don't answer based off of what you feel the interviewer wants to hear. Tell them how YOU feel about the issue
- Be able to explain why you believe something and have examples or reasons to back it up
- Also, be prepared to answer questions based on current health care issues such as universal health care
- Be aware of what is happening in health care before going into your interview

## **During—Types of Interviews**

### **Panel**

- There will be more than one interviewer interviewing you at the same time
- Try to not seem intimidated by the number of people and be sure to make eye-contact with the person who asked a specific question, while still looking and engaging the other interviewers. Avoid the “sprinkler” effect by mixing up your eye contact as the interview goes on (don’t do a left-to-right sweep each question)
- Be prepared for a range of questions. There could be a wide mix of people on the panel, including a current student in the program. Avoid being overly friendly or too relaxed/casual with the student interviewers; their perceptions are often more critical because they are currently enrolled in the program and know the rigor. They are looking for potential colleagues.

### **Blind**

- In this interview, the interviewer has not seen any part of your file. He/she does not know your grades, scores or essays you have written
- Expect to regurgitate a lot of what you have already put on your application
- Be sure to know answers to basic questions such as “So, tell me about your self.”

### **Partial Blind**

- The interviewer will have only seen a portion of your application such as your essays and secondary application but not your grades. This can save you from explaining a lower grade in a course or two
- Be sure to look at what you have previously written and discussed, as questions pertaining to your essays are likely to occur

### **Open**

- It is up to the interviewer whether they want to look at your file and there is generally only one interviewer
- Be prepared for “blind” type of questions, as well as what was written in your essays. Both of these could very well be asked

### **Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)**

- This interview is a series of approximately eight interview “stations” that last about 10 minutes and are centered on a scenario
- Each station will have its own interviewer; therefore, the student will be rated by approximately eight different individuals
- These stations focus on topics such as communication, ethics, critical thinking, teamwork and opinions on health care issues
- The interviewer at each station will not have background information or application material for any applicants
- Understand that while applicants can discuss background, qualifications etc, it is important to focus on the interview stations scenario

## **After**

### **Thank You Notes**

- Send thank you notes to your interviewers and anyone who made your day enjoyable. You can ask the person arranging your interviews for names and addresses of your interviewers. Provide specific examples for each of the people you write and personalize the notes
- Proofread for typos or spelling errors
- These may be typed or handwritten. It is most effective to send a handwritten thank you note

### **Follow-up**

- Be patient! It may take longer than promised to hear from schools and it could be a week to several months before hearing back. You should have conveyed your interest in your thank you notes and the school will contact you on their schedule.
- You may want to speak with your pre-professional advisor about the appropriateness of contacting schools if a significant amount of time has passed and you have yet to hear back.



# 35 Questions I Wish I Had Asked

## From the AAMC's Organization of Student Representatives

Medical schools, like individuals, are very different – in their philosophies, faculties, curricula, and the type of students they attract. As a result, selecting the “best” medical school for you can be challenging.

The following list of questions – compiled by medical students from across the country – is designed to help you evaluate the schools you will visit. This list is by no means complete; it was designed to serve as a base for your own questions. Make sure to research each institution before the interview so you can ask informed questions.

The interview represents a valuable learning opportunity for you, so don't be shy about asking anyone your questions. Congratulations on your career choice and good luck with your interviews!

### **Curriculum**

1. Are there any special programs for which this medical school is noted?
2. Please tell me more about the integrated curriculum.
3. What modalities are used for student lectures?
4. What are the opportunities for research? What are the policies for taking time off for research opportunities?
5. How do students get assistance if an academic need arises?
6. Is there flexibility in the coursework (the number of electives) and the timing of the courses (accelerating, decelerating, and time off) during the pre-clinical and clinical years?
7. Are standardized tests used each as the NBME shelf exams?
8. Has this medical school, or any of its clinical departments, been on probation or had its accreditation revoked?
9. How do students from this medical school perform on the National Board Examinations? How does the school assist students who do not pass?

### **Evaluations**

10. How are students evaluated academically? How are clinical evaluations performed?
11. Is there a formal mechanism in place for students to evaluate their professors and attending physicians? What changes have been made recently as a result of this feedback?

### **Counseling/Student Support**

12. What kind of academic, personal, financial, and career counseling is available to students? Are these services also offered to their spouses and dependents/children?
13. Is there a mentor/advisor system? Who are the advisors-faculty members, other students, or both?
14. How diverse is the student body? Are there support services or organizations for ethnic/cultural minorities, LGBT students, and women?

### **Facilities**

15. Tell me about the library and extracurricular facilities (i.e., housing and athletic/recreational facilities). Is designated study space available?
16. Are students required to have a laptop?
17. What type of clinical sites – ambulatory, private preceptors, private hospitals, rural settings, international – are available or required for clerkships? Does this school allow for students to do rotations at other institutions or internationally?
18. Is a car necessary for clinical rotations? Is parking a problem?

## **Financial Aid**

19. What is the current tuition and fees? Is this expected to increase yearly? If so, at what rate?
20. Are there stable levels of federal financial aid and substantial amounts of university/medical school endowment aid available to students?
21. Are there students who have an "unmet need" factor in their budget? If so, how do these students come up with the extra funds?
22. Are spouses and dependents/children covered in a student's budget?
23. Are there services/staff available to assist students with budgeting and financial planning?
24. Does this school provide guidance to its students and to its graduates/alumni, on debt management?

## **Student Involvement**

25. What medical school committees (e.g., curriculum committee) have student representation?
26. Are students involved in (required or voluntary) community service?
27. How active is the student council/government? Are there other active student organizations?

## **Policies**

28. What is the student medical insurance coverage and what is the cost to students?
29. Is there an established protocol for dealing with student exposure to infectious diseases?
30. Does this school provide, or does the student pay for, vaccinations against Hepatitis B or prophylactic AZT treatment in case of a needle-stick or accident?
31. Is disability insurance provided to cover exposure?
32. Is there a school honor code? Is there a grievance process/procedure? Are the students involved?

## **Residency**

33. May I see a list of residency programs to which this school's recent graduates were accepted?

## **Questions to Ask Yourself**

34. Does this school have strengths in the type of medicine (primary versus specialized care, urban versus rural practice environment, academic medicine versus private practice) that I will want to practice?
35. Would I be happy at this school for at least the next four years?