



GUIDE TO INTERVIEWING FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONS PROGRAMS

Click on a section to jump to the content

Interview policies by school, including format (MMI or one-on-one) and level of file availability (open, partial, closed-file): <https://students-residents.aamc.org/media/7051/download>

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DARTMOUTH RESOURCES

You can contact the [HPP office](#) and see if [Sarah Berger](#) or [Alicia Kehn](#), can help you with interview prep.

We are also fortunate to have **Dr. Joe Schwarzman** who used to be on the Geisel Admissions committee. Recently retired from his role at DHMC, he is volunteering some time every week to meet with interview candidates to run a mock interview session in person or on Zoom. Please contact [Rae Stokes](#) or HPP@Dartmouth.edu to schedule time with him.

Medical School Interview Panel: August 31, 2021, 6-7:00 PM EST

- Panelists: Case Western Reserve, Hofstra, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson, Vanderbilt
- After a year of remote interviews, we will be joined by 2 institutions that do traditional one-on-one interviews and 2 institutions that do MMI formats. They will offer general insights about the interview process as well as insights gained from their past year of conducting remote interviews.
- RSVP: <https://forms.gle/vJYD9J61oTsSNVJp7>

Compiled Alumni Advice

We've sent a survey to those that interviewed virtually last year to solicit advice on interviews. As they complete it, we will continue to add to this document so check it regularly for new information:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1h6X7q_eDcMEaKrSW5Fg2a8j7t9phj_D4NaLXCjC80pM/edit?usp=sharing

TIMELINE

Time Frame: Interview invites can arrive anytime between now through late February/early March. It's an unpredictable process.

Check your junk email and any other filtering your email has (for instance, Outlook has "focused" and "other.") Make sure you check all these spaces on a regular basis.

Scheduling: Interviews take the better part of a day, so you usually can't schedule multiple interviews on a single day. Make sure to plan accordingly if offered an interview.

If you are offered a date that you cannot do, or would prefer not to do for some reason, you can respectfully ask if any other dates are possible. Most of the time they will offer other options. On rare occasions that they can't, and you will have to make a choice.

If you have the option, consider scheduling an interview for a top choice school after you've had another interview or two, so you get some practice.

If you receive an acceptance at a school you know you would choose over another school you are scheduled to interview for, consider whether you will still take that interview. If you are certain about your choice, the polite thing to do is to relinquish that slot as it gives someone else a chance to interview who may not otherwise have one. It is okay to keep the interview if you are not certain or need to compare financial aid or other factors. However, if you are certain, consider bowing out.

ALWAYS notify schools if you decide to opt out of a scheduled interview and give them notice so they have time to fill the slot. To do otherwise would be wasting the limited spots they can offer (someone really wants it!) and it will give a bad impression of Dartmouth applicants.

Acceptance Timeline: You are allowed to hold multiple acceptances up until April 30. At that time, you must choose one school and withdraw from the others. Be aware that some schools will ask for a deposit to hold a spot for you, but some programs will refund that deposit if, in the end, you don't choose that school. Dental and DO (osteopathic) programs are less likely to refund deposits. If you are on a waitlist you may remain on that list. After April 30, there tends to be more movement off waitlists.

While Waiting for Interview Invites: The journey you are on this year will be enriching in its own right and may even be something you can discuss in interviews or in a future update. Most importantly, as meaningful as this process is, you are more than a med school applicant. May you experience many rewards and joys in the adventure you are on this year, wherever you are.

We are cheering you on from Hanover. Questions? Concerns? Feel free to contact us!

(603-646-3377) Health.Professions.Program@Dartmouth.edu

THE INTERVIEW DAY

Whether doing a one-on-one interview day or a Multiple Mini Interview (MMI) day, interview days can take nearly an entire workday. Along with the interview portion of the day, they often include a welcome talk from admissions personnel, presentations about the school's unique programs, opportunities to speak with current students, and a tour. Because of the switch to remote interviews, be aware that some schools are splitting their "interview" days such that an introductory talk might be in one block on a particular day, and other events might be on another day. Be extra attuned to how they are asking you to schedule your time.

PROFESSIONALISM

Check your location and background: Be sure you are sitting in a well-lit area (facing your light source) so that interviewers can easily see you. Be attentive to what is behind you and avoid messy personal spaces. If necessary, you can hang a plain sheet or curtain behind your chair. Some schools use platforms that may not allow for a virtual background, or which may have unfamiliar video settings. Plan accordingly.

Dressing for an interview: Wear professional attire, even virtually. If you are on a tight budget, you should still invest in a suit. There are suits in reasonable price ranges that are sufficient so long as it fits you well. If you find a suit that fits well, looks professional, and looks good on you, colors other than black are acceptable. When possible, however, keep the colors conservative. Even though interviews are virtual, be sure to wear a full suit just in case you must stand up. Dressing for the occasion from the shoes up will also assist you in embodying the mindset of engaging in a professional, meaningful, experience.

Conservatism in medicine is still a strong part of the culture, especially depending on the state and region. If you are unsure, please consult with an advisor. Dress in a way that conveys you are aware of the cultural expectations and formality of the occasion. Be aware of how virtual environment affects their judgment - what they will pay most attention to, like your face and upper body.

The bottom line is that you should be more memorable than your outfit. This means your face should be very "readable," so if you have hair that may block your face, consider pulling it back or styling it so that they can read all your facial expressions well.

Engagement: Be genuine. Interviewers want to get a sense of you and how you respond to them and the interview experience. They are not necessarily looking for "right" or perfect answers. They are using this interview to help them identify if you have some of the qualities they are seeking in future professionals and if you're a fit for their institution's mission and values.

- Be sure to look in the direction of your camera, or at least the same monitor where the camera is located. Do not have additional monitors, windows or notes up. Be fully present with your interviewers.
- Do your best with "eye contact" in the virtual environment. This can feel challenging when you are also trying to observe the interviewer. Practice looking between the camera and the interviewer on screen.
- Set your Zoom settings to "speaker view" so your attention is centrally located to the interviewer.
- Be aware of your own body language, even virtually. Don't slouch, fidget, or hold your arms tight across your chest. When you practice with friends or mentors, ask them to let you know if they notice any distracting nervous physical or verbal tendencies. Recording yourself can also help with this. Address nervous ticks and habits in advance and find substitutes that help you appear more focused (i.e., instead of playing with your hands, hold onto the desk or chair).
- Keep your phone off and out of sight (no notification alerts).
- Be considerate of and conscious of your nonverbal communication and what you wish it to convey.
- Be on time and always be "on." Everyone deserves a high level of respect.
- Avoid interrupting people or adopting a defensive tone.

Thanking the Interviewers: Pay attention during the interview to the staff, faculty, and student names so that you can follow-up with them. You can send "thank you" notes through the school's portal or through e-mail, depending on their policy. Sending it electronically allows it to be added to your file—but it is also nice to receive a personalized card. However, this is not the time to say "You are my top choice"- unless it's true. Notes with that type of intent should be separate from a thank you. When you send a note to the admissions email, address it to the Admissions Director by name.

GENERAL ADVICE

Check your technology early. Give yourself enough time in case you need to create a username and password for a new system, borrow/buy new equipment such as headphones or a microphone, check your internet speed, and/or scout a new location.

An interview is a connection with another person. Be present and mindful speaking with them and to them, but not at them. Do not have scripted or memorized answers. The time you put into preparation and self- reflection will give you confidence, help you be more relaxed and natural. Practice helps you integrate your thoughts, feelings, and experiences so you can be cohesive, prepared, and spontaneous rather than scripted.

Professional conventions are cultural ones. Everyone's opinion on these matters may differ. This can make you feel like you can't be yourself, even while we keep saying "be yourself!" When "being professional" and "being yourself" seem to come in conflict, be strategic.

You may hear or read divergent opinions about whether to express your sincere point of view if asked a question about potentially hot topics/current events during an interview. There are certainly some members of the medical community who may encourage you not to reveal your perspective and avoid discussing politically sensitive issues in a school interview, suggesting that might prevent you from

getting an offer. Others will challenge you to consider if you want to spend 4+ years hiding or avoiding politically sensitive issues to thrive at a program that wouldn't have held space for you had they known who you really were and what you believed. Consider for yourself what impacts (to the interview and to yourself) you are facing. Identify, whenever possible, ways to savvily integrate your professional presentation with your identity as an individual whose own lived experiences have engendered firm convictions, principles, and beliefs that guide your own journey into medicine. For an interview, you can practice how to share those convictions in a professional and thoughtful manner, without reactivity or casting blame.

Use personal questions to give personal answers. Questions about your reading, viewing, or pop culture interests and your hobbies are "fair game." Let it be known what you are passionate about. Integrate the knowledge/perspectives you have gained from these experiences and priorities into your analysis of why that has been helpful or meaningful to you.

Consider how personal experiences have shaped your perspective and values. It is never appropriate for an interviewer to expect you to reenact traumatic or highly sensitive experiences because it will make you "memorable" or help you "stand out." (See [Diversity in Medicine](#)) However, if you feel that some private experiences have played a central role in affirming or motivating your journey to this health profession, it is acceptable to address your interests from the perspective of your experiences. After all, experiences and reflection have contributed to the insights, goals, and vision you bring to your career.

If you get a question that stumps you it's okay to say, "That's a really good question, let me think on that for a moment." and take a pause.

If you stumble it's okay to laugh at yourself in the moment. Be flexible and resilient in an inherently stressful situation.

Stick with what's true. Don't overreach. If you don't know a lot about a topic, be honest.

Nerves are normal. Interviewers know this. If you are prepared you will feel more relaxed and might even have fun! The interviewers are also people who want to make a connection and get to know more about you. Practice smiling even when you don't feel like it. Smiling can make you appear warmer, and can help to relax you.

Preparation for one-on-one interviews helps prepare you for MMI interviews and visa versa. You will, for instance, want to be prepared to respond to scenario/ethically based questions in a more traditional interview, and you will want to be prepared to reflect on more traditional questions like "why medicine," or "discuss a challenge you've experienced," for an MMI. Whether your first invite is one or the other, read through both sections.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

Prepare by reflecting, writing, and especially, speaking.

Work with at least several key questions (you can use this url--and many others out there--to find more questions) <https://www.colorado.edu/career/2018/01/11/frequently-asked-professional-school-interview-questions>

- **Reflect:** Mull and reflect about them
- **Write:** Put your pen to paper and write notes/brainstorm answers.
- **Verbalize:** You use different neuronal pathways when you speak. Have friends, co-workers, family ask you some of these questions so you can practice out-loud. Try recording yourself

responding to different interview questions, so you can play it back and check for distracting tendencies and to check responses.

- **Review your primary and secondary application** before each interview. If they ask you about something in it, be prepared to know what you yourself have shared, especially about your research. This can help identify stories you've not yet shared with the medical school yet.

The interviewers will drill down for detail in all your answers, details about your experiences and motivations. Generalizations and platitudes will not pass muster. They will ask for examples and continue asking until they get one (or more). Give answers that are specific to their questions, and then be prepared for follow up questions. **“They key to a good interview is answering the follow-up questions well.” (NAAHP 2018)**

Common One-on-One Interview Questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to be a doctor? (Or other health profession)
- What qualities do you bring to the table as a future physician (or to your med school cohort)?
- Describe a mentor, role model, friend or family member who has been significant in your decision to pursue medicine? Why?
- Can you describe an experience of responding to a challenging or problematic situation?
- Why are you interested in being at our school?
- What would you describe as a weakness?
- What would you describe as one of your strengths?
- Can you tell us about a time when you needed to work collaboratively and what contribution you made to the group dynamic?
- Can you describe how you have managed a demanding project?
- What experience are you most proud of?

Other Interview Question Types

Be open-minded to unfamiliar questions, pause, and enjoy finding an answer. Good prep will help you be flexible with surprises. See examples below:

- If you found a magic lamp and could make one wish, what would it be?
- What would you do if you had infinite wealth?
- How do you relax/de-stress?
- Tell me about a favorite book/author

Be prepared to speak to any incidents or academic challenges that will have been noted in your application. Just be simple and honest and share how you've grown.

Ethics: Ethical scenarios can be presented in either a traditional interview or MMI interview. Reflect on your own ethical standpoints, and where they come from. You are not expected to be an ethics expert or to have a specific position. They are especially interested to hear how you think through an ethical situation, more than anticipating a correct answer.

Give time in your preparations to considering what it means for something to be ethical; to encounter an ethical dilemma; to see things from multiple points of view. Here is [a good website](#) that describes the “Four Pillars” of ethical thinking and offers several questions to consider as examples. Try out answering the questions without reading their comments first. Below are some additional examples.

- What do you do if you suspect a colleague (another doc) is abusing drugs?

- What if you knew someone in your class was cheating on their organic chemistry exams—would you take any action? What/Why?

Current Events: Read up on current issues/topics in medicine and health related current events. Read past and current health and biomedical related articles/essays in places like the NY Times, NPR Shots, Wall Street Journal, etc. You don't have to be an expert but have awareness of some of the main topics.

- What are some of the major issues in health care facing our country and the world?
- What do you know about proposed solutions?
- Given what is happening in healthcare at this time, what is something you think you'll face during your career?
- Given some of the accomplishments in medicine these days, what are some of the opportunities you see ahead for healthcare in your future.

Know the school: Learn what you can about the school, review their website, including their curriculum and structure. Don't ask questions about things you can easily learn from their website.

Think about what questions you want to ask them. What would you like to know? Approach your interview, in part, as a consumer. This is your chance to evaluate each school critically and learn more about its strengths and weaknesses.

Learn from the current students. Remember that students you meet on interview day are part of the interview. Continue to be just as professional with students. You can ask your interviewers (students and faculty) thoughtful and tactful questions like:

- What do you think are the strengths of your programs?
- If you were the Dean, what changes would you institute at this school?
- What made you decide to attend this institution?
- What experiences have been the best so far?
- What do you wish you would've known ahead of time?

Think of specific examples to illustrate answers rather than talk in generalities. You don't need remarkable stories for all your answers. Your interviewers want to learn how you handle challenges, and if you can be reflective. If you have done the work to compile small anecdotes, then even if you are asked something you hadn't practiced, your stories will be more accessible to you.

MULTIPLE MINI INTERVIEWS (MMI'S)

About MMI's

This is a style of interview that began at McMaster University in Canada and is being adopted by more US Medical Schools each year, described in [this article in the NY Times](#).

The goal of the MMI interview is to give programs a more holistic view of a candidate in action, by creating scenarios that allow candidates to demonstrate social and communication skills, and ethical and problem-solving skills. You are not expected to be an expert, but to show your ability to respond with creativity and engagement. The MMI style is becoming more popular because some programs feel it assists them to get a sense of some of the candidate's personal/intellectual/professional qualities that relate to becoming a future medical professional. Their hope is to build a strong pool of future health professionals who are not only able to apply the science, problem solving, and technical skills of medicine but also able to work well with patients and colleagues.



How it works: This style of interview has been likened to "speed dating." There are several stations. Virtually, you are given a limited amount of time to reflect on a scenario, then timed in your response (like CASPer and Snapshot). A scenario may include ethical dilemmas or social issues in which you will share your thoughts with a group of interviewers, who may or may not ask you questions as you proceed. You might even have scenario actors.

Some stations include typical one-on-one interview questions. In others, you may be problem solving with another candidate. Many dental schools include manual dexterity exercises that might include manipulating clay or even lab skills. There are many possibilities.

Like CASPer, the diversity of interviewers evaluating your responses leads to an intentional reduction of bias. If you're not as strong in one station, the interviewers at the next station will be unaware, thus offering plenty of forgiveness in the interview process. While you will still want to do well at each station, remember this as you head into the MMI, and allow it to reduce your anxiety in the moment.

General Advice for MMI's

There is no one way to prepare for such an interview format, given the possible range of questions (many of them will be unrelated to health and medicine), but we would strongly advise that you keep up with contemporary health policy news and issues.

Continue the prepping involved for traditional one-on-one interviews. This will prepare you for those and in general get you more comfortable for these.

If the school provides you with sample MMI questions ahead of time, use them. You will be asked different questions when the time comes, but you can use sample questions to practice generating a thoughtful, cohesive response in a limited time frame. Have fun with it.

Get a friend or family member involved. Create a scenario in which they are the actor. Play out questions you might ask them or approaches you might take to their situation.

Scenarios may or may not be medically related, but you are very likely to have at least some scenarios that introduce ethics. Here is a link to a [downloadable book called 101 Ethical Dilemmas](#). Read the Op Ed pieces in places like the NY Times, New Yorker, NPR Shots, etc. on health-related issues, ethical concerns, along with general articles in the news. There are also many good podcasts and booklists on these topics.

Familiarize yourself with the different sides of current events issues.

Give yourself timed scenarios, so you can become somewhat accustomed to thinking on your feet and moving on.

Prepare and be yourself. Take it seriously but know you can only prepare so much for these. Show up. Be present. Be willing to jump in.

Though these may seem like they'd be easier for folks who are more naturally extroverted, even our more introverted applicants have enjoyed their MMI experience. Some good preparation ahead of time, and the willingness to dive in is what you need. Practice engaging and thinking on your feet but still be yourself! You may find you like it better than you thought.

If asked to respond to scenarios that are medically relevant, ground your answer in the patients' experiences and needs. While the person across from you may not agree with the solution or the options you would champion, identify how listening to, understanding, and working with patients has shaped your priorities. Even if a colleague disagrees with your solution, you can appeal to what you do

theoretically share - a commitment to patients - and demonstrate that your difference of opinion is not in itself a barrier to collegiality or collaboration.

MMI Practice Strategies

MMI questions are used by the admissions committee to ascertain the following:

- How do you reason through complex decisions?
- What is your moral compass?
- Can you outline the facts you still need to ascertain?
- How do you use your resources?
- How do you exhibit the AAMC core competencies?

Four basic ethical principles:

- Autonomy (respecting the rights of individuals and letting them make choices for themselves)
- Beneficence (doing good, what is in the patient's best interests)
- Non-maleficence (avoiding harm)
- Justice

Steps in the Ethical Decision-Making Process

- Gather the facts
- Define the ethical issues
- Identify the affected parties (e.g., stakeholders)
- Identify the consequences
- Identify the obligations (principles, rights, justice)
- Consider your character and integrity
- Think creatively about potential actions
- Check your gut
- Decide on the proper ethical action and be prepared to deal with opposing arguments

Source: May, DR. Steps of the Ethical Decision-Making Process

Practice MMI Questions

Review the Prompt:

1. Read through the prompt for understanding first.
2. Read it a second time if you did not truly concentrate the first time.
3. Assess what kind of station this is (e.g., a scenario).
4. Identify what the focus of the prompt may be (e.g., empathy).
5. Consider what the rater might be evaluating (e.g., professionalism, integrity, social skills).

Practice Prompt 1 (2 minutes to review)

You are the doctor in a busy medical practice. Today, you are running 1.5 hours late. Earlier in the day, a patient came to see you, and you realized that she was having a heart attack. Concerned for her, you stabilized the situation, made arrangements for transfer to the hospital, and called the cardiologist to let him know of the patient's situation. Your next patient is waiting for you. Before you enter the room, your nurse informs you that he is very angry about waiting so long to see you.

Strategy Questions to Ask:

- What kind of interview station is this? (Prompt response, role play, or group activity)
- What is the focus of the prompt?
- What do you not know from the prompt?
- What might this patient be expecting?
- What might be at stake and how might the patient have been affected?
- What do I want to communicate? To the patient?
- About myself?
- What is my role?
- What might the rater be evaluating?

Forming an Answer:

- Be able to articulate what you don't yet know and how you would go about finding it out.
- Think about some of your life experiences, values, or priorities – how you have or would handle disappointing or frustrating someone, how you navigate conflicting interests and responsibilities, and how you show empathy for someone who is upset with you.
- Consider any ethical principles or professional obligations that inform or constrain how you act or what you say.

Additional Prompts for Practice:

- Discuss what you feel may have been the best medical innovation in the past 100 years.
- Without using your hands, explain how to tie shoelaces.
- Your mother calls you and asks you to help with a major family decision. Your maternal grandfather is 70 years old and has been diagnosed with a condition that will kill him some time in the next five years. He can have a procedure that will correct the disease and not leave him with any long-term problems, but the procedures have a 10% mortality rate. He wants to have the procedure, but your mother does not want him to. How would you help mediate this issue?
- A mother brings her 18-month-old daughter to your office for a routine physical examination. The child has had no immunizations. Her mother says that they believe that vaccines weaken the immune system and have heard that vaccination can cause autism. What is your role in this situation? Can parents refuse to immunize their children?
- With another applicant in the “room,” describe an object that you can see, and they cannot, while your partner attempts to draw it.

DIVERSITY IN MEDICINE-KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

The power dynamic during the interview process can, at times, cause problematic issues for applicants. You have rights as an applicant and admissions want to ensure a fair process and are open to feedback.

If you feel your interviewer has spent your interview time challenging your identity instead of focusing on your qualifications and candidacy, you have the right to reach out to admissions to request a new interview. Check the reporting policy for the school. If you are unsure, feel free to contact a pre-health advisor.

Know your rights. For example, you don't owe it to your interviewer to talk about race if you identify as underrepresented or a minority, religion if you identify as a religious person, gender if you identify as nonbinary, etc. Nevertheless, when you do feel passionately about an issue and sense that it has shaped the way you see and intend to pursue medicine, you have the freedom to claim it. If you have already

done so in your essays or application, they may ask legitimate follow-up questions about what you've said.

NOTE: If your interviewer has taken a line of questioning that has made you feel very uncomfortable, please let us know immediately. You can bounce that experience off us and we can give you some feedback and lay out options for handling this situation.

From the AAMC: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/preparing-medical-school-interviews>

Examples of inappropriate questions:

- What is your race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, marital status, opinion on abortion and/or euthanasia, income, value of your home, credit score, etc.?
- Are you planning on having children during medical school?
- Do you have any disabilities?
- Will you require special accommodations?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- Have you ever done drugs?
- How old are you?

Sample response to an inappropriate questions:

Q. *What are your plans for expanding your family during medical school?*

A. Can you please clarify your question? I want to make sure that I'm providing information that is most relevant to my candidacy.

Q. *Have you ever done drugs?*

A. I am uncomfortable discussing my medical history and possible use of prescription medications during this interview.

Bias in the Medical School Admissions Process: <https://aspiringdocsdairies.org/bias-in-the-medical-school-admissions-process/>

Rooting Out Implicit Bias in Admissions: <https://aspiringdocsdairies.org/bias-in-the-medical-school-admissions-process/>

Unconscious Bias Resources for Health Professionals: <https://www.aamc.org/what-we-do/equity-diversity-inclusion/unconscious-bias-training>

Interviewed While Black: <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2023999>

WEBSITES

Interview dates for MD/PhD Applicants:

https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0/embed?src=6juva39u7on1a4jclfrne8i0f0@group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America/New_York&pli=1

Case Studies (medical ethics): <https://www.practicalbioethics.org/resources/case-studies>

[The Healthcare Handbook](#)

[50 Common Medical School Questions](#)



[Sample Dental Interview Questions](#)

[Top 46 Physician Assistant Interview Questions](#)

[Preparing for Medical School Interviews](#)

[Common Interview Mistakes](#)

[ACA](#)

[Role of technology](#)

[Khan Academy Videos about Healthcare](#)

[Khan Academy video explaining ACA](#)

["Is Health Care a Right?"](#) Dr. Atul Gawande, New Yorker, 10-2-17 (very good article exploring different viewpoints)

[US News: Ethics Questions](#)