

DARTMOUTH

Health Professions Program

Med/Vet/Dental Application Newsletter

Situational Judgement Tests

2024-2025 Cycle

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As you prepare to submit your primary application you need to know about another facet of the application process – the Situation Judgement Tests (SJTs). Situational Judgement Tests (SJT) aim to evaluate a person’s [personal and professional competencies](#), with a focus on ethical problem-solving. SJTs are scenario-based tests that assess how you make “judgment calls,” or in other words, how you think through a situation in real life using ethical and humanistic problem-solving. There are no right or wrong answers.

The SJT that most people are familiar with is CASPer which is hosted by Acuity Insights. The other SJT was created by the AAMC and is called the AAMC PREview Professional Readiness Exam. If you have decided to apply to a school that requires one or both tests then you’ll need to closely review this newsletter to understand what these tests are, what they entail, and how to prepare for them. In addition to this newsletter, you can learn more about SJTs by viewing the [recording of our Situational Judgement Tests Workshop](#).

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What is CASPER, AAMC Preview, and what is their purpose?

CASPer and PREview are two different SJTs and each approaches its tests from a different perspective:

CASPer asks applicants: **WHAT** they would do in a hypothetical dilemma and most importantly, **WHY** they would do it. After presenting a video or written scenario it utilizes open-ended questions for applicants to reflect on and to provide either written responses or video responses,

which are timed. For CASper the emphasis is on using your combined life wisdom and knowledge to name the dilemma; note the main stakeholders; what possible approaches you might take and the potential consequences of different approaches. If they ask you to make a final decision it would be based on thinking through those elements and drawing a conclusion you think is best, all things considered. Prioritize recognizing different points of view and avoid being judgmental.

PREview is created by the AAMC. Its approach is quite different and asks applicants to evaluate “the effectiveness of a series of behavioral responses to each scenario.” using the options of very effective, effective, ineffective, or very ineffective. Scenarios emphasize the ethos of medical school students/future physicians

Important Things to Know:

- **YOU CAN AND SHOULD PREPARE FOR SITUATIONAL JUDGMENT TESTS (BUT DO NOT PAY FOR PREP MATERIALS).**
- [CASPER](#) is used by several medical, dental, and other professional health schools and is the most well-known SJT.
- [PREview](#), is only used for medical schools. At this time only a handful of schools require it but if one of those schools is on your list, you will need to take it. The AAMC posts updated information about participating schools on [its website](#).
- You can find out which schools use CASPER by checking [its website](#). For PREview, please check individual schools’ websites or contact them directly.
- CASPER is hosted by Acuity Insights. There is a companion “test” called **DUET** that you will find mention of on the same website. Very few schools ask for DUET but find out if any of the schools you are applying to recommend or require it.
- For both PREview and CASPer, if you were approved for Fee Assistance from AMCAS, AACOMAS, Texas JAMP, or Texas Early Assurance that will be honored and you won’t be charged.

Preparing for CASPER (and Duet)

CASPER presents scenarios that could happen in day-to-day life that require assessing the situation and making a judgment call. CASPER wants to know your thought process, therefore, it’s important to practice “showing” your thought process when faced with a scenario, rather than simply presenting your conclusion. Name the problem/dilemma. Who are the stakeholders? What are the different or creative ways you can approach the problem? What are the possible ramifications of these approaches? Does the scenario call for empathy and compassion? In considering all of this, what are your values? What choices would you make and why? Practice thinking out loud through writing and speaking.

CASPER is divided into two different sections – a video response section and a typed section. There are 14 scenarios in total in the test. For the video response section, there are two questions, and you will have one minute to record your response for each question. For the typed response section, each scenario will have three questions and you will have 5 minutes to respond to all three questions.

Give yourself time to practice thinking and writing down the steps of your thought process, including the possible different perspectives and ramifications of the choices you might make. After getting a feel for “thinking out loud,” **practice typing out your thoughts with a timer at hand.** You can also prepare for the video response section by speaking aloud and recording yourself on Zoom. This is also great interview prep!

Please note the following:

- Be sure to review the [FAQ](#) and [Test Prep](#) sections of the website to prepare for CASPER.
- If you haven’t used your full allotted five minutes for the typed response section, review your answer. Consider if there’s anything else you can reflect on or if there’s another element to the scenario.
- You will not be graded on spelling or grammar, but do make sure that your answers are clear and understandable.

What is Duet?

Duet is a companion “test” that some schools also ask for. It is not so much a test as a survey. As their website says, “Duet is a value-alignment assessment that compares what you value in a program with what the program has to offer.” It presents a variety of questions that essentially ask you to compare a range of interests and priorities that would be most important to you. There are no wrong or right answers. While there is not much to do to prepare, DO read everything you can on their website to be able to anticipate the experience.

- It is not required that you take Duet (see below for more information about DUET) unless requested by schools on your list, *but IF you need to take it, you need to take it within a 10-day window of taking CASPER.*

Preparing for AAMC PREview

Unlike CASPER, PREview is a multiple-choice exam. You can learn more about PREview content, policies, and procedures by reviewing the [AAMC’s PREview Essentials handbook](#). You can also prepare by using the AAMC’s [preparation resources](#).

To prepare, use the AAMC PREview Practice Exams (there are two available) and a guide that provides the rationale for each answer. Go thoroughly through their answer guide to get an understanding of how they are thinking about the problems presented in their scenarios. Even if you are not taking PREview, it is still valuable and useful for interview prep and professional development. Unlike CASPer, PREview sets up the scenario and different approaches for you, but then asks you to discern what they would see as either “Most Effective, Effective, Ineffective, Very Ineffective,” for each scenario. There could be multiple effective or ineffective choices for any scenario.

Considerations for Ethical Decision-Making

As you review the information for both SJTs there are a few principles that may help you consider your answers for either SJT. When it comes to ethics, much is written, but there are four basic principles:

- Autonomy (respecting the rights of individuals and letting them make choices for themselves).
- Beneficence (doing good; what is in someone's best interests).
- Non-maleficence (avoiding harm).
- Justice (while acknowledging the law).

As you check out practice scenarios for Casper and review the practice test for PREview, consider how any of these principles might play a role in your reflection. It's not about "naming" the principles in your answers but utilizing an understanding of their meaning in your reflections/assessments.

Why do some students score better on CASPER?

According to the CASPER FAQ page, students score better based on the following criteria:

- Effort
- Empathy
- Equity
- Communication
- Familiarity with the format of the exam

What about PREview?

- This is a newer test with less feedback. Its approach might even seem to conflict with the CASPER approach but think of it as expanding one's approach options to life situations. Familiarity with the practice exam and answer guide will be most helpful. As you review their answer guide, pay attention to the nuances of what they consider effective/most effective to consciously understand what makes them so.

Steps in the Ethical Decision-Making Process

[More details HERE](#)

- State the problem and gather the facts.
- Note the ethical issues.
- Identify the affected parties and relevant factors (e.g., stakeholders).
- Think creatively about potential actions (vs dualistic yes/no; right/wrong).
- Identify the consequences,
- Identify the obligations (principles, rights, justice).
- Consider your character and integrity.
- Check your instinct.
- Decide on the proper ethical action and be prepared to deal with opposing arguments.

Framework: PPRDJ

- Problem
- Perspective
- Responsibility
- Decision
- Justification

You've Got This!

Use prompts you can find online for CASPER. Use free websites to gather examples. For PREview, use their materials thoroughly. It will take an investment of a few hours in both cases, but it will pay off! We really don't know how SJTs are utilized in application decisions, so give yourself the best odds possible in case they are considered strongly by some school, and again, take comfort in knowing they absolutely contribute to interview prep.

Where Can I find HPP Application Resources?

As we move through the application cycle, we'll post links to our newsletters, resources, and forms to the HPP website, see <https://www.dartmouth.edu/prehealth/applying/>. Additionally, you can find recordings of our application workshops and medical school admissions webinars here, https://www.dartmouth.edu/prehealth/applying/app_podcasts.html. **We strongly encourage you to bookmark these pages for your ease of reference.**

Cheering you on!

Nicole, Sarah, and Rae