GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW GUIDE

“If you have seen one school, you have seen just that, one school”. Every school is unique from curriculum to special interests. Being asked to interview is a key step in your acceptance. In essence, the school is telling you they are interested in you and that you look good enough on paper to go there. Now, they want to meet you to see if you’d be a good fit. The admissions committee wants to learn more about you, particularly your motive for choosing a career in the health professions, and the basis for that decision.

Preparation

Preparation for your interview is the most important part of your interview. Know yourself and why you have chosen to pursue a career in your chosen field. Why do you want to be a ... (doctor? vet? research scientist? etc.) Are you able to discuss your personal skills and abilities, strengths, and interests? Review your application. Know your application better than the interviewer. Be prepared to discuss and answer questions about everything on your application. Everything is fair game. Be especially prepared to talk about any weaknesses or discrepancies in your application. It is highly possible that you will be asked questions on current medical, social, and ethical issues.

Clean up your on-line persona. If you have a personal website check it for embarrassing information. You should think twice about blogging on topics that may not reflect favorably on you. Employers and graduate schools are regularly “Googling” applicants. Beat them to the punch and Google yourself. You should know what the internet reveals about your past. More importantly, employers and graduate schools are increasingly gaining access to social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace to see what they can learn about candidates as well. There are many ways employers can gain access into facebook, i.e. employers are employing current students to do candidate researches. In any case, be sure to remove incriminating photos and any statements on your profile which could be embarrassing. More importantly, set your privacy settings as high as you can.

Be sure to have read the school’s catalog and website before the interview. Know something about the school at which you are interviewing and the city you are visiting. Why Philadelphia? Be able to state specific reasons for your interest in this school and how you fit in.

Interviewers also like to ask about the future of your field of interest (medicine, managed healthcare, and changes in the US healthcare system). It is only reasonable to assume that you know something about the profession you are hoping to join. Read the paper, magazine articles, etc. Newsweek and Time magazines all devote a good deal of print to these issues. The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), American Medical News http://www.ama-assn.org/amednews/, and Washington Highlights http://www.aamc.org/advocacy/wshhigh/start.htm also address issues concerning physicians today.

MOST OF ALL, think about what information you want the interviewers to know about you and leave the interview with. What is the impression you want to leave with them... what is
Appearance and Attire
Appearance creates a first impression and impacts on how you are perceived. Present yourself in a professional manner. Dress conservatively. For both men and women, interview clothing should be a professional looking suit and shirt or blouse, or classic (not faddish) blazer with pants or skirt. Avoid overwhelming colognes and perfumes. You must be neatly groomed. Do not chew gum. Avoid flashy jewelry. Guidelines for women: minimum conservative jewelry and conservative cosmetics. Avoid very high heels and outlandish nails. Avoid having your skirt length one which draws attention.

The Interview
There is no consistency among schools' interview formats or interviewers. Some schools interview students in small group/panel format, some use a single interview, while others schedule as many as 5 interviews per applicant. However, most interviews are one-to-one and informal (but be prepared for all types of questions). Most schools will either have a "closed or open file", interview. In a "closed file" interview, the interviewer does not have access to your file. In an “open file" the interviewer has full access to the applicant's file. Your interviewers may be professors, administrators, alumni, and students. Therefore, be prepared for anything. Interviews typically last anywhere from 20 minutes to 90 minutes. Most schools will have from one to four interviews.

For your interview itself... be relaxed. Be yourself. I know... easier said than done. Maintain good posture, eye contact, and smile. Be aware of the body language you convey when you sit. Remember, 65 percent of communication is non-verbal. Speak at a comfortable level and speed. Try to be clear, concise, and think about your answers. Do not fidget or fiddle with anything. If you don't understand a question the interviewer asks, ask them to repeat it.

Be Prepared to Answer Hypothetical, Problem-Solving, Situational or Research Related Questions: "What if..." or "Tell me about a time when..." types of questions are asked to get a sense of what you know, what you can do, and how well you do it. A good interviewer is looking for depth, and most will probe if your answers are too superficial. Be in tune with your interviewer – take cues

If questions are focused on your academic record, don't make excuses. Provide the best matter-of-fact information that you can. Explain personal or extenuating circumstances that you may have been facing at the time, but don't make disparaging comments about yourself. Find a way to convey some unique quality about yourself in the interview.

Prepare one or two questions for the interviewer about the students, the educational program, or other aspects of the school to which you’ve applied. It is best not just to ask her/him to cite the strengths or weaknesses of the school.

At the end of your interview be sure to express your pleasure and gratitude for the opportunity to interview.
Interview Day
Be on time and courteous in all your dealings with the admissions office, from receptionist to interviewer. Do not get upset if the interviewer is late. This can reflect poorly on you. The students who take you on a tour of the school, or have lunch with you, maybe sharing their impressions of you with the admissions staff.

Do’s
Greet the interviewer professionally and with a firm handshake
Read a national newspaper or the Wall Street Journal the day of the interview
Maintain eye contact
Ask questions
Allow the interviewer to interrupt you but do not interrupt the interviewer
Elaborate, don’t dominate conversation
Avoid slang terms
Humor can be risky if not used appropriately…save you favorite joke for another time
Smile
Be positive
Be alert, polite and poised
Be respectful
Be truthful
Be prepared
Be yourself
Thank the interviewer

Don’ts
Don’t ask any questions about your letters of recommendation
Don’t second guess the interviewer
Don’t get upset if your interviewer is late
Don’t ask what your chances are
Don’t be negative – about your current school/company, past/present bosses, anything
Don’t answer questions with a “yes” or “no”. Explain whenever possible
Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know.” It is better than making up a meaningless answer
Don’t argue or become defensive
Don’t provide answers to questions that weren’t asked

Following your Interview
After the interview, write down your impressions of the school and how your interview went. Are there things you can improve upon? What did you do well on? Send thank you notes to your interviewers and anyone who helped make your day there enjoyable. If you do not hear a decision, you may wish to update the admissions office with any new activities, etc.

Other Resources
• “Student doctor net”: http://www.studentdoctor.net/interview/interview_read.asp
  (medical, dental and veterinary) to find out about interview format and impressions from other students who have already interviewed at “your” school. Please keep in mind this
information is subjective and that any two student’s experiences can vary widely based on several factors (career interest, expectations) and should be evaluated within the context of all the other information that you will gather about a given school

*The AAMC has published a list of questions that students may want to think about prior to an interview: “31 Questions I Wish I Had Asked.” for their list of questions to ask during the interview.

*www.amsa.org/students/applying/about/31questions.htm
*www.kaisernetwork.org
*https://www.essayedge.com/

Sample Questions (compiled from many sources)

- Tell me about yourself?
- Why this career? Why this school?
- Why not any other profession?
- How did you go about deciding where to apply?
- How should we be picking doctors – what do you think we should be looking for?
- What would you say if you had to describe your ideal school?
- If involved in research – “Do you see that being part of your career?
- Anyone in your family in medicine?
- What does your family think of your being a doctor?
- Big political year…. if you could fix one thing in healthcare today what do you think should be fixed first?
- What do you like to do for fun?
- What kind of doctor do you think you will be? specialty
- Anything you want to know?
- Favorite course, least favorite?
- MCATS? Improvements – Why?
- Motivation – Could that be an issue as to why you did not do as well – how much you wanted this (medical school) vs. family? What were your favorite courses?
- What were your least favorite courses?
- What type of teaching style did you most enjoy? Why?
- What team-work experiences do you have? Difficulties: how resolved?
- What skills have you learned outside classroom settings?
- What is the greatest obstacle you have had to overcome?
- What has been your greatest achievement?
- What person, past or present, would you most like to meet?
- What have you read recently in the press about health care?
- What makes you a better applicant than others?
- Why do you want to become a physician?
- How do you relax?
- What is your biggest concern about entering medical school?
- Describe your best teacher and what made her or him unique.
- Describe an experience you had helping others.
- What was the last book you read?
- What has been your favorite non-science course and why?
- Who are your senators, congressional representatives, governor?
- What was your most difficult or demoralizing experience?
- What is the difference between sympathy and empathy?
- Is there anything you want to brag about or that you need to explain?
- If you are accepted to multiple schools, how will you make your decision?
- What is the toughest thing about being a patient?
- What type of criticism upsets you?
- Have you ever been a patient and, if so, can you reveal how that felt?
- How have your personal and volunteer experiences strengthened your goal to become a physician?
- What have been the strengths and weaknesses of your college preparation?
- Would you say you are most like your father or mother, and why?
- Why did you choose an osteopathic/allopathic school?
- What will you do next year if you don’t get into medical school?
- Is this school your first choice?
- Is there anything I haven’t asked you that you want to tell me?

Many medical school interviewers like to ask about an ethical or moral dilemma.

- What do you see as the biggest challenge facing the field of medicine today?
- What would you do if you saw a fellow student cheating?
- What issues now confront the medical profession? How will these affect you? (Examples: malpractice, cost, AIDS, insurance, distribution of services, funds for research).
- What have you read recently in the press about medical issues? (e.g. The Post, weeklies, Outlook).
- Describe your relationship with your friends. How would they describe you?
- What jobs have you had working with people?
- How would you express your concerns for a child needing an amputation?
- Explain a situation when you needed assistance. How did you get it? (Do not fabricate).
- What do you do particularly well? Not so well? What have you done to correct it?
- Describe a situation in which you were misjudged.
- What types of criticism upset you? (Patients are often upset, and physicians must hear a lot of criticism without taking it personally).
- What type of academic or social changes do you anticipate having to make in medical school? (Medical school is busy).
- Where do you see yourself in medicine in ten years? Twenty years?
- How do you feel about the debate over the hours residents are forced to work?

_Veterinary School Interview Questions (Questions from William & Mary Pre-Veterinary Club)_

Six main categories of questions:

- Asked personal questions to get an overall feel for you
- Tell us about past veterinary experiences
- Asked what would you do in future ethical situations
- Asked how you deal with stress
- Find out if you have realistic expectations about becoming a vet
- What questions do you have for us?