



PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL INTERVIEWS

The professional school admissions interview is one of the most important components of the application process. Selected applicants who have met initial standards for a school are interviewed so that the schools can learn more about the applicant as a person. There is no need to get butterflies or sweaty palms if you're prepared to effectively package and present your career interests, relevant experiences, and academic accomplishments. In addition to reviewing this resource guide you should plan on scheduling a mock interview or practice interview. You can schedule a mock interview by calling the Student Affairs Office at (614) 688-1171 or emailing [COP-CareerServices@osu.edu](mailto:CareerServices@osu.edu).

Interview Goals and Objectives

WHY DO PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS REQUIRE AN INTERVIEW?

Interviews are a critical component of the professional admissions process because they provide a wealth of information not included in the paper application. Specifically, they allow the admissions committee to learn more about the applicants personality, professionalism, and interpersonal and communication skills. To be successful as a healthcare professional (e.g. pharmacist, physician, dentist, veterinarian, optometrist, etc.) individuals must not only have a strong knowledge of math and science, but also be able to effectively communicate and interact with patients. The interview is the most important way professional schools assess your soft skills and abilities.

YOUR INTERVIEW GOALS

- Demonstrate how your experiences, academic background, and abilities prepare you to be a successful professional students and future healthcare provider.
- Explain your career interests and reasons for pursuing a professional education.
- Gather information about the program and institution to decide if you would accept an offer if you received one.

ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE'S INTERVIEW GOALS

- Does the candidate have the skills and knowledge to be successful in the program?
- Is the student knowledgeable about the profession they are pursuing?
- Has the student gained relevant healthcare experiences to make an informed decision?
- Does the student fit our program and the profession?
- To present the program and the institution positively so the best students will accept an offer.



The Interview Process: What to Expect

Each professional school's interview process will vary. To prepare yourself be sure to read all provided interview information carefully. You should also check the programs' websites to see if there is any additional information provided. The whole interview process may take a half-hour or half of a day; remember you are being assessed throughout the entire interview process. Within that period you may have one, two, three, or more individual interviews with one or more different persons or groups, often including faculty, alumni, practicing healthcare professionals, or current students. Once you are invited for an interview you may want to call or e-mail the institution to learn more about their unique process.

COMMON INTERVIEW FORMATS

- **Open Interview:** During an open interview the interviewer has had time to review your application materials (e.g. test scores, transcript, personal statement, resume, letters of recommendation) in advance. Never assume the interviewer has read your application in great detail; be familiar with these application materials and comfortable talking about your relevant experiences.
- **Blind or Closed Interview:** During blind or closed interviews, interviewers have no or limited information about the students they are interviewing. A blind interview is not colored by your application materials so candidates must be prepared to present themselves in a complete and positive manner. Providing your interviewer with a resume may be especially beneficial for this type of interview.
- **Multiple Mini Interviews (MMI):** The MMI is a series of 6 to 8 interview stations consisting of timed (six- to eight-minute) interview scenarios. Applicants rotate through the stations, each with its own interviewer and scenario. The MMI allows admissions committees to assess applicants' characteristics and attributes that are critical to becoming a competent and caring healthcare provider. The MMI format is growing in popularity; to learn more visit the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC): <https://www.aamc.org/students/download/369358/data/multipleminiinterviews.pdf>
- **Group Interviews:** Some institutions may choose to interview multiple candidates in the same room; this is called a group interview. Group interviews allow admissions committees to evaluate multiple candidates at the same time as well as gain specific insights on your interpersonal skills and ability to work in group. When participating in a group interview it is important to not only be polite and respectful to the other candidates, but also ensure that you have your time to share your unique accomplishments and experiences.



Preparing for Your Interview

The interview is your chance to really shine. Interviewing is a skill; strong interview skills are the result of practice. Careful preparation and knowing what to expect are critical to conveying a polished image.

KNOW YOURSELF

Preparing for an interview starts with being prepared to speak knowledgeably about yourself. The best preparation is to know yourself: your skills, abilities, interests, and past experiences.

- Think of three to five specific reasons you are planning to pursue your profession of choice. What experiences have you had that have reinforced your interests?
- Identify three to five skills or qualities that you would use to describe yourself. How will these qualities help you be successful as a student or a healthcare provider?
- Take some time to think about your past. What accomplishments are you most proud of? What did you do in college that made you who you are today? What did you learn from your past experiences?
- Finally, look over your resume and application materials. Be prepared to discuss the information listed in detail. Write outlines for your answers to anticipated questions, and then rehearse them out loud for practice.

COMMON TRAITS AND CHARACTERISTICS

It can be difficult to predict every question you might be asked during an interview. Focusing on commonly asked questions and key themes can aid you in preparing for your interview. The topics and themes are commonly discussed in professional interviews:

- Strong interest in math and science
- Desire to work in a healthcare setting
- Strong communication skills
- Importance of patients care and patient relationships
- Ability to serve as a patient advocate
- Time and stress management skills
- Decision making process for pursuing professional education

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Behavioral interview questions usually start with the following prompts “Tell me about a time when,” “Describe a situation when,” or “Give me an example of.” The following is an example of a behavioral question, “describe a time when other members of work team disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?” Strong responses to behavioral interview questions use the STAR technique.



S - Situation - Describe the problem, decision, project, etc.

T - Task - What were the major tasks involved?

A - Action - What did you do?

R - Result - What were the outcomes of your actions?

Responses to these types of questions are difficult to create on the spot and should be prepared ahead of time. Think about various situations from work, classes, or student organizations and use the STAR technique to identify key pieces of information. Here are a few examples of behavioral questions:

- Describe a particularly stressful time you faced? How did you manage your stress during this period?
- Give an example of an important goal which you set in the past. How did you reach it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to arrive at compromise or guide others to a compromise.



Presenting a Professional Image

Following these tips will help you present a polished, professional image for your interview:

- **Do Your Homework:** Know the school, the program, and the faculty. You may even consider reaching out to current students to get the real scoop on the department and faculty. Be able to articulate why you are interested in attending that specific institution and program.
- **Be on Time:** Arrive a few minutes early for the interview. If you are traveling to a new location you might consider arriving the day before. If you must be late or cannot go to the interview for some reason, be sure to call and let the school know as early as possible. Avoid being a no-show at all costs.
- **Dress for Success:** Students should plan on dressing in business professional attire for professional school interviews. It is better to be conservatively dressed than to be trendy. A dress, suit or skirt, and blouse outfit is appropriate for women. Men should wear a suit, or slacks and sports jacket, shirt, and tie. See page 5 for examples of business professional attire.
- **Greet Your Interviewer:** Use your best manners; greet and shake hands with the interviewers, repeating each interviewer’s name. Maintain strong eye contact throughout your greeting and thank the interviewer



for the opportunity to speak with them. Consider practicing your handshake in advance.

- **Show Genuine Enthusiasm:** Interviews are an important step towards your future career. Use this time to demonstrate your interest and excitement for your future career. Avoid sounding rehearsed or too stiff. Be serious, but remember to be yourself and let your enthusiasm and confidence show!
- **Prepare a List of Questions:** The interview gives you the opportunity to discover subtle differences among schools. Ask questions of your interviewers about the program’s strengths, educational approach, engagement opportunities, and the quality of student life. Plan on preparing a list of 5 to 10 questions in advance. *A list of sample questions can be found later in this guide.*
- **Thank Your Interviewers:** Promptly send handwritten thank-you notes to each of your interviewers and to any students with whom you visited or stayed. Ask for business cards to help ensure the correct spelling and mailing addresses. Some schools will also have a box to collect thank-you notes on site.



Common Interview Questions

QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED

- How would you describe yourself? / Tell me about yourself.
- What do you view as your strengths?
- Why do you want to be a _____?
- Where do you see yourself professionally in 10 years?



- How do you see yourself contributing to this field?
- What steps have you taken to acquaint yourself with the role of a _____?
- In what kind of setting would you like to practice or work?
- What will you do if you are not accepted?
- What factors have influenced your decision to become a _____?
- What are the traits of a good professional in this field? How do you embody those traits?
- How would you describe your undergraduate experience? What are you most proud of?
- What is an important issue or problem currently in the field?
- Can you explain the discrepancy between your GPA and your admission test scores?
- Tell me about a time you encountered a customer who was upset. What did you do?
- Why do you think you will be successful in professional school?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR INTERVIEWERS

- What do you view as the strengths of your school/program?
- If you could change any feature about your school, what would it be?
- How would you characterize the interaction between professors and students?
- What kind of academic, personal, financial, and career counseling is available to students?
- Is there a mentor/advisor system?
- To what degree are students involved in community service/student organizations?
- What types of rotations do students typically complete?
- Where are recent alumni employed? What do most students do after graduation?
- Do most students live near campus? What is it like to live in this area as a professional student?
- What is the selection timeline? When will candidates be notified of their acceptance into the program?

Don't forget to schedule a mock interview to prepare for your professional school interview!
Call the Student Affairs Office at (614) 688- 1171 or email COP-CareerServices@osu.edu to set-up
your mock interview.