

[Virtually] Interviewing for the Health Professions

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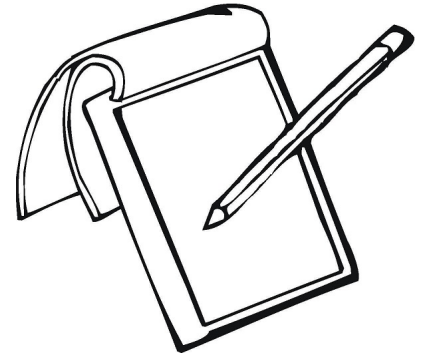
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PRE-HEALTH ADVISING CENTER

Outline

- Overview of Timeline
- What's the point?
- Types of Interviews
- Preparing for Interviews
- Additional Tips for Virtual Interviews
- Interview Day
- After the Interview
- Take Home Points



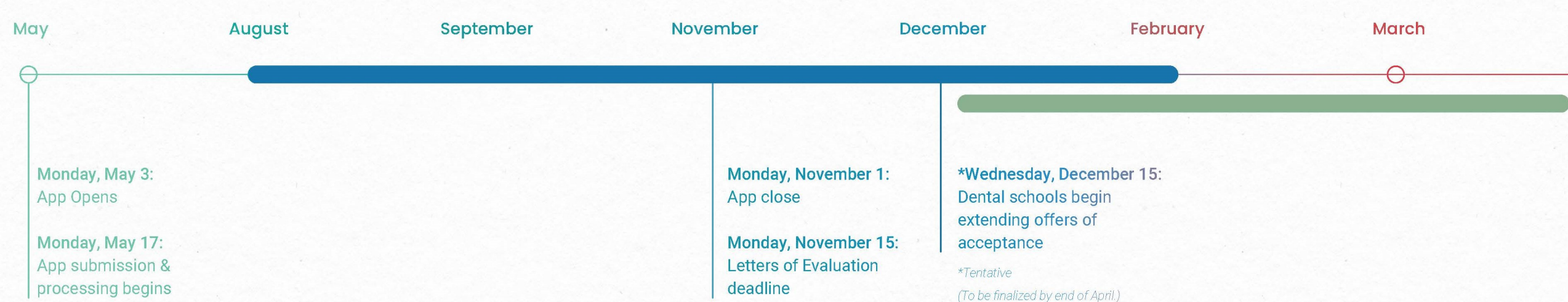
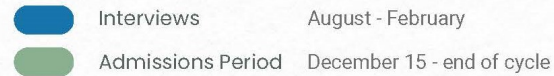
Entry Year 2022 Application Timeline for Medical Applicants

- Interviews August - February
- Pre-Match Period Oct 15 through January
- Rolling Admissions March - end of cycle



- Interview season typically runs from August-January.

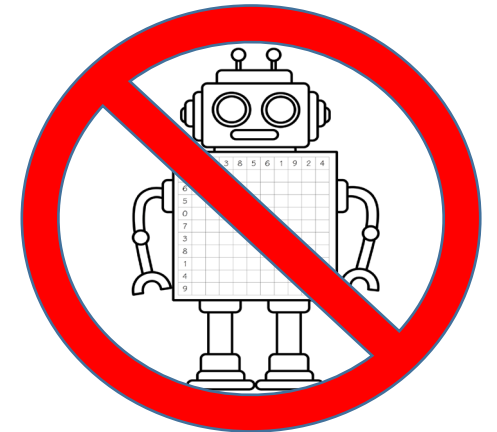
Entry Year 2022 Application Timeline for Dental Applicants



- Interview season typically runs from August-January.

What is the point of the Interview?

- To assess your suitability for the profession and fit for their program.
 - What is your motivation for choosing medicine (or other healthcare pathway)?
 - Can we picture you as a physician/dentist/PA? Team-player, maturity, service to others.
 - Do you understand what your life will be like in this profession?
- “Numbers” are no longer the focus—it’s about you!
 - How well can you communicate your ideas—especially with a stranger?
 - How do you handle stress and solve problems?
 - How honed are your interpersonal skills?
 - How well would you fit with their mission or student-body/culture?
- Key points:
 - They do not want robots!
 - Mostly conversational, but some interviewers may challenge you!



Types of Interviews

- One-on-one
 - Meet with 1 interviewer at a time.
 - Can be “open-file” or “closed-file”
- Group
 - One applicant, multiple interviewers
 - Multiple applicants, multiple interviewers
- Multiple-Mini Interview (MMI)
 - Rotate through several stations (typically 6-10)
 - Tasked with a different scenario at each station
 - Several schools in Texas use MMI
- Interviewers consist of faculty, staff, students, or community professionals.



Preparing for Interviews (the 3 “knows”)

▪ **Know yourself!**

- Be ready to give a brief summary about yourself at the beginning of the interview.
- Study your application!
 - Everything on your application is fair-game, so be ready to discuss in detail anything that you included. This is especially true for secondaries! Do not ask the interviewer what you wrote down!
 - Review [AAMC Core Competencies](#)—use your activities and experiences to exemplify these traits.
- Have an explanation for any grade missteps/withdrawals/shortcomings.
 - Avoid making excuses. Take accountability, explain what happened. What did you learn?
- Be introspective.
 - Consider your overall strengths and weaknesses. Again, consider the Core Competencies.
 - Have a general idea of your professional goals and reasons for pursuing this path.
- What makes you unique? What makes you a good fit for this program?
 - Provide specific examples where possible. (“Tell about a time in which you were a leader.”)

Preparing for Interviews (the 3 “knows”)

▪ **Know the school!**

- What types of interviews does the school conduct? Virtual or in-person?
 - Could be a combination (e.g., one-on-one and MMI).
- Who are your interviewers?
 - If possible, research the background of your interviewers and tailor your questions for each.
- What is the school mission statement?
 - How do you and your goals align with that mission?
- What *specific* opportunities does this school offer you?
 - Community outreach, student mentoring, facilities, research, types of clinical exposure/patient populations, innovative curriculum?
 - Be sure to read or watch any material that is sent to you by the school ahead of the interview.



Preparing for Interviews (the 3 “knows”)

- **Know the profession!**

- Be familiar with the healthcare profession you hope to enter.
 - Why did you choose this career over another in healthcare?
 - Why are you interested in osteopathic medicine?
- What are some hot-topics in healthcare?
 - Consider reading news articles daily—e.g., New York Times or journals like Science or Nature.
 - COVID-19, Affordable Care Act, access to quality/affordable healthcare.
- What do you consider to be the greatest crisis in healthcare?
 - Do you have any personal experience with these issues from your life or shadowing/volunteering?

Interview Practice

- **Mock interviews are a must!**

- [University Career Services](#) conducts mock interviews.
- Visit [our website](#) for additional practice questions and resources.
- Do not over-practice your responses. *Learn to converse, not rehearse!*
- Be ready to discuss:
 - Your interest in healthcare (Why do you want to become a doctor?)
 - Your interest in the program (Why this school? How do you feel you will contribute?)
 - Your professional goals (Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?)
 - Your hobbies (What do you do for fun?)
 - Your research (What was your role? What were your results?)
 - Your best and worst qualities (How would your friends describe you?)
 - Issues in healthcare (Covid-19, “biggest” issue(s) in healthcare, etc.)



Additional Tips for Virtual Interviews

▪ **Test your virtual interview settings and configuration:**

- Determine how the interview will be conducted—Zoom? Skype?
- Quiet, distraction-free environment—no pets or family-members.
- Good lighting—no glare from windows or blinds; try placing lamp in front rather than behind you.
- Minimal background—make the focus on you, *not what's behind you*.
- Minimize or remove your video. You need to be looking at your interviewer, not yourself.
- Turn off all computer/phone notifications—no dings, vibrations, pop-ups, etc.
- Do not use notes for your answers (except for questions). *Learn to converse, not rehearse!*
- Make sure your account profile has a professional photo and your full name as listed on application.
- Practice your answers out-loud (record yourself using your phone or use Zoom with a friend).
- Audio can be choppy—Don't be afraid to ask an interviewer to repeat or clarify their question.



The Best Interview Candidates....

- Practice their interviewing skills during a mock interview
- Research the interview structure and their interviewers (if known)
 - What is their specialty? You may tailor questions based on their background
- Read/watch all material that is sent by school prior to interview
 - You want to avoid asking questions about something that has been covered already
- Stay actively engaged throughout interview
 - This will be necessary even during group sessions where focus may not be directly on you
 - Non-verbal cues are key! Nod, smile, show consistent eye-contact, ask questions
- Can work with questions that don't have a clear “right” answer
- Provide examples or evidence to support their answers.
 - It is not enough to say that you can work with diverse populations or a good communicator—prove it.
- Read up on current events and policy issues
 - Be ready to talk about COVID-19—it's impact on your life and on healthcare, generally

Day of the [Virtual] Interview

- Be nice to everyone! Keep notes on everyone you interact with.
- Keep phone out of the room! Turn off all computer notifications.
- Double-check lighting, sound, video, etc. *before* the interview.
- Have water and pen/pad.
- Dress professionally—your clothing should not be why they remember you!
 - Men: Dark suit (black, navy, gray). Trimmed facial hair.
 - Women: Dark two-piece matched suit, blouse, or pantsuit. Limit jewelry and cleavage.
 - Try to minimize visibility of tattoos
 - Comfortable shoes (it's virtual!)
- Don't be afraid to ask questions or engage during group meetings.
- Remember: *You deserve to be interviewing! Be excited! Smile!*

During the [Virtual] Interview

- Be mindful of your body language and non-verbal cues
 - Maintain consistent eye contact, smile, and nod (again, we emphasize closing your video window)
 - Sit up straight, keep hands free of pens to limit tapping. But it's ok to talk with your hands.
 - Listen actively (this means paraphrasing and taking time to respond thoughtfully to questions)
- Avoid:
 - Rambling—don't expect interviewers to cut you off. Answers should be 1-2 mins. 3-mins. max.
 - Negativity—don't disparage doctors you've shadowed or peers you've worked with.
 - Dwelling on prior interview or MMI station—stay focused on what's in front of you.
- Think out loud when trying to solve a problem (process is more important than solution):
 - Define the problem. What do you know? What do you need to know?
 - How are you going to gather information?
 - What will you do with information?
- Be yourself—it's ok to talk about non-medical things that have influenced you

Common Interview Questions

- *Tell me about yourself.*
 - Introduce name, where you're from, where you graduated, your major/minor, then things you did in college/gap-year, what you like to do for fun, and close with how you have been looking forward to interviewing at XXX and are thankful for opportunity.
- *Why do you want to be a doctor/dentist/PA?*
 - Answer should be specific to the profession!
 - It's ok to say you want to “help people” but answer needs to be more in-depth than that.
 - If you're applying to a specialized program (e.g., osteopathic, dual-degree, etc.)—be prepared to discuss why you're specifically interested in that program.
- *Why did you apply to this program?*
 - Again, be specific to the school based on your research.



Additional Common Interview Questions

- *Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?*
- *What do you consider your greatest weakness? Greatest strength?*
- *How would your friends (or family) describe you?*
- *What would you do if you were not accepted?*
- *Describe a situation where you failed/Tell me about an accomplishment.*
- *Tell me more about [activity/experience] on your application.*
- *What are your interests outside of medicine?*
- *What do you feel is the biggest problem/issue in healthcare today?*

- Be honest, succinct and use examples where possible.
- Try not to dwell on negative topics for too long—give positive spin



Are any questions off-limits?

- Yes, interviewers will often pose challenging questions but should not ask inappropriate questions, such as those involving:
 - Personal disabilities
 - Race
 - Religion
 - Sex
- Report the interviewer's name and the interview question to an admissions officer (usually program director) immediately or by email within 24-hours.

Questions to ask during Interview

- To ask Interviewers:
 - How did you end up at this school? Why did you choose your chosen specialty?
 - What is your favorite thing about the school? Least favorite thing?
 - What do you see as the biggest positive and negative change coming in medicine, and how is your school preparing its students for them?
 - Where are rotations sites? University hospital available? Residency programs?
 - Is research emphasized? Opportunities for research?
- Other questions to ask during interview day (including students):
 - How are students graded during pre-clinical years? Pass/Fail? Are students ranked?
 - What are some challenges that new students often face?
 - How often are exams (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly)?
 - Attendance policy/lecture recording?
 - What do students do for fun?

After the Interview

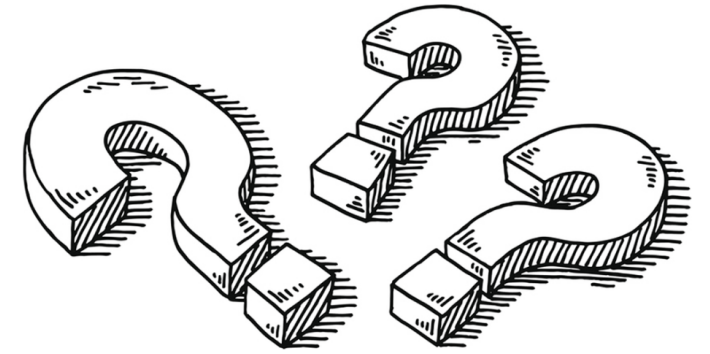
- Breathe! You did it!
- Consider composing thank-you notes to your interviewers—*but not required!*
 - Hand-written or email is fine (check to see if one is preferred)
 - Suggest bringing cards with you to in-person interviews
- Write down notes about the experience immediately following interview
 - Consider your feelings on the program, facilities, students, faculty, and city/state.
- Consider areas to improve on for next time—but don't dwell on negative
- Update your application with new info or provide a statement of interest
 - Always check with program guidelines before sending anything
- Complete our [Health Professions Interview Survey](#)



Take Home Points

- Interviews are for assessing your character and personality
- Get your application in early to improve chances to interview
- Practice, practice, practice. Schedule mock interviews early
- Think deeply about why *this* career over other healthcare careers
- Know your application inside and out
- Interview begins the minute you step on campus
- Do your research about the program before interviewing
- Be yourself—no robots!
- Be patient! You may not be invited to interview right away

Thank you!



Questions?

Email: prehealth@uh.edu

Visit: www.uh.edu/pre-health

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