

Dentistry mock interview

A seven station MMI circuit for dentistry applicants, ready to print and run in an afternoon. Interviewers do not need to be dentists.

MOCK INTERVIEW 1 MMI CIRCUIT 7 STATIONS 7 MINUTES PER STATION

BEFORE YOU START

How to run this mock

- 1 Set up seven stations, one room or clearly separated space each, with a door card from the back of this pack on the door and one interviewer holding the matching station page.
- 2 Run students round in order: 7 minutes in the station, 2 minutes to move on. Seven students fit in one 63 minute circuit, twenty one if you start three at different points.
- 3 Interviewers mark all four domains at every station on the 1 to 4 scale, and write one line of evidence before the next student comes in, while it is still fresh.
- 4 Collect the station pages, copy the marks onto the scoring summary, and give every student one strength and one thing to work on. The debrief is the part that changes results.

MARKED THE SAME WAY AT EVERY STATION

The four scoring domains

M Motivation and insight

Knows what a dentist does all day, the practical and repetitive parts included.

- 1 Reasons that would fit any health course.
- 4 Specific, and clear about the real job.

C Communication

Explains clearly to someone anxious or in pain, and listens to what worries them.

- 1 Talks at the listener, or hides in jargon.
- 4 Plain, warm, and checks it has landed.

R Reflection and self awareness

Learns from experience rather than listing it, and knows the limits of their skill.

- 1 Describes what happened, learns nothing.
- 4 Says what changed, and what needs practice.

V Professional values and ethics

Puts the patient's health before what is quickest, cheapest or most wanted.

- 1 Gives the patient whatever they ask for.
- 4 Weighs need against want, and says why.

MOTIVATION FOR DENTISTRY

Why do you want to be a dentist?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What first put the idea in your head, and what has kept it there?
- Which part of the job do you think you would like least?

WHAT A STRONG CANDIDATE COVERS: A LISTENING AID, NOT A MODEL ANSWER. DO NOT READ IT OUT.

- A specific starting point rather than a slogan: something they saw, read, felt in a chair or did, with enough detail that it could only be theirs.
- Evidence they have tested the idea since, through a visit, reading, a conversation with someone who does the job, or work with the public.
- Understands that the work is done in a small space with their hands, on the same few procedures, many times a day, for a whole career.
- Says why the mix of practical skill, science and anxious people suits them in particular, rather than why dentistry is a good career in general.
- Some sense of why not medicine, pharmacy or dental therapy, without talking any of them down.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Everyone has prepared for this one. If it sounds recited, use the first follow up and mark what comes back, not the script. Listen for whether the hands-on, repetitive side of the job has actually been thought about.

MARK ALL FOUR DOMAINS

	Little evidence	Some evidence	Clear evidence	Strong evidence
Motivation and insight	1	2	3	4
Communication	1	2	3	4
Reflection and self awareness	1	2	3	4
Professional values and ethics	1	2	3	4

EVIDENCE: ONE LINE, IN THEIR WORDS, BEFORE THE NEXT STUDENT COMES IN

WORK EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTION

Think of a time you watched a dentist working, at your own appointment or on a placement. What surprised you, and what did it tell you about the job?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What was the nurse doing while the dentist worked?
- What would you have wanted explained to you that was not?

WHAT A STRONG CANDIDATE COVERS: A LISTENING AID, NOT A MODEL ANSWER. DO NOT READ IT OUT.

- One moment described concretely, so it is clear they were paying attention rather than reciting what a dentist is supposed to do.
- Something genuinely unexpected: the noise, how close the work is, how little of a visit is drilling, how much of it is looking and writing.
- Notices the people as well as the procedure, including how the patient was spoken to and who else was in the room.
- A learning point stated plainly and tied to how they would want to work themselves.
- No identifying detail about a patient, which is the quiet test in any work experience answer.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

A dental placement is hard to get and no student should need one to answer this. Someone who watched carefully at their own check up, in a care home or behind a till can score full marks.

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	Little evidence	Some evidence	Clear evidence	Strong evidence
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Communication	1	2	3	4
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Professional values and ethics	1	2	3	4

EVIDENCE: ONE LINE, IN THEIR WORDS, BEFORE THE NEXT STUDENT COMES IN

ETHICAL REASONING

A patient with healthy front teeth asks for them to be whitened and then veneered, purely because she dislikes how they look. What are the issues, and what would you do?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Does it change anything if she says she will go abroad for it instead?
- What if she were seventeen rather than thirty?

WHAT A STRONG CANDIDATE COVERS: A LISTENING AID, NOT A MODEL ANSWER. DO NOT READ IT OUT.

- Separates what the patient wants from what her teeth need, and does not treat either as automatically the winner.
- Knows that veneers on healthy teeth usually mean removing enamel that never grows back, and that this commits her to upkeep for life.
- Sees the dentist's own position: a practice has to pay for itself, and wanting the work is not a reason to do it.
- Gets to proper consent, meaning she understands the alternatives, including whitening alone or doing nothing at all.
- Knows where a student's judgement stops and a senior colleague's begins.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

No dental knowledge is needed to mark this. Listen for whether the patient stays a person, whether both sides are weighed, and whether the money in the room is noticed rather than ignored.

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DENTISTRY AND THE PUBLIC

In much of the country people cannot find a dentist taking new NHS patients. Why do you think that is, and what would you want to understand better before proposing a fix?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Who does that shortage hit hardest?
- Where did what you have just told us come from?

WHAT A STRONG CANDIDATE COVERS: A LISTENING AID, NOT A MODEL ANSWER. DO NOT READ IT OUT.

- Explains that NHS dentistry is mostly delivered by private businesses working to a contract, not by salaried staff in a public building.
- Offers more than one reason: how the contract pays, where dentists choose to work, staff leaving the profession, and demand built up over years.
- Describes what the shortage does to people in practice: pain managed at home, problems found late, and trips to A and E.
- Accepts that the obvious fix costs something, and says who pays it.
- Is honest about the limits of their own information and says where it came from.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Sixth formers are not expected to know how a dental contract works. An honest 'I am not certain of the figure, but what I have read suggests' beats a confident wrong number every time.

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COMMUNICATION ROLE PLAY

Your friend has had toothache for weeks and has not seen a dentist in years because he is frightened. Speak to him now.

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What if he says he will take painkillers until it settles?
- What would you do if he agreed and then did nothing?

BRIEF FOR THE PERSON PLAYING THE PART

Your part	You are the candidate's friend. You had a bad experience as a child and have avoided dentists since. The tooth has ached for weeks and you are sleeping badly. You make jokes about it. If the candidate asks what you are actually afraid of, you tell them.
Open with	It is not that bad. It only really goes when I eat on that side.
If handled well	Admit you are scared of the drill and the not knowing, and agree to ring a practice tomorrow.
If handled badly	Laugh it off and change the subject if they lecture you. Never aggressive.

WHAT A STRONG CANDIDATE COVERS: A LISTENING AID, NOT A MODEL ANSWER. DO NOT READ IT OUT.

- Finds out what actually frightens him before offering any solution.
- Takes the fear seriously rather than arguing him out of it.
- Says plainly what waiting is likely to cost him, without frightening him more.
- Ends with one small step he has agreed to, rather than a lecture.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Two people run this station: one marks, one plays the friend from the brief. Mark the conversation, not whether he agrees.

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DATA AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Look at the table. What would you say is going on in these two areas, and what would you want to know before acting on it?

TOOTH DECAY IN FIVE YEAR OLDS, TWO AREAS OF ONE CITY

Area	Children with decay	Average decayed teeth	Deprivation band
A	21%	0.7	9 of 10
B	44%	1.9	2 of 10
Country	27%	0.9	n/a

Deprivation band 1 is the most deprived tenth. These figures are invented for this exercise. They are not data from any real area and should not be quoted as such.

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Area B is about to lose its school brushing scheme. What would you say?
- Which single extra column would help you most here?

WHAT A STRONG CANDIDATE COVERS: A LISTENING AID, NOT A MODEL ANSWER. DO NOT READ IT OUT.

- Reads the table accurately first, including what each column is actually counting, before drawing any conclusion.
- Notices that the area with far more decay is also the more deprived one, and treats that as the striking thing rather than a coincidence.
- Offers more than one explanation: diet, water, the cost and distance of getting seen, and whether families were ever reached at all.
- Resists blaming parents, while holding on to the fact that decay in a five year old is very largely preventable.
- Names what the table cannot say, including how the children were counted and whether both areas were checked the same way.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Print this page so the candidate can see the table while they talk. There is no right answer. Mark careful reading, reasoning out loud, and awareness of what they do not know.

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PERSONAL INSIGHT

Tell us about something you do with your hands. How did you get better at it?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What did your first attempts look like?
- How do you know when it is right, rather than nearly right?

WHAT A STRONG CANDIDATE COVERS: A LISTENING AID, NOT A MODEL ANSWER. DO NOT READ IT OUT.

- Picks something real and specific, whether that is braiding hair, soldering, baking, playing an instrument or fixing bikes.
- Describes getting better honestly: what was clumsy at first, and what they repeated until it was not.
- Knows how they judge their own work, and what they compare it against.
- Shows patience with a slow skill, which is what the station is really about.
- Does not oversell it into surgical dexterity: a dental school wants evidence of practice, not a claim.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Manual dexterity is asked about at most dental schools and there is no right hobby. A student who talks precisely about getting better at something ordinary beats one who lists an impressive activity and says nothing about practice.

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Scoring summary

One row per student. Copy each mark across from the station sheets, then total the row. Every station is marked out of 16, so the circuit totals 112.

M Motivation and insight C Communication R Reflection and self awareness V Professional values and ethics

[illegible]

THE SCALE, AT EVERY STATION

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Little evidence | Barely addressed, or addressed in a way that raises a concern. Would need substantial work before a real interview. |
| 2 | Some evidence | Touched on it, but thinly or only when prompted. The material is there and the answer is not. |
| 3 | Clear evidence | Covered it well and unprompted. The kind of answer that does the candidate no harm at a real interview. |
| 4 | Strong evidence | Covered it with insight and specifics, and made the interviewer want to hear more. Rare, and should stay rare. |

Briefing for interviewers

Read this once before the circuit starts. It takes about three minutes, and it is the difference between a mock that flatters everyone and one that tells a student something they can act on.

You do not need to be a dentist to interview

You are not judging dental knowledge. You are judging whether a seventeen year old can think out loud, listen, reflect honestly and hold more than one side of a problem, which is what a dental school is looking for too. Everything you need is on your station page, and the four domains mean the same thing at every station in the circuit.

Before the circuit starts

- Read your station page twice, including the two follow up prompts, and check the door card outside matches your station.
- Have the page, a pen and a watch or a phone timer in front of you. Someone will call the changeover, but keep your own eye on the time.
- Decide with the coordinator who calls time if you are running the role play station, because that station needs two people.

Running your station

- Ask the question exactly as written, so every student gets the same station.
- Then stop talking. Let a silence run for a good five seconds before you prompt: thinking time is not a fault.
- Use a follow up only if the candidate has stalled or has finished early. Two prompts is the maximum.
- Do not teach, correct or react. Nodding along warmly to one student and sitting stony faced with the next is the most common way a circuit becomes unfair.
- Keep the listening aid beside you, not in front of the candidate. It is there to help you hear a thin answer, and it is not a checklist to tick off or read aloud.

Marking

- Mark all four domains, every time, even at a station that leans on two of them. A candidate who communicates beautifully and says nothing can score 4 and 1 on the same answer.
- Mark immediately, before the next student walks in. Marks written at the end of the afternoon are memories of the strongest and the weakest, and nothing in between.
- Write one line of evidence per student, in their words if you can. That line is what makes the debrief useful, and it is the part students remember.
- Use the whole scale. If everyone gets a 3, the circuit has told the student nothing.

Afterwards

- Hand your station pages to the coordinator with every mark and evidence line filled in.
- Flag anything that worried you, for example a student who was very distressed or an answer that raised a safeguarding concern, to the member of staff running the day rather than to the student.
- If you can stay for ten minutes, the students get far more from hearing one strength and one improvement from you directly than from a score.

Why do you want to be a dentist?

Take a moment to think before you answer. The interviewer may ask you more.

**Think of a time
you watched a
dentist working,
at your own
appointment or on
a placement. What
surprised you, and
what did it tell you
about the job?**

Take a moment to think before you answer. The interviewer may ask you more.

A patient with healthy front teeth asks for them to be whitened and then veneered, purely because she dislikes how they look. What are the issues, and what would you do?

Take a moment to think before you answer. The interviewer may ask you more.

In much of the country people cannot find a dentist taking new NHS patients. Why do you think that is, and what would you want to understand better before proposing a fix?

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Your friend has had toothache for weeks and has not seen a dentist in years because he is frightened. Speak to him now.

Take a moment to think before you answer. The interviewer may ask you more.

**Look at the table.
What would you
say is going on in
these two areas,
and what would
you want to know
before acting on
it?**

Take a moment to think before you answer. The interviewer may ask you more.

**Tell us about
something you do
with your hands.
How did you get
better at it?**

Take a moment to think before you answer. The interviewer may ask you more.