FOR TEACHERS AND CAREERS LEADS

Dentistry mock interview

A tenth seven station MMI circuit for dentistry applicants, built around doubt, prevention and the pull between NHS and private work, and no interviewer needs to be a dentist.

MOCK INTERVIEW 10 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

What would have to be true in ten years for you to regret having chosen dentistry?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- How likely do you think that is, honestly?
- What could you do now to make it less likely?

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

- Names a real risk rather than a safe one, such as the physical toll, the repetition, or the money pressure inside a practice.
- Shows they have looked at the parts of the job people complain about, not only the parts they enjoyed watching.
- Does not slide into insisting they could never regret it, which answers a different question.
- Has done something to test the risk, or can say plainly how they would go about testing it.
- Ends still wanting it, with the reason intact rather than hastily repaired.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

This unsettles candidates, which is why it is here, so give them time before prompting. A student who can name what might go wrong and still argue for the choice is showing more insight than one who refuses the premise.

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

What has surprised you most about a job once you saw it from the inside, in a practice or in any workplace you have spent time in?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What had given you the wrong impression in the first place?
- What do you think would surprise you most in your first week in a dental practice?

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

- Names a real surprise, which usually means admitting the picture they arrived with was naive.
- Describes what they actually saw that changed it, rather than jumping to the conclusion.
- Notices the unglamorous parts: paperwork, cleaning, waiting, the same conversation repeated all day.
- Draws something useful out of it about the job they are applying for.
- Makes a thoughtful guess about a dental practice rather than reciting a wish list.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

A shop, a kitchen or a care home answers this fully, and a student with no dental placement should not lose a mark. Mark whether the surprise is genuine, because a manufactured one is easy to hear.

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

ETHICAL REASONING

Someone with a large following offers to promote a practice online in return for free cosmetic treatment. The practice owner asks what you think. What do you say?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Does it change anything if the treatment is genuinely needed?
- Who might be harmed by the posts themselves?

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

- Separates the clinical question from the marketing one, since whether the treatment is right for that mouth comes first.
- Sees the risk to the followers, who are shown a result without being shown the upkeep, the cost or the risks.
- Notices the pressure it puts on the dentist to agree to something they might otherwise advise against.
- Knows that promoting a health service carries duties that selling a jumper does not.
- Gives the owner an actual answer rather than only a list of concerns.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

No knowledge of advertising rules is expected. Mark whether the candidate keeps both the person in the chair and the audience watching in view at once, and whether they can disagree with a senior person politely.

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

DENTISTRY AND THE PUBLIC

A lot of dentists have moved away from NHS work. Why do you think that happens, and what does it mean for patients?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Which patients feel that first?
- What would you change to keep dentists doing NHS work?

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

- Offers reasons on both sides of the decision: how the work is paid for, the pace it demands, and what a practice must cover to stay open.
- Does not reduce it to dentists wanting more money, nor pretend that money is irrelevant to it.
- Follows the effect through to real people, especially those who cannot pay privately or travel far.
- Mentions knock on effects, such as pain being dealt with somewhere it should never have reached.
- Suggests a change and admits what it would cost, or who would have to find that money.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Candidates often repeat a headline here. Ask what sits behind it. A student who can explain that a practice has fixed costs whatever the work is paid at is reasoning rather than repeating.

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COMMUNICATION ROLE PLAY

A friend has ordered a whitening kit online rather than seeing a dentist. They are about to use it. Speak to them.

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What if they had already used it once with no problem?
- What would you do if they asked you to order one too?

BRIEF FOR THE PERSON PLAYING THE PART

Your part	You are the candidate's friend. You ordered a whitening kit from a website because seeing a dentist felt expensive and slow. You have a photo in mind of how you want to look. You listen if the candidate asks about that rather than telling you off.
Open with	It came yesterday. Loads of people use it and nothing happens to them.
If handled well	Admit you are nervous about your gums, and agree to ask a dentist before you open it.
If handled badly	Say they sound like your mother, and tell them you will use it tonight anyway.

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

- Asks why they want it before arguing against the kit.
- Raises the risk plainly, without frightening them into silence.
- Does not lecture, and keeps them talking.
- Offers a realistic alternative rather than only a no.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Two run this station: one marks, one plays the friend from the brief. No product knowledge is needed or expected from either of you.

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DATA AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Two sets of areas are compared here. What would you conclude from this, and how confident would you be in that conclusion?

DECAY IN FIVE YEAR OLDS, AREAS WITH AND WITHOUT FLUORIDE ADDED TO THE WATER

Area group	Children examined	With any decay (%)	Decayed teeth each
Fluoridated A	4,100	18	0.6
Fluoridated B	3,500	21	0.8
Not fluoridated C	3,900	29	1.3
Not fluoridated D	4,300	24	1.0

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

- What else might differ between these areas besides the water?
- What would change your confidence either way?

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

- States the pattern accurately, and notices that the two groups overlap rather than separating cleanly.
- Does not jump from a difference to a cause, and can say why that step needs more than this table.
- Raises the obvious confounder, which is that these areas may differ in income, diet and access as well as in water.
- Understands that a small difference per child is a large difference across a whole population.
- Says what would make them more confident, such as looking at one area before and after a change.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Print this station page so the candidate can see the table. The station is about the gap between a pattern and a cause. Stay neutral if the candidate has strong views about fluoride.

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

PERSONAL INSIGHT

What have you given up to get to where you are now, and was it worth it?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Who else was affected by that decision?
- What would you not be willing to give up in the next five years?

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

- Names something real that was lost, rather than a token sacrifice mentioned to look dedicated.
- Is honest about whether they still miss it, including when the answer is yes.
- Answers the second half properly instead of automatically declaring that it was worth it.
- Notes the cost to other people, such as family time or a friendship that quietly faded.
- Holds a limit, which shows they are not planning to give up everything they have for a career.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Some students have given up a great deal and some have not had to, and neither of those is a virtue. Mark the honesty of the accounting, not the size of the sacrifice.

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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

	Station 1				Station 2				Station 3				Station 4				Station 5				Station 6				Station 7				Total
STUDENT	M	C	R	V	M	C	R	V	M	C	R	V	M	C	R	V	M	C	R	V	M	C	R	V	M	C	R	V	/ 112

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.

What would have to be true in ten years for you to regret having chosen dentistry?

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

What has surprised you most about a job once you saw it from the inside, in a practice or in any workplace you have spent time in?

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

STATION 3 OF 7

ETHICAL REASONING

Someone with a large following offers to promote a practice online in return for free cosmetic treatment. The practice owner asks what you think. What do you say?

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A lot of dentists have moved away from NHS work. Why do you think that happens, and what does it mean for patients?

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

A friend has ordered a whitening kit online rather than seeing a dentist. They are about to use it. Speak to them.

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

Two sets of areas are compared here. What would you conclude from this, and how confident would you be in that conclusion?

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

STATION 7 OF 7

PERSONAL INSIGHT

What have you given up to get to where you are now, and was it worth it?

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