

Dentistry mock interview

A third dentistry circuit built around children's teeth, the wider dental team and the appointments that go unfilled. Interviewers do not need to be dentists.

MOCK INTERVIEW 3 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

Which part of a dentist's working day do you expect to find hardest, and what makes you say that?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What would help you through that part on a bad day?
- Which part do you expect to enjoy most?

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

- Names one specific part and stays with it: frightened patients, the repetition, the physical strain, or being disliked over a bill.
- Shows they have a picture of an actual day, with a full list, short appointments and the clock running behind.
- Explains why that part would be hard for them in particular, rather than why it would be hard for anyone.
- Has a plan for it that is about habits and asking colleagues, rather than about simply trying harder.
- Does not turn the answer into a strength in disguise.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Listen for whether the student has looked at a real working day rather than the idea of one. Honest uncertainty about what something will feel like is worth more than a confident guess.

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 have you learned about the people who work alongside a dentist: the nurse, the hygienist, the therapist and the technician?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What can a dental therapist do that a hygienist usually does not?
- Where did you find that out?

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

- Can say something real about at least two of the roles, rather than listing four job titles.
- Knows the nurse is not simply passing instruments: they prepare, they reassure, they keep the record and they watch the patient.
- Understands that the work is shared across a team, and that the dentist is not the only person treating.
- Says where the knowledge came from, whether that is a visit, a conversation, reading or their own appointments.
- Treats the team with respect rather than as support staff around the important person.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

A student with no placement can answer this well from reading and from their own check ups, and should not be marked down for it. Mark the understanding, not the access.

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

A four year old is brought back with widespread decay for the third time, and none of the advice given before has been followed. What are the issues, and what would you do?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- At what point does this stop being only a dental problem?
- How would you raise it with the parent without losing them?

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

- Puts the child first, and treats the immediate pain and infection as the first question to answer.
- Asks why the advice was not followed before assuming it was ignored: cost, work patterns, language, or advice never understood.
- Knows that repeated severe decay in a small child can be a safeguarding matter, and that dental neglect is a recognised concern.
- Keeps the parent in the conversation rather than lecturing them, because the child comes back with them or not at all.
- Says plainly that this is raised with a senior colleague and the practice safeguarding lead, not settled alone.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Safeguarding is the idea you are listening for, but a candidate who describes the concern without using the word is doing the same thing. Mark whether they hold the child and the parent together.

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

DENTISTRY AND THE PUBLIC

Tooth decay is among the most common reasons young children are admitted to hospital in this country. Why do you think that is, and what would you do about it?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Would you spend the money on the children, or on their parents?
- Whose job is this, if it is not the dentist's?

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

- Understands what those admissions are for: teeth taken out under general anaesthetic, because a small child cannot sit through the work awake.
- Offers more than one cause: sugar, brushing, fluoride, and children who have never been seen by a dentist at all.
- Notices that the condition is very largely preventable, which is what makes the figure striking.
- Proposes something specific and says who would have to do it: schools, health visitors, water companies or supermarkets.
- Accepts that their proposal has a cost, in money or in freedom, and says who it falls on.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Sixth formers are not expected to know the policy. Mark the reasoning, the willingness to name a trade-off, and honesty about where their information came from.

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

COMMUNICATION ROLE PLAY

Your younger brother is having a tooth out tomorrow morning and cannot sleep for worrying. Speak to him now.

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What if he asks you straight out whether it will hurt?
- What would you say to your parents afterwards?

BRIEF FOR THE PERSON PLAYING THE PART

Your part	You are eleven and you are having a back tooth out in the morning. You are frightened of the needle above everything, and a friend told you it cracks. You ask direct questions and you can tell when you are being fobbed off.
Open with	Does it hurt? Tell me the truth, do not just say it is fine.
If handled well	Calm down, ask what the numbing feels like, and agree to tell the dentist you are scared.
If handled badly	Get more worried if they promise it will not hurt at all, because you do not believe them.

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

- Asks what he is picturing before reassuring him about anything.
- Tells the truth in a way a child can hold, and does not promise it will not hurt.
- Gives him something to do: a question to ask, a signal, someone to hold on to.
- Stays calm and warm, and does not rush him off to sleep.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Two people run this station: one marks, one plays the brother. Mark honesty and warmth together, not one at the cost of the other.

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

DATA AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Look at the table. What is happening in this practice's diary, and what would you do about it?

APPOINTMENTS NOT ATTENDED AT ONE DENTAL PRACTICE, ONE MONTH

Time of day	Booked	Not attended	Not attended rate
Before 9am	180	34	19%
9am to noon	460	28	6%
Noon to 3pm	420	25	6%
3pm to 5pm	390	35	9%
After 5pm	210	40	19%

These figures are invented for this exercise. They are not data from any real practice and should not be quoted as such.

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- The practice wants to stop opening before nine. What would worry you?
- What would you measure that this table does not show?

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

- Reads the table accurately, including how many appointments each part of the day actually holds.
- Notices that the earliest and latest slots are missed far more often than the middle of the day.
- Offers several explanations before settling on one: school and work hours, transport, reminders, and slots booked weeks ahead.
- Thinks about who would lose out if those slots went, which is likely to be people who cannot take time off.
- Names what the table cannot say, such as what each slot was booked for and how patients were reminded.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Print this page so the candidate can see the table. There is no right answer. Mark careful reading, more than one explanation, and awareness of who a change would fall on.

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

PERSONAL INSIGHT

Tell us about a time you had to concentrate closely on one thing for a long stretch. How did you keep going?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What broke your concentration, and what did you do about it?
- How did you feel afterwards?

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

- Chooses something that genuinely took sustained attention, not simply something that took a long time.
- Describes what they did to hold it: how they set up, what they removed, how they broke it into parts.
- Is honest about the point where it got hard, and what happened to the quality of the work then.
- Knows their own warning signs, and what they do once they notice them.
- Connects it to work done in a small space where a slip matters, without overclaiming.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Dentists work to fine tolerances for hours at a time. Any example counts: revision, sport, sewing, a long shift. Mark the self-knowledge, not the activity.

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

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.

Which part of a dentist's working day do you expect to find hardest, and what makes you say that?

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

What have you learned about the people who work alongside a dentist: the nurse, the hygienist, the therapist and the technician?

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

A four year old is brought back with widespread decay for the third time, and none of the advice given before has been followed. What are the issues, and what would you do?

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

Tooth decay is among the most common reasons young children are admitted to hospital in this country. Why do you think that is, and what would you do about it?

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

Your younger brother is having a tooth out tomorrow morning and cannot sleep for worrying. Speak to him now.

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

**Look at the table.
What is
happening in this
practice's diary,
and what would
you do about it?**

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

Tell us about a time you had to concentrate closely on one thing for a long stretch. How did you keep going?

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