

# Dentistry mock interview

A seventh seven station MMI circuit for dentistry applicants, built around the team, the business and where the job is going, and no interviewer needs to be a dentist.

MOCK INTERVIEW 7   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

## How do you think dentistry will have changed in twenty years, and knowing that, why do you still want to do it?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Which part of the job do you think will not change at all?
- What would you want to be doing yourself in twenty years?

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

- Names plausible changes with a reason attached, such as scanning and milling in the practice, more prevention, or work shared across the team.
- Does not simply assert that machines will take over, and can say what still needs a person in the room.
- Holds on to something durable: a frightened patient, a hand working in a small space, a decision made without certainty.
- Says why the changed version of the job still appeals, rather than defending only the version they have seen.
- Admits how much of this is speculation, and reasons carefully anyway.

## NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Speculation is the point of the station, so mark the reasoning rather than the forecast. A candidate who says a machine could scan a tooth but not persuade a frightened nine year old to open their mouth is answering it well.

## 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

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## WORK EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTION

**From any workplace you have spent time in, what did you learn about the business side of running it, and why would that matter in a dental practice?**

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What did that cost the place, and who ended up paying for it?
- Where could the business side and a patient's interest pull apart?

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

- Something concrete from a real workplace: a quiet hour still staffed, stock that went out of date, a slot nobody filled.
- Understands that a practice pays wages, rent and equipment out of what it earns, so an appointment slot genuinely has a value.
- Sees the tension honestly, since the quickest option and the best option for the patient are not always the same one.
- Treats money as an ordinary constraint rather than as something shameful or as the point of the job.
- Brings it back to a person sitting in the chair instead of leaving it as an abstract observation.

## NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

A supermarket, a cafe or a charity shop answers this as fully as a practice would, and a candidate with no dental placement should not lose a mark. Listen for whether they grasp that somebody has to pay for the chair and the nurse.

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
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## ETHICAL REASONING

**An adult with a learning disability needs several teeth treated and cannot make the decision on their own. How would you approach it, and who should be involved?**

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- How would you try to involve the patient themselves?
- What if a family member wanted something different from what you thought was needed?

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

- Starts by trying to include the patient rather than talking past them: simple language, pictures, time, a familiar person in the room.
- Knows that the ability to decide is specific to the decision and can change, rather than a label somebody carries around.
- Brings in the people who know the patient well, while keeping the patient's own interests as the test that settles it.
- Weighs treating less, or differently, against the discomfort of a long procedure for someone who may find it frightening.
- Says plainly that a student or a new dentist would take senior advice on a decision of this size.

## NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

No legal knowledge is expected and nobody should lose a mark for not naming an Act. Mark whether they keep the patient in view as a person with a preference, and whether they know a family's wishes are not automatically the deciding factor.

## MARK ALL FOUR DOMAINS

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## DENTISTRY AND THE PUBLIC

## Who else works in a dental practice besides the dentist, and why does having that mix of people matter to patients?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What can a hygienist or a therapist do that frees up a dentist's time?
- What would go wrong in a practice where nobody talked to each other?

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

- Names real roles and what they do: nurse, hygienist, therapist, technician, receptionist, practice manager.
- Understands the point of the mix, which is that work goes to whoever is trained for it rather than all of it to one pair of hands.
- Values the people a patient meets first, including whoever answers the telephone to somebody in pain.
- Sees the dentist as a member of a team carrying a particular responsibility, not as the only one who matters.
- Gives an example, from a practice or any other workplace, of a handover that went well or badly.

### NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

This rewards curiosity rather than access. A student who has never stood behind a reception desk can still have asked who made their own retainer. Listen for respect for the whole team, not for accurate job titles.

### MARK ALL FOUR DOMAINS

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## COMMUNICATION ROLE PLAY

**A friend on placement with you made a joke about a patient's teeth in front of others. Speak to them about it now.**

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What would you do if they made the same joke again next week?
- Does it change anything if a nurse heard it too?

## BRIEF FOR THE PERSON PLAYING THE PART

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Your part        | You are the candidate's friend and you think the joke was harmless, because the patient was out of earshot. Underneath you are embarrassed, and you cover that with more jokes. If the candidate is specific and not preachy, you take it seriously. |
| Open with        | Oh come on, nobody heard. You have gone very serious lately.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| If handled well  | Go quiet, admit the nurse probably heard it as well, and say you will apologise.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| If handled badly | Laugh it off and accuse them of showing off. Never hostile, just dismissive.                                                                                                                                                                         |

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

- Raises it directly rather than hoping somebody else will.
- Describes what was said and its effect, instead of labelling the friend.
- Leaves room for the friend to reply without turning it into a trial.
- Is clear about where the line sits, and says what should happen next.

## NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Two run this station: one marks, one plays the friend from the brief. Mark the conversation, not whether the friend gives in.

## MARK ALL FOUR DOMAINS

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## DATA AND PROBLEM SOLVING

**This table compares four dentists in one practice. What does it tell you, and what would you be careful about concluding?**

FOUR DENTISTS IN ONE PRACTICE, ONE WEEK, PATIENTS SEEN AND TREATMENTS COMPLETED

| Dentist | Patients per day | Treatments done | Returned early |
|---------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| W       | 18               | 44              | 3              |
| X       | 24               | 61              | 11             |
| Y       | 12               | 38              | 1              |
| Z       | 20               | 50              | 6              |

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

- Which of the four would you want as your own dentist, and why?
- What would change your mind about the busiest one?

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

- Reads all three columns together rather than crowning whoever saw the most people.
- Spots that the busiest dentist also has the most patients coming back early, and treats that as a question rather than a verdict.
- Considers what the table cannot show, including how complicated each patient was and who takes the emergencies.
- Notices that the slowest dentist might be seeing the hardest cases, or might be a new graduate still learning.
- Says what they would rather have measured, such as how the work was holding up a year later.

## NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Print this station page so the candidate can see the table. Mark whether they resist the obvious ranking and notice that speed and quality are being set against each other here.

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## PERSONAL INSIGHT

**A dentist can spend most of a working life in one room, at one chair, doing a fairly small range of procedures. How do you think you would cope with that?**

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What do you do now that is repetitive, and how do you keep it from going stale?
- What would you do to stay interested twenty years in?

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

- Takes the question seriously instead of insisting it would never bother them.
- Draws on something they already repeat, whether that is training, practising an instrument or a shift job.
- Finds the variety where it actually sits, which is in the people rather than in the procedures.
- Has a plan for staying sharp, such as learning a new technique or teaching somebody else.
- Knows the physical side too: the same posture and the same small movements, for years on end.

## NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Candidates often hear this as a trap and deny the premise. It is not a trap. The strongest answers accept the repetition and say honestly what would carry them through it.

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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

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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.

**How do you think  
dentistry will have  
changed in twenty  
years, and  
knowing that, why  
do you still want  
to do it?**

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

**From any workplace you have spent time in, what did you learn about the business side of running it, and why would that matter in a dental practice?**

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

**An adult with a learning disability needs several teeth treated and cannot make the decision on their own. How would you approach it, and who should be involved?**

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

# Who else works in a dental practice besides the dentist, and why does having that mix of people matter to patients?

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