

Dentistry mock interview

A ninth seven station MMI circuit for dentistry applicants, built around craft, cost and the standards a profession holds itself to, and no interviewer needs to be a dentist.

MOCK INTERVIEW 9 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

Dentistry is both a practical craft and a relationship with a patient. Which of the two pulls you more, and what does that say about the sort of dentist you would be?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What would you lose if the job were only the half you chose?
- Where have you tested the half you chose?

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

- Actually chooses, instead of insisting both matter equally and leaving the question unanswered.
- Backs the choice with something they have done, not with what they imagine it would feel like.
- Respects the half they did not choose, and can say what it contributes to the work.
- Draws a fair conclusion about themselves from the choice, without overclaiming.
- Knows that a dentist who enjoys only one half will still be doing both of them all day.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Either answer can earn full marks, and so can a genuinely reasoned refusal to split them. What cannot is a candidate who dodges the choice because they are trying to guess which one you want 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

WORK EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTION

Tell us about something you saw in a workplace that you did not understand at the time. What did you do to find out what was going on?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Who did you ask, and how did you pick your moment?
- What did you get wrong in your first guess?

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

- Admits to not understanding, which is the point of the station, rather than smoothing it into something they knew all along.
- Describes curiosity in action: asking afterwards, reading it up, watching again, checking with somebody who knew.
- Shows judgement about when to ask, particularly with a patient or a customer standing there.
- Says what they actually learned, including the part where their first assumption turned out to be wrong.
- Comes out of it with a habit rather than with a single fact.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Any workplace answers this. A student who asked a pharmacist why one prescription took longer than another is doing exactly what a student on a dental placement would do. Mark the curiosity and the judgement about timing.

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 patient needs a tooth restored. The longer lasting option is private and beyond what they can pay, and the option available to them may not last as long. What do you say to them?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- How would you make sure they were not just agreeing with whatever you suggested?
- What if they asked you straight out what you would choose for your own mother?

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

- Explains both options honestly, including how long each is likely to last and what happens when one of them fails.
- Does not steer the patient by leaving out the cheaper option or by overselling the expensive one.
- Notices the power sitting in the room, and gives the patient room to say no without embarrassment.
- Keeps the decision with the patient while still giving a straight answer when they are asked for one.
- Sees that the dentist's own income is part of this conversation, and says so without cynicism.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

This is the ethics station most likely to be answered with a slogan about putting patients first. Push for the actual words they would use. Mark whether cost is treated as a real constraint rather than an awkwardness to be skipped.

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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

DENTISTRY AND THE PUBLIC

Dentists are on a register and can be taken off it. What do you think a regulator is for, and why should behaviour outside work ever count?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Where would you draw the line on a dentist's private life?
- Who is a regulator actually protecting?

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

- Explains the purpose in terms of the public rather than of punishment, since a patient cannot check a dentist's competence for themselves.
- Connects registration to trust, and to the fact that people open their mouths to a stranger holding a drill.
- Argues the outside work case rather than asserting it, using something like dishonesty or violence as the example.
- Draws a reasonable line, and admits that the line is genuinely arguable.
- Applies it to themselves, including what they are putting online now.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Nobody is expected to name the regulator or quote its standards, and no marks hang on getting the name right. Mark whether they can explain why a profession polices itself and who that policing is for.

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COMMUNICATION ROLE PLAY

Someone in your group project has missed two deadlines and stopped replying. The work is due Friday. Speak to them now.

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What would you do if they missed Friday as well?
- Would you tell the teacher, and when?

BRIEF FOR THE PERSON PLAYING THE PART

Your part	You are in the candidate's group. Your grandmother has been in hospital and you have told nobody, so you went silent instead of asking for help. You are defensive at first. If the candidate asks how you are before asking about the work, you tell them.
Open with	I know what this is about. I said I would do it, did I not?
If handled well	Explain what has been happening at home, and agree a smaller piece you can finish by Thursday.
If handled badly	Go flat, agree to everything without meaning it, and end the conversation early.

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

- Opens by asking rather than accusing, and gives them room to explain.
- Is honest about the effect on everybody else's work.
- Separates what happened from whether they still trust them.
- Leaves with a concrete plan and a time to check in.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Two run this station: one marks, one plays the teammate from the brief. Mark how they open the conversation and whether they stay curious.

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DATA AND PROBLEM SOLVING

This table shows children admitted to hospital to have teeth taken out. What stands out, and what would you ask next?

CHILDREN ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL FOR TOOTH EXTRACTION, ONE REGION, ONE YEAR

Age band	Children admitted	Admissions per 1,000 children
0 to 4	310	4
5 to 9	1,420	17
10 to 14	640	8
15 to 17	180	3

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

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Why might the youngest band be the lowest here?
- What would you want to compare this against?

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

- Reads the rate column as well as the count, and sees why the two say different things.
- Fixes on the five to nine band and asks what is happening to those children's teeth in the years before it.
- Offers several reasons rather than one cause: diet, when children first see a dentist, fear, getting an appointment at all.
- Understands that a hospital admission means a general anaesthetic, so none of these are small events.
- Asks a next question that could actually be answered, such as how many had ever been seen before.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Print this station page so the candidate can see the table. Mark whether they use both columns rather than one, and whether they realise almost all of this is preventable.

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PERSONAL INSIGHT

What do you do to settle yourself before something that has to be done exactly right, and how do you know that it works?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What does it feel like when it has not worked?
- What do you do in the moment you notice your hands are shaking?

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

- Describes something they genuinely do, with enough detail that it is a practice rather than a wish.
- Says where they use it, whether that is an exam, a performance, a race or a driving test.
- Has some evidence that it helps, even if that is only their own before and after.
- Knows what they are like when it fails, and has something to do next instead of simply panicking.
- Sees why a dentist needs this at four in the afternoon as much as at nine in the morning.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

This is not a wellbeing question, and vague answers about music and sleep are thin. Mark whether they can describe a routine they actually use in the ten minutes before something matters.

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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.

Dentistry is both a practical craft and a relationship with a patient. Which of the two pulls you more, and what does that say about the sort of dentist you would be?

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

Tell us about something you saw in a workplace that you did not understand at the time. What did you do to find out what was going on?

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