

Veterinary medicine mock interview

A fifth circuit, about what the work costs, to pay for and to do.

MOCK INTERVIEW 5 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 the work involves beyond animals: early starts, hard graft, money and death.

- 1 Loves animals, and has looked no further.
- 4 Personal, tested, honest about the hard parts.

C Communication

Explains and listens well to an owner or farmer who is worried, rushed or short of money.

- 1 Speaks only about the animal.
- 4 Clear and kind, and hears what is unsaid.

R Reflection and self awareness

Learns from experience rather than listing it, and knows how they react when it is hard.

- 1 Lists the experience, learns nothing.
- 4 Says what changed, and what still needs work.

V Professional values and ethics

Holds animal welfare, the owner's circumstances and public health together.

- 1 Picks one side, ignores who else it hits.
- 4 Weighs welfare against what is possible.

MOTIVATION FOR VETERINARY MEDICINE

What would make you regret choosing this career?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- How likely do you think that is, and what have you done to find out?
- What would you do if it happened five years after you qualified?

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

- Names something real and specific rather than giving a safe non-answer.
- Shows they have looked at the profession as a job with conditions, not only as a calling.
- Says how they have tested that risk, through placements, reading or talking to vets.
- Can imagine changing direction without treating it as a failure, which is a sign of a settled choice rather than a shaky one.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Some students hear this as a trap and insist they could never regret it. Reassure them that there is no wrong answer, and mark whether they can look honestly at the parts of the job that make people leave it.

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 the dulllest or coldest job you were given on a placement or at work. What did you take from it?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Did anybody notice how you did it, and does that matter?
- What would you have missed if you had not been doing it?

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

- A specific task described honestly, whether that is mucking out, scrubbing, counting stock or standing in the rain.
- Does not dress it up as fascinating, and does not sneer at it either.
- Notices what could only be learned from being there: the routine, the animals, the people, the shape of a bad day.
- Understands most of any job looks like this, and says why they are content with that.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Kennels, stables, farms, shops and rescue centres all count, and no veterinary practice is needed. The student who says the job was boring and then tells you exactly what they saw while doing it is the one to mark highly.

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

You raise a welfare concern about a client's yard and a more senior colleague waves it away. What are the issues, and what would you do?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What if the colleague says you have misread it because you are new?
- How would you raise it again without it turning into a row?

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

- Keeps the animals in view while accepting the colleague may know something they do not.
- Starts proportionately, by asking what the colleague saw, before escalating anything.
- Knows that being new is a reason to check rather than a reason to drop it.
- Has a next step if it is still wrong, such as the practice principal, a written record, or a welfare organisation.
- Separates the disagreement from the person, and does not turn it into a judgement of their character.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Handle this soberly: it is about speaking up, not about accusing anybody. Mark whether the student can hold a concern politely and persistently, and whether they know the difference between checking and reporting.

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

THE PROFESSION AND THE PUBLIC

Veterinary care is expensive. What does that mean for who gets to keep an animal at all, and is it a problem anybody should be trying to fix?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Who do you think is affected most by that, and in what way?
- Whose responsibility is it to do something about it?

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

- Understands where the cost comes from: staff, equipment, medicines, out of hours cover, and a practice that has to pay for itself.
- Sees the consequence honestly, including people on low incomes delaying care or going without an animal at all.
- Knows charities, insurance and payment plans exist, and that none of them solves the whole thing.
- Weighs the good that animals do for people against the risk of an animal whose care cannot be paid for.
- Reaches a view without blaming either owners or vets for the situation they are in.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

There is no settled answer to this and none is expected. Mark whether the student can discuss money and animals in the same breath without becoming either sentimental or cold.

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COMMUNICATION ROLE PLAY

You volunteer at a rescue centre. Another volunteer has been handling the animals roughly. Speak to them now.

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- What would you do if nothing changed the following week?
- Would you tell anyone else, and when?

BRIEF FOR THE PERSON PLAYING THE PART

Your part	You volunteer at the rescue centre and have been there far longer than the candidate. You are rushed, short handed and tired, and you think you are simply being quick. You are hurt rather than angry, and you soften if they are fair about what they saw.
Open with	If you had forty kennels to do before four o'clock you would be quick too.
If handled well	Admit you have been rushing, and agree to say something about being short handed.
If handled badly	Say they have been here five minutes and are already an expert, then walk off.

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

- Raises it directly and early, rather than hinting at it.
- Describes what they saw, without labelling the person cruel.
- Asks what is going on for them before deciding what it is.
- Is clear it has to change, and says what happens if it does not.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

One person marks, one plays the volunteer from the brief. Mark whether the concern survives the other person being upset by it.

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DATA AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Look at the table. What does it suggest is happening at this centre, and what would you want to know before saying so?

ANIMALS TAKEN IN, REHOMED AND RETURNED AT ONE RESCUE CENTRE

Year	Taken in	Rehomed	Returned
Year 1	310	280	22
Year 2	365	301	34
Year 3	430	342	58
Year 4	512	388	79

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

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- Are more animals coming back, or simply more animals going out?
- What would you want to see 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 years in order and describes the trend before trying to explain it.
- Notices that both the animals taken in and the animals returned are rising year on year.
- Turns returns into a share of the animals rehomed, rather than comparing raw counts across different years.
- Offers more than one explanation, such as cost, rented housing rules, or simply a bigger centre.
- Names what the table does not show, including how long animals stayed and how many were turned away.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

Print this station page so the candidate can see the table. Watch for the student who turns the counts into a proportion without being prompted, which is the step this station is looking for.

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PERSONAL INSIGHT

When a week has gone badly, what do you actually do to look after yourself?

IF THEY STALL OR FINISH EARLY, YOU MAY ASK

- When did you last do that, and did it work?
- Who would notice if you stopped doing it?

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

- Describes things they really do, in enough detail to be believable, rather than things they know they ought to do.
- Includes at least one thing that involves another person, not only time on their own.
- Honest about what they are not good at, such as saying yes to too much or not sleeping.
- Knows the difference between recovering and avoiding, and can say which is which for them.
- Connects it to a job where bad weeks are normal rather than exceptional.

NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEWER

This is the station where rehearsed answers show, so ask the first follow up every time. If a student discloses something about their own health, thank them, do not probe, and make sure staff are available afterwards.

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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 vet to interview

You are not judging veterinary knowledge. You are judging whether a seventeen year old can think out loud, listen, reflect honestly and hold the animal, the owner and the cost in mind at the same time. 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 make you regret choosing this career?

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

**Tell us about the
dullest or coldest
job you were given
on a placement or
at work. What did
you take from it?**

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

**You raise a
welfare concern
about a client's
yard and a more
senior colleague
waves it away.
What are the
issues, and what
would you do?**

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

Veterinary care is expensive. What does that mean for who gets to keep an animal at all, and is it a problem anybody should be trying to fix?

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

**You volunteer at a
rescue centre.
Another volunteer
has been handling
the animals
roughly. Speak to
them now.**

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

**Look at the table.
What does it
suggest is
happening at this
centre, and what
would you want to
know before
saying so?**

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

When a week has gone badly, what do you actually do to look after yourself?

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