



## Top Interview Tips

### Preparing for the Interview

- Before interview invitations are released, prepare a calendar of when they are offered for each desired program. This way, you will know when to accept an interview, as offers (for most specialties) are released at different times.
- Reflect on your personal interests, skills, qualifications, experiences (research, volunteer, clinical and personal) and goals; this will enhance your ability to communicate how and why you would be a good fit for the position.
- Do your research on the program so that you can better respond to questions asked of you in the interview, and are able to clarify anything that you do not understand.
- Practice a variety of questions prior to the interview either on your own, with a friend or online.
  - Prepare a clinical and nonclinical story for each of the CanMEDS roles. Prepare examples of when you did it well and when you did it poorly. Speak to what you've learned from the latter regardless of whether they ask for.
  - If you kept an anonymized reflective journal throughout medical school, this is a good time to review it.
  - Prepare your questions about the program's structure, further training opportunities, research opportunities, or opportunities to learn specific skills.
  - Review CaRMS guidelines on inappropriate interview questions. [www.carms.ca/match/r-1-main-residency-match/faculty-ugme/file-review-interviews-r1-ug/interview-guidelines-r1-ug/](http://www.carms.ca/match/r-1-main-residency-match/faculty-ugme/file-review-interviews-r1-ug/interview-guidelines-r1-ug/)
  - Book a Mock Interview with the Office of Career Advising and Mentorship
- Pay attention to personal grooming too.
- Be sure to turn your cell phone off prior to beginning the interview.

### Virtual Interview Best Practices

- Ensure your technology is up to date and that your device has clear video and good sound quality.
- Find a private location where you won't have to worry about distractions. Consider a neutral background without clutter, but add some personality, such as a piece of art or a plant.
- Dress professionally head-to-toe.
- Maintain eye contact with the camera.
- Sit up at a table and avoid reclining on a couch or a bed. Avoid swiveling in your chair or consider a fixed chair.
- Keep track of what platforms the interviews will be delivered on. Make a plan for what you will do if you experience technological issues.
- Download and familiarize yourself with the platform the day before the interview if you haven't used it recently.

### During the Interview

- Take a deep breath to focus and provide clear, concise answers. Remember the interviewer was in your position at one point as well!
- Consider that the interviewer may or may not have your CV in front of them, so don't assume they know what is on it.
- Don't be afraid to ask the interviewer to repeat a question or ask if you can come back to a question if you need additional time to prepare your answer.
- Avoid repeating examples. Preparing several clinical and non-clinical examples as well as positive and negative examples for each CanMEDS role helps to prevent this.
- If you are asked about your weaknesses, turn them into a potential strength or explain how you have learned to compensate for that weakness; think of a weakness as a challenge to overcome by identifying how you are specifically working on it.
- If you are asked about a failure, speak to what you learned from it and how you apply that learning in other situations.

## Interviewing 101

The purpose of the interview is to determine whether you are right for the residency position and whether the program is right for you. Think of the interview as a conversation between you and the selection committee where you are both learning about each other.

### Interview Types

- **Basic/Traditional** – typically include open-ended questions designed to get to know you better
- **Behavioural Based** – builds upon the premise that future performance is best predicted by past behaviour; questions focus on real-life experiences and actions

One technique for formulating strong answers to behavioural questions is the **STAR** technique.

**SITUATION** | Provide a brief overview of the situation

**TASK** | Outline the specific task or resp asked to accomplish

**ACTION** | Explain the action or activities you took and why

**RESULT** | Describe the positive result or outcome of your actions; if you are asked about a negative situation, indicate what you learned and/or how you would act differently

- **Case Style** – allows interviewers to see how you respond to situations that may arise, especially those that require problem solving; can be done individually or in a group setting; critical thinking, creativity and presentation are the most important skills to showcase.

If asked clinical questions, take a stepwise SOAP approach (Subjective, Objective, Assessment, Plan). Programs are looking for your ability to approach clinical scenarios.

- **MMI** - involves interviewees rotating through a series of stations each focusing on standardized questions, which could be across the general domains including behavioural, situational, fit for discipline, and clinical questions.
- **Reception/Dining/Social** – one or more candidates and one or more members of the selection committee; conducted over a meal or beverages. This forum is an opportunity to meet fellow applicants, the staff, the residents, and the program directors in a more casual environment.

*"This social is your opportunity to get the inside view of the program if you weren't able to do an elective. Talk to the residents about what they like, what they don't like and what is changing. Observe how they interact – dynamics will range from 'happy family' to 'we do our own thing' and chances are that you'll fit in with one of those better than the other. Talk to them about their fellowship plans."* - Dr. Brent Thoma, EM PD, <https://canadiem.org>

- **Group** – groups of candidates are placed together during the interview process and are observed with regards to their ability to network and stand out from other applicants. This may include activities like bowling.

- **Interview Tour** – Pay close attention to the facilities and be sure to ask questions about the city, as this may be your chosen location!

Resource: Check out [canadiem.org/carms-guide/](http://canadiem.org/carms-guide/) for more tips by Dr. Brent Thoma

## Interview Structure

### Introduction

- Establish a positive rapport with the interviewers within the first few minutes; be friendly, smile, make eye contact and be sure you have a firm handshake
- Interviews often begin with a few minutes of small talk to help break the ice
- Remember the PAWS acronym when answering the “Tell me about yourself” question  
**P** – Personal **A** – Academics **W** – Work experience **S** – Skills

### Overview

- Interviewers will often provide some structure for the interview process; show your interest by listening attentively

### Questions

- The length of this section of the interview can vary quite a bit and may include a variety of different types of questions to assess your competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities) and behaviours or attitude towards the position

### Closing

- Interviewers will typically explain next steps in the application process and ask you if you have any questions for them; have some prepared from the tour, social, online program description and/or your clinical experience at that site
- If you have a concern with your application (Ex. multiple electives in another discipline, academic or professionalism concerns), be upfront about disclosing that during the interview. If you haven't yet discussed it, the “anything else to share?” question is an opportunity to do so.

## Inappropriate Questions

- Develop a strategy to deal with inappropriate questions such as those that pertain to your nationality, age, religious affiliation, political views, gender, spousal employment, pregnancy plans, how highly you will rank the program etc.  
Your options are:
  - Answer the question by addressing what you believe are the underlying concerns
  - Ask for clarification on how the information being asked relates to the position
  - Answer the question, but remember that you are providing information that is not relevant and may cost you the position if you provide what is deemed to be an incorrect answer
  - Refuse to answer the question (ex. “I have read the CaRMS list of inappropriate questions and this question is on that list”); this may harm your chances of getting the position
- Polishing your communication skills is essential to effectively showcase your skills and abilities during the interview; using industry-specific language is helpful

## Social Media

- Review all of your social media accounts and privacy settings and remove anything that reflects poorly on you or others even if you are private.
- Consider creating a LinkedIn profile which allows you to upload your CV content and connect with other healthcare professionals locally and around the world
- For tips on how to build a professional student LinkedIn profile, check out [Leverage LinkedIn students.usask.ca/articles/linkedin.php](https://students.usask.ca/articles/linkedin.php)

# Checklist

## Preparing for the Interview

- ☐ Practice articulating your values, knowledge, skills, abilities and interests as they relate to the position and program you are interviewing with.
- ☐ Conduct an adequate amount of research on the prospective program.
- ☐ Prepare knowledgeable and insightful questions to ask during the interview.
- ☐ Familiarize yourself with the various interview formats.
- ☐ Familiarize yourself with the STAR technique to prepare yourself for a behavioural based interview.
- ☐ Review possible questions interviewers might ask and prepare responses to them.
- ☐ Know what strategy you will use to approach inappropriate questions.
- ☐ Make sure the outfit you've chosen to wear is clean and well pressed.
- ☐ Download and familiarize yourself with the platform.
- ☐ Practice interview questions, including participating in a mock interview with our office.

## During the Interview

- ☐ Log in at least 10–15 minutes early to ensure your technology is working properly and you're ready to begin on time.
- ☐ Be friendly and courteous from the beginning of the interview.
- ☐ Address the selection committee by their formal names.
- ☐ Answer the interviewers' questions using the STAR format when appropriate.
- ☐ Refer to the positions or program as it relates to your background, skills, values, knowledge, or abilities.
- ☐ Sit up straight and speak clearly.

## Following the Interview

- ☐ Take notes about the site, your performance, and their questions.

### Additional resources can be found at

<https://medicine.usask.ca/students/undergraduate/career.php#SpeakwithaCareerAdvisor>

[www.cma.ca/resources-medical-students/carms-prep](http://www.cma.ca/resources-medical-students/carms-prep)

[www.aamc.org/cim/prepare-residency/interview-prep](http://www.aamc.org/cim/prepare-residency/interview-prep)

[www.cfms.org/what-we-do/education/residency-interview](http://www.cfms.org/what-we-do/education/residency-interview)

## A collaboration between:

### CAREER SERVICES

G50, Lower Marquis Hall (below the bookstore)  
97 Campus Drive  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, SK, Canada S7N 4L3

### OFFICE OF CAREER ADVISING AND MENTORSHIP

College of Medicine  
5B34 – 107 Wiggins Road  
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5E5  
[med.careeradvising@usask.ca](mailto:med.careeradvising@usask.ca)  
Tel: (306) 966-7275

**medicine.usask.ca**



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

**College of Medicine**

OFFICE OF CAREER ADVISING AND MENTORSHIP  
MEDICINE.USASK.CA