



## 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.
  - 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 and a group mock interview with the Saskatchewan Medical Association [www.sma.sk.ca/](http://www.sma.sk.ca/)
- Pay attention to personal grooming too.
- Be sure to turn your cell phone off prior to walking into the interview.

### 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!
- 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.
- 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.

### After the Interview

- Reflect on how you felt the interview went and identify areas where you feel you could improve.
- Make notes about the selection committee, the facility, and the city, so that you may come back to your reflections before submitting your Rank Order List to CaRMS.
- Consider writing down the questions that the interviewer asked so that you can practice your answers for the future.

### 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.
- Ensure you have adequate internet speed.
- Dress professionally head-to-toe.
- Maintain eye contact with the camera.
- 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.

## 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. Most residency position interviews are either held one-on-one, in a panel setting with multiple interviewers and/or in a tour or social setting.

### 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** - involve 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. [www.carms.ca/match/msm/faculties-postgraduate/interviews-msm-pg/interview-guidelines-msm-pg/](http://www.carms.ca/match/msm/faculties-postgraduate/interviews-msm-pg/interview-guidelines-msm-pg/)

## 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
- 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](http://Leverage LinkedIn students.usask.ca/articles/linkedin.php)

# Checklist



## Preparing for the Interview

- Can you comfortably articulate your values, knowledge, skills, abilities and interests as they relate to the position and program you are interviewing with?
- Did you perform an adequate amount of research on the prospective program?
- Have you prepared knowledgeable and insightful questions to ask at the interview?
- Did you familiarize yourself with the various interview formats?
- In order to prepare yourself for a behavioural based interview, did you familiarize yourself with the STAR technique?
- Have you reviewed possible questions interviewers might ask and prepare responses to them?
- Do you know what strategy you will use to approach inappropriate questions?
- Is the outfit you've chosen to wear clean and well pressed? Did you shine your shoes?
- If virtual, did you download and familiarize yourself with the platform?
- Have you practiced interview questions, including during a Mock Interview with our office?

## During the Interview

- Did you arrive at least 10-15 minutes early for your interview?
- Were you friendly and courteous, even from the moment you arrived?
- Did you address the selection committee by their formal names?
- Did you answer the interviewers' questions using the STAR format when appropriate?
- Did you reference the positions or program as it relates to your background, skills, values, knowledge or abilities?
- Did you sit up straight and speak clearly?
- Did you shake the interviewer's hand with a firm grip while making eye contact?

## Following the Interview

- Did you take notes about the site, your performance, and their questions?

Additional resources can be found at

[medicine.usask.ca/students/undergraduate/mentoring.php#CareerAdvisingAppointmentsandResources](http://medicine.usask.ca/students/undergraduate/mentoring.php#CareerAdvisingAppointmentsandResources)

[medicine.usask.ca/students/undergraduate/career.php](http://medicine.usask.ca/students/undergraduate/career.php)

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

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

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

A collaboration between:

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