

Recommendations and Key Takeaways for Virtual/Web-Based Interviewing for the Residency Application Process

Setting up an efficient online interview scheduling system

“Recently, online scheduling services, such as Interview Broker and Thalamus, have provided a streamlined, web-based solution to this problem. Similar to the scheduling of an airline ticket online, an online interview portal allows applicants to independently see up-to-date interview availability, select their preferred date, and make wait-list requests for specific days.”

After setting up a scheduling system, pre-notifying applicants when online interview scheduling goes live requires minimal additional effort or technical expertise for residency programs and could notably reduce the stress and distraction associated with scheduling interviews.

Some recommended tips:

- Send announcements when students are less likely to be engaged in academic or clinical duties, such as the late afternoon or early evening
- Send communications after 5 PM Pacific Time will help ensure that the majority of applicants are not penalized as a result of their time zone

Benefits: Ultimately, streamlining the scheduling process with a trusted service would improve applicants’ experience and reduce costs for programs

Providing digital program materials

Making this packet available to interviewees in digital form in advance of the interview day would be easy to implement, as the programs already have the documents in digital form prior to printing.

Digital program materials would include:

- Information on current residents
- Faculty bios
- Research programs
- Surrounding community
- Clinical schedule, etc.

This would allow applicants to learn more about a program’s schedule, research opportunities, curriculum, and culture. It would also help interviewees when creating their ranking lists.

This can be further supplemented with interactive tools like:

- Video clips of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act–compliant conferences and didactic sessions
- A virtual tour video of the campus that includes commentary by the chief residents
- Recorded video presentations normally given by faculty/staff during an on-site interview

These supplemental materials would help remedy the problem of the interviewee unable to scope out the area and communicate with faculty or residents that a traditional interview would offer

Videoconferencing Interviews

Understanding how to use web-based videoconferencing (WBVC) in virtual interviews with traditional interviews

Skype versus traditional on-site interviews showed that applicants and faculty favored using WBVC as an adjunct to on-site interviews. One study did confirm that, as expected, participants consider the traditional on-site interview to be more effective than virtual ones, but when used as a screening tool to determine smaller pool of applicants to interview in person, it is very beneficial.

Recommended process for virtual interviews

Before interview:

Interviewers should compile a list of preferred questions - draft questions should be reviewed and consolidated to avoid duplication and ensure that highest-impact questions are asked. Each interviewer on a panel could ask 1 to 2 questions and 1 standardized question.

- Ensure that the backdrop is neutral (no distractions) with appropriate lighting, and camera angled away from any doors or windows
- Notify friends, family, and coworkers about the videoconference interview
- Disconnect or silence the office or home telephone, cell phone, and pager
- Decrease the speaker volume on the computer
- Use an Ethernet connection
- Reduce interruptions and unnecessary background noise (eg, vacuuming, conversations, dog barking)

A solution for possible interruptions to connection or computer difficulties is to have someone from IT available during the interview slots so there is immediate help and/or take precautions with prior technology training

- Provide written instructions for establishing a software account a month prior to the web-based interview
- Conduct a test call with the program coordinator to verify a successful connection during the preceding week
- Offer faculty members who were unfamiliar with the technology a five-minute tutorial on the day of the interview

During interview:

- Close all unnecessary programs on the computer (to prevent slow connection)
- Plug portable computers into a power source and verify that the profile picture displayed by the video software is appropriate
- Dress professionally and angle the camera slightly downward
- Look into the camera when responding to questions to improve the perception of eye contact
- Avoid inadvertently watching yourself when speaking
- Sit still, lean forward, and keep hands still
- Notes are acceptable, but ensure that they are clearly visible so that the sound of paper-shuffling is limited

After interview:

- If connection problems occur, inform the interviewer or interviewee early in the conversation and allow them to hang up and reconnect
- Occasionally touch base with the interviewer or interviewee to ensure any cut-offs or lags are acknowledged

- If the interview had technical difficulties, the interviewee can ask whether a protocol for a repeat interview is available
- **Feedback surveys** are recommended to give to interviewees in order to gauge how prepared the program is with the interview process and what should be fixed or kept in the future

More details on virtual interviews

Example experiences of incorporating WBVCs into virtual interviews

1st study:

Each candidate was interviewed by a panel (the program director, the associate program director, and 2 chief residents) for a total of 30 minutes. An option was given for scheduling interviews on 1 of 3 half-days, which included at least 1 morning and 1 afternoon option to accommodate time zone differences. Ultimately, 2 to 3 candidates were interviewed on each half-day. The panel remained in the room for the entire 30-minute videoconference.

Study found recommendations for future virtual interviews:

- Resident-made FAQ sheet
- Tip sheet for video interviews

<https://www.jgme.org/doi/pdf/10.4300/JGME-D-14-00507.1>

2nd study:

The Skype interview (SI) involved a series of 3 sequential, 25-minute interviews with 2 interviewers per session. After the applicant's third interview, the interviewers met to determine whether to offer the individual a face-to-face interview. Post-interview surveys assessing the logistics of using Skype, the interview itself, and the overall experience of using SI were sent via e-mail to all SI applicants (provided as online supplemental material).

Overall: sequential interviews with multiple interviewers per session appeared to be the best approach to virtual interviews.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3771184/>

Key points taken from AAMC standardized video interview (SVI)

Interviewers should determine the following before setting forth a final plan:

- Live or asynchronous interview (real-time vs recorded, “on-demand” responses)
- Video interview platform
- Number of interviewers
- Interview length
- Types of interview questions
- Competencies or skills assessed during the interview.

The AAMC SVI tests interpersonal communication (IC) and professionalism (P) in the following sub-competencies: Oral Communication, Emotional Intelligence, Teamwork and Leadership, Empathy and Altruism, Ethics, Cultural Competence, and Conscientiousness.

Interview asks 6 questions combined with situational, general, and behavioral questions:

- Behavioral: describe previous experiences that demonstrate your level of knowledge and skills with IC and P
- Situational: demonstrate your level of knowledge and skills with IC and P by describing what you should do in different hypothetical situations
- General: questions asking for the interviewee to broadly describe themselves
- [Sample](#) of questions involving IC and P

Actual format:

- Six questions are presented in text prompts, and the interviewee records an audio/video response which means there is no human interviewer
- Interviewee has up to 30 seconds to read and reflect on each written question and up to three minutes to record a response
- This is an example of an Asynchronous Virtual Interview (or on-demand interview); asked to respond to questions presented via text or prerecorded video - examples include Hire Vue and Kira Talent

https://www.aamc.org/system/files/2020-03/AAMC%20Virtual%20Interview%20Tips_03.19.2020.pdf
<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-residency/article/about-svi/>

Using multiple-mini interviews with a virtual interview setting (iMMI)

MMIs address behaviors relating to interpersonal skills, ethical reasoning and situational judgement. The reliability of the MMI is moderately high, ranging from 0.65 to 0.81, most commonly being 0.70 with eight to 10 questions. One study found no significant difference between iMMIs (internet-based) and in-person MMIs.

Study method:

- Once the interviewer had introduced themselves, they sent the opening scenario of the MMI question to the candidate through Skype
- The candidate was required to read aloud the first line of the scenario to ensure the correct scenario had been received
- On completion of the question, each interviewer moved to the next computer station and introduced themselves to the next candidate
- Candidates remained logged into Skype on the same laptop within the circuit

The iMMIs were conducted in circuits of nine questions, each lasting 7 minutes, with a 2-minute turnaround between questions. MMIs can include four to five prompts related to the question scenario that interviewers can use if the candidate does not canvass those responses spontaneously.

The scoring format requested interviewers to rate each candidate out of four for each of the five relevant attributes for each MMI question where four was excellent, three was good, two for satisfactory and one for not satisfactory; the interviewer summed their ratings to a numerical score out of 20. In addition, each candidate was given a global rating on their suitability for the medical program.

It was possible to conduct each circuit in the one location, albeit a large room with nine computer stations (one for each question) and two additional computers for administration and technical support.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/medu.12224>

“Online Matchmaking”: an approach to finding a good fit through a virtual process

Working in conjunction with an actual interview process, a one-on-one conversation with a practicing resident and a group tour video of the facility would be very beneficial:

- A 15-20-minute phone call between the applicant and resident in order to provide them with an opportunity to ask specific questions about residency in general, and any questions specific to the program
- After the one-on-one session, the video tour is conducted by the FM resident on his/her personal smartphone, and the group meeting format allows participants to see and talk with the resident host along with other student participants; using the smartphone’s front facing camera, a tour is conducted showing prospective applicants areas of interest.

Source: US Air Force Regional Hospital Family Medicine Residency, 96th Medical Group

General findings – advantages and disadvantages – with virtual interviewing

Advantages:

- Virtual interviewing was considered “easier logistically,” “cheaper,” “innovative appeal,” and “convenient”
- One study showed that 73% of interviewers (8 of 11) thought SI was a fair way to present residency to applicants
- Lower costs
- Saves time
- Interviewers are still able to assess communication skills with visual and verbal cues

Disadvantages:

- Voice delay and minor distractions, like lag, as technical difficulties with Skype
- Lack of physical contact, such as a handshake (interviewers tended to emphasize this loss more than applicants did)
- Applicants were more interested in the character of the individuals whom they would potentially be working with rather than information on the facility itself; a solution would be some method that will enable the applicant to converse with practicing faculty or residents
- Any disadvantages to virtual interviews will be in the technology and connection area, but these errors can be significantly reduced with proper training and preparedness

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3771184/>

Screening candidates in non-content-based areas (professionalism, interpersonal skills, etc.)

[CASPer exams](#): effectively screens for people skills by using an online situational judgement test and tests in 10 areas: collaboration, communication, empathy, equity, ethics, motivation, problem solving, professionalism, resilience, and self-awareness

- Already being used as a required exam for some medical schools in order to test for well-rounded program compatibility

Formulating questions to determine competency in areas of professionalism, motivation, diligence, interpersonal and communication skills, etc.:

- Identify requirements for PGY-1 position and determine 3-5 target competencies to ask about
- Develop behavioral questions for each competency and invite faculty to review draft questions for edits
- Document process on gathering questions

https://www.aamc.org/system/files/c/2/469536-best_practices_residency_program_interviews_09132016.pdf

How to ensure online interviewing will not disadvantage some groups

Many individuals may not have access to technology or quiet environments at suggested interview times so a few steps can be taken:

- Asynchronous interviews will help individuals who need to plan to access technology and resources prior to the interview, although it does eliminate benefits of a real-time interview; perhaps these can be last-minute resort options for individuals who need it
- Asynchronous interviews could work well with the ideas presented in the “Online Matchmaking” section where one-on-one sessions with residents and video tours of the facility could help the individual with the real-time personal communication aspect

The great benefits of virtual interviewing are that it helps economically disadvantaged groups with the elimination of costs of traveling to interviews and associated food/lodging, and it reduces the time taken away from education and personal areas that would have been dedicated to traveling

Additional journal articles used

<https://www.jgme.org/doi/pdf/10.4300/JGME-D-19-00080.1>

<https://www.ashp.org/-/media/assets/professional-development/residencies/docs/streamlining-residency-interview-process.ashx>

<https://www.jgme.org/doi/pdf/10.4300/JGME-D-15-00501.1>

<https://westjem.com/articles/feasibility-and-usability-of-tele-interview-for-medical-residency-interview.html>