

WSUSOM Virtual Interview Guide & Checklist for the Class of 2023

MChadwell, MD, FAAFP September 2022

The residency interview is a critical phase of trainee selection!

Goals for the Virtual Residency Interview:

1. To be fully prepared and physically comfortable throughout the entire interview to optimize performance
2. To minimize distractions and technical blunders and keep the interviewers attention on YOU!
3. To take full advantage of the opportunity and gather key information to inform your career decisions.

Key points:

- Acknowledge that this is new and uncharted territory for everyone
- Be patient with yourself
- Remain flexible
- Ask for help
- Practice and Prepare (this session/mock interviews)
- Expect technology mishaps and plan for them
- Realize that the Programs have had a lot more work on their front end to adjust to and deliver this new format

In general, what can you expect on interview days?

- Brief welcome and intro to the program via a live or video presentation – likely with other candidates in the group
- Breakout rooms for individual live interviews with PD/Faculty/Chief Resident – these will likely be 15-20 minutes each (max 30 minutes).
- Group gatherings (“couch conversations”) or team activities to allow for more casual interactions with faculty and residents
- “Holding Pen” or “Waiting Room” for additional interactions – remember, all are observable and part of the interview!
- Social Elements: Invites for Game Nights, etc.
- Hospital tour: May be pre-recorded marketing-type videos, could be resident conducted live at another time (i.e. resident walking around after visiting hours with cell phone)
- Some programs may employ a Standardized Video Interview approach in addition to the live interview: provide you with questions and recorded timed responses for later review.

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Pre-Interview:

- Check Time-Zone
- Check interview portal software used by that program
- Obtain contact information of interviewer(s) before or when starting in case you are disconnected
- Understand the interview format, agenda, and length (may be several hours!)
- You may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement by the program (to safeguard questions, etc.)
- Review Program marketing material sent in advance for familiarity and content
- Plan for quick snacks during breaks
- Dress fully! You may be asked to point out something in the room 😊
- Get plenty of rest the night before so that you can be fully engaged – no yawning! Remember basic manners.
- Arrive early to your own interview spot – time to use restroom, set-up your space (where will you take notes?)
- Alert your family/friends that you will be in interviews for the next 1-3 hours

Finding a Suitable Environment & Setting up your Space:

- Private (No coffee shops, parks, high-traffic areas in the house); is your car or closet ok?
- Quiet: Reduce and Eliminate Distractions (Pets, other people, noise, on-screen notifications, yourself)
- Neutral or Stage your background with a conversation starter to show your personality or a hobby; be open to rearranging furniture/desks!
- No virtual backgrounds! They can be distracting and make part of you invisible depending on your motion
- Check lighting – as natural as possible – be mindful of shifting sunlight/darkness from window/use blinds as needed. Majority of light source should be behind the camera, not you.
- Set up close to power outlet
- Have a stable chair – remain stationary - no swiveling, rocking, or falling off!
- Screen Position and Self-Awareness: sit at correct angle to the camera – your full face and shoulders should be visible in the screen – not too close-up, not too far away
- Place the laptop or webcam at eye level. May need to prop up with books, etc. Look directly into the camera rather than watching yourself speak- this requires some effort but optimizes eye contact.
- Angle camera slightly downward for a more flattering appearance and less shadows and be mindful of what is captured in the background. Be intentional about what is in view!
- Turn off Notifications and shut off cell phone!
- Headphones not recommended to optimize natural appearance & limit distractions

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- Have water/snacks nearby for breaks or if your throat is scratchy.
- Notepad and pen at hand – practice in advance to determine ideal place to take notes
- Have friendly and encouraging reminders set for yourself (speak slowly, breathe, smile, etc.)
- Minimize distracting personal behaviors such as fixing ones hair, over-adjusting glasses or jewelry, touching face, making noises (i.e. faint whistling or humming), over-dramatic hand gestures or facial expressions.
- You may also have a cheat sheet of important things you want to ask or convey (pivotal experiences/etc.
- Avoid using private chat function during group elements as they messages can easily be sent to everyone
- Learn how to take screen shots without the shutter sound during presentations to maintain engagement and limit note-taking
- Mute yourself when in a group setting to limit feedback
- Suspend your video feed if you absolutely need to engage in distracting behaviors (closing a window or door, speaking to someone in the background that is interrupting unexpectedly, etc.)
- Make sure you have sound and video on at beginning and OFF at end!

Tips for Demeanor & Body Language

Relax, deep breath

Appear ready and eager vs. anxious

Be patient

Professional Stance

Not too casual or uptight

Maintain an upright posture

Stay Focused and Calm

Smile 😊

Post Interview:

Send follow-up – immediate?

Expect increased offline contact from programs post interview to maintain engagement and be responsive!

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IT specifics: Do a "Test Run"

- ✓ Connectivity: Check your internet speed for the platform being used
- ✓ Download /Create free accounts with the most common platforms: Zoom/Google Meet/Teams/BlueJeans
- ✓ A long ethernet cable is preferred to optimize WIFI
- ✓ Check web cam, microphone, ring lights?
- ✓ Avoid using guest or public wireless service as these can time out or be of lower video quality
- ✓ Check to see who else may be using the internet at the same time as you as network quality may be diminished or unstable with multiple users.
- ✓ Check for glare from glasses
- ✓ Make sure the default name listed when you log in to the platform is not informal, someone else, or a distracting nickname
- ✓ Shrink and drag the platform software window to just below the laptop camera or webcam to facilitate direct eye contact

SOM Support in Progress: *from Bryant Hansen's awesome Technology Committee survey!*

USB webcams and microphones for students to rent from the library who lack funds to purchase one

Setting up dedicated virtual interview rooms at the med school that can be used for interview space with advance reservations/sign-ups

An "emergency contact" tech support number for students to call should the need arise right before or during an interview

Practice with a High Fidelity Interview Simulation: the Mock Interview!

September 8

September 15

September 29

October - date to be determined

~~~ We have every confidence in you ~~~