



# OHPSA CARMS INTERVIEW GUIDE

2020-2021 EDITION

**We're with you**

**Navigate. Elevate. Advocate.**

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## Welcome Message

Dear Students,

We hope you will find this Interview Guide helpful as you start to prepare for your residency interviews. As you all know for the 2021 application cycle, ALL interviews will be virtual. We have included some specific guidance on virtual interviewing in this guide which we hope will be useful for you. Please review the CaRMS program descriptions for details specific to the program you're applying to.

Please remember to take advantage of the opportunities we have made available to you for interview practice. You can an appointment with an OHPSA counsellor for interview prep, connect with your ACT leads for specific questions and don't forget to participate in the Mocks by Docs session during TTR which will take place on March 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Good luck on your interviews – we know you will shine!

We're with you,

The Career Advising Team

## Your Support System for CaRMS interviews

### OHPSA Staff - We're with You

	How to request an appointment
<a href="#">Dr. Tony Pignatiello</a> Associate Dean	<a href="mailto:ohpsa.admin@utoronto.ca">ohpsa.admin@utoronto.ca</a>
<a href="#">Dr. Laila Premji</a> Director, Career Advising System	
<a href="#">Colleen O'Connor</a> Career Counsellor	<a href="http://md.utoronto.ca/content/book-appointment">md.utoronto.ca/content/book-appointment</a> or <a href="mailto:ohpsa.reception@utoronto.ca">ohpsa.reception@utoronto.ca</a>
<a href="#">Lucky Kalsi</a> Career Counsellor	
<a href="#">Nellie Perret</a> Academic Coach	
<a href="#">Shayna Kulman-Lipsev</a> Manager of Counselling Services Personal Counsellor	
<a href="#">Joanne Leo</a> Personal Counsellor	
<a href="#">Carmen Bartolo</a> Personal Counsellor	
<a href="#">Carole Sandy</a> Personal Counsellor	
<a href="#">Carole Sandy</a> Personal Counsellor	

### Academy Career and Transition (ACT) Leads

	How to request an appointment
<a href="#">Dr. Maria Wolfs</a> FitzGerald Academy	<a href="mailto:dragana.markovic@unityhealth.to">dragana.markovic@unityhealth.to</a>
<a href="#">Dr. Penny Yin</a> Mississauga Academy of Medicine	<a href="mailto:mark.wlodarski@utoronto.ca">mark.wlodarski@utoronto.ca</a>
<a href="#">Dr. Yashi Yathindra</a> Peters-Boyd Academy	<a href="mailto:sonya.boston@sunnybrook.ca">sonya.boston@sunnybrook.ca</a>
<a href="#">Dr. Michelle Yee</a> Wightman-Berris Academy	<a href="mailto:nanci.sommerville@sinaihealth.ca">nanci.sommerville@sinaihealth.ca</a>
<a href="#">Dr. Natalie Clavel</a> Wightman-Berris Academy	<a href="mailto:shirlene.eliathamby@uhn.ca">shirlene.eliathamby@uhn.ca</a>

## Interview

The interview is an important part of the CaRMS process.

It is an opportunity for you:

- To communicate and highlight your relevant attributes, skills, interests, goals and how they link with the program
- To assess if the program focus, team, setting, etc. are the right fit for you and will meet your training needs/goals
- To gather information to help with your rank order list decision-making

Conversely, it is an opportunity for the program admissions committee:

- To assess if you are a good candidate and right fit for their program
- To determine if the program will meet your training needs/goals
- To gather information to help in their rank order list decision making

Words of  
Wisdom

This year all interviews will be virtual. Be familiar with your own equipment ahead of time, dress professionally as usual and be cognizant of what your background looks like. As you begin each interview, it may be a good idea to ask if the interviewer(s) can hear you ok ay and to ensure there are no sound issues. Also, if you're using a virtual background, ensure it's not distracting, and that your face projects well. Sometimes a neutral background and/or a blank wall works better - you should try different options ahead of time.

Adapted quotes from  
Dr. Cheryl Hunchak and  
Dr. John Foote

### Types of interviews

1. Traditional – questions are asked by a panel of interviewers or one-on-one.
2. Modified Personal Interview – successive interviews and each is assessed by different interviewers.
3. Multiple Mini Interview – many short independent assessments, typically through timed circuits, to obtain an aggregate score of the candidate's skills. For more information about the MMI, review the resources under the "Useful Links" section (page 14 below).



### MatchTips: Virtual Interviews – Tips from a Resident

This year, traditional interviews, MPIs and MMIs will all be conducted virtually. Here are some helpful tips from a resident who participated in virtual interviews.

- ❖ Position the Zoom box/window under your webcam so that it looks like you are looking right at the interviewers. You will have to make the box smaller, so their faces might be a tiny bit less clear - but it's important for them to feel you are making direct eye contact.
- ❖ Prep the lighting beforehand, to ensure no backlighting.
- ❖ Dress professionally from head to toe! Not just a nice top. It helps get you in the right mindset.
- ❖ Consider standing during the interview, which also helps you get into “presentation mode” when you need to be a bit more “high energy” for MMIs.
- ❖ Treat every MMI station as a brand-new interview. Smile and bring the same energy you do to every single one.
- ❖ Keep some snacks off camera, a drink of water, etc. for breaks during MMIs.
- ❖ Since you have the advantage of having the time in front of you, I would suggest you glance down at it discretely once in awhile – if you know the interview is only half an hour, make sure you don't ramble and use up all the time before they get a chance to ask you more questions.

## Interview Checklist

### Before the interview

#### Know what to expect

- Is the interview format live/synchronous vs. recorded/asynchronous?
- What platform is being used? Ensure you are comfortable with the functions.
- What is the interview style? 1-on-1? Panel? MMI? MPI?
- How long will the interview be? Think about your pacing.
- Who should you contact if there are technical glitches that arise?

#### Know yourself

- What do you really want your interviewer to know about you?
- What is your narrative? How did you get to the place you are now?
- What are your major strengths and weaknesses? Think about this one thoughtfully and avoid being cliché or generic.
- What qualities make you particularly suitable for the specialty?

#### Know the program

- What are the unique aspects of the curriculum?
- What are some of the programs' strengths and weaknesses?
- Are there any faculty you are particularly excited to work with or learn from?
- What have you heard about the program from the residents?
- Are there any specific aspects about the program or city that draw you to it?
- What can you contribute to the program?
- Be upfront if you have roots in city/town (E.g. Family live in town).

#### Prepare & Practice

- Practice commonly asked questions but be careful about over rehearsing.
- Make notes on the key experiences and stories you want to share.
- Prepare 3-5 concrete examples/stories you may use to answer questions such as "name a patient encounter that...". Reflect on different ways to present this story. (E.g. Good team player experience might also be an example of professionalism, etc.).
- Prepare 3-5 questions you can ask your interviewer(s).
- Make an appointment to practice with OHPSA career counsellors.
- Participate in physician mock interviews (Mocks by Docs) during TTR.
- Prepare others who may be in the home with you – you need uninterrupted time and a quiet space – consider having a sign on your door that is posted during an interview.



### □ Test technology

- Download all the necessary software and update to latest version well ahead of time so that you can trouble shoot before the interview if necessary.
- Test camera angle, lighting, background, mic/headphones, internet connection.
- Prepare back-up software and/or devices in case of technical issues.
- When you sign on get into the practice of starting with your mic on mute.

### □ Prepare outfit

- Think something professional, solid bold colours (e.g. red, purple, etc.), something that doesn't blend in with the background and makes you feel confident! Wear an entire outfit for a full body profile.



For more details: <https://cultivatedculture.com/what-to-wear-to-an-interview/>



## During the interview

### Housekeeping

- Ensure you have a quiet and private space with no distractions.
- Turn off your other devices or place them on silent. Use the “do not disturb” function on your devices.
- If there is a technical issue follow the plan you created before your interview – connect with the appropriate person, try to reconnect, apologize for the glitch when you do reconnect and continue.

### Presentation

- Try to imagine you are having a face to face in-person interview – i.e. Make eye contact, smile, do not check your phone or emails at the same time etc.
- Look at the camera – not at the screen, not at faces on the screen and not at yourself!
- Watch for cues so that you are doing your best not to cut others off or interrupt.
- Mute yourself if there is a long period where you will not be speaking.
- Listen to the question carefully and ask for clarification if needed (especially if the connection is not the best – you don’t want to have to guess what the question was)!
- Take a moment to think about your answer (if needed).
- Keep calm and carry on (even if there is a technical issue).
- Show interest and enthusiasm.

## After the interview

### Reflect

- Make notes on the questions that were asked and your answers. Is there the potential for improvement for your next interview?

### Follow-up

- If your time was really cut short due to a technical glitch on either side, consider writing a professional email to the program coordinator or administrator.
- Consider sending a thank you note/email.



## MatchTips: Interviews

### 1. Review information on the CaRMS website.

Look at [program descriptions](#) for important details (e.g. the style of interview that will be used, format, number of interviewers, etc.). For virtual interviews this year, it will be especially important to find out what platform will be used and whether it is an asynchronous or live interview. See next page for more virtual interview specific tips.

### 2. Know your story.

In addition to showing strong clinical skills, interviewers want to get to know you as a person so make sure you provide memorable but genuine answers. Take time to reflect on your proudest moments, what you learned from a patient encounter, and times you experienced failure (and what you learned from these experiences).

### 3. Practice plenty but don't over-rehearse.

You want to prepare answers to common interview questions. Record yourself giving answers, practice with friends and don't forget to sign up for a mock interview with a career counsellor and to participate in Mocks by Docs (mock interview with a clinician) as part of TTR.

### 4. Practice your power poses.

Two minutes of high-power poses can help to increase confidence and reduce stress prior to an interview.

### 5. Monitor your nonverbal communication.

70-90% of all communication is nonverbal. So, in addition to preparing well-crafted answers, also pay attention to your facial expressions, body language, gesture, and voice to make sure your nonverbal communication is telling the same story.

### 6. Be prepared to answer questions but also to ask questions.

You are usually given an opportunity to ask questions towards the end of the interviews. Not having any questions prepared may be interpreted as a sign of disinterest. Be genuine in your questions, get details on the curriculum, research projects, and/or teaching opportunities. Don't ask questions that could easily be answered on the program website. Need ideas? Check out the "Questions you can/should ask" section.

### Amy Cuddy's Power Poses, plus some more



Bold & confident



Wonder Woman



Victory



Generic superhero



Statue of Liberty



I'm a little teapot,  
short but with clout



Walk like an Egyptian  
(Pharaoh, that is)



Rawr!



Power yoga

2014 EB



## MatchTips: Virtual Interviews

### 1. Check your tech.

Do a test run to ensure your webcam, mic, speaker, and internet connection are functional and won't be causing you unnecessary stress during the interview. As a back-up, if you have more than one device (e.g. a phone in addition to a laptop), consider ensuring that both devices are set up and that you are familiar with using both if need be.

### 2. Set up your space.

Interview from a room with minimal distractions (i.e. blank/neutral walls, away from potential noises) with good lighting. You may also want to consider one of the virtual backgrounds – but again test in advance! Try sitting in front of or near a window at different hours of the day to ensure proper lighting so the interviewers can clearly see your face! Ideally you want to sit in front of a window (face to the window) so the natural light can illuminate your face. You may need to test out a few spots to find your favourite.

### 3. Show off your face.

Make sure you angle your webcam so that your face is visible to the interviewers. Your camera should be at eye level (you may need to place your laptop on top of some textbooks) and about an arm's length away, so your face is not distorted by awkward angles.

### 4. Dress for success.

You may be tempted to only dress up from the waist up, but we encourage you to dress your best from head to toe as research has shown that dressing up in professional attire may boost your confidence! As you will be on camera, it is also recommended that you wear neutral/mild/solid colours instead of black/white/patterns that can be distracting to the interviewer. You want to be soft on the eye but try not to blend in with your background.

### 5. Bring energy.

The camera tends to suck energy so you may need to lean in, smile bigger smiles, and sound more excited during a virtual interview. You may also wish to do some jumping jacks to get your energy level up before an interview!

### 6. Make eye contact.

Or rather make "camera contact". Make sure you are looking at the camera during the interview. Some people find it helpful to place a post-it over the screen to avoid the temptation to look at themselves during the interview. While others use post-its as visual aids and reminders.



## 7. Stay calm and carry on.

Your Wi-Fi signal may get interrupted and your camera may malfunction, even after testing everything out. You or your interviewer, despite everyone's best intentions, may still experience “technical difficulties”. Don’t panic – the key is to be prepared in advance (know who to contact) and try to reconnect. When you can connect again you may apologize for the technical glitch but remember this is not a reflection of you – just pick up where you left off! So try to reconnect, email the administrator to reschedule if needed and carry on.

## Preparing Examples/Stories

Think about patient encounters, ethical scenarios, conflict situations, examples of teamwork, lessons learned, etc.

It is also good practice to review the CanMEDS roles and prepare an example/story for each role.

Remember one example can serve as an answer to multiple questions. Pivot!

Words of  
wisdom

When preparing for behavioural questions (e.g. "Tell me about a time you demonstrated \_\_\_\_, or was faced with \_\_\_\_"), brainstorm 3-5 stories in advance that had a significant impact on your personal growth. Be prepared to be able to tell your story in an efficient manner, for example using the STAR

technique. Then be sure to emphasize what you learned from that situation, what you may have considered doing differently, and how you can take those lessons moving forward to ensure that you become the best possible physician or resident in the future.

Furthermore, consider how each of these stories may be tweaked to have a slightly different focus. For example, a story where you may have been an "excellent leader" may also be one in which you were a "great team player" or one in which you "were faced with an ethical dilemma".

Within the 3-5 stories you brainstorm, be sure to make sure your examples encompass a variety of CanMEDS roles. That way, regardless of the type of behavioural question they ask you, you can more easily pivot and think about which story might be most suitable.

Dr. Michelle Yee  
Emergency Medicine Physician, Mount Sinai Hospital  
WB Academy Career and Transition Lead

## Answer Structure

Well-structured answers make a strong impact.

Using a 3- or 4-point structure helps your interviewers capture key themes in your answer and means they won't be working too hard to follow your train of thought.

Make sure your answers have a clear beginning, middle and end or "sandwich" so you don't just trail off at the end of an answer. Ending well ensures you drive your point home.

For behavioural or competency-based questions that usually starts with:

Tell me about a time...

Describe a situation...

Give me an example of...

...when you had to work under pressure

...when you made a mistake

...when you demonstrated leadership skills

### STAR

#### Situation

- give context, be concise and informamtion to situation the listeners

#### Task

- the goal you set for yourself or what you were asked to do

#### Action

- Demonstrate and highlight skills and attributes that the question is assessing
- Explain what, how and why you did it

#### Result/Reflect/Relevance

- Outcomes of actions
- Describe what you accomplished
- Reflect on lessons learned
- Relate it to the speciality/program you are applying to

Remember details are essential to providing a comprehensive and memorable answer!

## Interview Questions

### Common interview questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this program?
- Why are you interested in this specialty?
- Tell me more about X (an experience/activity) that you listed on your CV.
- What are your strengths? What makes you a strong candidate?
- What is a weakness or an area for improvement/development?
- Tell me about your successes and failures.
- Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years? What are your long-term career goals?
- What are some challenges you foresee in the field of [insert specialty]?
- Tell me about a time when you worked under pressure.
- Describe a situation when you had to make a difficult decision.
- Tell me about your hobbies or interests or what you do for fun.
- What do you see as a prevalent issue in healthcare currently?
- How would your friends/colleagues describe you?
- What do you have to bring to our program?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- Why should we pick you?

For more practice interview questions, check out:

[AAMC Careers in Medicine Frequently asked interview questions](#)

### Difficult/Inappropriate questions

Questions related to human rights are inappropriate such as:

- What is your sexual orientation?
- What is your religion?
- How old are you?

They should not be asked but if asked, politely ask the interviewers to clarify how the question is relevant to the residency program.

Questions related to specific reasons behind absences/gaps in education, how you are going to rank, what programs/specialties you have applied to are also inappropriate. However, the program may ask you questions that are appropriate but still difficult to answer such as:

- “I see you failed X course...what did you learn from that experience?”
- “I see you went unmatched last year...how did that impact your specialty choice this year?”
- “I see you haven’t done any research – can you tell me about that?”

Anticipate difficult questions; prepare in advance; and practice. Get help from OHPSA and/or mentors.

Take time to gather your thoughts before answering and avoid being defensive.

Answer these difficult questions diplomatically, be brief and respond to them in a factual way. Provide only the necessary information. Stay positive and be honest.

## Questions you can/should ask

Remember the interview is a two-way street so you should have some questions prepared for the interviewer(s). Here are some sample questions:

- What are you looking for in a candidate?
- Can you describe the structure of your clinics and the residents' roles?
- What elective/teaching/research opportunities are available to your residents?
- What paths have most your recent graduates taken after completing the residency?
- Is the program anticipating major changes in the next few years?
- How is feedback provided to residents?
- Can you describe the community? Patient demographics?
- How is competency by design being integrated into the program? What do the residents and staff think about it?

For more questions you can ask, check out:

[AAFP Ask the right questions to find your match](#)

## Useful Links

### General

[CFMS Matchbook](#)

[CFMS Residency Interview Resources](#)

Canadian Medical Residency Guide (on [Elentra](#))

[CiM \(Careers in Medicine\)](#)

[Matchannel](#)

[AAMC Careers in Medicine Frequently asked interview questions](#)

[AAFP Ask the right questions to find your match](#)

### Virtual Interview

[AAMC Conducting Interviews During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

[Dressing for the Camera](#)

[6 Quick Tips for Looking Good on Camera](#)

[How to Dress for a Zoom Job Interview](#)

[What to Wear to a Job Interview \(including examples\)](#)



## **Multiple Mini Interview**

[An admissions OSCE: the multiple mini-interview \(including sample questions\)](#)

[What it's Like to Participate in Multiple Mini Interviews](#)

[McMaster University MD Program – Multiple Mini Interview \(including Interviewer Training Manual\)](#)

[University of Calgary Cumming School of Medicine MMI Interview Sample Questions](#)

[A Multiple-Mini Interview \(MMI\) for Emergency Medicine Residency Admissions: A Brief Report and Qualitative Analysis](#)

## **Modified Personal Interview**

[Preparing for Modified Personal Interview](#)

## **Dressing and looking your best for your virtual interview**

[Dressing for the Camera](#)

[6 Quick Tips for Looking Good on Camera](#)

[How to Dress for a Zoom Job Interview](#)