Example Portfolio and Structured Interview Questions

These are SAMPLE questions based on the categories listed on the PERSON SPECIFICATIONS for different specialties and from observations at a variety of selection centre stations and other structured interviews. Practising how you might answer these kinds of questions in advance can act as excellent preparation for a formal interview.

*Yourself*

- What sort of person are you?
- What kind of qualities do you possess that make you suitable for this post?
- What are you good at outside work?
- Give an example of how your personal skills helped in a crisis at work – what did you do and how did you handle the situation?
- How do you manage unwanted stress?
- How do you unwind after a busy day?
- How would you know that you are making good progress in your training?
- Reflecting on a negative experience, work or elsewhere, what have you learned about yourself from this experience?
- What picture do your assessment tools give of you of your progress to date?

*Specialty*

- What factors have influenced you to choose this specialty area?
- How have you researched the specialty? What insights have you gained from this research?
- What is the most interesting advance in this field?
- What journals do you read? (General and relevant literature)
- What do you enjoy most/least about the specialty?
- How do you see your specialty developing in the next five years?
- How will you know how good a Consultant you are?
- What constitutes good clinical care in your specialty, how would you recognise it?
- What feedback have you received (both formal and informal) which demonstrates your commitment to specialty?

*Research and Audit*

- Why is research important?
- Is it important for all doctors to undertake research?
- Do you have any research ideas?
- What research have you done… what are you most proud of?
- Which is more important – research or teaching? Which do you prefer?
- Tell us about your publications.
- What do you perceive to be the differences between research and audit?
- Have you been involved in audits?
- What is your experience of Clinical Audit and what you learned from it?
- Can you give examples of useful audit (specific to the job/specialty)
- Describe your last audit.
- When undertaking research on (e.g. patients with certain conditions, certain patient groups i.e. drug users, children, elderly, those with communication difficulties) what are some of the challenges faced?
Maintaining Good Medical Practice

- How will you know whether or not your clinical practice is up to date?
- How do you maintain your practice and that of others?
- Are there areas in yourself that you need to develop further?
- When faced with a colleague who is under performing, what action would you take?
- What evidence do you have of reflection and how you have applied your learning to your professional practice?

Teaching, Training, Appraising and Assessing

- What do you think about the introduction of personal development appraisal?
- What things are important when planning a teaching event?
- How is teaching best done?
- Describe an example where your teaching style has been successful - why did it seem successful and how did you know it was successful?
- What do you consider to be your teaching and training needs over the next year?
- What has been your personal involvement in delivering teaching?
- What are your development needs around teaching and training?

Professional Relationships

- Give an example of where you needed to work with a team of skilled professionals? What has been your role within this team and what have you learned about team working as a result?
- How do you reduce the patient's fear of having essential treatment?
- Can you describe the components that make an effective team?
- How do you manage the situation where a patient is rude and aggressive to a valued member of staff?
- How will you know how well you work in a team?

Management

- Tell us about an experience where you have had difficulty working closely with a manager. In hindsight where did you think the problem lay and how would you tackle the problem differently if the same problem occurred in the future?
- Do you think Primary Care Trusts will play an important part in the NHS structure?
- What are the benefits of Clinical Governance?
- How do you think the European Working Time Directive affects clinical practice?
- What do you think of revalidation? Is it effective?
- What is the importance of NICE clinical guidelines?
- Have you done a management course?
Specialty Core Competences

The next section covers specialty core competences (often featured in the person specification section of a job description) and poses a series of questions that could be asked at interview. The Specialty Core Skills cover skills such as communication, decision-making & problem-solving, empathy and sensitivity and coping with pressure.

Communication Skills

- Describe a situation where your communication skills had a positive impact on patient care.
- Give an example of how your communication skills have enabled you to develop effective relationships with your colleagues.
- Describe a time when you found it difficult to communicate with a colleague or patient. What did you do and how did you feel?

Problem Solving & Decision Making

- Describe a difficult problem you have faced at work. How did you contribute to the solution?
- Give an example of a difficult decision you have made recently. How did you decide what to do?
- Describe a time when you felt you made the wrong decision. How did you feel and what has happened as a result?
- What is your strategy for tackling difficult problems at work?
- Describe a situation where you have managed risk? What were the short, medium and long term risks you considered in your decision making?

Managing Others & Team Involvement

- Describe a time when you have successfully led a team.
- Describe a time when you've supported a colleague with a work-related issue.
- Outline a situation where you have had to motivate work colleagues to do something they didn’t agree with.
- Which do you prefer, leading a team or being a member of a team?
- Describe a situation that shows you have started to develop leadership qualities.
- Describe a situation that shows you have started to develop your management skills.
- How would your colleagues describe you in 3 words?
- Using an experience from your practice please describe how a patient benefitted from the involvement of the multidisciplinary team? What was your role and involvement?

Empathy & Sensitivity

- Why is it important for doctors/Nurses/Physio’s/ etc to show empathy and sensitivity?
- Describe a situation where your sensitivity to the patient’s perspective changed the way you managed their care.
- Describe a situation where you have shown empathy or sensitivity towards one of your colleagues.

Organisation & Planning

- How do you keep yourself organised at work?
- How do you cope when unexpected and unplanned work is added to your workload?
- How have your planning skills had a positive impact on those around you?

Vigilance & Situational Awareness
- Describe a situation when your awareness of a developing situation at work enabled you to avoid a problem or difficulty.
- Describe a situation where your lack of awareness of a developing situation at work resulted in a difficulty for you, your colleagues or a patient. What did you do as a result?

**Coping with Pressure**

- How do you cope with pressure?
- Describe a situation where you found yourself under conflicting pressures. What did you do to resolve them to the satisfaction of everyone involved?
- What strategies do you have in place to manage your workload and the pressure you are under?
- How have you used your initiative to manage your work effectively and reduce the pressure you are under?

**Professional Integrity**

- Give an example of a scenario where you made a mistake. What did you do about it?
- What do you understand by the term ‘professional integrity’ and can you give an example where you have shown professional integrity at work?
- Is it ever justifiable to bend or break the rules at work? Have you ever done so?
- What would you do if you overheard a senior colleague making an inappropriate remark to a patient?
- How would you go about demonstrating your probity in your portfolio? What examples have you collected already & how do these contribute to the demonstration of probity?
- If you were appointing a colleague, what are the key elements of professional behaviour you would be seeking?

(* Probity means being honest and trustworthy, and acting with integrity: this is at the heart of medical professionalism. GMC: Good Medical Practice, 4th Edition: Oct 2006)


**Clinical Knowledge & Expertise**

- Describe the most interesting case you have been involved in recently. How did you contribute to the management of the case?
- Describe a situation where management of a patient didn’t go as planned. What happened and what did you learn?

**Situational Judgement**

- A relative calls you at 3am and says they have a rash all over their body and have been feeling hot and generally unwell in the last few hours. What would you say and what would you advise?
- You are just finishing a busy shift on the Acute Assessment Unit. Your colleague who is due to replace you for the evening shift leaves a message with the nurse in charge that she will be 15 to 30 minutes late. There is only a 30 minute overlap between your timetables to handover to your colleague. You need to leave on time as you have a social engagement to attend with your partner. What would you do?
- You review a patient on the surgical ward who has had an appendicectomy done earlier on the day. You write a prescription for strong painkillers. The staff nurse challenges your
decision and refuses to give the medication to the patient. What would you do next in this situation?

You may be asked a range of additional questions...

Questions about the general job/post:

- Why do you want this job? What do you want from your career?
- Why should we consider you for this particular post?
- Why do you want to train in this field?
- Why do you want to work for this Trust/Deanery/organisation?
- What concerns you about a career in this speciality?
- What are the challenges facing this field/specialty in the next 5 years?
- Why do you want to be a ????? (Whatever you are applying for?)
- If appointed, what are you personal expectations, especially in your first year?
- What specific skills do you possess and have demonstrated in the past which will make you a good candidate?

Questions about your personal qualities:

- What will you bring to the role? What will you bring to the job? What strengths will you bring to the role?
- When have you demonstrated a key strength in your work? What did you do and what was the outcome?
- What are your weaknesses in relation to the role you are applying for?
- Looking over your application/CV can you pick 2 achievements you are most proud of?
- We’re interviewing lots of high calibre candidates today, why should we appoint you?
- What do you think your referees would say about you?

Questions specific to the NHS:

- Is the clinical governance system really necessary? What are the benefits and pitfalls?
- What are the main issues facing the NHS over the next 5 years?
- If you could change one thing in the NHS what would it be?

Interview Tips

- Practice your interview technique with your peers. Role-playing questions with peers and/or senior colleagues is a good technique to prepare more effectively for interviews. This can help to alleviate any nerves in the interview and you will be more prepared. The STAR Technique is an effective interview preparation technique. Take a look at the “15 Top Tips for a successful ST application” produced by the East Midlands Healthcare Workforce Deanery for information on the STAR technique.
- Consider what the interviewers are actually looking for in the person they wish to appoint for the job. The person specification section in the job description provides details of the specific competences, qualifications (essential and desirable) and the type of person they are looking for, this is usually more detailed than the job advertisement.
- Make some time to review the relevant person specification to pre-empt potential interview questions.
- It is a good idea to research the background of the post you are being interviewed for, the speciality and the history and background of the Trust/Deanery/Organisation you are being interviewed for. This will help you to be more prepared in your interview.
- Remember to create a positive impression, as first impressions do count. Plan your route to your interview in advance to avoid delay, arrive on time for your interview, dress sensibly, pay attention, make eye contact, speak clearly, and try not to fidget!

Additional Resources
- The medical careers website has a useful section on interviews (www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk);
- Many of the Royal Colleges offer interview sections on their websites