

Hints and tips for interview preparation

Whether you are new out of training, or have been in the profession for a number of years, going for an interview can be a nerve-racking experience. Here are a few tips to help you through the process.

Pre-interview

The most important part of the process is to be like a scout, and 'be prepared'! The more preparation you can do beforehand, the better. Know what kind of department you are going into; this information can normally be found on public websites. For example:

Does it have a speciality, such as plastics, burns, dermatology, or ophthalmology?

Does the Trust or University the department is based in have a speciality?

How many sites does it cover?

What are the core values or the vision that the Trust works towards, and are there any future plans to develop certain services?

References

Make sure the people you have asked to be a referee, besides from your current manager, are happy to do this for each application, and that you have the correct contact details.

Portfolio

Always take a portfolio, even if you haven't been asked to. Ensure it is up to date, that you are able to talk about the technical details of each piece of work, and most importantly, it is presentable. Have your work organised – don't just grab a handful of sample work and put it in a box only to spend time in the interview flicking through trying to find something specific. If it is electronic, ensure your tablet or laptop is fully charged and working, the presentation is in an easy to find place on your desktop, and only the images you want to be seen are on show. Take a back-up on a memory stick for those unforeseen technical issues. Make sure it is relevant, varied, and the work you have isn't too old. You want to show you are versatile and relevant.

For more information about this have a look at the portfolio section on the IMI Website: <https://www.imi.org.uk/resources/for-students/>

Travel

If you aren't familiar with the interview venue, do a dummy run at a similar time of day so you know how long it takes to get there. Most hospitals and universities are hard to park in and the car parks can be a good distance from where you need to be. Allow time for this so you aren't flustered on arrival. If using public transport, make sure you allow time to get from the station or bus stop. If you are held up for any reason and you are going to be late, ring ahead with an explanation.



The Interview

The basic preparation is now done; you just have to get through the interview! Every department will do this process differently in accordance with their human resources specifications. Some are quite informal with one person asking the questions, others will have two or three people on the team, and it varies with the level of job being applied for. All will ask questions about your past work and experience, why you should have the job etc., as well as some technical questions to test your knowledge. Be honest and be able to back up details you have included in your application form with practical expertise. If you don't know how to do something, be up front and say. Don't try to hide the fact or talk your way around it as you will get caught out at some stage.

Most interviewers will allow for nerves but try not to let them get the better of you. Avoid one-word answers and have some questions prepared to ask the interviewer. This shows your interest in and knowledge of the position you have applied for.

Appearance

First impressions count. Most interviewers will allow for creativity, quirkiness or certain trends, however, there is no excuse for scruffiness. You are trying to show yourself at your best and prove that you can go out representing a department and Trust as a professional.

Wear smart but comfortable clothing and footwear; you may be taken on a tour of the building or be asked to take some photographs as part of your interview, so make sure you can kneel down or bend without embarrassing yourself.

Ensure what you are wearing is clean, without holes, and your shoes aren't too scuffed. This may sound obvious, however most managers will have a story to tell about someone who turned up for an interview with all of these issues.

Practical Tests

Some departments will want you to do some form of test to prove that you can do what you put on your application form. You should have been informed of this prior to your interview to allow for preparation, and it will vary between departments. The tests fall under four main categories:

- Role specific test
- Presentation (for more senior/leadership posts)

- Psychometric testing
- Role play

The usual tests for medical illustrators are role-specific Examples include:

- Photography – this can involve a PR style image such as a head and shoulders shot for a website, or replicating a medical image e.g. anterior and lateral facial views. You may also be required to upload these and do a basic edit to show you know how to use image editing software.
- Graphics test – you could be asked to produce a basic leaflet or poster to show you can use the software, how proficient at it you are, and your design skills.
- Video – you may be asked to film something such as movement or someone talking to show how you would set up the camera, sound and lighting. You could be asked to upload and carry out a basic edit.

Certificates

Take the relevant certificates to prove the qualifications that have been asked for. It saves time later if you are the successful applicant.

Timing

Be at least ten minutes early, do NOT be late.

Post-interview

If you are successful and are provisionally offered the post, there are certain pre-employment checks that have to be carried out before you are given a confirmed offer.

References

These are usually requested for the last three years of employment and from your current line manager. Encourage your referees to complete the paperwork or online forms at the earliest opportunity.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

DBS checks are carried out on most candidates, ensure you complete any necessary paperwork.

Medical Clearance

You may be asked to attend a medical assessment or give details of your medical history by the occupational health or wellbeing department.

Asylum and Immigration

Checks will be carried out and the employer must be happy with your status to ensure they can legally employ you without incurring a £10,000 fine.

Qualifications

You must have your certificates to prove you have the required adequate education. This is often done during the interview process.



Registration

If registration with a professional body is required, you will need to prove this with an up-to-date certificate.

The sooner you complete all this, the sooner you get a start date. If you are taking paperwork to HR for checking, it can be helpful to arrange to go into the department at the same time to meet everyone in the team properly. The first day won't then seem quite as daunting.

If you were unsuccessful, it can be useful to speak to the interviewer and get feedback. There may be some pointers to help you improve for your next interview.

Example questions

This final section gives an idea of the type of questions that may be asked over a broad range of job roles, the list is not exhaustive so be prepared!

General

What are the Trusts values/visions?

What do you know about the job role and this department?

What attracted you to this particular post and what experience or knowledge can you bring to the role?

Why should you be given the job over somebody with the same experience/qualifications?

What are your strengths/weaknesses?

Give an example of when you have felt under pressure at work, and how did you deal with it?

How could you develop the job role/service?

Give an example of a successful project you have been involved in?

Give an example of a project that wasn't successful and what would you do differently?

What equipment do you use on a day to day basis?

What is your understanding of the job role?

Have you supervised staff before?

Have you had to deal with a difficult member of staff before? Give an example?

How did you manage them?

You have a disgruntled patient complaining about a member of staff, what do you do?

Photography

Have you done any PR photography?

What did you like/dislike about it?

Have you used hand held flash before?

Have you used studio lighting before?

What software do you edit in?

You are going to see some sensitive sights and deal with vulnerable people, how do you think you will cope with this?

If you are not already eligible for entry on the Academy for Healthcare Science register (AHCS), you will be expected to carry out training via a distance learning clinical photography course. How do you feel about this?

If you make a mistake, maybe forgot to take a picture that was requested in a set, what would you do?

What would you do if you saw someone else make a mistake?

How would you make someone who is very embarrassed, feel at ease about having to get undressed and have a photograph taken?

Graphics

What software would you produce a poster/booklet in?

Have you worked directly with print companies?

This position mainly works alone and requires a lot of creative thinking to manage the clients and workload priorities. Could you tell me about a time when you've had to juggle priorities and how you came to your decision?

What websites do you use to get stock images from?

If you don't have access to these, what would you do?

Video

What type of microphone would you use to film someone talking directly to camera?

What preparation would you do before filming a training video?

What software do you use to edit?

What stock websites do you use for music?

What do you know about copyright issues for music being used in films?