



AAMC

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The AAMC Video Interview Tool for Admissions: Applicant Preparation Guide

Contents

Overview	2
Format.....	2
Competencies	3
Questions.....	3
Preparing for the Interview.....	4
Identify Sample Experiences	4
Practice Describing Your Experiences	5
Practice With Technology	5
Technology	6
Environment.....	6
Logistics	6
Completing the Interview	7
Logistics	7
Responding to Questions	7

The AAMC Video Interview Tool for Admissions: Applicant Preparation Guide

Overview

The AAMC Video Interview Tool for Admissions (AAMC VITA™) is an innovative tool that offers applicants an opportunity to share information about their pre-professional competencies and journey on the path to medical school. It will provide depth and breadth to their applications and provide medical schools with additional, nonacademic information to assess applicants.

While this document focuses on tips tailored to preparing for and completing the AAMC VITA interview, many of the strategies you might use to prepare for an in-person or telephone interview will also be helpful. Although the virtual format may seem more informal, the AAMC VITA interview is an official interview, and we encourage you to approach it as you would any formal interview. It is important to prepare, present yourself professionally, and share your experiences to the best of your ability.

To complete the AAMC VITA interview, you will need the following:

- A description of your journey and/or the experiences that led you to pursue a career in medicine.
- A sample of experiences that highlight your knowledge or demonstration of the following core competencies for entering medical students:
 - Social Skills
 - Cultural Competence
 - Teamwork
 - Reliability and Dependability
 - Resilience and Adaptability
- A stable internet connection.
- A computer or tablet with a good webcam and microphone. Although a mobile phone may be used, we recommend using a computer or tablet for better stability of the picture.
- A private, quiet, and well-lit space that is free of distractions, where you can be alone.

Please refer to [The AAMC Video Interview Tool for Admissions: Essentials](#) for the official policies and procedures.

Format

The AAMC VITA is an online, one-way interview. Six questions are presented in text prompts, and applicants record an audio/video response; there is no human interviewer. Throughout the recorded response, *your face must be visible* to ensure it is you who is completing the interview, and *your voice must be audible* to permit listening to the responses.

You may complete the interview using any internet-enabled computer, tablet, or smartphone. We recommend using a device that will not accept phone calls while interviewing, as a phone call will interfere with your ability to complete your response. Because the interview is unidirectional, you may

complete the video interview in a location and at a time most convenient for you during the interview window.

You will have up to one minute to read and reflect on each written question and up to three minutes to record a response. Once you are exposed to a question, you will not be able to pause the interview until the time to record the response has ended. Therefore, ensure you are in a disruption-free environment for at least four minutes after launching a question. After recording a response, you may choose to progress to the next question or take an untimed break. You will not be able to view your video responses during or after you complete the video interview.

To clarify, the AAMC VITA interview is *not*:

- A one-on-one interview with a human interviewer.
- A tailored or personal interview with a specific medical school.

Competencies

The AAMC VITA provides schools with information about your journey to medical school and five competencies that medical educators and physicians have identified as key prerequisites for success in medical school and the practice of medicine.

- **Social Skills:** Demonstrates an awareness of others' needs, goals, and feelings, and the ways social and behavioral cues affect peoples' interactions and behaviors; adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues; and treats others with respect.
- **Cultural Competence:** Demonstrates knowledge of social and cultural factors that affect interactions and behaviors; shows an appreciation and respect for multiple dimensions of diversity; recognizes and appropriately addresses bias in themselves and others; interacts effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.
- **Teamwork:** Works collaboratively with others to achieve shared goals; shares information and knowledge with others and provides feedback; puts team goals ahead of individual goals.
- **Reliability and Dependability:** Consistently fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner; takes responsibility for personal actions and performance.
- **Resilience and Adaptability:** Demonstrates tolerance of stressful or changing environments or situations and adapts effectively to them; is persistent, even under difficult situations; recovers from setbacks.

Questions

The interview consists of six questions, the first of which asks you to describe your journey and/or the experiences that led you to pursue a career in medicine. The remaining five questions will assess the five competencies listed in the previous section. While every applicant's video interview will assess the same five competencies, the specific questions asked may differ.

The questions will be a combination of:

- **Medical school journey questions**, which ask you to describe your journey on the path to medical school and/or the experiences that led you to pursue a career in medicine.

A sample question of this type is:

- Why did you decide to pursue a career in medicine?
- **Past behavior questions**, which ask you to describe previous experiences that demonstrate your level of knowledge and skills related to the various competencies.

A sample question of this type is:

- Describe a time when you experienced a conflict with a classmate or a coworker. What did you do? What was the outcome?
- **Situational questions**, which ask you to demonstrate your level of knowledge and skills related to the various competencies by describing what you would do in different hypothetical situations.

A sample questions of this type is:

- Imagine you are working in a group project and one of your teammates is not doing their share of the work. What would you do?

Additional sample questions specific to each competency can be found in the AAMC VITA Practice Interview, which will be available later in summer 2020.

Preparing for the Interview

- Read [The AAMC Video Interview Tool for Admissions: Essentials](#).
- **Practice.** There are several ways you can practice for the AAMC VITA interview:
 1. Read an interview preparation guide.
 2. Complete the AAMC VITA Practice Interview in HireVue to familiarize yourself with the interview platform.
 3. Study sample interview questions related to the competencies assessed.
 4. Rehearse responses with or without technology.
 5. Rehearse responses either alone or with others to get feedback.

Identify Sample Experiences

- Review your resume and reflect on your experiences and learning before you complete the interview. Identify and note some examples of situations you either participated in or witnessed that highlight your knowledge or demonstration of the relevant competencies. You may draw on your experiences that occurred in any context, such as at school or work, during a volunteer activity, or in your personal life.
- Discuss your experiences and the competencies with your advisors. Which may be the best examples of each competency? Your best examples should demonstrate your highest level of proficiency in a competency.
- Create a brief list of experiences that demonstrate the competencies and could be used in response to different questions. It may be helpful to have these experiences in mind as you read and prepare your response to each interview question.

Practice Describing Your Experiences

With your peers and advisors, conduct mock interviews to practice developing responses using specific behavioral examples from your life and experiences. These mock interviews can be done in person or over a web-based application, such as Skype or Google Hangouts. As you practice, keep track of time to get used to responding within the three-minute time limit.

- Use the **STAR** method for responding to questions.
 - Because this interview is not a conversation, it is important to provide enough detail for any admissions officer to fully understand your responses. Think of each answer as painting a picture of what happened, what you did, and the outcome. For each response, be sure to answer each part of the **STAR** acronym:

Situation or Task — What was the context of the event or situation? Who was involved?

Action — What exact behaviors or actions did you take (or would you take)?

Results — What were the outcomes or consequences of the behaviors or actions?

- When practicing responding to **past behavior questions**:
 1. Be sure to discuss the situation or task you encountered, the actions you took, and the outcome of your actions.
 2. You may draw on your past experiences from any context (i.e., school, work, volunteer activity, personal life, etc.) to describe how you demonstrated each competency.
 3. If you cannot identify a past experience where you demonstrated a competency, describe a situation you witnessed or speak hypothetically about what you would do in that situation.
- When practicing responding to **situational questions**:
 1. Discuss what factors of the situation you would consider in deciding what actions to take, the actions you would ultimately take, and what you would expect the result of your actions to be.
 2. You may draw on your past experience to explain why you would take specific actions.

Practice With Technology

- Practice responding with the device you'll be using and without an interviewer. When you complete the AAMC VITA interview, you will do so alone with your device. Look at the device's camera — not at the screen — and keep your head and shoulders centered in the camera's view. If possible, record yourself to get a sense of your eye contact, sound quality, and whether you're fidgeting, swiveling in your chair, or making distracting gestures like covering parts of your face.
- Practice in the HireVue system. The AAMC is providing an opportunity to practice responding to questions in the interview platform.
 1. *Complete the AAMC VITA Practice Interview.* The AAMC is making one practice interview available in HireVue at no cost. This practice interview mirrors the AAMC VITA interview in both length and functionality. It includes six AAMC VITA questions and gives you a chance to practice in the interview platform environment. You can complete the practice interview one or more times as you prepare for the AAMC VITA interview. For

instructions and access to the practice interview, refer to the AAMC VITA Practice Interview webpage when it becomes available later in summer 2020.

2. *Complete typical job interview questions.* Upon receiving your actual AAMC VITA invitation email from HireVue, you will have access to typical job interview questions in the interview platform. These questions are not specific to medical experiences but provide an opportunity to respond to questions in the interview platform. You will have an opportunity to view your responses to these sample job interview questions to verify your camera position and audio are working.

Technology

- We recommend using a computer or tablet with a good webcam and microphone. Although a mobile phone may be used, a laptop or tablet may provide better picture stability.
- Double-check your microphone and camera to make sure they're working well. Note how they're positioned so you can recreate a setup that works when you log in to the system to complete your interview.
- Shut down all programs on your device so that no alerts, notifications, or other electronic interruptions distract you.
- Before proceeding, ensure the HireVue system checks are all successful. Troubleshoot any areas that did not pass the test prior to completing your interview (practice interview or the actual AAMC VITA interview).

Environment

- Identify a private, quiet, and well-lit space where you can complete the interview by yourself, you are free of potential distractions, and you can speak freely (e.g., avoid the library).
- Avoid sources of bright light (e.g., sunlight, lamp) directly behind you, as it can make it hard to see your face.
- Consider the backdrop you will use during your interview. Admissions officers will have access to your videos. While you should strive to complete the AAMC VITA interview in a neutral setting, medical schools understand that may not be possible due to constraints resulting from the pandemic. They will be instructed to ignore the background in which you complete the interview and focus on the content of a response. In addition, the AAMC will provide them with training to minimize the potential for bias.
- If you are interrupted during your interview, do your best to stay focused and take a few seconds to regroup if needed before continuing with your response.

Logistics

- Dress professionally, as you would for an in-person interview.
- Do the interview at a time when you're rested and focused. As with any formal interview, you want to be able to focus on understanding the questions, craft coherent responses, and present your best self.

- Give yourself plenty of time to complete the video interview. Allow time at the beginning to conduct a technology check, answer sample questions, and get used to the interview environment.

Completing the Interview

Logistics

- Read the entire question before you begin responding. Make sure you respond to all parts of the question.
- Do not repeat the interview question. School evaluators will have access to the questions.
- If you have a rough start, take a deep breath and attempt to answer the question again. You don't need to apologize or explain if you restart — just focus on responding to the question in the remaining time. Remember, you can take a break between questions if you need more time to regroup.
- You don't need to use the full three minutes to respond if you feel you've answered the question effectively and comprehensively in less time.

Responding to Questions

- Focus on providing detailed examples of behavior you engaged in from your life and experiences when responding to questions, if possible.
- Provide detailed responses, and try to avoid speaking in generalities. One strong example is better than several weak or tangential examples. Use the STAR method for responding to questions.
 - If your response may portray an individual in a negative light, do not provide information that could be used separately or in combination to identify that colleague, such as a name, title, location, or other distinguishing characteristics.
 - Please refer to [The AAMC Video Interview Tool for Admissions: Essentials](#) for additional guidance.
- When responding to **past behavior questions**:
 - Share past experiences, and be sure to discuss the situation or task you encountered, the specific actions you took, why you took those actions, and the outcome of your actions.
 - If you cannot identify a past experience that addresses the question, describe a situation you witnessed or speak hypothetically about what you would do in that situation.
- When responding to **situational questions**:
 - Make sure you discuss the specific actions you would take, why you would take those actions, and what you would expect the result of your actions to be.
 - You may draw on your past experience to explain why you would take specific actions.

If you have a question or concern, specialists are available to assist you with the video interview process, policies, and procedures at askVITA@aamc.org. From all of us at the AAMC, we wish you the best of luck when completing your VITA.