

Communication

Thank you for supporting the University of Buckingham's Multiple Mini Interview (MMI), which forms part of our admissions process for prospective medical students.

Your contribution is greatly appreciated and plays an important role in helping us provide candidates with a fair, consistent and authentic assessment experience.

This station is designed to assess the candidate's **communication skills**, including their ability to listen actively, respond empathetically and communicate clearly and appropriately in an interpersonal situation.

You will be playing the role of a friend, and we ask that you portray the scenario as realistically and consistently as possible for each candidate. Please remain in character throughout the interaction, responding naturally to what the candidate says and does, without deliberately making the conversation easier or more difficult for particular candidates. Your role is to facilitate an authentic interaction rather than to assess or guide the candidate; the assessor will be responsible for evaluating their performance.

This station will take place online and you will be sent a Teams Meeting link in advance of the day.

Confidentiality: The materials provided for this station are confidential and must not be shared, discussed or reproduced outside the admissions process. Please do not disclose details of the station scenario or the information provided to you to candidates or others, either before or after the MMI.

Thank you again for your time, commitment and support.

Actor Instructions

Brief Background

- **Chris Lamerton**, aged 18 years old (can be male or female)
- Occupation: student
- Living situation: Lives with parents and grandmother
- Relationship: single
- Presenting Issue: you have received an offer to study Medicine at University but you are unsure whether to accept this or not

Core Scenario

You are an 18-year-old student who has recently received an offer to study medicine at a university approximately four hours from home. You are speaking to a friend about whether you should accept the offer.

You are excited about the opportunity, but you feel conflicted because you provide regular support to your 90-year-old grandmother, who lives with you. Your main concern is not that your family has told you that you cannot go. Nobody has asked you to stay. Instead, you feel responsible for your grandmother and are worried about what might happen if you move away.

The candidate's role is to listen to you, understand your concerns and help you think through the situation. They should not make the decision for you.

Your personality and emotional state

You are:

- Generally friendly and willing to talk.
- Excited about the possibility of studying medicine.
- Increasingly anxious and conflicted when discussing your grandmother.
- Worried about being perceived as selfish.
- Unsure whether you are putting too much responsibility on yourself.
- Looking for someone to listen and help you make sense of your feelings.

You are not distressed or upset at the beginning of the station. Your emotions should become more apparent as the candidate explores the situation sensitively.

If the candidate listens carefully and shows empathy, you should become increasingly open.

If the candidate is dismissive, judgemental or immediately tells you what to do, become more defensive and uncertain.

Opening Statement

At the beginning of the station, say: "I've got an offer to study medicine, but it's really far from home and I honestly don't know whether I should accept it."

Then allow the candidate to respond.

Do not volunteer all of the information below immediately.

The purpose of the station is for the candidate to explore your situation through conversation.

Information to reveal during the conversation

Only give information when the candidate asks an appropriate question that gives you an opportunity to provide it. Do not deliberately hide information if the candidate asks directly about that subject.

University offer

If asked about the university or the offer:

- The offer is to study Medicine at the University of Glasgow.
- It is approximately four hours from home.
- It was one of your preferred choices.
- You were really excited when you received the offer.
- This is your only offer for Medicine.
- You also have an offer to study Pharmacy at a university much closer to home.
- You would much rather study Medicine than Pharmacy.

If asked how you feel about the opportunity:

"I really want to go. That's what makes this so difficult."

Your grandmother

If asked why moving away is a concern:

- Your grandmother is 90 years old. She lives with you and your parents.
- You regularly help her with shopping, preparing meals, appointments and other day-to-day tasks.
- Until recently, she was relatively independent, but over the past few months she has had several falls. This has made her less confident walking around on her own. As a result, she has increasingly relied on you.

If asked how serious her health problems are:

"I don't really know that much about the medical side of it. My parents deal with most of that. I just help look after her."

Do not provide additional medical information. If the candidate continues asking detailed medical questions, gently redirect: "I'm not really sure. I just know she's been falling more recently and needs more help from me."

Your parents and family

If asked who else could help:

- Your parents both work full-time. They own a catering company. Their work can involve evenings, weekends and travelling around the country.
- Other family members occasionally help, but you currently provide much of the regular support.
- You have no siblings. You do not have other immediate family living nearby.

If asked whether your parents expect you to stay: "They haven't actually said that I should stay."

If asked whether they would be angry or disappointed: "I don't know. They've never said that. I think I'm probably putting some of that pressure on myself."

This is an important part of the scenario: the family has not explicitly asked you to sacrifice university.

Your Main Concerns

If the candidate explores what is worrying you, explain that you are concerned about:

- Leaving your grandmother: "I'm worried about what will happen to her if I'm not here."
 - You are particularly worried that she might struggle with everyday tasks, become more isolated, feel lonely, lose confidence, need more help than your parents can provide.
- Feeling guilty
 - You feel guilty because "Part of me feels like I'm choosing university over my grandmother"
 - You worry that your family might think: "I'm being selfish for putting my own future first."
- Making the wrong decision
 - You are afraid that whichever decision you make, you will regret it.
 - If you stay: "I'd probably always wonder what would have happened if I'd gone."
 - If you leave: "I'd feel awful if something happened at home and I wasn't there."

What you have already considered

You have thought about some possibilities, but you have not properly explored them yet.

If asked about possible alternatives:

- You could return home during holidays.
- You might be able to come home on some weekends.
- However, the four-hour journey would make frequent trips difficult.
- Other family members could potentially help more.
- Your parents might be able to change how responsibilities are shared.
- You have not yet had a proper conversation with your family about how things could work if you left.

If the candidate asks:

- "Have you actually spoken to your parents about what would happen?"
- Say: "Not really. We've talked about university, but we haven't actually sat down and worked out what we'd do about Grandma"
- This is an important opportunity for the candidate to recognise that the decision does not necessarily have to be made immediately or alone

Emotional responses

Use the candidate's communication to determine how open you become.

If the candidate listens carefully and shows empathy, become more open.

You might say: "I know I probably sound like I'm overthinking it, but I just don't want to let everyone down"

Or: "I really want to go. I'm just scared that choosing to go makes me a bad person."

Or: "I hadn't really thought about it like that before."

You should gradually appear more comfortable discussing your feelings.

If the candidate asks open and thoughtful questions

Give fuller answers.

For example, if they ask: "What would it mean to you if you went to university?"

You might respond: "I'd be doing something I've wanted to do for years. I'd be really excited."

If they then ask: "And what worries you about that?"

Respond: "Leaving Grandma behind. And feeling like I abandoned my family."

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Respond: "Leaving Grandma behind. And feeling like I abandoned my family."

If the candidate immediately gives you a solution

For example: "You should definitely go to university."

Respond: "I'm not sure it's that simple. I'd feel really guilty if things became difficult at home."

If they continue telling you what you should do, become increasingly uncertain rather than argumentative.

You can say: "I know you're probably right, but I still don't feel comfortable just leaving."

If the candidate says you should stay at home

Respond: "But then I'd be giving up the only Medicine offer I've got."

You should make it clear that this would also be a difficult decision.

If the candidate is judgemental

For example, if they say: "You shouldn't let your family stop you from living your life."

Respond: "I know, but it feels more complicated than that."

Do not become angry. Simply become less open.

If the conversation slows down

If there is a prolonged silence or the candidate appears unsure how to continue, you may introduce one of the following questions.

Use no more than one at a time: "Do you think it's selfish to want to go?"

or "How do I know whether I'm making the right decision?"

or "What would you do if you were me?"

If the candidate asks what they would do, this is an opportunity for them to demonstrate that they can support your decision-making without simply deciding for you.

If the candidate asks what you want them to do

You can say: "I don't know. I suppose I just want someone to help me think it through."

This reinforces that the purpose of the conversation is support rather than advice-giving

If the candidate explores your priorities

Be honest and balanced.

You genuinely want to:

- Study Medicine.
- Move away and become more independent.
- Take up the opportunity you have been given.

But you also genuinely want to:

- Support your grandmother.
- Help your family.
- Avoid feeling that you have abandoned them.

There is no single correct answer to the dilemma.

Do not make the situation artificially easy for the candidate.

Important boundaries for the actor

Do not:

- Ask the candidate for medical advice.
- Ask the candidate to diagnose your grandmother.
- Introduce additional medical problems.
- Invent new family circumstances.
- Become extremely distressed or cry.
- Argue with the candidate.
- Tell the candidate exactly what answer you want.
- Make the decision during the station.

The situation should remain a realistic personal dilemma, rather than becoming a crisis.