PHARMACY SCHOOL ADMISSION INTERVIEWS

Pharmacy schools conduct interviews to evaluate a candidate’s academic preparation, related experience, personal qualities, communication skills, career goals, fit with their educational program, and potential to becoming a professional pharmacist. The interview format varies with each school, but may include interviews with faculty, community pharmacists, current students, meetings with student affairs staff, a writing portion with an essay, and tours of the pharmacy school facilities. Some schools include a breakfast or lunch with all the candidates and staff together. There may be a welcome and overview by the Dean or the Admissions staff at the start of the day and a closing session for general questions at the end of the day. Most schools will send you the interview schedule when your interview is confirmed, so you may make your travel arrangements accordingly.

An important difference in the interview process is the practice of interviewing candidates with either Open or Closed application files. Your interviewer may have read your complete application and know of your qualifications and background OR may know nothing about you! For either format, it is critical to evaluate ahead of time what is most important for the interviewers to know about your background and preparation for pharmacy school, your experiences and your career goals.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW: PREPARE AND PRACTICE

Schedule plenty of time to practice before interviews. Evaluate and know yourself.

- Prepare to describe yourself and to state your value as a candidate.
- Why do you want to become a pharmacist? What are your abilities? How have you prepared?
- Practice describing your accomplishments, experience, education, skills, career goals...
- Review your written application – know it well and incorporate it into your verbal answers.
- Answering typical practice questions will help you to be ready for other questions.
- For each skill you have, prepare detailed examples of where you demonstrated that skill.
- Practice answering interview questions out loud with someone else and in front of a mirror.
- Use a web cam to answer some of the practice interview questions on UA Interview Stream: http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/jobs-and-interviewing/ua-interview-prep
- Career Services provides individual mock interviews and career counseling by appointment.

Research pharmacy schools and current issues in pharmacy and health care.

- Conduct your research to develop questions you will ask about the school during interviews.
- Research every school you are applying to: curriculum, faculty, history, resources, size, campus facilities, location, rankings, student services, specializations, community programs, student organizations, local hospital connections, the community...
- Be prepared to speak about your specific reasons for why you want to attend a particular school.
- Talk to pharmacists (clinical/non-clinical practice), faculty, current students, and admissions staff.
- Practice discussing current ethical, social, and legislative issues in health care and pharmacy.
- Review the American Pharmacists Association Code of Ethics and the Oath of a Pharmacist.
- Review the pharmacy school’s student code of conduct and academic integrity policies.
DURING THE INTERVIEW: PRESENTATION AND PERFORMANCE

Interviewers develop an impression of how you look, dress, speak, and act in order to provide their feedback to the admissions committee. You may increase your chances for interview success through preparation, reflection and evaluation. When preparing, keep in mind the skills and qualifications that schools are seeking in candidates. Practice talking about your skills, accomplishments and career goals. You must articulate your preparation to attend their pharmacy program, your potential to be a successful student, and your ability to become a compassionate and skilled pharmacist.

Arrive early, check in and wait for your interviewer.
• Your body language, facial expressions, poise, mannerisms, clothes, grooming, and overall presentation and appearance are being evaluated during an interview.
• Be professionally dressed in a suit with shined shoes. Appearance matters.
• Turn your cell phones off throughout interview (don’t text in the lobby or waiting area).
• When called, stand up, smile, offer a handshake and greet your interviewer formally: “Good morning Dr. Reeve. I am Zelda Wildcat and it is a pleasure to meet you.”
• Be poised, listen attentively and be aware of your body language: maintain eye contact, nod your head appropriately, sit up straight, unfold your arms, lean forward. Be expressive.
• Avoid distracting hand movements or squirming in your chair. Do not touch your face or hair.

Listen attentively. Be concise, to the point, and answer the question that is being asked.
• Provide detailed answers and specific examples - avoid “yes” and “no” responses.
• Demonstrate knowledge of yourself and your interest in their school of pharmacy.
• Give specific examples of past situations where you have successfully demonstrated the skills and desired behavioral competencies required for pharmacy school and a career in pharmacy.
• Be honest, friendly, cooperative, enthusiastic, positive and professional.
• Speak clearly and concisely. Use proper grammar and professional language.
• Avoid saying filler phrases: um, uh, like, you know, in other words, to be honest with you, to tell you the truth, long story short, as I said before, you know what I mean...

Ask quality questions (prepare at least 10 questions in advance that you might ask).
• Decide what you want to know and what you will ask before you go to your interview.
• Your questions demonstrate your research and knowledge about pharmacy and their school.
• Possible topics to ask your interviewers about include: curriculum, faculty, staff, rotations, student support services, research opportunities, community programs, evaluations, facilities, funding and research grants, resources available for students, and the interviewer’s background.

Thank the interviewer(s) and leave promptly (do not linger or try to prolong the interview).
• Express your appreciation for the interview, stand up and say thank you as you shake hands.
• Keep written notes of all of your interviews. Who interviewed you, when, what was discussed...

Evaluate your performance to determine your interviewing strengths and weaknesses.
• How did the interview go? Did you highlight your education, experience, and skills?
• Did you ask good questions to show interest in studying pharmacy and knowledge of their school?
• Did you support your skills and accomplishments with specific examples?
• Closed interview well with a short summary of skills? Stated interest in school and said thank you?
• After interview, made detailed notes of questions you were asked and everything discussed?
• What worked well for you? What could you improve on during your next interview?
PROFESSIONAL APPEARANCE COUNTS! DRESS UP!

It is always better to be conservative and overdressed than underdressed in interviews. You will always be safe in a professional suit! Classic cut matching suits and shined shoes are recommended for men and women, to make a positive first impression. Find a great fit that complements your body type. Dress conservatively in dark colors such as navy blue and dark gray, with a white or blue shirt. Choose natural suit fabrics that don’t wrinkle, preferably wool gabardine. Prepare in advance in case you need alterations.

Wear minimal jewelry and have neat hair and clean fingernails. Be well groomed and use deodorant, but not cologne or perfume. Avoid eating garlic and onions 24 hours before interviews. Carry breath mints. If you will be interviewing in the winter with pharmacy schools on the east coast, you may need an overcoat. If you are traveling to interviews, pack light and carry your suit in a small carry-on suitcase or garment bag.

WOMEN

- Professional skirted suit or pantsuit, with a long sleeved white blouse and black shoes.
- Skirts should be about knee length (not too short, no thigh showing when seated).
- Sleeveless and low necklines are not professional - no armpits or cleavage please!
- Wear low-heeled, closed-toe and closed-heel pumps and neutral color hose with skirted suits.
- Wear flat or low-heeled, closed-toe shoes with slacks.
- Do not wear open-toe or open-heel shoes, sandals, spiked heels, or bare legs with a suit.
- Only use light make-up. Make sure fingernails are clean - avoid flashy nail polish colors.
- Have well groomed hair pulled away from your face, so you won’t touch it when you talk.

MEN

- Single-breasted jackets are more common than double-breasted. Solid color or small pinstripes.
- Long-sleeved, ironed white cotton shirts, with cuff extending ¼” below the jacket sleeve.
- Wear a plain white t-shirt under your button down dress shirt - especially if you tend to sweat.
- Conservative silk ties should complement suit and be as wide as your lapels (2¾” to 3½”).
- The bottom tip of your tie should land in the middle of your belt when you are standing.
- Black shined shoes with dark socks and a matching belt.
- Well groomed hair. Be clean shaven or have your beard and mustache neatly trimmed.

TABLE MANNERS DURING INTERVIEW MEALS

A formal breakfast, lunch or dinner may be part of your interview. Your hosts are evaluating your social graces, dining etiquette, and communication skills. Participate in the conversation by asking pertinent questions and contributing to the discussion. Stay with safe conversational topics and be cautious about discussing politics, religion, health, or personal issues.

Remember your best table manners:

- order food that is easy to eat with a knife and fork so you do not eat with your hands
- place and keep your napkin in your lap throughout the whole meal
- wait until everyone is served before you begin eating
- always taste your food first before using salt or pepper
- your glasses are to your right and your bread plate is to your left
- pass to your right
- salt and pepper always travel together - even if only one is requested
- only cut your food one bite at a time (never cut up all your food at once)
- keep your elbows off the table and never talk while you are chewing
- signal servers when you finish eating by placing silverware at the 4 o’clock position on your plate
- when you leave the table, place your napkin to the left of your plate
ASSESS YOUR SKILLS

Identifying your skills will help you prepare for the questions pharmacy school admissions interviewers ask. Describe your related experiences, skills, knowledge, qualifications, motivation and career plans. Analyze the qualifications schools are evaluating and prepare to talk about how and where you have demonstrated the required skills, strengths, competencies and characteristics through your education and experiences. Focus on measurable skills and specific examples where you can cite evidence of your skills and knowledge. Use the STAR approach to talk about your history and your strongest skills.

STAR: skills focused approach to answering interview questions

- Recall 10 successful experiences where you liked what you did and you did it well.
- Identify 10 challenging experiences where things did not go as planned or you were not pleased with your performance or the outcome.
- Use various situations to describe your experiences from college, jobs, internships, hospitals, clinics, community service, campus activities, student involvement, class projects, teamwork, research, labs, volunteer roles, leadership roles, committees, etc...
- Evaluate skills you used and how you were effective during each experience.
- A strong story demonstrates use of multiple skills in one situation.
- Practice telling detailed stories about your experiences, describing:

  Situation: challenges, problems, concerns, issues, conflicts
  Tasks: your responsibilities and role in the situation
  Actions: your behaviors, focusing on skills and competencies you used
  Results: outcomes, accomplishments, what you contributed/learned, how you were effective

Behaviors and skills being evaluated include:

- scientific knowledge
- ethical decision-making
- verbal communication
- compassionate care
- showing empathy
- accepting feedback
- learning from successes
- patient interactions
- community service
- academic skills
- analytical reasoning
- written communication
- learning new things quickly
- handling pressure
- flexibility and adaptability
- interpersonal skills
- conducting research
- decision making
- achievement orientation
- problem solving
- leadership
- altruism
- working under stress
- time management
- showing initiative
- taking direction
- teambuilding

Create a list of each of your top 10 skills with at least two situations where you demonstrated each skill, using the STAR method to describe what you did and how you were effective in 20 varied situations.

Skill: ________________________________

**Situation #1:**

Tasks: __________________________________________________

Actions: ________________________________________________

Results: ________________________________________________

**Situation #2:**

Tasks: __________________________________________________

Actions: ________________________________________________

Results: ________________________________________________
WHAT WILL INTERVIEWERS ASK YOU?

Interviewers ask questions to assess your educational preparation, relevant skills, work experience, campus involvement, personal characteristics, and career aspirations. No two interviews will be the same, although preparing for common interview questions may help you to learn to focus your answers on the information most important for you to convey. Practice describing in detail the situations where you demonstrated the competencies required for admissions. Practice talking about your skills, accomplishments, motivations, influences, experiences, education, and career goals. Describe your experiences and tell memorable stories that demonstrate your skills and qualifications. Focus on measurable skills that you can describe concisely with specific examples. You must inspire confidence in your ability and motivation to become a successful graduate student and a compassionate and skilled pharmacist.

Interview questions cover many topics, but you must be prepared to talk about:

✓ why you want to go to pharmacy school
✓ your educational preparation and career intentions
✓ what you have done to prepare to be a successful pharmacy school student
✓ qualities and characteristics you have to become an excellent pharmacist
✓ what or who influenced your decision to pursue a career in pharmacy
✓ motivations to pursue this career
✓ why you applied to and what you know about this school
✓ current issues in pharmacy education, the practice of pharmacy, and health care

Skills and topics interviewers often question students about:

• commitment to be of service to society
• personal characteristics including compassion, empathy, altruism
• interpersonal and teamwork skills: able to get along with and work well with others
• communication skills: writing, listening, verbal/conversational ability to articulate ideas
• knowledge of and ability to speak about pharmacy, health care, ethical issues, current trends
• the extent and scope of your health care setting experiences and patient interactions (clinical, non-clinical, research, community service, hospital, retail, public health, education, teaching, shadowing, local, national, international, campus involvement, etc.)
• exposure to pharmacy professions and knowledge of career options (clinical, non-clinical, community, retail, compounding, research, industry, public health, education, administrative...)
• knowledge of and interest in their particular school (related to curriculum, faculty, specialties, research and clinical opportunities, resources and support services for students, facilities...)
• cultural competency; sensitivity to studying with, working with and serving diverse populations
• adherence to ethical principles, ethical decision-making and behavior, moral judgment
• excellent academic record and strong foundation in science in organic & general chemistry, biological & physical sciences, physics, math, anatomy & physiology, etc.
• logic, critical thinking and analytical reasoning, problem solving skills
• professionalism, character, attitude, integrity, maturity, honesty
• time, stress, change and project management skills and experience
• achievement orientation, initiative, perseverance, flexibility, adaptability, resilience
• accepting feedback; learning from disappointments and failures as well as your successes
• overall commitment to and preparation for pharmacy school and a pharmacy career
INTERVIEW PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Keep in mind the skills and qualifications pharmacy schools are seeking in candidates. You communicated your skills, qualifications and motivations in your application to get invited to an interview. Now you must present your case verbally and communicate why you believe you are a qualified candidate for pharmacy school and the profession. Before every interview, practice talking about your experience, motivation, skills, accomplishments, and career goals.

- Why do you want to be a pharmacist?
- Tell me about yourself and how you have prepared for pharmacy school.
- Describe your related experience.
- When did you first decide on pharmacy as a profession? What or who influenced you?
- What qualities do you have to be a good pharmacist?
- How has your education and experience prepared you for pharmacy school?
- What challenges do you anticipate during pharmacy school? during your career?
- What will you do if you do not get into pharmacy school? What is your second career choice?
- What changes would you like to see made in the current health care delivery system?
- What factors have influenced your decision to attend pharmacy school?
- What type of pharmacy career path do you want to pursue?
- What has been your biggest challenge in preparing for pharmacy school?
- How did you choose your undergraduate school and your major?
- Explain the discrepancy between your grades and your PCAT scores.
- What was the biggest challenge you faced when you were a hospice volunteer?
- What was your role and contribution in the research project you participated in?
- Describe your greatest strengths and skills. Give me detailed examples of each one.
- Describe what you are doing to improve two of your weaknesses. Be very specific.
- What criteria are you using to evaluate potential pharmacy schools?
- Why do you want to go to this school? What do you know about this school?
- Why did you take the PCAT twice? How did you prepare differently the second time?
- How did the pharmacists you volunteered/shadowed with influence your outlook on pharmacy?
- If you observed a fellow student cheating, what would you do? Why does it matter?
- What regrets do you have about your college education and experience up until now?
- What do you consider to be some of the most pressing issues in health care and pharmacy today?
- What resources do you read and use to keep current on the trends in health care and pharmacy?
- What is your opinion on ________? (various topics and issues in pharmacy and health care)
- Do you have any questions you would like to ask me? (always have questions to ask)
- Is there anything else you want to tell me and the admissions committee?
- Why should we admit you? What makes you a strong candidate for pharmacy school?
BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Behavioral-based interviews involve questions asking you for examples of past situations demonstrating you have the skills, competencies and behaviors a pharmacy school wants to find in candidates. Interviewers ask for examples of past situations with positive or negative results and want you to describe the situation, your actions, any challenges or problems you faced, and the outcome. This popular interview questioning style focuses on evaluating past behaviors to predict future behaviors and your potential for success. Identify specific situations where you demonstrated the required competencies, skills and qualifications required for admissions. Give examples of your past situations using the STAR Approach by describing the:

**Situation:** challenges, problems, concerns, issues, conflicts

**Tasks:** your responsibilities and role in the situation

**Actions:** your behaviors, focusing on skills and competencies you used

**Results:** outcomes, accomplishments, what you contributed/learned, how you were effective

- Describe an accomplishment. What did you do to make that happen? Be specific.
- Tell me about a time you performed well in a stressful situation. What did you do?
- Tell me what you did in your most recent volunteer experience to be effective. What challenges did you have to overcome? What did you contribute? What did you learn?
- Tell me about a time when you were (or you were not) satisfied with your performance.
- Tell me about a time you believe you made a difference with a patient. What type of challenges did you face? What did you do? What did you contribute to the situation?
- Describe a problem you had in a health care setting. How did you go about solving it?
- Describe a time when you worked on a team. What was your role and contribution?
- Describe how you dealt with the grief you experienced as a hospice volunteer.
- Describe a time when you volunteered or worked as a member of an interdisciplinary health care team. Describe your role, your contributions, and any challenges you faced.
- Tell me about a situation when you were part of a team and a team member was not performing their role as expected. What did you do? What were the results?
- Describe a time you successfully managed multiple tasks. How did you prioritize?
- Describe a recent problem you attempted to solve using a systematic and logical process.
- Tell me how you handled a conflict with a co-worker. What did you learn from that?
- Tell me about a weakness you used to have. What did you do to improve that skill?
- Describe a time when you did (or did not) perform well in a stressful situation.
- Tell me about a time when you made suggestions for improving a process or procedure.
- Tell me about a time when you took the initiative and went beyond what was expected of you in order to complete a work project or class assignment.
- Tell me about a time when you utilized good listening skills and empathy.
- Describe a time when you effectively interacted with people from diverse backgrounds in a health care environment. What were the challenges and how did you handle them?
- Give me an example of a time you were faced with an ethical decision.
CAREER SERVICES PROVIDES SERVICES AND RESOURCES TO HELP STUDENTS AND ALUMNI:

- Explore and prepare for careers related to their interests, skills and values
- Learn about career fields, occupations, and organizations
- Write professional resumes, develop interview skills, and research potential employers
- Conduct a job search for career experience during college and employment upon graduation
- Plan for graduate school and professional program application and admission interviews

- **Career Counseling** for interviewing strategies, mock interviews, resume, CV and job search letter critiques, job search preparation, graduate & professional school planning, and career exploration

- **CareerBeam** has career assessments with a database of millions of employers, job & internship postings, and current salary data: [www.career.arizona.edu/webresources/online-resources/careerbeam](http://www.career.arizona.edu/webresources/online-resources/careerbeam)

- **What Can I Do With This Major/Degree?** [http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/choosing-a-career](http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/choosing-a-career)

- **Ferguson’s Career Guidance Center**: career information with 90 industry & 3000 occupation profiles: [www.career.arizona.edu/webresources/online-resources/ferguson's-career-guidance-center](http://www.career.arizona.edu/webresources/online-resources/ferguson's-career-guidance-center)


- **O*NET** provides extensive occupational profiles: [http://www.onetonline.org/](http://www.onetonline.org/)

- **NACE Salary Survey** published 4 times a year, on reserve in SUMC411 Career Services library


- **Graduate school and professional program** planning and career counseling assistance with the application process, personal statement reviews, and admissions mock interviews

- **Career information library** with information on occupations, careers, and employer directories

- **Campus Interviewing**: national & local employers seeking students for internships and professional jobs: [www.career.arizona.edu/student/finding-a-job-after-graduation/campus-interviewing](http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/finding-a-job-after-graduation/campus-interviewing)

- **Wildcat JobLink** lists full-time career positions, summer jobs, internships, and student employment (work-study and non-work-study, on and off campus): [http://www.career.arizona.edu/joblink](http://www.career.arizona.edu/joblink)

- **Interview Guidelines** with practice questions: [www.career.arizona.edu/student/interviewing](http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/interviewing)

- **Interview Stream** to practice interviewing using a web cam and 1500+ practice questions: [http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/interviewing/ua-interview-prep](http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/interviewing/ua-interview-prep)

- **Resume Guidelines** with format examples: [http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/resumes](http://www.career.arizona.edu/student/resumes)


- **Calendar** of all career events, services and Walk-in Hours: [https://arizona-csm.symplicity.com/calendar/](https://arizona-csm.symplicity.com/calendar/)

TO REGISTER WITH CAREER SERVICES

**UA Students**: [https://www.career.arizona.edu/student/subscriptions](https://www.career.arizona.edu/student/subscriptions) ($5 per year)

**UA Alumni**: [https://www.career.arizona.edu/alumni/subscriptions](https://www.career.arizona.edu/alumni/subscriptions) (various fee options)