



# Tips on preparing for interviews

INMO student and new graduate officer Catherine O'Connor gives an overview of how best to get ready for job interviews

AS WE enter the summer months, many interns will now be thinking about where they would like to work once their internship finishes. In order to assist with thinking about the next steps, this month I would like to look at ways to prepare for interviews. Interviews can seem daunting especially if you are not used to doing them but remember that everyone gets nervous coming up to an interview, and if you prepare well beforehand, you will be ready on the day.

## What to expect

Nursing and midwifery interviews are often done by panels, meaning there could be two to three people sitting across from you. One person will likely be taking notes throughout the interview – try not to get distracted by this. The questions tend to be mostly competency-based, but some may be designed to let the employer know how you might fit into the organisation. It is a good idea to prepare some answers for general questions about yourself like: 'Why did you go into nursing/midwifery?' or 'Tell me a bit about yourself', as this is your opportunity to stand out. It is also important that you are familiar with your CV and portfolio as anything you have written can be asked about during the interview.

## Before the interview

Good interview preparation should start well before the day of the interview. Search for your name online to see what comes up, as employers sometimes search candidates before the interview. Remember that each workplace normally has a social media policy. The NMBI social media guidance document is available on its website ([www.nmbi.ie](http://www.nmbi.ie)). Researching the employer online is always beneficial – if you can demonstrate a genuine interest in the organisation, it can go in your favour. This includes knowing some key information on mission and ethos. Is the organisation known for its work in a particular speciality? It is also worth reviewing the job

Situation	Describe the event or situation that you were in
Task	Explain the task you had to complete
Action	Describe the specific actions you took to complete the task
Result	Close with the results of your efforts

description to see how well your skillset and CV match the role.

It is important to try to sleep well the night before, have a good breakfast and stay hydrated, as these will all help you to focus and perform well. Aim to arrive at least 10 minutes early; plan how you will get there and allow time for the unexpected, eg. delayed bus, difficulty finding a parking spot. Turn your phone off, discard any chewing gum, make eye contact and smile when you greet your interviewers. Hand shaking should be avoided at present due to Covid-19. It is possible that some interviews may be held over a video call due to Covid-19, but the same principles would apply.

## During the interview

Be sure to maintain eye contact with your interviewers. Be aware of your body language and the way you communicate, as some people tend to slouch, fidget or speak too quickly when they become nervous. Similarly, some people tend to punctuate sentences with 'you know' or 'like', or fill pauses with 'um' or 'ah' when nervous. Practising with friends/family beforehand and asking for honest feedback can help make you aware of what to look out for. It is ok to take a breath before answering a question or use phrases like 'That's an interesting question...' to buy yourself a little time to collect your thoughts before answering. The STAR technique (see Table 1) can be extremely helpful when answering competency-based questions, as it can be used to demonstrate previous experience, eg. 'How would you prioritise your workload at the start of a shift?'

Some questions may be skills/knowledge-based, such as 'Tell me about the EWS/

ISBAR' or 'What are the five moments of hand hygiene?', while some may assess your professional development, eg. 'How do you keep up to date in your practice?' Others may assess how you communicate, eg. 'How would you deal with relatives who complain about the care of their loved one?' Remember that you are applying for a staff nurse/midwife position, so you should avoid limiting yourself by using phrases like 'I can't do that as I'm only an intern'. Instead, you could say what you would do as a staff nurse/midwife.

## After the interview

Interviewers often ask candidates if they have any questions and it can be helpful to come up with a few questions to demonstrate interest. Thanking your interviewers for their time will leave them with a positive impression. Whether or not the interview goes well, you can ask for feedback on the interview when you are contacted with the result. This can help you to improve your interview skills whenever you next go for an interview.

## Further resources

The INMO offer courses on interview skills. Due to Covid-19, some courses are now available online. Please keep an eye on [www.inmoprofessional.ie](http://www.inmoprofessional.ie) for updates. Additionally, many colleges have career guidance services and offer assistance with CV preparation or mock interviews.

## Join a Youth Forum

It's never too late to get involved. Both students and qualified nurses/midwives can be members of one of the regional Youth Forums if under the age of 35. To learn more about what is involved, please contact me at email: [catherine.oconnor@inmo.ie](mailto:catherine.oconnor@inmo.ie)