

Acing Job Interviews in Healthcare

Reading time:

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Date created: 24/08/2021

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[Article previously published as: Essential tips for job seekers: Getting the interview]

You have found a role of interest. How do you give yourself the best chance of success? We have assembled some tips which we think may assist you in your quest to secure an interview. If you would like to explore education options MIPS has to offer, visit mips.com.au



Learning outcomes

- To identify the pivotal aspects of successful CV writing
- To discuss how to create a CV and cover letter to effectively showcase your skills and competencies
- To explore portfolio breadth and enhancement

The steps to getting a job interview are:

- Create a portfolio from the beginning of your career
- Tailor your CV to the specific role
- Develop a cover letter specific to the role
- Request references from people who will strongly support your application
- Follow the application requirements, precisely

1. Portfolio:

TIP: If you've not yet started compiling a portfolio, do it NOW!

It is much easier to collate information and evidence as it happens rather than try to do so retrospectively. 'Future you' will be very glad you started this now.

A portfolio is:

- A complete record of your activities and achievements, storing all certificates
- A paper and/or electronic version

Your CV is a shortened record of your portfolio tailored to the job application

Portfolio contents include evidence in all CV categories plus:

- Professional thanks and compliments
- Reflection activity
- Feedback from teaching/presentations
- Critical incidents
- Logbook
- Include all of the above headings in your portfolio:
 - Any gaps will highlight potential deficits in your experience

2. Curriculum Vitae (CV):

TIP: Your CV is a living document and should be updated regularly:

- Always have an up-to-date, general CV for spontaneous opportunities
- When applying for a specific role, tailor your CV for that role:
 - Ensure it covers all aspects of the job description and that they're clearly visible
 - Showcase your relevant skills and experience
 - Highlight terms in relevant specialities
 - Tailor your personal profile/career aims

TIP for Senior Doctors: As you progress in your career, your CV should reflect your more senior role eg:

- Clinical and non-clinical roles within your current position
- Procedures dependent on speciality
- Significant teaching and training
- Leadership/management/committee work
- Quality improvements
- Research, including clinical trials and publications

CV Content/Section Headings

Personal details/Contact:

Header with name, AHPRA registration number and contact details:

- At least one email address
- Mobile phone number
- Address
- Do not include unless specifically requested:
- Age, sex or gender, marital status or dependents, photo

Personal profile/Career intentions:

3-5 sentences written in the first person

Demonstrate who you are and your intended career direction

- What is great or special about you? Skills, especially human factors
- Any current roles/projects
- Career aims and intentions
- Skills you aspire to develop

Qualifications/Awards:

- University and beyond - only include school awards if exceptional (state/national)
- If the award title is not self-explanatory, provide explanation
- Include any non-medical graduate qualifications e.g. dietetics, physics degree

Society membership:

If you have a career plan, consider early membership of appropriate societies:

- Trainee memberships tend to be fairly inexpensive

- Inclusion of the relevant membership in your tailored CV can demonstrate a long-standing commitment to the speciality.
- Include the date membership commenced
- Include membership of societies or committees to which you were invited or elected

Clinical roles/Practicing history/Employment history:

- Start with the most recent
- Include dates (month/year)
- Include the role and place
- Include a brief review of responsibilities within the role if applicable – eg responsibilities in a medical PHO post is applicable for application to BPT, whereas the responsibilities of an intern surgical rotation is not
- Explain any gaps in the timeline e.g. parental leave
- May include volunteer roles if list is not extensive

Volunteer roles (if required):

If extensive volunteer roles, include this separate heading

Procedural skills:

Keep a record of all case numbers. Any practical skills can be included. For each application, tailor the list to prioritise those most relevant to the position.

Sample record:

Competent skill	No. performed	Developing skill Supervised practice	No. performed
Venepuncture & Cannula insertion	>50	US guided cannulation	6
Use of airway adjuncts including guedel and LMA	>50	Intubation	32
Urinary catheter insertion	14	Chest drain insertion	4
Epidural insertion	36	Relocation of dislocated joints	3
Spinal anaesthesia	41	Femoral nerve block	4
NG tube insertion	8	Central line insertion	2
Perform and interpret ECG	>50		
Blood culture sampling	>50		
Arterial line insertion	12		
Closure of minor wounds	15		

IT skills:

Competence in IT skills is highly regarded. List skills eg

- Office proficiency – PowerPoint/Excel/Word/
- iEMR training
- Zoom or Teams presentation competency
- Touch typing
- Telemedicine experience
- Role specific skills
- Statistics applications
- Research specific applications

Quality Assurance – Audit, Service Improvement and

M&M meetings

Audit:

- Cite the standard audited against
- Recognition of the audit cycle – complete yourself or follow up
- Aim to be completing an audit every 6 months and always present it
- Look for audits you can take to national meetings for presentation
- Ensure ethics exemption/application is completed

Service improvement – information leaflets, patient satisfaction

Morbidity and mortality meetings:

- Dates attended
- Presentations – title only

Research:

- Include ongoing or previous trials
- Ethics applications
- Grants and awards
- Laboratory or other skills gained

If you don't have much research content, combine 'Audit and Research' or omit research entirely from your CV if nothing to list.

- Get involved; you can start by offering to help with data collection

Publications and Presentations:

You should be looking to present something at least 5-10 times per year and submitted something for a national meeting or for publication at least once per year.

Actively seek opportunities.

- Departmental presentations
- Grand rounds
- Debates
- Letters to the editor
- Case reports
- Original research
- Literature review
- Poster presentations at national/international meetings

Teaching:

Show you're willing and have made efforts to learn how to teach effectively.

- List dated teaching sessions and informal teaching
- Variety of teaching
- Multidisciplinary as well as junior doctors/students
- Mentoring
- Show some feedback – use feedback forms for every teaching session you do

Management and leadership:

- Medical and non-medical
- Committee membership
- Rostering
- Organising team building/socialising events
- Supervising juniors

- Organising information for new starters/students
- Mentoring

Professional development:

- Divide into clinical and non-clinical courses if you have an extensive list
- Consider PD that will aid your application
- Examples for anaesthetics such as: Blood safe elearning, ALS, Neonatal resuscitation, Human factors training, ANZCA Part Zero course, Ethics course, ilearn coaching for better conversations, Clinical Educator Preparation and Support on ilearn

Interests outside of medicine/Extra-curricular activities:

- Opportunity to show yourself as a well-rounded person
- Team based activities
- Activities that show commitment
- Highlight human factors skills used or developed such as: Communication, vigilance, situational awareness, decision-making, leadership, care (self-care, compassion)
- Simple things such as baking, reading/book club, going to the theatre, socialising, gym, cycling, pilates, yoga, learning a new language
- Use "I enjoy", "I'm committed to", "I value" etc
- Never embellish

Verification statement:

- I verify that the information contained within this Curriculum Vitae is true and correct as at 01/01/2021.
- Signature:

Referees:

- At least 2 referees, unless specified otherwise
- Choose carefully and ALWAYS ask their permission first
- Choose recent contacts who know you well
- Ask if they can support your application – references should GLOW!
- You don't want mediocre references so give people an easy out eg:
 - "Would you be able to provide a supportive/positive reference for me?"
 - "I appreciate you're very busy at the moment and can ask someone else if you have too much on/don't feel able to support my application."
 - "I appreciate you're very busy at the moment and can ask someone else if you have too much on/don't feel able to support my application."
 - "If you were refused a reference, go back later, and ask for feedback about whether there are any areas they feel you need to work on."
- Provide name, job title, email, phone number
- Remember to let your referees know how you got on and send a note of thanks

Layout of CV:

Aim to achieve an easily read document that makes your achievements shine. Make good use of 'white space' and a simple font eg Arial 11+.

- Use of bold font, bullets and tabs
 - Order newest to oldest
 - How many pages is less important than ease of reading?
- Junior doctors' CVs are usually 2-3 pages, double-sided
- Include sections that provide an impression of who you are
 - Check and double check spelling and grammar
 - Never lie or embellish
 - Use colour sparingly and check the appearance in B&W

- Number pages

CV templates can be helpful. But, be ready to copy and paste into a requested format.

Examples of a [MIPS CV Example - good.pdf](#)  and [MIPS CV Example - poor.pdf](#) 

TIP: Most importantly, if the position advertisement specifies a format for submitting a CV, provide your CV in that exact format. It is vital you follow the instructions of the application process precisely, even if they are 'recommendations', to help get you to the all-important interview list.

3. Cover Letter:

TIP: Many institutions use the cover letter as the first screening tool.

Assume your CV will not be read!

The advertisement often asks for the cover letter to demonstrate how you fulfil specific criteria – don't just refer to the CV. Pick out the best parts of your CV that match those criteria. Make it easy for the person screening the applications to find how you fulfil the benchmarks required.

Your cover letter should typically be no more than one side of an A4 sheet, unless specified otherwise.

Considerations for the letter:

Why do you want the job and why are you ideal for the position?

- Research the organisation/hospital
- What do you know about their values and goals

Investigate websites, annual reports, area health service profiles, college educational coordinators.

TIP: Save this research as it can be very helpful to review if you are granted an interview

- Check requirements very carefully
- Refer to the person specification/role description
- Evaluate your skills in relation to the requirements; explain how your skills 'fit' the role; how does your CV fit the job specifications?
- It is best to avoid humour, keep the tone highly professional

Conclusion:

- Your CV is a living document, update it regularly
- Tailor your CV to each application
- Layout your CV carefully to ease reading
- Follow application instructions strictly
- Choose your referees carefully
- Actively work on creating a balanced portfolio using all headings to identify gaps

Essential tips for job seekers: CV writing - Self reflection

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