

A Readiness Self-Assessment

The 20Q is a private, personal working document. It is not sent to the HCEC. This questionnaire is designed to serve as a comprehensive self-assessment tool that helps pre-health students and alumni determine their preparation, the strength of their background, and readiness for further study in any health career.

Respond to the following questions fully in narrative form. They will serve as a useful resource in completing the HCEC Background Information Form (BIF) and Personal Statement; some responses can be pasted directly into the BIF. Additionally, the 20Q will be helpful when completing medical school secondary applications, and when preparing for interviews with medical school admissions committees.

Note: HCEC registrants must attest that they have responded to all questions before continuing beyond Registration Part 1 of the HCEC process.

To discuss the 20Q, contact a health careers advisor. Contact information for health careers advisors is available at <http://www.career.cornell.edu/paths/health/advisors.cfm>.

1. Why do you want to be a physician/dentist/health care professional?
2. What experience have you had in the last 3 years in a healthcare setting? How have these experiences helped you in your decision to pursue a health profession?
3. Outside of a healthcare setting, what have you done in the last 3 years to be of service to others? How have these experiences helped you in your decision to pursue a health profession?
4. Describe any research – not necessarily science related – that you have done in the past 3 years, including anything of significance that involved pursuing an interest independently, developing it into a research project, or working in a lab. What has your research experience meant for you? How did your project fit into the larger project/lab?
5. Explain how you are making an informed choice about a life in medicine. What do you know about what it is like to be a patient, directly or indirectly? What do you know about what it is like to be a physician?
6. Describe your family background. Some things you could include: What is your cultural background? What family structure/type of community did you grow up in? Have you lived outside of the US? If so, describe. What is your current citizenship? What are the occupations of your family income earners? Where did you grow up? How many siblings do you have? What are they doing?
7. Describe your academic preparation in high school (public or private high school). How was your transition to Cornell? Did you take AP courses in either science or non-science courses?
8. When you have been faced with multiple demands, how have you managed priorities – academic vs. extracurricular? How have you become better at this during your college years?
9. Who are your role models, and why?

Twenty Question Readiness Self-Assessment (20Q)

10. We define a personal strength as something that, when you do it, makes you feel strong, competent, effective, as well as something you do well. Describe your strengths. What do you think you are best at of the activities you regularly do in your daily life?
11. We define a personal weakness as something that, regardless of your skill at it, drains you when you do it. Personal weaknesses could also include tasks for which you have an innate aversion, or simply things you don't naturally do very well. Given these definitions, describe your weaknesses. What are your principal faults? What do you think you are worst at of the activities you regularly do in your daily life? How do you try to overcome your weaknesses or faults?
12. How would your best friends describe you?
13. How do you handle your mistakes or errors? How would you handle them in medical practice?
14. In your college years, what did you do besides study a lot? Give an overview here, concentrating on describing the big picture. What are your personal interests and talents? How did you become interested in your hobbies, pursuits, or avocations?
15. What life events or activities have changed you the most in the past 3-4 years, and how have they changed you?
16. What experience have you had leading large or small groups of people? Think about leadership in broad terms that include not only offices you have held, but experiences such as tutoring and mentoring others, and examples of situational leadership.
17. If you could begin college again, what would you do differently? What would you do the same way again?
18. How did you develop cultural competence (if any) during your primary and secondary education? How did you gain cultural competence in your years at Cornell or thereafter? Have you had international experience in a healthcare setting? Describe any experiences or situations in which you became conscious that you were interacting with people who were different from you? How did it affect you?
19. Recognizing that you have much to learn about different medical careers, what type of medical practice interests you at this point? (e.g., Rural vs. urban? Primary care vs. specialty? Academic/research vs. private practice? Domestic vs. international?)
20. Have you ever been the subject of an institutional action (i.e., a disciplinary action resulting from an unacceptable academic performance, a conduct violation, or a criminal act)? An affirmative response should be shared with your health careers advisor.

Even if you were exonerated of charges, it is worth writing about them and discussing them with an advisor. Describe what happened, what agencies got involved, and what you know about whether – and under what circumstances – the university or civil agency can or will report the action or offense to external parties. What did you learn from the experience? If you have been subjected to such action, schedule a meeting to talk to your health careers advisor about this. With guidance, you can learn the best way to share it with schools.