

Health Careers Reflection Journal

A Readiness Self-Assessment & Preparedness Exercise

Cornell Career Services

The Health Careers Reflection Journal is a private, personal working document that should help you reflect on your experiences and academics, assess your readiness for applications to professional schools, and prepare for the application process. You should continually update and revise your journal entries, particularly when preparing to complete a subsequent section (e.g., when you are ready to complete the “prior to the HCEC interview section,” you should review and revise the “prior to HCEC registration” section). Be thorough, honest, and thoughtful when responding to these questions and prompts. You will not send this document to the HCEC.

If you have difficulty addressing these questions, it may be wise to delay application to medical or other health profession school. To discuss your reflection journal, contact a health careers advisor. Contact information for health careers advisors is available at <http://www.career.cornell.edu/paths/health/advisors.cfm>.

To be completed prior to HCEC registration

1st year, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Alumni

1. Why do you want to be a physician/dentist/health care professional?
2. How do you stay informed about the medical field?
3. What experience have you had in a healthcare setting? How have these experiences helped you in your decision to pursue a health profession? Explain how you are making an informed choice about a life in medicine. What do you know about being a physician?
4. Outside of a healthcare setting, what have you done to be of service to others? How have these experiences helped you in your decision to pursue a health profession?
5. Describe your academic achievements to date. What is particularly noteworthy about your accomplishments and your challenges? How do you compare yourself with other students or alumni? Explain any circumstances that had an impact on your performance.
6. What three words would you use to describe yourself? Ask five close friends or family members what three words they would use to describe you. Are these the same words that you used? If there was disagreement between the words you used and those provided by others, comment on the differences and why you think they exist.
7. How have you developed cultural competence? Describe any experiences or situations in which you interacted with people who were different from you.
8. 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.

To be completed prior to the HCEC interview

Junior, Senior, Alumni

9. Describe your strengths. How did you develop these skills?
10. Describe your weaknesses. How do you try to overcome your weaknesses or faults?
11. When you have been faced with multiple demands (e.g., academics, extracurricular involvement, personal situations) how have you managed your priorities? How have you become better at this during your college years?
12. How do you handle your mistakes or errors? How would you handle them in medical practice?
13. What life events or activities have changed you the most in the past 3-4 years, and what have you learned from them?
14. Describe situations in which you have been out of your “comfort zone,” especially where you have worked with those who are unlike yourself.

To be completed prior to AMCAS/AACOMAS/AADSAS, etc.

Junior, Senior, Alumni

15. What is “holistic review,” and why is it important to medical school admissions committees? Describe how you think admissions committees will view your application through holistic review.
16. Describe allopathic and osteopathic medicine and the differences between the two philosophies.
17. Which health professions schools best align with your personal goals for practicing in the health professions? How many of these schools are in your state of residence?
18. What does it mean to develop a strategy for applying to health professions schools?
19. 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)? Describe what happened and what you learned from the experience.

Note: Discuss any affirmative response to this question with your Health Careers Advisor before proceeding with your application.