BIOS | BRITISH AND IRISH ORTHOPTIC SOCIETY

Guide to Job Applications and Interviews for Newly Qualified Orthoptists

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FINDING A POST

There are lots of different ways to find orthoptic posts - these sites will be very useful:

- For posts in England and Wales https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/
- For posts in Scotland https://jobs.scot.nhs.uk/
- For posts in ROI https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/jobs/job-search/

It is a good idea to register with these websites and request email alerts to let you know when adverts are posted. Adverts are also posted in Parallel Vision, so make sure you read this when it is sent to your email.

Once you have found a post look at the job description and person specification and see if you would be a 'good fit' for the post. If you have any further questions about the advertised role you can ring the department. It is also nice to see if you can arrange to look around the department, and this is a good opportunity for you to get to meet the staff members and see if you would fit in. You need to consider if there is going to be support for you as a new graduate and if there are opportunities for you to develop in the future (e.g. advanced or expanded scope of practice).

PREPARING YOUR STATEMENT

Once you have found a suitable position that you would like to apply for you need to look at the job description and person specification in detail. Here is some advice on how to prepare a good personal statement:

- Your statement needs to reflect and address **all the points** raised in the person specification, even if you do not have a particular skill – address it and say how you plan to develop this.
- **Do not assume** the reader will know anything about you or your student experiences.
- It is also important to not just state facts but to **include evidence** of how you demonstrate that particular skill/knowledge/quality/value.

- **Be concise**. Do not list every module you studied at university or every placement you have been on, select appropriate examples to illustrate your points.
- Include anything that makes you **stand out**. For example, any part-time jobs, extra-curricular activities and/or awards.
- If you are applying for a post that is miles away from your home don't imply "because I need a job and yours would do"! Think about how you might convince them that you've always wanted to live in their area. For example, have you ever travelled to that area of the world? Or is there something that stands out about the area?

General advice on the structure of the personal statement:

- Remember not to use your name in the personal statement.
- Keep to the word limit (1500 words).
- Ensure that you double-check your spelling, grammar & punctuation. Use spell-checker and if possible get someone else to read through your statement.
- Some candidates like to use subheadings or bullet points for each section of the person specification.
- Write in short paragraphs and ensure that each paragraph covers a different point.
- Start each sentence by making your point and then evidence it.
- Be very careful copy and pasting. If you are copy and pasting sections, ensure that you change the Trusts name throughout.

PREPARATION

When you are invited to an interview, the panel has chosen you! Be confident that they like you and just want to know more about you, to see if you would be a good fit for the department. The panel will want to get a feel for your personality, experience, and potential.

Preparation is **KEY**. Before the interview, it is good advice too:

- Review any orthoptic topics that you have not fully grasped as the panel may ask about anything! (e.g. causes of pupil dilation and differential diagnosis).
- It is also important that you look at the Trust's aims and values, and even if you are not directly asked about them, it is good to structure your answers around them when you can.
- Read about the department (e.g. what advanced or expanded scopes of practice do they have? What do the consultants specialise in?).
- Clinical governance and clinical effectiveness are both good to revise before your interview. So look at the definitions of clinical governance and the different aspects. Often you may be asked what clinical governance means to YOU. It is therefore good to develop your 'own definition' of this, as lots of people will just reel off the standard definition.
- Asking about clinical audit is another common interview question. It is excellent if you can describe an audit that you have been involved in either at university or on placement? Also, what is the difference between a clinical audit and research?
- It is good to start developing a CPD portfolio and this can be a useful document to take to interviews with you. You can use the CPD facility on the BIOS website to record your CPD activities. There is also an example document on the HCPC site that you could use as a template (https://www.hcpc-uk.org/globalassets/cpd/sample-profiles/orthoptist---practitioner.pdf).
    - It may be good to include your student feedback from placements so the panel can see why they should hire you, even if the feedback isn't the best you can include development plans to show how you improved or plan to improve.
    - You could also include any literature that you have read, with notes you have made.
- You should have selected cases that you can refer to when discussing points in the interview. For example, to highlight your communication skills and ability to adapt your clinical skills, you could talk about times you have assessed stroke patients or patients with learning disabilities.
- Be prepared for unexpected questions (e.g. current challenges for orthoptics and the NHS).

- Prepare questions to ask the interview panel. For example, will you be supported by the BIOS preceptorship programme? If no, what support will you get? What are the typical adult and paediatric clinic split? What CPD opportunities are available? Try not to ask for information that has already been discussed in the interview.

ON THE DAY OF YOUR INTERVIEW

- Dress appropriately for the interview.
- Remember to check exactly where you need to go once you have arrived at the hospital and arrive early so that you can relax before going into the interview.
- Spend time reviewing your statement and its relevance to the person specification and job description.
- Identify experiences and situations that can prove your abilities to meet the criteria.
- Be prepared to explain to the panel why this role appeals to you, why they should consider you for this role and what makes you stand out over your peers.
- Make sure you know the Trust's aims and values and can discuss why they are important to you.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

- Written tests. At some interviews, you may be asked to do a written test before doing your actual interview. For example, they may ask about diagnosis or management of different conditions, or they may ask you to transpose prescriptions. Remember the interview panel needs to be able to read your writing!
- Presentations. You may also be asked to do a verbal presentation on the day of your interview (the questions may be given before the interview or given on the day).
- Formal question and answer format. Example questions are at the end of this document.

- Rounds of interviews. These types of interviews have a range of stations in the morning, and then the top-scoring applicants have a formal interview in the afternoon.
- Group activities with all applicants. This is to see how well you work as part of a team.
- Virtual interviews. This type of interview may take place on Skype - although you are not meeting the panel face-to-face it is important that you still dress appropriately for the interview, as the panel will still expect you to 'dress for the occasion'.
- Other types of interview formats include involvement with patients or patient groups and 'meet the team'.

WHEN YOU ARE IN THE INTERVIEW

- Try to remain calm! Remember to smile and make eye contact with all members of the panel. Also, watch your body language as you want to convey that you are enthusiastic and interested.
- Some questions in the interview will be competency-based. These types of questions require you to draw on previous experiences and describe examples that demonstrate your competence for the post. The best way to answer these types of questions is to use the 'STAR' technique:
    - **Situation**: Describe the situation.
    - **Task**: Describe what tasks were required of you.
    - **Action**: Tell the interviewer what action you took.
    - **Result**: Conclude by describing the result of that action.
- Remember that it is never a good idea to make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers or previous placement sites you have attended.
- If you are interested in the position, make sure you tell the interviewer this and convey your interest throughout the interview.
- Make sure that you thank the interview panel for their time and consideration of you.

TIPS IF YOU GET STRESSED

- Try to be positive, the interview panel believes you are a good candidate for the post, and they are just trying to see if you would fit into the department.
- Try doing some mindfulness or doing an activity that helps you de-stress. For example, go on a long walk, listen to music or watch TV.
- Some candidates find that running through the interview process from start to finish may help. This may include from the point of waking up and getting dressed, to the journey and arriving at the interview, and running through the actual interview questions. Some find that this may stop them from going into panic mode on the interview day.
- Call the designated person if you are really worried to find out as much as possible about the interview structure. Remember they won't be able to tell you too much as it would be unfair to other candidates.
- Discuss interviews with your peers and anyone you know who is working to see if they have any tips for you.
- Ask placement sites to do mock interviews.

EXAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Tell us about yourself?
- What three words would you use to describe yourself?
- What would others say about you?
- What are your areas for development, or can you tell me about a time you have turned a personal weakness into a strength?
- What are you most proud of?
- What is your greatest achievement?
- How have you prepared for this interview?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?
- Why should we hire you?
- What makes you the best person for the post?
- Tell us about a time you have worked in a team?
- Best qualities of an Orthoptist?

- What do you love most about Orthoptics?
- Are you aware of any recent changes to orthoptic practice?
- Trusts aim and values?
- Tell us about a time you have demonstrated the Trust values or why do you think they are important?
- Tell us about a time you have found it difficult to demonstrate the Trust values, or what Trust value do you think is the hardest to demonstrate.
- Why do you want to work at '….'?
- Why does this post appeal to you?
- *If you are applying for a job in the ROI* – what is your understanding of Sláintecare? (the equivalent to answering a question about the NHS)
- Example of when you have gone above and beyond for a patient?
- Tell us about a time you haven't been able to provide compassionate care.
- How have you dealt with conflict in the past?
- How would you deal with conflicts with patients?
- How would you deal with a complaint from a patient?
- How would you deal with issues between members of staff?
- What would you do if a staff member did something wrong?
- What would you do if a staff member did not seem themselves?
- NHS long term plan applied to orthoptics
- Current challenges for the NHS and/or for the Orthoptic Profession?
- What does clinical governance mean to you?
- Why is clinical governance important and what events or reports do you know about?
- Who regulates good governance and who assesses it?
- How can you demonstrate your effectiveness in your clinical work?
- How will you expect me to support you as a member of my team?
- How could you involve patients in their care?
- What questions would you ask to measure patient experience?