

COMPARISON CHART: CONVENTIONAL INTERVIEW V. THE MMI

The attributes most prized by each interview format – the conventional interview and the MMI – are shaded in the appropriate column.

Applicant's attribute	Conventional interview	MMI
<i>Clarity of purpose</i>	This is the primary focus of the conventional interview. Your job is to demonstrate that you have a clear and powerful motivation to be a doctor, founded on self-understanding and exposure to medical practice.	Most of the MMI questions do not call upon you to demonstrate your clarity of purpose. (But traditional interview questions about your reasons for applying to medical school can and do appear!)
<i>Initiative</i>	Requires initiative. While letting the committee ask the questions, it is up to you to take the lead in presenting your case for going to medical school.	Your role is, comparatively speaking, reactive. You are given a series of situations and invited to respond.
<i>Overall coherence</i>	Calls for a great deal of overall coherence. As the conversation progresses, you want to bolster your thesis with points belonging to different categories of experience – your first career, your Columbia classes, your clinical work.	Calls for less overall coherence. Each eight-minute session stands alone; you need not link them at any point.
<i>Confidence in dealing with authority</i>	Calls for confidence in dealing with authority. You are invited to show poise and self-possession in a social context with few defined tasks to perform.	Adaptability rather than confidence is the reigning quality. More like a test than a conventional interview, the MMI presents you with defined challenges. You figure out which qualities are being sought in a given situation and then show that you possess them.
<i>Quick thinking</i>	Calls for a settled strategy. Before entering the interview, you formulate your basic message or thesis. You then use every opportunity offered by the conversation to get your message across.	Calls for quick thinking in response to multiple situations rather than a single, unvarying message. You try to respond to each scenario in a considered manner, bringing to the fore the specific qualities that it is designed to evoke.
<i>Ethical reasoning, problem solving, critical thinking, diplomatic interaction with difficult people</i>	You may or may not have any chance to demonstrate these skills.	You will almost certainly be required to show that you have some or all of these skills.