

Interview Questions for Internationally Educated Candidates

A) Questions about the candidate's personal and professional experiences in their country of origin

1 Tell me about your personal background and your experience living and working in [country of origin].

This icebreaker question will:

- a) help you highlight some of the cultural similarities and differences that may exist
- b) allow the candidate to acknowledge his/her experiences
- c) allow you to encourage the acceptance of similarities and differences in attitudes, perceptions and behaviours of the two cultures, and
- d) put the candidate at ease

2 You mentioned that you [describe behaviour], and that this may lead to a misunderstanding. How might you modify your behaviour to make yourself better understood by your manager [or patient, or client]?

This question will help you determine if the candidate can adapt to your work environment.

3 Describe the code of conduct in your country of education?

Allot at least 5 minutes for this question

4 Describe a typical day in your home country where you were working as a [profession].

Use this question to find out the number of clients they may have worked with in a typical day, the kind of cases and pressures they may have encountered, etc.

5 Briefly describe the scope of practice in your country of education [or the country in which you were working].

Allot at least 5 minutes for this question

B) Questions about common situations with clients

- 1 How do you know if a client understands what you are telling them? Describe what this would look like. Give examples of past experiences.

This question does not mention anything about communication skills yet helps you determine the candidate's skills. It is also linked to quality of care and may help you understand candidate's commitment to quality of service and patient relationships

- 2 How would you address a client [by first name, last name, title]? How were you addressing your clients [or supervisors, or managers]back home?

Most internationally educated professionals come from cultures that are significantly more hierarchical than Canada. This question will help you determine the level of hierarchy in their home country and provide additional education/acclturation supports if necessary.

- 3 How do you deal with running late when a patient needs extra time? How were you dealing with this back home?

Candidates may be coming from cultures where time is not a significant "item" in the day-to-day lives of individuals. As such, time management and personal productivity may be dealt with differently in different cultures. This question will help you understand the candidate's time management skills and whether the candidate may need some training in this area.

- 4 Tell me about a time when you had to terminate a relationship with a client. Explain the process in detail. [If the answer is "I never did", ask under what circumstance they may decide to do so here and the process in detail.]

The concept of conflict of interest and ethical conduct may mean different things in different cultures. For example, a health professional may be allowed to have a romantic relationship his/her patient in certain countries. This question may help you determine if the candidate would be able to modify his/her behavior given the code of conduct for health professionals in Canada. This question also helps you understand the candidate's quality of service and patient relationships. For example the candidate may say "I was not able to provide the care the patient needed due to x,y,z and I decided to terminate the relationship..."

- 5 Tell me about a time when you received advice from another health care professional about the care you provided to a client. What was the advice, who was it from, and how did you handle it?

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C) Questions about the candidate's professional habits and attitudes

1 Tell me about a couple of your most recent continuing education activities.

The licensure and registration process is a very long one. It may take an individual between 1 to 3 years to register with their relative regulatory body. While some candidates manage to work in their field during this time (perhaps as an aid or an assistant) and keep their knowledge up-to-date, majority of candidates end up working in odd jobs in order to provide for their families. This question will help you determine what the candidate has done since arrival in order to keep his/her knowledge up-to-date.

2 Tell me about the most recent journal you read and when. [Have them describe the specific situation in the journal – should reflect issues common to practice.]

Many candidates may not have the time or financial means to complete continuing education courses. As an employer you still want to ensure that, at a minimum, the candidate has been reading profession/specialty-specific scientific journals since graduation/arrival in Canada.

3 Tell me about some of the approaches you would take to be on time and stay on time?

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4 Give me an example where you demonstrated ability to work in a team environment. Which tasks did you perform most often? Which tasks you tended to perform better or more quickly than other team members?

Almost all employers would ask a question about teamwork during an interview. When it comes to culturally different international candidates, employers need to help them differentiate between their contributions and the contribution of other team members as well as identify what are their personal accomplishments versus the accomplishments of others. This can be challenging at times because, in many cultures, the individual will often look at this exercise as making no sense at all, since they did everything together. By asking the two specific questions after the main question, the candidate may in fact tell you about the tasks for which Canadians would consider them responsible within the team.

5 You come home one day from work and your wife tells you that she can no longer cope with the isolation in the northern community you live in and wants to move to an urban area. What would you do?

Lack of IEHP commitment has been a challenge for many employers in northern / rural Ontario. Many employers have spent a tremendous amount of financial and human resources to recruit, select and hire an IEHP only to lose them after a short period of time. This has been specifically a challenge with IEHPs with families. This question may help you determine the level of the IEHPs commitment.