

Interview Guide for PPS Interviews

Preface

Personnel Placement Service (PPS) is the industry's largest and most widely attended national pharmacy recruitment event held annually at the ASHP Midyear Clinical Meeting. PPS provides an opportunity for applicants and employers to interview one another and participate in critical networking before a formal application and on-site interview.

PPS candidates can request interviews with employers and vice versa via the online platform before the Midyear meeting. These are typically 30-minute, 1:1 interviews, but can be longer and involve multiple interviewers or group sessions depending on the position for which you are interviewing.

This ***Interview Guide for PPS Interviews*** is an informative guide prepared by members from the New Practitioners Forum Resident Advancement Advisory Group. Information included in this guide is here to assist all current and aspiring pharmacists in their PPS preparation.

The following guide is divided into four sections:

- [PPS Participation Checklist](#)
- [Key Considerations for Each Step of PPS](#).
- Helpful advice when it comes to [ASHP PPS First Impressions](#) as it relates to ASHP PPS Interviews with additional tips.
- [Example Timeline](#) of tasks to complete before, during, and after ASHP's PPS sessions when applying for residencies.



Section 1: Navigating PPS

Participation Checklist

Before PPS

- Talk with your pharmacy community (e.g. friends, colleagues, alumni, professors, etc.) to learn more about their own “PPS tips”!
- Schedule interviews
 - Check out: *Tips and Tricks*
 - Be aware of time and space between interviews (back to back interviews can become difficult in both settings).
 - Confirm interview dates, times, and locations - be mindful of the time zones when scheduling interviews.
 - Provide or exchange phone numbers in case of technology issues.
 - If concerned with being late to a PPS session, consider blocking 30 minutes before and after a session on the scheduler to provide adequate “buffer” time.
- Prepare for interviews
 - Check out: *Interview Guidance*
 - Research the program, institution, or company (e.g. look at mission/vision of the institution or company).
 - Be sure to revisit information in the week before PPS, many institutions are currently revamping online information.
 - Prepare questions for the employer (some programs may only use the time for you to ask questions and not provide a program overview).
 - Check the residency website to ensure questions you prepare are not already available and answered.
 - Practice answering interview questions
- Finalize your curriculum vitae (CV)
 - Check out: [ASHP’s CV Development Resources](#)
 - Seek feedback on your CV from peers and mentors.

During PPS

- Dress professionally and comfortably.
- Consider having the following with you:
 - Interview schedule
 - Questions for the program (not found on the website)
 - Padfolio, notebook, or tablet with writing utensils for writing notes about the program
 - CV in a ready-to-send electronic format
 - Nourishments (food, drink)
- Silence or turn-off your phone and other devices
- Smile and relax – you’ve got this!

After PPS

- Send thank you emails, cards, or letters within 24-48 hours of encounter.
- Submit applications.

Section 2: Tips and Tricks for PPS

Creating a PPS Profile

- Fill out the entire PPS profile, although it may be similar to your CV. This is important because it can be a program's first impression of you.
- When creating your profile, block off times you are unavailable (e.g. residency showcase, poster and podium presentations, other interviews you have scheduled, as you schedule them, if not automatically blocked off in the PPS system).

Requesting Interviews

- Use the PPS website on ASHP.org for all interview scheduling unless otherwise directed by PPS vendors or interested residency programs.
 - Be sure to have a professional email address on file with PPS as this may be a way for employers to contact candidates.
- Some employers have limited availability, so do not delay requesting an interview.
 - It is recommended that candidates look at all available opportunities in their area of interest prior to narrowing down PPS interview options.
- Since PPS is an initial introduction, use this session to narrow your list of interested locations.
 - Candidates may schedule as many interviews as they would like.
 - Be mindful of your schedule and do not overbook yourself to avoid fatigue and interview burnout.
- Candidates should create a standard template for requesting PPS interviews that can be modified to individual programs.
- Candidates should always introduce themselves via the PPS website when requesting interviews.
- Candidates must make sure their PPS profiles are updated with the most current information from their CV; employers will use this profile as a quick reference to a candidate's achievements.

Invitations to Interview

- Interviews can be confirmed through the PPS messaging system or via the email candidates provided on their profile.
- Candidates should ensure they leave enough time between interviews to avoid multiple consecutive sessions as some vendors may run behind schedule.
 - 30 minutes between each interview is recommended.
 - To avoid "interview burnout" during PPS, self-reflect on what your personal limit may be.
 - You may prefer more or less interviews depending on your individual goals and availability.



What to Expect During PPS Interviews

Residency programs have different interview formats based on planning and scheduling preferences. In general, there are five types of interview structures at PPS, including a mix of three components. Due to this variety, it is important candidates are mindful of each format so they can prepare accordingly.

Scheduling incorporates different interview formats and length. Expect some program interviews to be 30, 45, 60, or 90 minutes in duration. Also anticipate that interview sessions may be formatted differently between programs.

Interview Components

- Informative: One-way exchange of information about the program to the candidate.
- Candidate interview: Interview panelists ask questions to learn more about the candidate.
- Program interview: Candidate asks questions to learn more about interview panelists and program. These include Q&A sessions with current Program Director/Coordinators, administrative personnel, preceptors, and residents.

Example Layout 1. Informative + candidate interview	
Informative	10-15 mins
Candidate Interview	30 mins

Example Layout 2. Candidate interview	
Brief Program Introduction	5 mins
Candidate Interview	25-30 mins

Example Layout 3. Program interview	
Introductions	5 mins
Program interview	30-45 mins

Example Layout 4. Informative + program interview	
Informative Program Overview	10 mins
Program Interview	30 mins

Example Layout 5. Informative + program interview + candidate interview	
Informative Session	10 mins
Program Interview	15-30 mins
Candidate Interview	20-30 mins

Interview Guidance: Practice

- Be prepared to discuss:
 - Yourself (“Tell me about yourself”)
 - Why you are pursuing this position/specialty
 - Why you identified this program
 - Your short and long-term goals
 - Your strengths and weaknesses
 - What are the top 3-5 qualities you are looking for in a training program when weighing your options?
 - Anything listed on your CV
- Familiarize yourself with performance based interview (PBI) questions, which are scenario-based questions highlighting your past actions and experiences
 - When answering PBI questions, remember the STAR (or “STAR-So what”) method to help structure your response:
 - S = Situation
 - T = Task
 - A = Action
 - R = Result
 - [So what = emphasize what you took away/learned from the experience]
- Practice your responses in a mock interview with a friend or mentor and get feedback on your responses as well as on your nonverbal communication.
 - Practice with the [ASHP Interview Prep Video Platform](#) (free for ASHP members).

At the Interview

- Dress professionally.
- Login 5 – 15 minutes early.
- Relax and be yourself; remember that you are interviewing the program/institution to decide if it is a right fit for you.
- Collect contact information at the end of the interview so you can follow-up after the interview to thank the interviewer.
- Take notes after the interview to remember how you felt right after the interview when it is fresh in your mind.

Additional Resources:

- [Interview Questions with Follow-Ups \(Sara White Blog\)](#)
- [Sample of PBI Questions](#)



Section 3: Putting Your Best Foot Forward

Content

Below includes a list of notable positive and negative impressions conveyed by PPS interview coordinators in the past. This should not serve as a comprehensive list, as other factors should be taken into account before, during, and after interviews.

Examples of Positive and Negative Impressions During ASHP PPS Interviews		
Domain	Positive Examples	Negative Examples
Professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Arriving early. ● Engaging personality. ● Wearing a nametag. ● Open to other areas/experiences, in addition to expressing specific interest areas. ● Confidence (e.g., eye contact, firm handshake when in-person). ● Positive attitude (e.g. smiling) ● Clear and concise communication throughout the encounter. Ability to carry normal conversation about non-pharmacy topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wearing unprofessional attire. ● Not being flexible due to the amount of space and time. ● Being overconfident. ● Robotic, rehearsed responses. ● Communication that is too informal. ● Giving the impression that another program is more desirable. ● Not giving the ones you're using as "practice interviews" your full attention. ● Minimal eye contact, distracted, or visually not engaged or listening during the interview. ● Narrow-mindedness when it comes to early career goals.
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrating knowledge about the program, after having done research. ● Having good questions prepared (e.g. about site-specific opportunities with rationale). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not reviewing the website and asking questions that are on the website. ● No research into the program and people; uncertain about specialty they want to pursue during PGY2 PPS interview ● Candidates not blocking off time on their schedule where they are busy, leading to double booking and cancellation.
Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good listening skills. ● Readily shared interest and experience that is applicable to the program. ● Having thoughtful responses (i.e. responses are specific, have depth, and illustrate the contribution that the interviewee made). ● Providing SPECIFIC examples in response to questions, rather than hypothetical "I would do XYZ in this scenario". ● Bringing a CV to share or having one readily available to send. ● Drawing from experiences from your CV throughout the interview. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Being late or not showing up at all. ● If late (conflicts happen), showing a lack of remorse or explanation. ● Talking for the entire time ● Name-dropping. ● Long-winded responses that lack depth. ● Having no questions for the interview panel. ● Surface-level questions (asking about something answered on their website).



Advice During PPS Encounters

Advice for PPS Encounters	
Domain Tips	Why It's Important
Professionalism	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Block off times you are busy (i.e. during own residency showcase, presentations, other meetings/interviews).<ul style="list-style-type: none">This also includes interviews scheduled outside of PPS as these do not appear on your profile.	This will help interview coordinators schedule times with selected candidates and maximize their time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Avoid "shopping" in the interview environment (i.e. interviewing with no intention of applying)	Expressing or conveying that you have no interest in applying may be perceived poorly by interview panelists.
Preparation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Exchange cell phone numbers with interviewer ahead of time, if possible, in the event of technology malfunction.	It shows you are willing to be flexible.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Plan for interview preparation between the next interview. If allotted time for the current interview is up, please conclude the session so you are not late for the next interview.	Displays time management skills.
Execution	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">When residents provide <i>specific</i> examples to questions rather than hypothetical "I would do XYZ in this scenario". The better answer to this question is "when a similar situation came up [describe situation], I did this" even if what you did maybe wasn't the most correct you can self-identify and say looking back I would have done things differently and explain how.	This is an excellent way to answer the question and will convey a lot of insight and introspection.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Have questions prepared about site-specific opportunities.	It displays candidates did their homework and are interested in a program for a specific reason.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Instead of asking no questions or surface-level questions, come prepared to ask questions about the program that go beyond staffing/weekend staffing.	Asking more about additional experiences demonstrates you have sincere interest in the program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Be mindful of your responses when speaking about other programs or opportunities.	It is likely that RPDs in different specialties or administrative personnel know one another.



Section 4: Example Timeline

September

- Week #1: Begin researching prospective programs.
- Week #2: Review and update your CV (don't forget about [ASHP CV Resource Center](#)).
- Week #3: List preferred learning experiences.
- Week #4: Build a table including prospective programs.

October

- Week #1: Register for PPS and build PPS profile.
- Week #2: Identify prospective programs for PPS interviews.
- Week #3: Schedule interviews.
- Week #4: Research programs (exclude/include); continue updating CV.

November

- Week #1: Coordinate time for interview practice.
- Week #2: Interview practice.
- Week #3: Schedule interviews.
- Week #4: Continue researching programs.

December

- Week #1: Interview preparation; Conduct Midyear PPS interviews.
- Week #2: Interview preparation; Conduct Midyear PPS interviews.
- Week #3: Begin writing letter(s) of intent (if applicable).
- Week #4: Finalize letter(s) of intent; submit application(s).

January

- Week #1: Submit application(s).
- Week #2: Schedule program interviews.
- Week #3: Schedule program interviews.
- Week #4: Schedule program interviews.