

Values Based Recruitment



How to Design and Deliver Multiple Mini Interviews for Values Based Recruitment

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Work Psychology Group has over 20 years' experience of designing and evaluating assessment and recruitment methodologies for high stakes selection in healthcare, finance, engineering and professional services. The team is made up of experienced consultants who have worked in both research and industry, giving a unique blend of organisational and academic expertise, ensuring the latest research can be turned into practical, innovative solutions. For more information, please see www.workpsychologygroup.com.

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Overview

The following guidance is designed to highlight key considerations NHS employing organisations and admissions staff within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) may need to take into account in the delivery of Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs). It is intended to be used as a guide to assist with the planning, development and implementation of selection activities whilst recognising the need for individuals to tailor their approach to meet the needs of their own organisation.

It is recommended that utilisation of recruitment methods for assessment of values need to be considered with regards to the national core requirements, as set out in the national VBR framework. This recommends that an individual structured interview (including MMIs) to assess values must be conducted as part of the overall recruitment process to effectively recruit for values. This may occur in isolation or as part of a wider process such as a selection centre or in conjunction with a screening method such as an SJT.

See the [HEE website](#) for more information about the national core requirements and to learn more about structured interviews.

Summary

- Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs) are considered to show good reliability and validity when designed appropriately, and applicant and interviewer reactions also tend to be positive.
- It is important, for reasons of validity, that the design of MMI stations is closely mapped to outputs of a thorough role analysis from which key selection criteria can be clearly defined.
- MMI stations may consist of standard interview questions, scenarios or dilemmas, task-based activities or role-play interactions. Consider the length of each station and the resources available in order to determine the most appropriate station format.
- An MMI question bank can be developed from which managers can select MMI questions or scenarios to create an MMI circuit. Typically including a higher number of stations reflects positively on reliability.
- It is important to pilot MMI content and scoring frameworks to ensure that they are fit for purpose; MMI content may also need to be refreshed periodically to ensure it remains up to date and reflects the values and competencies considered of importance for the role.
- MMIs can be resource intensive; they require a number of assessors, multiple rooms for delivery and a facilitator to coordinate an efficient schedule of rotation through stations.

What is a Multiple Mini Interview?

A Multiple Mini Interview (MMI) is a form of structured interview and provides a way of structuring the delivery of an interview. MMIs comprise a series of short interview stations, each of which employs a single standardised short interview scenario and a single assessor (interviewer). Applicants rotate through the various MMI stations, responding to the interview scenario or question. Applicants are rated by assessors at each station using a standardised scoring framework. MMI stations are traditionally interview-based where applicants are required to respond to an interview question or scenario. They can however involve other elements such as role-play interactions or task-based activities.

MMI stations are independent and typically each measure one trait or competency area. There are usually between six and ten stations within an MMI. Applicants are often allowed time to read the question or scenario before entering the room or attending at the station to provide a response to the assessor. For example, an applicant may be allowed up to two minutes to read and consider the question and then given up to eight minutes to respond to the assessor at the station.

What is the evidence base for MMIs?

MMIs show good reliability and validity when designed appropriately, with reliability increasing with a higher number of interview stations. Applicant and interviewer reactions also tend to be positive. For higher validity, the design of MMI stations should be closely mapped to outputs of a thorough role analysis, as this defines key selection criteria. There is evidence to show that MMIs can be more advantageous than traditional interviews because the multi-rater assessment offers good reliability, and interviewer-applicant compatibility is unlikely to have a negative effect as a result of applicants being assessed by multiple interviewers^{1 2}. Due to the multiple components of an MMI, they are more resource intensive than other selection methods and therefore may be considered more appropriate in selection for certain roles.

For a more in-depth summary of the evidence-base relating to MMIs please see the **VBR literature review** available on the [HEE website](#).

What makes an MMI values based?

A values based MMI consists of independent interview stations particularly focused on understanding an applicant's values. Each station may be designed to assess an individual value considered relevant and of importance to the role in question. The format of the values based MMI will be similar to that of a traditional MMI in that a series of independent stations with a single scenario or question and single assessor will exist. However the stations in a values based MMI may be designed to focus on exploration of an applicant's learning and

¹ Eva K, Reiter H and Rosenfeld J et al. (2004a). The relationship between interviewers' characteristics and ratings assigned during a multiple mini-interview. *Academic Medicine*, 79(6), 602-609.

² Roberts C, Walton M and Rothnie I et al.(2008). Factors affecting the utility of the multiple mini-interview in selecting applicants for graduate-entry medical school. *Medical Education*, 42, 396-404.

reflection in order to provide insight into their core values. In some cases values may be assessed as part of only a selection of stations within a circuit in which other stations are designed to assess other competency-based criteria.

Some MMI stations might involve consideration of an ethical dilemma whereby applicants need to provide an explanation of their reasoning in relation to addressing the dilemma. These scenarios can be beneficial for providing insight into values as they focus on an exploration of the underlying drivers of the applicant's behaviour. Furthermore, standardised, probing questions designed to explore the reasons for an applicant's behaviour can provide further insight in relation to core values and what an applicant considers to be important.

Key considerations for implementing an MMI for VBR

When looking to implement or refine structured interviews within an organisation, there are a number of key considerations to be aware of. Recognition of such considerations will enable the delivery of an effective VBR approach.

Definition of key criteria

- The effectiveness of an MMI is based on a thorough and accurate identification of the relevant knowledge, skills, attributes and values associated with successful performance in the role or course. A role analysis should be used to accurately identify the criteria to be assessed as part of the MMI.
- The relevant criteria should be reflected in entry requirements, person specifications, job descriptions and attraction material so that applicants are aware of what they will be assessed against.
- The nature of the MMI will provide insight into an applicant's communication and listening skills as well their effectiveness in managing under pressure as the challenging process requires quick thinking, adaptability and the need to communicate key points in a short space of time.
- The criteria should be developed into specific indicators describing positive and negative demonstrations of behaviour. Scoring frameworks for each station in the MMI should be developed with indicators for the relevant competency or values. These frameworks are used to evaluate the evidence provided by applicants at each station.
- By defining the criteria via a thorough role analysis, fairness in the process is enhanced as all applicants applying for the same role are assessed against one standard set of relevant criteria and indicators.

Standardisation of MMI documentation

- All applicants should experience the same process in terms of its delivery and execution. This ensures a fair, reliable and defensible process in accordance with

best practice selection principles.

- The development of standardised MMI documentation enables the consistent delivery of the MMI. This includes guidance for conducting the process overall and at each station, a station template (or questioning framework), a scoring framework and reporting template.
- For each station a template or questioning framework should be developed. This will contain the standardised interview question or scenario and associated probe questions for the station in question.

Development of the MMI

- It is important to consider the level of the role being recruited for when generating scenarios or questions for MMIs, as well as mapping to the key criteria identified for the role.
- Managers may find it beneficial to develop a bank of MMI scenarios or questions which can be drawn upon to create an MMI circuit of stations for particular roles.
- If a bank of questions or scenarios is developed, it is important to consider that questions or scenarios may need adapting and developing in relation to their level and complexity based on the role being recruited for.
- It is recommended that, where possible, stakeholders, including staff and service users, are consulted to inform the development and refinement of MMI scenarios or questions. Involving staff and potentially services users will provide insight into how values are demonstrated in practice and what might be expected of successful applicants.
- Typically, MMIs consist of structured interview questions at each station. Assessors should be provided with a series of standardised probing questions to use during the interview at each station. Values based MMI questions should be designed to assess applicants in relation to an applicant's given situation and why they made the choices they did. Probing questions can be designed to provide insight into an applicant's values.
- Example MMI questions are provided on the following page for illustration purposes only. It is important to ensure that questions and indicators are developed based on an analysis of the specific target role in order to ensure relevance.
- In some cases ethical dilemmas or scenarios are also presented for applicants to discuss with the assessor. For example, an applicant may be presented with a scenario and asked to discuss the ethical considerations or asked to explain what actions they would take to address the situation.
- MMIs can also involve an interactive role-play or task. Key considerations for

developing such exercises and the use of role-players are highlighted in the **Guidance for Selection Centres** available on the [HEE website](#).

- An MMI timetable or schedule will need to be developed. This should take into account the length of time at each station, the order in which applicants attend a station, the length of time required between stations and allocation of assessors to specific stations.
- Ideally adequate time should be allowed within the timetable for assessors to score an applicant immediately after they have completed the station and prior to meeting the next applicant to avoid distortion.

Table 1 Example MMI station

Station one question	Please give an example of a time when you have successfully led a team to achieve their objectives; what approach did you take and why?	
Probing questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the outcome? • What did you learn as a result of the experience? • What would you have done differently and why? 	
Criteria/ value	Collaboration: Works effectively with others, building trust and mutual respect; seeks to work in partnership with others, building on ideas and facilitating joint decision-making (mapped to NHS Constitution value 'Working together for patients')	
Indicators	Positive indicators	Negative indicators
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is aware of impact on others • Considers needs of others when planning action • Seeks input from others • Encourages cooperation within the team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is unaware of impact on others • Is dismissive of others' input and views • Discourages a participative approach, taking the lead or allowing other team members to demonstrate undue influence • Seeks to make independent decisions

Table 2 Example MMI station

Station two question	Describe a situation where you have introduced change or refined work methods to improve performance.	
Probing questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the outcome? • Why was the change important? • How did you overcome any challenges? 	
Criteria/ value	Innovation: Proactively develops new ideas for solutions to work-based challenges; is creative in problem-solving and seeks to find novel ways of improving work methods.	
Indicators	Positive indicators	Negative indicators
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies opportunities for improvement • Is enthusiastic about change and new ideas • Generates unique or novel solutions to solve problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fails to act on opportunities for improvement • Sees issues as barriers rather than problems to solve • Has difficulty generating novel solutions to solve problems

Assessor training

- Assessors should be trained to deliver selection and assessment activities according to best practice principles. Assessors should also be specifically trained in the techniques and approach for delivery of the values based MMI. Training should be regularly refreshed to ensure skills and knowledge remains up to date to enhance reliability of the selection process.
- Following formal training, assessors should familiarise themselves with the standardised MMI documentation associated with the target role, in particular the behavioural indicators and key criteria differentiating effective and ineffective performance in each of the stations.
- It is beneficial for assessors to be familiar with the overall MMI process. In addition, they may also need time during training dedicated to the specific station they will be attending to ensure they understand their role and the requirements of the station.

Stages of the MMI process

An overview of the key stages involved in developing and delivering a MMI is provided to support managers considering the implementation of an MMI. Individual organisations will need to tailor their approaches according to local needs and available resources. The following information is therefore provided for as a guide to outline some of the practical considerations.

MMI planning

Before delivering an MMI it is important to ensure sufficient planning is conducted to ensure effective delivery within the required timescales. As part of the planning process it may be useful to consider the following:

- If introducing MMIs as a new method of selection it may be beneficial to pilot the process and MMI content first. This will provide evidence of the reliability and validity of the process and determine the extent to which questions or scenarios and the associated scoring framework is effective.
- Ensure the entry requirements or person specification and job description are up to date, reflective of current/future needs, and aligned to the criteria being assessed for and the organisational values.
- Identify an appropriate venue for the MMI to be conducted. This may be using existing facilities in-house or may involve use of an external venue.
 - Consider the space and number of rooms required. Typically a room will be required for each individual station as well as an assessor room and an applicant room or breakout area for applicants to base themselves.
 - Where an external venue for delivery is required, consider who takes responsibility for arranging this.
- Identify assessors trained in the delivery of the MMI and ensure their availability. This should be done as far in advance as possible due to the number of assessors required to deliver the MMI.
 - It is important to ensure assessors are engaged with the MMI and process from the beginning. Delivery of the MMI is intensive and assessors need to be able to remain positive and engaged throughout a period of intense delivery.
- Is the MMI being used in combination with any other selection methods? If so, consider the weighting of the MMI in the overall selection process. Evaluation activity (see below) may be used to help inform the weighting of different selection methods.
- Consider how applicants will receive feedback from the MMI. Will applicants be provided with a written report? If so, the scoring framework for each station may need space for assessors to capture a written summary of performance or an explanation of any ratings.
- What are the timescales for the recruitment process? For example, when does the applicant need to be in post and how long will it take to complete a recruitment cycle (i.e. attraction, screening and selection)?

- The approach to attracting applicants and required advertisement for the target role.

MMI preparation

- In preparation for the MMI, the standardised documentation should be developed and provided to assessors in advance of the process. Standardised documentation will include guidance for delivery of the MMI, scoring frameworks and reporting template if applicable.
 - Given the intensive nature of MMI delivery, it is important to ensure assessors are well trained in the delivery of the process and familiar with the scoring for each station. Ensure any necessary training is scheduled in advance of delivery of the MMI.
- Relevant questions will need to be developed, or selected from an existing MMI question bank and refined as necessary for the specific role. It may be useful to consider the following:
 - How many criteria are being assessed?
 - Are these a combination of values and competencies?
 - Will each station assess generic and specific values/competencies?
 - What probe questions are required to support the main question?
 - How do existing MMI questions need adapting to meet the level and complexity of the role?
- Have any relevant equality and diversity issues been identified and attended to? (See 'Equality and Diversity' section of **Choosing a selection method for Values Based Recruitment** for more information, available on the [HEE website](#)).
- Consider the length of individual stations and the length of time in between stations. Ensure timing in relation to breaks for assessors is also considered in the design of an MMI circuit.
- Ensure that the positive and negative behavioural indicators or key criteria have been identified as part of the scoring framework for each MMI station. This is used to assist with objective evaluation of an applicant's performance.
- Following screening, ensure that the relevant information is distributed to applicants. This may include an overview of the process, focus and purpose of the MMI and details of the assessment venue.

Conducting the MMI

- It is often beneficial to arrive at the venue with sufficient time to check all the rooms that will be utilised for delivery of the MMI. It is important to check room layout as well as temperature and noise (which may impact on the applicant experience).
- Best practice assessment principles (FORCE) should be followed when conducting the MMI.
 - **F – Familiarise:** Ensure that you are familiar with the MMI materials to be used as well as the entry requirements or job description/person specification and values of importance for the role.
 - **O – Observe:** The key skill in observing is not to make judgements, but to be aware of what the applicant is saying or doing. Be aware of possible assessment bias.
 - **R – Record:** Make written notes of the applicant's responses and behaviour during the MMI. An observation/recording sheet should be used.
 - **C – Classify:** Evidence of the required criteria and values should be identified through examining the information provided in the applicant's responses. Some comments will include evidence - these should be identified. Some comments may not be directly relevant to the target criteria.
 - **E – Evaluate:** The information identified in the response now needs to be evaluated. Look at the scoring indicators to decide on the quality of the evidence relevant to each value.
- Begin the MMI by welcoming the applicants and providing an overview of the MMI process and timetable. Ensure that the applicants are at ease, and allow time for building rapport.
 - Ensure any housekeeping rules (for example, fire alarms, use of mobile phones) are covered as part of an introduction to the MMI. Remind applicants of the importance of the time restrictions associated with the MMI process and emphasise the need to avoid delays in moving between stations.
 - Ensure assessors and facilitators are appropriately briefed; this may be done prior to the start of the MMI. If using an external venue, it may be necessary to liaise with conferencing staff to ensure refreshments are delivered accordingly and the MMI is not disturbed during delivery.
 - Ensure applicants are informed if audio recordings will be used to assist with recall of information. Applicants' consent to being recorded should be obtained prior to commencement.

- Assessors will be expected to take notes during the MMI yet also engage appropriately with the applicant and ensure that the applicant feels comfortable and listened to. Assessors should be skilled and practised in capturing accurate notes whilst maintaining appropriate levels of eye contact. It can be helpful for assessors to explain to applicants that they will be taking notes at the beginning of the MMI and therefore to expect occasional brief pauses.
- During the MMI, it is important to adhere closely to the MMI timetable to avoid delays and to ensure applicants move between the stations without disruption as the delivery of the MMI will create an impression of the organisation for applicants. It is the facilitator's role to ensure applicants are moving between stations accordingly.
- Ensure the time between the stations is considered as assessors will use this to finalise their notes immediately after an applicant leaves the station.
- Ensure the applicant leaves at the end of the interview with a clear understanding of the next stages of the process and when they might be contacted again.

Decision making and feedback

- Based on the notes taken during a station, evaluate the applicant's performance using the associated scoring framework. Ensure all scoring information is complete and any summary comments are recorded.
- Combine the output of the MMI with information obtained from any other assessments used as part of the overall selection process in order to inform selection decisions.
- Once applicants have been informed of the selection decision, ensure they are provided with appropriate feedback. Successful applicants may be given feedback as part of their induction to the new role.
- How feedback is provided to applicants should be defined as part of the interview planning and may be provided verbally or in writing. Provide constructive feedback to the applicant using examples gathered throughout the selection process. Be sure to describe the applicant's performance based on the behavioural indicators when providing feedback on the MMI.
- Where possible it is recommended that verbal feedback is provided to applicants. This is more efficient for allowing the applicant an opportunity to respond to the feedback.

Evaluation, monitoring and review

- It is important to consider monitoring the outcomes arising from an MMI to determine its success. Planning for monitoring, reviewing and validating the effectiveness of an MMI should form part of the initial project planning phase. Considerations for

evaluating the outcomes of an MMI are as follows:

- An initial review of the MMI should examine whether it is fit for purpose. For example, are the indicators for competencies and values clearly defined for assessment; are assessors operating in accordance with best practice principles (FORCE as outlined above).
- It may be beneficial to have observers oversee delivery of the process for quality assurance processes and to ensure that the MMI is being delivered in accordance with best practice.
- A review of the content of MMI stations is also important. Consideration should be given to whether stations provided applicants with sufficient opportunity to demonstrate the intended competencies or values (for example, is the time allowed for each station and in between appropriate). Some stations may need to be refreshed periodically to ensure that they remain up to date.
- Differentiating between applicants' performances in an MMI should be on the basis of demonstrated attributes only. It is important to be aware of differential performance associated with membership of a particular ethnic group, gender or other protected characteristic.
- It is beneficial to consider the approach for data gathering and statistical evaluation of the MMI process to determine the extent to which the MMI measured what it intended to measure. Procedures for efficiently and accurately capturing data should be put in place in order to inform evaluation which will determine the validity and reliability of the MMI.
- Further information regarding the criteria which can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of selection methods can be found in the **literature review** for VBR.

Example case studies

Example case studies from universities from across England who have used MMIs can be viewed on the [HEE website](#), including:

The [University of Worcester](#) uses MMIs as part of the selection process for the recruitment of **Nursing** students. As this case study involves a variety of assessment formats (for example interactive/group/written exercises), which each assess multiple competencies, it could also be categorised as a Selection Centre. (See [Guidance on Selection Centres](#) for more information).

The [University of Leeds](#) uses MMIs as part of the selection process for **Medical students**.

The [University of Surrey](#) uses MMIs in selection of students for their healthcare courses.

[Kingston University and St George's, University London](#) has been using MMIs as part of recruitment and selection onto programmes within the **Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education** since 2011.