

APPLYING FOR MEDICINE DEGREES: A STEP BY STEP GUIDE 16-19



Key Subject Pointers

Limited Places Only just over 30 of over a hundred universities have medical schools. There are currently only around 8000 places available, 10% of which will be taken by post-graduates.

Length of Course: Typically training for medicine takes 5 years which means five years of university fees

Be Certain You need to be absolutely sure that you are in a strong position to apply for medicine and that you are being realistic about the exam grades you can achieve. It is one of the most competitive university courses. A significant proportion of students receive no offers at all even though predicted at least three A grades. You will need A*AA at A level for Oxford and A*A*A for Cambridge, for example and at least three As for other medical schools with an A* for many.

Chances of an Offer Around 60% of all applicants will get no offer in a typical year. At Oxford little more than 10% get an offer and around 15% at Cambridge.

More than Grades Needed Academic ability and getting the grades is not enough, however. You will need to demonstrate the ability to be sensitive and caring towards others, as well as other relevant qualities and provide evidence of this.

Aptitude Tests You may have to take either the BMAT or UKCAT selection test.

Can You Compete? Think very carefully about your application. Make sure you fulfil all the requirements in terms of GCSE grades expected, predicted grades and work experience so that you put yourself into a competitive position. Four of your five UCAS course choices will be for medicine (plus one other such as Biomedical Science or a straight science course, for example) You can easily end with four rejections if your application is unrealistic and over-ambitious. Read this useful article in The Daily Telegraph:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/universityeducation/10162238/Medical-school-applications-maximise-your-medical-mojo.html>

Qualities Needed Qualities needed to work in medicine will be: integrity, confidentiality, caring, compassion, commitment, responsibility, and a spirit of enquiry. Be able to provide evidence that you have these qualities.

GCSEs Check on the GCSE requirements for different courses which can be very specific, Birmingham, for example. You will almost certainly be required to get at least a grade B in English Language and Maths.

Med Course Structures Find out about the different ways in which medical courses are structured: the traditional course, problem based learning and integrated courses, to find which will suit you.

Be Realistic about Becoming a Doctor Start your research early to make sure that you are clear about the realities of being a doctor. A very useful website is the Leeds University *So You Want to be Doctor* site:

<http://www.wanttobeadoctor.co.uk/>

Are Foundation Courses a Way in? Some medical schools offer foundation medicine courses to widen access to medical school. These are aimed at people from particular socio-economic backgrounds or those without experience in studying science. Do not treat them as an insurance choice in case you do not get an offer for a mainstream medical course. You will probably get rejected if you do this. Make absolutely sure that you meet the course criteria for a foundation course.

HE Course Profile

<http://university.which.co.uk/subjects/medicine>



In Year 11

A Level Choices Think carefully about your A level choices in the Sixth Form. The Russell Group (most of the leading universities) advice on A level choices for medicine is as follows:

ESSENTIAL: If you do Chemistry, Biology and one from Mathematics or Physics you will keep all the medical schools open to you. If you do Chemistry and Biology you will keep open the vast majority. If you do Chemistry and one from Mathematics and Physics you will limit your range of choices much more.

USEFUL: Further Mathematics or a contrasting (non-science) subject, Computing/Computer Science

What you Need to Start Doing as Early as You Can

At the end of Year 12 and beginning of Year 13 you will be required to write an A4 length Personal Statement to accompany your university application. Find out more about the Personal Statement here:

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/when-apply/writing-personal-statement>

Make sure that when you write your UCAS Personal Statement that you have something relevant and interesting to write about. There are suggestions for activities you should start and websites you should visit as early in Year 12 as you can towards the end of this guide. Use them to enrich your knowledge of your chosen course and to get involved in what universities call super-curricular activities.



Early in Year 12

Begin to Gather Key Information Visit www.ucas.com and write a list of all the universities offering medicine. Create a grid with the following headings and record the information found on the web site: GCSEs, A Levels, experiences outside the classroom, aptitude test.

Student Room Use the Student Room medicine stalker www.thestudentroom.com to note the selection test (BMAT/UKCAT) score which tends to be given an offer, so you know which universities to apply to based on your eventual score. Be careful this website is not always up to date.

Deadlines Remember your deadline is 15 October in Year 13 – so your key experiences need to have taken place by this time. Your school/college deadline for completing your application will often be around 20 September to give the centre time to process your form so that UCAS receive your form no later than the 15 October.

Early in Year 12:



Work Experience It is very important to start work experience as early in Year 12 as you can. 3-4 weeks or more may be needed but you should look at the specific requirements of particular medical schools. Use the PDF *Work experience in the NHS* which is on the NHS website to help you with your placements:

<http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/explore-by-who-you-are/teachers-and-careers-advisers/work-experience/>

Variety of Work Experience Get a variety of different experiences in variety of settings: hospital work, GP, socially different areas. Evidence of ‘sustained voluntary commitment’ is very important, for example,

Record Your Observations Make sure that you are clear about what you have gained from your placements, ask intelligent questions, perhaps keep a log-book or diary to record insights and experiences so that you remember them when you write your personal statement or are called to interview.

Work Experience Guide The Severn Faculty (Bristol Area) of the Royal College of General practitioners has produced an extremely useful 28 page guide to work experience including a work book to fill in at your placements.

There is also a work experience guide on the Student Room website:

http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/medicine_work_experience



From January of Year 12:

Open Days Look at www.ucas.com from January in Year 12 as the Open Days often go live from this point. You can secure the most favourable dates e.g. weekend dates so that you don't miss lessons (missing lessons means its harder to get the grades). <http://www.opendays.com/> is a very

useful website which provides an open days calendar as well as advice on choosing your visits.

Plan Open Days Early Don't leave your open days planning till May or June in Year 12, the best dates may have been and gone.

Clear Aims Make sure that you have some clear aims and key questions before you attend an open day.

Record Keep a record observations and insights in a journal/diary as well as questions you might want to ask at the time or at interview.

Virtual Open Days Some medical schools, Warwick for example, also have virtual open days on their website. This does not mean you should not go on the actual open day.

Early June in Year 12



UCAS APPLY OPENS UCAS Apply system becomes available online.

July to September in Year 12: The Personal Statement

Start Early Make sure that when you write your UCAS Personal Statement early in Year 13 that you have something relevant and interesting to write about by this time in your A level career. See enrichment activities below. At least 75% of your statement should be about medical related issues

Personal Statement Advice You will find some sound personal statement advice for Medicine at this link:

<http://university.which.co.uk/advice/personal-statement-advice-medicine-students>

Med School Expectations Check with the medical schools to which you are applying to see what they expect in the personal statement. Some will be quite specific about things the want you to write about and will expect to see it.

Avoid Clichés Don't begin your personal statement with clichés. Ask yourself whether this is something anybody could have written. If so write something original. Make it clear that you understand the realities and pressure of working as a doctor

Do Not List When writing about work experience say how long you spent on each placement but also make clear what you got from the experiences you had. Don't just list what you did. The more interesting, original and perceptive your observations, the better.

Reading Similarly with books or articles you have read. Say what you found particularly interesting and why you found it interesting and how you have tried to explore the issue further.

Area of Interest You may want to write about a particular area of medicine that has grabbed your interest. Make sure you have something to say about it if asked at interview.

Writing about your Work Experience It is important to say what you learnt from your work experience and to write about the insights which were gained. For some good advice on how to do this go to:

<http://university.which.co.uk/advice/personal-statements-how-to-make-your-work-experience-really-count>

Online

The Student Room website has useful advice on medicine personal statements:

http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/advice_for_people_writing_their_medicine_personal_statements

There is also very good personal statement advice on the Oxford Medical Sciences website including an anatomy of a personal statement:

<http://www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/study/medicine/pre-clinical/applying/anatomy-of-ps>



From July in Year 12: Selection Tests

Practice Make sure that you take every opportunity to practise these before you take them either online or by using one of the books that supports applicants with tests

BMAT You will find further information together with useful videos discussing the BMAT test at:

<http://www.admissionstesting.org/our-services/medicine-and-healthcare/bmat/about-bmat/>

UKCAT:

<https://www.themedicportal.com/application-guide/ukcat/>

Selection Test Books

Get into Medical School. 400 BMAT Practice Questions .by Lydia Campbell and Olivier Picard

Preparing for the BMAT: The Official Guide to the Biomedical Admissions Test

Another useful source of help and support is the book Passing the UKCAT and BMAT: Advice, Guidance and Over 600 Questions for Revision and Practice, by Rosalie Hutton, Glenn Hutton , Felicity Taylor

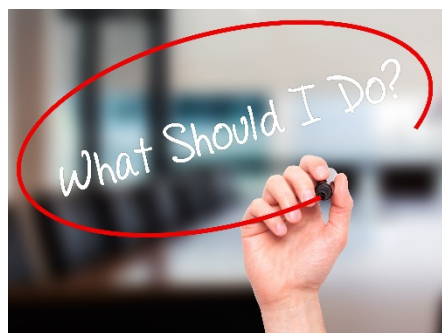
How are Test Results Used? Different universities will use the results of selection in different ways. Check this with the universities to which you are applying

Book Test Early Try and book your UKCAT test before you need to submit your UCAS form so that you have plenty of time to prepare and you know your score.

The score can guide which medical school you apply to. Have a high score choice list and a lower score list ready

Test Prep Courses Kaplan Test Prep offer test preparation courses and some free resources both for BMAT and UKCAT. These include a free UCKAT starter pack and sample questions for both tests:

<http://www.kaptest.co.uk/>



15 October in Year 13:

UCAS Deadline Make sure you have finished your application well before 15 October deadline for medical applications so that your advisers can check it and write a reference.

October to March in Year 13: The Interview

Interviews take place over an extended period and at different times for different medical schools, sometimes as late as March/April. The dates will depend on the medical schools you to which you have applied.

Science Knowledge Your science knowledge and ability will be tested in many medical interviews especially at Oxford and Cambridge where it will play a major part in the selection process.

Useful Website The ISCMedical website is good for interview training and resources:

<http://www.medical-interviews.co.uk/c-48-med-school-entry.aspx>



Seven Key Medicine Interview Tips



Know what it is like to be a doctor

See suggested reading for books about the realities of being a doctor

Read the BMA website Secret Doctor Blog

<http://bma.org.uk/news-views-analysis/the-secret-doctor?page=3>

Be able to show what you got from work experience

Know about the course and the structure of medical training at undergraduate and post-graduate levels

Be able to provide evidence of your ‘sustained voluntary commitment’

Think carefully about ethical issues

Prepare well thought through personal examples which demonstrate such things as your ability to take initiative, effective teams skills, leadership skills, caring attitude, ability to be sensitive, your awareness of ethical issues which arose on placements, ability to seek help when needed.

Be able to talk convincingly about your Personal Statement

Multi Mini Interviews (MMIs) Make sure you find out about multi-mini interviews which an increasing number of medical schools use as part of the selection process. This link to St George's Medical School gives an insight into MMIs

<https://www.themedicportal.com/application-guide/medical-school-interview/medicine-interview-tips-2018-19/st-georges-medicine-interview-tips/>

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=multi+mini+interviews

Ethical Issues Ethical issues in medicine frequently come up in interviews. Be ready to discuss ethical dilemmas that you observed on your work experience. The Ministry of Ethics website is excellent for video case material and support material on medical ethics issues which often come up in interviews:

<http://ministryofethics.co.uk/>

An extremely useful book is the excellent *Medical Ethics: A Very Short Introduction* by Tony Hope, Oxford University Press

GMC Website The General Medical Council website has excellent material on good medical practice which is aimed at doctors but is equally useful in helping medical applicants think about some important issues they may be asked about in interviews:

<http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/index.asp?WT.ac=WBHM130422>

In the *Decision Tools and Other Learning Materials* section of the GMC website, there are invaluable case studies which address confidentiality issues:

<http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/20473.asp>

The Good Medical Practice in Action section of the website provides excellent interactive case studies:

http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/case_studies.asp

How do Interviews Vary? The Student Room website has a guide to interviews at different medical schools, but be careful because it may not be up to date. Check with the individual university website:

http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/What_you_should_expect_at_a_medical_school_interview

Very Useful Books

- *Medical School Interviews: a Practical Guide to Help You Get That Place at Medical School (150 Questions Analysed)* by George Lee and Olivier Picard (Make sure you get the 2nd Edition)
- *Multiple Mini Interviews (MMI) for Medical School* by Dawn Sellars

Lists of Interview Questions You will find lists of medical school interview questions at the following links:

ISC Medical:

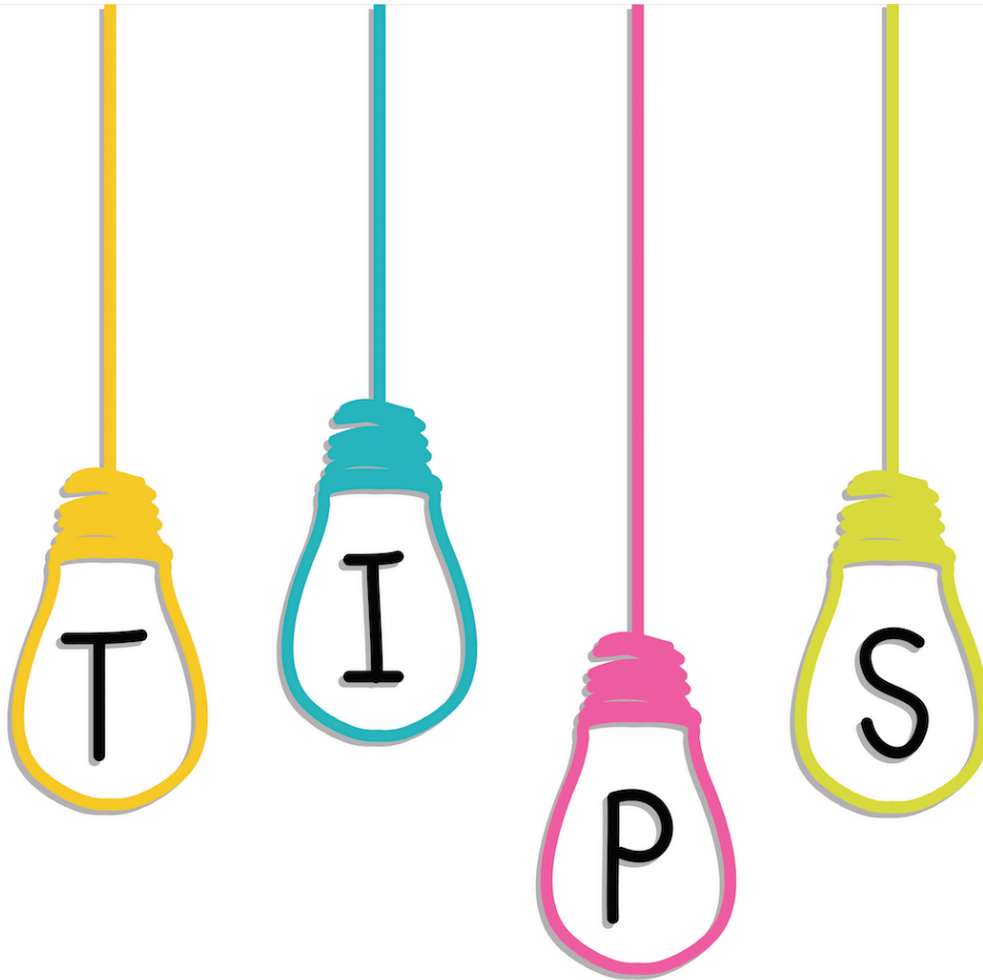
<http://www.medical-interviews.co.uk/interview-questions-medical-school-interviews.aspx>

Oxford Sample Questions

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/guide/interviews>



Subject Enrichment Activities in Year 12 and Beyond



Medical Conferences Attend one of the medicine student conferences courses at Nottingham University run by The Workshop for students interested in applying for medicine at university:

EPQ Consider doing an EPQ into an area of the subject that interests you.

Read Widely Get really involved in reading about aspects of medicine that interest you to show that you have made an effort to broaden your understanding. This is especially important if a medical school you have applied to has suggested a reading list. Check on their website. Here are some suggested books:

The History of Medicine: A Very Short Introduction, by William Bynum Oxford University Press

Epidemiology: A Very Short Introduction by Rodolfo Saracci

Subscribe to the *Student British Medical Journal*

Direct Red: A Surgeon's Story by Gabriel Weston Vintage Press

Do No Harm: Stories of Life, Death and Brain Surgery by Henry Marsh

Sick Notes: A Doctor's tales From the Front Line of Medicine by Dr Tony Copperfield

In Stitches: The Highs and Lows of Being an A& E Doctor by Dr Nick Edwards

Bad Science by Ben Goldacre (and accompanying website)

<http://www.badscience.net/>

Which websites will be useful?



- The Medic Portal: **BRILLIANT ESSENTIAL WEBSITE ******* This answers all your questions about a medical application

https://www.themedicportal.com/?gclid=CjwKCAjwiZnnBRBQEiwAcWKfYlh04ppmlkilDQJ78mTh1t5aYOIsM4TF93cCmYTbCSulBx8APW5hPhoCTjsQAvD_BwE

- BBC News website for health related issues website for topical news and issues:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health>

- Medicine and Healthcare section of the *Bright Knowledge* website is very useful:
<http://www.brightknowledge.org/knowledge-bank/health>
- NHS Choices website:
<http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx>
- Wellcome Trust website for the latest medical research:
<http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Wellcome-Trust-websites/index.htm>
- *Royal College of General Practitioners* website:
<http://www.elearning.rcgp.org.uk/>
- *SciCentral* collects breaking research news from the most reputable and reliable sources including health sciences:
<http://www.scicentral.com/>

