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Medical School Application Guide

Your guide to the medical school application process.

The Medical School Application Guide

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Application Process and Timeline

There are lots of steps required to produce a competitive application to medicine (See Timeline, Yellow is everything you need to complete in Year 13).

The application process for medicine takes place on the Universities and College Admissions Service (UCAS). Your UCAS medicine application will require:

- Your grades/predicted grades
- A Personal Statement
- Teacher reference



Work Experience

Getting work experience can set your application apart. It also provides useful content for the portfolio station in the multiple mini interview and is commonly raised in traditional interviews. Work experience allows you to understand what a doctor does on a day-to-day basis. You should aim to do at least 2 weeks of work experience.

How do I get work experience?

Work experience is difficult to get. In order to secure a work experience placement you need to be persistent. We recommend that you:

- **Ask friends and family:** Someone you know may have a friend in healthcare who will be able to organise a placement for you at their place of work.
- **Discuss with your school:** Your school may have a work experience programme with local hospitals.
- **Contact hospitals directly:** There is normally a work experience coordinator working at hospitals. They will likely receive a lot of requests for work experience so try multiple hospitals and apply early.
- **Contact GP surgeries directly:** The practice manager is the best contact. You could try dropping off your CV at the reception desk.
- **Use your community:** Try posting on apps like “Nextdoor” or putting up a flyer in your local place of worship/community centre.
- **Volunteer:** If you can’t get work experience volunteer work is also highly regarded.

- **Go overseas:** Contact hospitals abroad. This allows you to compare and contrast different healthcare systems.

How old do I need to be to get work experience?

Hospitals will normally only take those that are over 16 for work experience.

What do I do if I can't get any experience?

If you cannot get any work experience or volunteer work in person, there are a number of online or virtual alternatives:

- **Observe GP** is a free interactive video platform providing insights into the role of a GP.
- **Brighton and Sussex Medical School 'Virtual Work Experience'** is an online platform that introduces users to six different medical specialties.

Personal Statement

Your personal statement is your chance to highlight the educational and professional experiences that have motivated you to choose medicine. The personal statement has a character limit of 4,000 characters (roughly 500 words). For medicine you need to submit your personal statement before the UCAS deadline in October.

What do Medical Schools do with your personal statement?

Most Medical Schools do not formally score personal statements or use it to determine who gets an invitation to interview. Instead, personal statements are often used to frame conversations during the interview. In addition, they are often used in tie-breaker scenarios post-interview.

What should I include in my personal statement?

You should try and include the following in your personal statement.

- Why you want to study medicine (What is driving your motivation to study medicine)
- Work experience and/or volunteering (How has this helped you understand the positive and negative aspects of a career as a doctor)
- Wider reading/activities (How this has helped you develop the skills required of a doctor).

- Extracurricular activities (Especially achievements rather than hobbies).

- Conclusion (Highlight your motivation to study medicine)

Choosing a Medical School

There are currently 37 Medical Schools in the UK. In addition, an increasingly popular route is attending a private GMC accredited Medical School abroad. Medical Schools differ in many ways. It is important that you select a Medical School that you feel will suit you. Geographically Medical Schools are located all over the UK.



All Medical Schools have the same end point and must meet the curriculum set out by the General Medical Council. However, Medical Schools differ in how the content is delivered e.g. Problem Based Learning vs. Traditional learning models. In addition, the amount of clinical exposure that occurs during the first two years of Medical Schools may differ.

You may also wish to consider an intercalated BSc (this is an additional undergraduate degree that you complete away from your medical degree). If your Medical School offers this then consider what courses are available.

Finally, there is huge variation in the extra-curricular activities offered by each Medical School.

We recommend that you attend Medical School open days prior to making your selection. When attending medical school open days note down things that the open guide tells you, as this will be valuable information if asked why you selected a particular Medical School in the interview!

Admissions Tests (BMAT & UCAT)

When applying to Medical Schools you are required to take either the University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT) or BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT). Applying to university and having to take additional examinations can cause excess stress. It is important to remember that you are not alone in feeling stressed. Take regular revision breaks and unwind.

What is the University Clinical Aptitude Test?

The University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT) is a 2 hour admission test used to help select applicants for their medical and dental degree programmes. The UCAT is a computer-based test delivered in Pearson VUE test centres (you may have visited one before for your driving theory test).

Booking for the UCAT opens in June and closes in September. Applicants can select a test date between July and September. You can book the UCAT on the official UCAT website (www.ucat.ac.uk/register/booking-your-test/).

The UCAT consists of five sections:

- **Verbal Reasoning** (21 minutes): This section tests your comprehension skills.
- **Decision Making** (31 minutes): This section tests your ability to interpret test/visual data.

- **Quantitative Reasoning** (25 minutes): This section tests your maths skills.
- **Abstract Reasoning** (12 minutes): This section tests your ability to spot patterns.
- **Situational Judgement** (26 minutes): This section tests your response to real life situations.

For the Verbal Reasoning, Decision Making, Quantitative Reasoning and Abstract reasoning sections you will get a score between 300 and 900. A good score is above 650. It is however important to note that individuals with below average UCAT scores still get into Medical School. Average UCAT scores in 2022 were:

- Verbal Reasoning: 567
- Decision Making: 616
- Quantitative Reasoning: 658
- Abstract Reasoning: 659

For more information on the UCAT sections and for mock stations/revision materials you can visit the official UCAT website (<https://www.ucat.ac.uk/prepare/practice-tests/>).

What is the BioMedical Admission Test (BMAT)?

The BioMedical Admission Test is a 2-hour medical admission assessment used by certain universities. In 2022/2023 it was used by Brighton and Sussex, Imperial College London, Keele University, Lancaster University, University College London, University of Cambridge, University of Leeds and the University of Oxford.

The BioMedical Admission test is divided into three sections:

- **Section 1** (Thinking Skills): This section is 60 minutes long and consists of 32 multiple-choice questions. It tests your problem solving and critical thinking skills.
- **Section 2** (Scientific Knowledge and Applications): This section is 30 minutes long and consists of 27 multiple choice questions. It tests scientific knowledge that is of GCSE/IGCSE level in science and Mathematics.
- **Section 3** (Writing Task): This section is 30 minutes long. You will be required to complete one writing task from a choice of three questions.

For Section 1 and 2 of the BMAT you get 1 mark per question. The raw score is converted to a BMAT scale score between 1.0 (low) and 9.0 (high). For section 3 you get one score for the quality of the content between 0.0 (low) to 5.0 (high) and one score for quality of English between A (high) and E (low).

In order to register for the BMAT you need to speak to your school or test centre. Registration for the BMAT opens and closes in September. The BMAT is typically sat in October. For More information about registration visit the BMAT official website (<https://www.admissionstesting.org/for-test-takers/bmat/bmat-october/how-to-register/>).

The Interview

If your application (personal statement and predicted grades) pass the first stage of the admission process, you'll get an invite to a Medicine interview. It is important to note that the Medical School interview process is highly competitive and it is not uncommon for many candidates to not receive invitations to interview, from some universities, even if they have excellent personal statements and predicted grades.

It's important for candidates to be well-prepared for their interviews and to practice answering common interview questions. They should also be familiar with the curriculum and the teaching methods of the Medical Schools they are applying to. Additionally, they should be able to demonstrate their commitment to a career in medicine and show how they would be an asset to the Medical School.

When do Interviews occur?

Medicine interview season starts as early as November and usually runs to March. The time between invitation to interview and the interview itself can be very short, you are therefore advised to start preparing in advance of receiving an invitation to interview.

Do not worry if you hear about friends/colleagues who have been invited to interview. Different universities work to different timescales. In addition, there is a wide time window that interviews run from, so for the same

university someone may receive an invitation in December, whereas someone else receives one in February.

When will I know the outcome?

The deadline for universities to inform you about offers is March. Some universities will update you about your applications a few weeks after your interview, while others will wait until March.

What types of Medical School interviews are there?

There are two types of Medical School interviews:

- The Multiple Mini Interviews
- Panel interviews (traditional)

Medical School interviews with either be held in person or online. Several universities are offering online interviews for overseas students.

What does the Multiple Mini Interview involve?

The Multiple Mini Interview format involves a series of short, structured interviews, each lasting around 8-10 minutes, with a different interviewer for each station. The stations are designed to assess different aspects of the candidate, such as their communication skills, ethical reasoning, and motivation for pursuing a career in medicine.

During the interviews, candidates may be presented with scenarios or case studies that require them to demonstrate their problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making abilities. They may also be asked questions about their personal statement, their knowledge of the medical profession, or current events in healthcare.

Stations encountered in the multiple mini interview can be broadly categorised into 8 different formats:

- **Role Play Stations:** this typically involves you delivering some bad news to an actor. E.g. You have broken a friend's camera after borrowing it for a school project.

- **Ethical Stations:** You may be asked a question about how you would deal with a problematic colleague or presented with an ethical question and asked to comment. E.g. You notice that your friend has turned up to placement smelling of alcohol and looking dishevelled.

- **Prioritisation Stations:** You are typically asked to prioritise a number of things on a list with a specific scenario in mind. E.g. Items you would take on a camping trip.

- **Instructional Stations:** You are asked to instruct the interviewer to perform a simple task. E.g. Tie your shoelaces.

- **Calculation Stations:** You are asked to use basic mathematical skills in order to solve mathematical problems commonly encountered by doctors.

- **Problem Based Learning Stations:** You are asked to either teach something, how you would research something or perform a group based activity.

- Portfolio Stations: This assesses your personal characteristics and motivation for studying medicine/at a particular university.
- Hot Topics: During this station you will be asked about medical current affairs e.g. Junior doctor strikes.

For Station guides and mock stations with detailed approaches/mock answers please visit www.medschoolmmi.com

What universities use the Multiple Mini Interview format?

This list is subject to change, however the following Medical Schools are using the multiple interview format: Aberdeen, Anglia Ruskin, Aston, Birmingham, Bristol, Brunel, Brighton and Sussex, Buckingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Dundee, Edge Hill, Exeter Hull/York, Imperial, Kent and Medway, Keele, Leeds Lancaster, Leicester, Manchester, Newcastle, Norwich, Nottingham, Plymouth, Queen's University Belfast, St. Andrews, St. Georges, Sunderland, Sheffield, UCL, UCLan, King's College London, and Warwick.

What does the Panel Interview involve?

The panel type medical interview, also known as a traditional or conventional interview, is a type of interview where the candidate is interviewed by a panel of two or more individuals. The panel usually consists of a mix of

people such as a faculty member, a practicing physician, and a member of the admissions committee.

During the interview, the panel will ask the candidate a series of questions, which may include queries about their academic and extracurricular achievements, their motivation for pursuing a career in medicine, and their understanding of the medical profession. They may also ask more specific questions related to the candidate's personal statement and any relevant work or volunteer experience. (The questions asked in the traditional interview are similar to those asked in the Portfolio and Hot Topic stations of the Multiple Mini Style interview Mock questions and answers can be found on our website: www.medschoolmmi.com).

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