Which Medical Schools have Graduate Entry Courses?

A number of medical schools offer four year courses for individuals who have a degree. From only five institutions offering such courses in 2002, there are now sixteen medical schools offering graduate entry medical programmes. These are:

- Queen Mary, University of London
- University of Birmingham
- University of Bristol
- University of Cambridge
- Kings College, University of London
- Imperial College London
- University of Keele
- University of Leicester
- University of Liverpool (Liverpool curriculum also delivered at Lancaster University)
- University of Newcastle
- University of Nottingham
- University of Oxford
- University of Southampton
- St George’s, University of London
- University of Swansea
- University of Warwick

Full details of these courses including entry requirements can be found on:

UCAS website: [http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/coursesearch/](http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/coursesearch/)
Medical Schools website: [http://www.medschools.ac.uk/Students/Courses/Pages/Graduate.aspx](http://www.medschools.ac.uk/Students/Courses/Pages/Graduate.aspx)

Note, some medical schools accept graduates onto their 5 year undergraduate programmes.

Which Medical School Should I Choose?

There are a number of factors to consider when deciding which Medical Schools to apply to.

Admissions Tests. If you don’t do well on the UKCAT it is not advisable to apply to Medical Schools that use UKCAT to rank applications. You might prefer to apply to Medical Schools that use BMAT but it’s not advisable to apply to more than two schools using BMAT as you will not have taken the test at the time of application. (See below for further details about the tests).
Course Style: Medical degree courses vary considerably in terms of their structure, content and teaching method (e.g., Problem Based Learning ‘PBL’, traditional, integrated).

- **Problem-based learning (PBL)** involves student-centred teaching in which students learn about a subject in the context of complex, multifaceted, and realistic problems. The goals of PBL are to help the students develop flexible knowledge, effective problem-solving skills, self-directed learning, effective collaboration skills and intrinsic motivation. Here medical students are sent away each week to work in a team to examine a clinical scenario. The scenario usually contains triggers and cues from which students can draw up learning objectives for private study. These are then discussed at the next meeting and each student’s findings are then presented to the group and the facilitator by the end of the week.

- **The traditional method** usually focuses on having medical school-based lectures and tutorials in pure science for the first 2-3 years of the course and you spend the rest of the course (the clinical years) being taught in clinical settings e.g. on ward rounds; GP placements etc.

- **The integrated method** is where lectures are integrated with clinical attachments from the start.

Other factors to take into consideration when considering which course is right for you could include:

- Early clinical contact and, if so, how early, how much
- How is anatomy taught – whole body, small body parts
- Well established course vs. new course
- Compulsory animal tissue work

**The University:** Distance from home, local hospitals, campus based, reputation, research, opportunity to integrate with students from other disciplines, size of year group (ranges from 130 – 350), applicants to places (although this varies from year to year) plus other priorities/factors that might be important to you personally.

**Can I Get in with a 2.2. Degree?**

Of the graduate-entry courses, the only two institutions that will consider you equally with those with higher degree classes are St George’s and Nottingham but you will need to sit the GAMSAT exam and achieve the required cut-off mark. Details of cut-off scores are provided on the medical school websites. Divided into three parts, the GAMSAT tests your reasoning and communication skills, and you will need to have some knowledge of biology, chemistry and physics to do well. See
below for further details on the GAMSAT exam. Kings College accepts 2.2 degrees with a Masters (merit) and Imperial accepts 2.2 degrees with a PhD.

What do Medical Schools Look For?
Selectors will be assessing three key areas:

- Your motivation for wanting to study medicine
- Cognitive skills
- Personal attributes and skills

Motivation
Your motivation for wanting to study medicine will be assessed at both the application and the interview stage. Applicants will be expected to have gained healthcare experience in a range of settings such as hospitals, GP surgeries, community based clinics, care homes, hospices and so on. This experience could take the form of voluntary work, a part time job or work shadowing. You will benefit from being able to demonstrate both breadth and depth of experience which will help you to convince the panel that you are:

- Able to understand the realities of medicine
- Motivated to help people
- Community/patient orientated
- Informed about the demands and challenges that doctors face
- Aware of the qualities doctors are required to have
- Realistic about yourself and your commitment
- Aware of health issues
- Understanding of the NHS (structure, politics, challenges, reform etc.)
- Fit to practice

You might find it interesting to read about the personal stories of medical students/graduates who decided to study medicine and their reasons for doing so.

http://www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk/considering_medicine/graduate_entry_programme.aspx

Cognitive Skills
Selectors will be looking for evidence of high level cognitive skills and these will be assessed through your academic record, admissions tests and interview questions/tests. Medical schools set their own selection criteria and details of the entry requirements at each university in the United Kingdom (UK) are published annually on the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) website.
Generally, medical schools seek a good grade in chemistry at A level and often require A level biology. All applicants will be expected to have good GCSE passes in English and Mathematics. Students with mainly non-science A levels are normally required to study a foundation course. The majority of graduate entry programmes require students to have their first degree in a science subject, but some medical schools also consider applicants with a first degree in an arts subject. Graduates can also apply to enter undergraduate medical courses.

The grade requirements of medical schools for entry in 2012 are summarised on the Medicalcareers website:
http://www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk/considering_medicine/graduate_entry_programme/gep_further_information.aspx

In addition to demonstrating cognitive abilities, academic achievement scores can also be an indication of content knowledge, memory skills, motivation (to study, to succeed), conscientiousness, positive work habits and study habits.

Most medical schools also require applicants to take admission tests and, again, the test you are required to take will vary from medical school to medical school but the three principal tests used are:

**UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT)**

UKCAT is used as part of the selection procedure for 26 medical schools in the UK.

The UKCAT test focuses on testing attributes considered to be valuable for healthcare professionals and aims to ensure that applicants selected to medical school have the most appropriate mental abilities, attitudes and professional behaviours required to be successful doctors.

Dates and cost (2012):

Registration opened - 1 May
Testing begins – 3 July
Registration deadline – 21 September
Last Testing date – 5 October
UCAS application deadline – 15 October
Cost of test - £65.80 (EU), £100 (outside EU)

Further information can be found on the UKCAT website www.ukcat.ac.uk

**BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT)**

The BMAT assesses a candidates’ potential in an academically demanding undergraduate biomedical degree. The test is designed to be challenging, in order to discriminate effectively between applicants for university courses.
BMAT is required for applicants to Cambridge, Imperial College London, Oxford and University College London medical schools.

Dates and cost (2012):

Registration opens – 1st September
Standard entry closing date – 1st October
BMAT takes place – 7 November
Results released – 21 November
Cost of test- £42.50 (EU), £72.50 (non EU)

Further information can be found on the BMAT website www.bmat.org.uk

Graduate Medical School Admissions Test (GAMSAT)

The GAMSAT is a test for applicants to graduate-entry medical courses. The GAMSAT involves testing your ability to think critically, analyse information and express your thoughts clearly and effectively.

GAMSAT is required for applications to graduate-entry programmes at St George’s University of London, the University of Nottingham at Derby, the University of Wales Swansea, and Keele University.

Dates and cost (2012)

Registration opens – 4th June
Registration closing – Midnight BST 10th August (late registrations accepted until midnight BST on 20th August on payment of an additional £60 late fee)
GAMSAT takes place – 21st September 2012

Further information can be found on the GAMSAT website www.gamsatuk.org.

NOTE! Practise tests are available online and preparation is often required, especially for GAMSAT which tests up to A level standard for Physics and first year degree level for Chemistry and Biology.

Personal Attributes and Skills:

Why do Medical Schools assess non-academic qualities?

- They cannot be taught effectively
- They are consistently identified as being essential in the repertoire of a good doctor
- A lack of these skills/attributes is the usual cause of a struggling student or failing doctor

So what are the skills and attributes that selectors look for?
Although medical schools may differ slightly in the emphasis they place on skills and attributes, they are all essentially looking for candidates who demonstrate potential. This is likely to include:

- Ability to communicate effectively, both in writing and verbally
- Ability to work effectively as part of a team
- Ability to take on responsibility and show leadership
- Problem solving skills
- Organisational and administrative skills
- Ability to work under pressure and cope with stress (resilience)
- Persistence
- Empathy/sensitivity to people
- Conscientiousness (positive work habits)
- Self motivation/proactivity
- Ethical orientation
- Probity, integrity

Selectors may also select candidates out on:

- Psychological vulnerability (inability to handle stress appropriately)
- Low levels of empathy or emotional over involvement
- Extreme ethical orientation
- Extreme conscientiousness
- Lack of organisation

In order to gain a good understanding of the skills and attributes that are important to be effective as a doctor, it is helpful to have a look at Tomorrow’s Doctors (General Medical Council) which outlines the outcomes for graduates and provides some context for the skills you will be expected to develop throughout your medical training.


What Do I Need to Include in My Personal Statement?

This is your opportunity to provide the selection panel with evidence that you have the attributes to be a good doctor and that you deserve to be one of the “quota”.

It is also an opportunity to reflect upon the way in which you wish to portray and present your ‘non-academic’ qualities to a selection panel.
The Personal Statement will play a crucial part in your application to Medical School and it is important therefore to put a significant amount of time and effort into writing it. You should expect to revise and redraft it several times before being satisfied with the final version.

It can help if you imagine being asked questions, with your ‘response’ forming a section of your statement. For example, the first ‘question’ may be

*When and how/why did you first become interested in pursuing a career in medicine?*

It may be that you were ill in hospital, or someone close to you had hospital treatment, and the experience inspired you in some way. You may already be a healthcare professional who wants to advance your career, or your first degree has inspired you to take up medicine. Perhaps there was no defining moment as such and you’ve wanted to do it for as long as you can remember. Whatever the case may be, spend time thinking about your own personal reasons. Avoid excuses or writing about what has deterred you in the past. Use positive language to explain what motivates you. Also, you may want to avoid starting with famous quotations or phrases as these are often common starting points and don’t reveal much about your own motivation to study medicine.

*How can you convince us of your commitment?*

The role of work experience cannot be emphasised strongly enough. If you have no relevant work experience to write about, it is unlikely that medical schools will consider you, so paragraphs on this are vitally important. If you have had limited experience so far then you must organise relevant work as a matter of priority. Planning to study medicine with little or no related work experience would be a disaster, not least because you would be making an important decision on too little information.

Aim to have a range of different experiences of working with people in a caring environment. These could include voluntary work at a local hospice or in a hospital, working in a care home, involvement in a local community project or volunteering with St John’s Ambulance Brigade. You may be involved with disabled people, with the homeless, with the elderly, with the vulnerable, with children. You need only a brief outline of your overall responsibilities as the focus should be on the personal qualities and skills you have developed. Include details such as:

- Specific responsibilities you had/have
- What skills you learned or developed
- What you learned about yourself
- What you learned about medicine and what makes it different to other healthcare professions?
- How you feel about what you did
- What you found challenging
- What you found most rewarding
- What you learned about medicine
How your experiences have confirmed your commitment to medicine

Things to Avoid Mentioning

- Hero worship of doctors
- Child of medics
- Status
- Money
- Wanting to ‘cure’ people (often not possible, particularly with chronic illness)

What skills and strengths do you possess that will help you to be effective as a doctor?

Use examples from different experiences that you have had (academic, voluntary/paid work, hobbies and interests, travel etc.) to provide evidence of your skills. Make it clear how you developed the skill, don’t just state that you possess a skill. Eg Teamworking – what teams have you worked in and in what ways have you supported these teams? Communication: How have your experiences made you a more effective communicator (communicating with different age groups, demonstrating sensitivity/empathy, importance of listening etc.).

First and subsequent drafts

It might be helpful initially to set out your ideas as a series of bullet point headings such as:


Expand on each of these, with examples. Read through. Does it flow? Is anything missing? Is there too much irrelevant detail? Does it sound strong, confident and genuine?

Proof-read

Proof-read your work (or ask someone else to do it for you). Ensure grammar, spelling and punctuation are correct. Remember that medical schools will be able to assess your basic written communication skills via your Statement. Don’t let yourself down.

How Can I Prepare For Interview?

Not all medical schools interview students as part of the selection process. If you are invited for an interview, however, it is important that you are sufficiently prepared. An interview can provide an opportunity for you to demonstrate your awareness of what studying medicine involves and to provide further evidence that you have the skills and abilities that are being sought. You will usually face questions about your motivation to study medicine, your understanding of the course, your current course, hobbies and personal interests, as well as having to produce evidence of your
academic achievements. A key question will be your reasons for wanting to become a doctor. You may also be expected to demonstrate a reflective approach to communication and learning. Finally, you could be asked about current medical topics/ NHS issues and may also be presented with an ethical scenario/question.

Sample Questions:

Why do you want to be a doctor?

Aim to provide an authentic response. This could link to your academic bias, personal experiences and vocational aspirations. Why are you now interested when not previously (ie when applying for your first undergraduate degree)

Have you applied to medical school before? If so, how far did your application get and what feedback were you given?

Focus on what you have done since/changed which makes you successful on a second (or third) attempt.

What do you think might be the challenges of working as a doctor?

Be clear on what you regard as the difficulties ahead (eg length of training, exam culture, stress of work, stamina required, work/life balance, competition etc.). You might want to draw on your work experience to illustrate your points.

What range of work experience have you already done

As discussed above, a wide range of work experience is essential and you should be clear about what you have taken from the experience.

Why have you chosen this particular course?

Medical degrees vary quite a bit. Some are more traditional in their delivery (eg lectures/seminars for the first two years of the degree followed by three clinical years). Others employ Problem Based Learning methods (PLB) where students tend to work in small groups on clinical issues from the start of the course (see below). You should be prepared to explain why you prefer the particular teaching method that the medical school employs.

Knowledge/understanding of the NHS or an NHS issue eg

How could the restructuring of the NHS help to improve patient care?

What are some of the key challenges that the NHS is facing?

Whilst you will not be expected to have an in depth understanding of the changes to the NHS, you should have some knowledge of the key changes and their implications (eg GP commissioning
bodies, public health moving to Local Authority control etc.). Also think about issues/challenges the NHS is facing (increasing elderly population, obesity, funding, funding etc.)

**Medical Ethics questions**

You could be presented with a scenario and asked what you would do in the situation. Eg The parents of your 10 year old patient are refusing to give their permission for a life saving blood transfusion on religious grounds. What would you do?

**Hints and tips:**

The interviewers are not asking you this question because they want to know what the answer to this problem is. Rather, these types of question are designed to see if you can look at the situation from different perspectives, weigh up the arguments and provide a well balanced answer, explaining your rationale.

- Explain the background to the question
- Consider both sides of the argument
- Bring current issues or examples into your answer
- Only express a personal opinion at the end

**Where Can I Find Information About Funding?**

Funding for 2012/13 is an interim arrangement and subject to change for students starting from 2013. Further, up to date information can be found at:

- **Student Finance England:** [www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance)
- **NHS Student Bursaries:** http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students
- **NASMA (National Association of Student Money Advisers):** [http://nasma.org.uk/students/](http://nasma.org.uk/students/)
- **Money for Med Students** http://www.money4medstudents.org/index.asp?id=1