



Guide to Studying Medicine and related degrees at University

Studying medicine usually involves 5 years of study at university, followed by more training years at the start of your career. So it's important to make sure that medicine is right for you.

What Is The UK Medical School Application Process?

Applying to study medicine in the UK is a long and challenging process. In summary, these are:

1. [Deciding on Medicine](#) — making sure being a doctor is right for you
2. [Doing Work Experience](#) — finding out what it's like and strengthening your application
3. [Choosing a Medical School](#) — narrowing down from 33 to your top four
4. [Completing UCAS](#) — applying to four UK medical schools through UCAS
5. [Doing UKCAT](#) — getting a top mark in this key entrance exam for most medical schools
6. [Doing BMAT](#) — taking this second exam if you are applying to certain universities
7. [Passing the Interview](#) — performing well at medical school interviews

1. Is medicine for you?

The first thing you need to do is to think, or confirm, whether medicine (including veterinary, dentistry etc) is right for you. It is one of the most valuable and rewarding careers, but also very competitive and hard work and it does require a particular skill set.

Unlike other courses you might apply to, medicine ties you directly into a specific career path. In the UK, it also binds you to a particular employer: the [National Health Service \(NHS\)](#).

If you're deciding on medicine, it's very important that you understand the realities of being a doctor as well as you can before committing to the pathway. This includes being clued-up on the NHS.

Doctors lead teams providing care to patients – so there is science, people skills and teamwork / leadership. Do these areas excite you, and do you have these broad skills? Or is it really the science that drives you? Or perhaps the job prospects?

We give a talk to all 1YS interested in applying to study medicine at university (including veterinary, dentistry and related) early in the first term of Lower Sixth as there is quite a lot to consider and it is helpful to have plenty of time to prepare. Charterhouse have a specialist, Mr Peter Bagley (PAB) to help with applications and we offer a lot of support and expertise to guide you through the process.

Medical Society

We meet for just over half an hour on Wednesday evenings at 9:00pm. Pupils give talks on medical issues followed by a debate on some of the ethical points arising (and there is pizza!). This is very useful preparation for interviews and personal statements, but as importantly in helping you decide if medicine is for you, and which areas you are most interested in. 2YS are encouraged to join the committee and help with the running of the society.

These decisions take time so start early. Do ask the team for help – Dr Warren, Mrs Allen, and Mr Bagley all have experience from different angles. Speak to friends and parents' friends. Think about your interactions with the health system. What roles and skills did you witness in the different professionals? Can see yourself in these positions?



2. Medical Work experience

If you are still interested get some work experience organised. This is vital if you are to apply, but can be very helpful in confirming whether or not it is the right decision for you. Even if you decide against medicine, it is likely the work experience will help you in other applications. The Charterhouse Service programme is very helpful and you may also want to try hospitals, surgeries and care homes near your home address.

The NHS in Surrey have put together a guide to a career in health and social care which includes opportunities to work shadow in local hospitals and volunteering opportunities in the local area. There are also career events at Royal Surrey County Hospital. [Details](#)

Many hospitals offer work experience / voluntary placements to 16-18 year olds. These include (but are not limited to):

Barts Contact: work.experience@bartshealth.nhs.uk

Guys and Thomas's Register via website: [Guys work experience](#)

Chelsea and Westminster (must live in inner London) [Chelsea and Westminster](#)

Royal Surrey Hospital, Guildford (must live in local area) [Royal Surrey](#)

Great Ormond Street [Great Ormond Street](#)

Lewisham Hospital (must live in Lewisham or Greenwich) [Lewisham](#)

Portsmouth Hospital contact your chosen department directly [Portsmouth](#)

We would also recommend contacting your local GP and care homes.

[London Institute of Medical Sciences](#)

Laboratory research and science communication for 1YS. 4 weeks in August. Summer students complete a project based on the current work of one of their research groups. To apply, please visit **MRC**.

3. Choosing a Medical School

There are 33 medical schools in the UK, and no two are exactly alike. Choosing which ones to put down on your [UCAS](#) form can be a daunting task. Ultimately, the goal is to find the best fit for you.

How Important Are UCAT And BMAT? Different universities place different levels of importance on the UCAT. You can learn more about this by visiting the dedicated guide we have created for UCAT, as well as by using a comparison tool. You will know your UCAT score by the time you apply to Medical School, so that should be a major consideration. You can find out which universities use the BMAT by visiting the dedicated BMAT page. Unlike the UCAT, the BMAT will be sat after your application is submitted. So you might want to hedge your bets by applying to no more than two BMAT universities when choosing a medical school.

How Important Are Grades? Grades are very important to study Medicine. Your GCSEs and A-level grades will ultimately dictate which Medical Schools to apply to. To view the entry requirements for every UK Medical School, please see our [Medical Comparison Tool](#)

How Important Is Location? When you eventually interview at Medical Schools, you will stress that the course itself is the primary reason for applying there, rather than the location of the university. However, the reality is that location is important. Some of you will want to stay close to home. Others probably want to get as far away as possible! Just remember to choose wisely as you will be away for up to 6 years.

4. UCAS for Medicine

You can select up to 4 medical schools on your UCAS form. You also have a fifth slot to apply for something different. Some universities allow you to write a different personal statement for the fifth choice. But many won't. So it's normal to use it for something science-related. We run personal statement workshops for medical and related applicants at the end of CQ including using a collaborative referencing tool that helps direct the personal statement and school's reference at medical competencies.



Lots of people apply to study medicine every year — but only about 9.5% are successful. It's very competitive. Medic Portal have a useful guide to personal statements for Medical School. [Guide](#)

5. What is UCAT?

UCAT (formerly UKCAT) is an admissions test used by many medical and dental schools to assess students' suitability to study medicine. Its full name is the University Clinical Aptitude Test. It is a two-hour computerised test, designed to assess aptitude rather than knowledge. In CQ we have UCAT training in school using an external provider and the pupils do their UCAT over the summer holiday.

The idea is that high UCAT scores indicate candidates with the best potential to successfully train as doctors. The test consists of five sections, each designed to assess different skills required by doctors. These skills include problem-solving, communication, numerical skills, spatial awareness, integrity, empathy and teamwork skills.

- [Verbal Reasoning](#). This tests your ability to read and interpret passages of text
- [Quantitative Reasoning](#). Tests your mathematical ability
- [Abstract Reasoning](#). This tests your spatial awareness
- [Decision Making](#). This tests your problem-solving skills
- [Situational Judgement](#). This tests qualities needed to become a doctor, such as professionalism and teamwork

Registration usually happens in May, with tests starting in July through to early October.

6. A Guide to the BMAT Exam

The [BioMedical Admissions Test \(BMAT\)](#) is a two-hour pen and paper aptitude test required by a handful of medical, dental and veterinary schools. Unlike the UCAT, the BMAT 2019 assesses a combination of aptitude and knowledge testing a broad range of skills across three sections:

- [BMAT Section 1](#) (Aptitude and skills)
- [BMAT Section 2](#) (Scientific knowledge and applications)
- [BMAT Section 3](#) (Written communication)

Pupils doing BMAT do in house BMAT training each week, practicing papers and learning how to approach the essay from the end of CQ until BMAT half way through OQ.

All past papers are available to download online from the Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing website [Test](#) so with sufficient practice you should feel confident and well prepared.

There are two test dates each year at the end of August and end of October. It's worth noting that whereas before you could only sit the exam *after* submitting your UCAS application, the test session in August means you can now find out your BMAT score *before* applying to medical school. This means you can apply strategically with both your UCAT and BMAT scores in hand.

7. Medical School Interview

Not all types of medicine interview are the same, medical schools utilise different kinds of interviews to evaluate their candidates.

The three main types of medicine interview are:

- [Multiple Mini Interviews \(MMIs\)](#) – MMIs are now used by a large number of medical schools. They require candidates to face a series of 'stations', each testing for different qualities. These might involve interacting with patients, tackling ethical scenarios or problem-solving.
- [Traditional Interviews](#) – The traditional interview format involves being asked questions about your application and reasons for wanting to study medicine by either one person or a panel.



- **Group Interviews** – Similar to a traditional interview, the difference is that you will be in a group setting and are likely to be given a topic to discuss with your group in front of the interviewers before moving on to a panel interview.

Your medical school interview will cover a broad range of topics. From explaining your background and motivation to study medicine, to commenting on current NHS hot topics, you can expect to cover a lot of ground in the topics you discuss throughout. You can also expect questions on: depth and breadth of interest, knowledge of medical school, creativity and imagination, medical ethics, empathy, personal insight, teamwork and work experience.

Medic Portal have an interview questions and answer guide which you might find useful. [Questions](#)

All applicants have interview training which is kicked off by the University of Nottingham who explain the process and conduct a mock on a volunteer. Pupils then have a mock panel style interview and we team up with local schools to give multiple mini interview training and Oxbridge style for those applying to Oxbridge. MMIs are now the most common form of interview and comprise several (4-10) standardised mini interviews of between 4 and 8 minutes each testing specific competencies. The interviews come in quick succession which can be quite a daunting prospect. The pupils have full mock MMI with interviews from both Charterhouse and St Catherine's School teachers to ensure they encounter interviewers they do not know. We do a situational judgement group exercise involving role play which can also be part of the medical assessment process as well as working on sample interview questions and resources. The pupils also have panel interview training comprising a mock interview and feedback involving a beak they do not know. We then do all we can to support pupils through the long and stressful waiting game that follows until offers are received.

Next steps

1. Focus on your studies - you will need AAA or A*AA and that is not easy so have a good plan B.
2. Get some good work experience.
3. Immerse yourself in all things medical - especially Medics Society, but also medical news etc.
4. 1YS meet in the New Year (your parents are invited too) to launch the application process to explain the UCAT, BMAT, personal statement, interview training and the support we will help you with.

We do all we can to support pupils through the long and stressful waiting game that follows submission of applications.

Please do contact us if you have any questions.

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The resources are listed on the Med Soc website. <http://greyhound.charterhouse.org.uk/biology/medics-society>