



# FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## APPLYING FOR MEDICINE

### WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU NEED TO APPLY FOR MEDICINE?

Medical school is not easy and requires a lot of dedication so you need to be someone that is able to manage your time/stress well. Also, being able to ask for help is a great quality for a medic to have because older year groups will always have many tips and resources that make your journey a lot easier.

Resilience is another good quality to have because people on other courses will have a lot more free time which will make medicine seem 'not worth it' at times.

### HOW CAN I PICK WHICH UNIVERSITY FOR MEDICINE IS BEST FOR ME?

There are various qualities of a university that you should be considered such as:

- Location – e.g. rural/ city? it is important as you will mainly be living in that area for approximately 6 years
- Teaching styles/ structure of course – Some universities offer different teaching styles (e.g. Intercalated, PBL) find the learning style that works best for you
- How early do you have clinical contact – clinical contact is essential as it gives you experience and helps you gain clinical skills, you should find a time you think would work best for you
- What modules they have?
- What are the demographics?

Use resources such as the student room/ medic portal to help find a uni that tailors to your strengths

### WHAT SHOULD YOU CONSIDER WHEN APPLYING TO STUDY MEDICINE ABROAD?

- Medical School is six years long – you must be willing and able to commit to 6 years of university, and once you begin, it will not be easy to transfer to another country. You will most likely have to start fresh.
- The language – know the language your course will be in and mentally prepare to study that language. Even if your studies are in English, you will have to do rotations and interact with patients, so you will have to learn the language.
- Research – Look for the medical school's ranking and the qualifications that you will obtain after studying. Ensure that you will be able to get back into the United Kingdom to practice. Know the various exams and requirements you will need to work in the UK.
- Family – Psych yourself up because you might miss out on many family events, and you might not see your family as much as you would like. Medicine is not easy, and you need a strong support system.

**Elfreda Johnson (Debrecen Medical School, Hungary)**

## **IS AN EPQ ESSENTIAL FOR APPLYING FOR MEDICINE?**

Definitely not. Do it if there is something you are not taught at school you would like to go into more detail in, but do not just do it for the sake of it.

## **DOES ONLINE WORK EXPERIENCE COUNT TOWARDS YOUR APPLICATION?**

Medical schools actually value students who think outside the box, and show uniqueness and resourcefulness.

If you're able to show that you understand the concepts of what the role of a doctor involves as well as demonstrate the qualities of a good doctor through non-medical experiences, then this makes your application stand out way more than the student who has done the typical work experience that they probably easily attained via family. There are many transferable experiences and skills from part-time jobs in hospitality, retail, healthcare as well as personal experiences and responsibilities.

Read up on the GMC qualities of a good doctor and map them to experiences and responsibilities you currently have or have had in the past.

In regards to online work experience, it's literally the same thing. You would not be asked to do anything different than if you were there in person.

Your role is to observe, assimilate and gain experience, and then use the information attained to make an informed decision about what it means to be a doctor in practice, character and conduct. And then assess whether you fit those requirements, genuinely have an interest or have had other experiences and responsibilities that have prepared you for such field of work.

## **WHAT SORT OF ADMISSIONS TESTS MUST I TAKE TO GET INTO MEDICAL SCHOOL? UCAT, BMAT OR BOTH?**

You can take either one or both, depending on the university you are applying to so check requirements. Most universities in the UK require UCAT.

## **WHEN SHOULD I PREPARE FOR MY ADMISSIONS TESTS?**

The UCAT can be taken anytime during the academic year and more than once if you want to improve your grade. The BMAT takes place on a set day each year and is usually in November. It is best to start preparing for the tests the summer before year 13 and take the UCAT as early as you feel confident with once school starts in September. This means you can get it out of the way before UCAS gets intense and gives you time to retake it if you want to.

## **HOW MUCH ARE THE ADMISSION TESTS WORTH FOR MY APPLICATION?**

Medical schools look at a lot of things in an application, but because most applicants have good grades and all the work experience the UCAT/BMAT can make a big difference. Some medical schools take them into account more and <https://www.themedicportal.com/> has specific information on this.

## **WHAT MAKES A GOOD PERSONAL STATEMENT?**

You should include:

- Why you want to study medicine
- What have you done to prepare?
- What could make you a good medical student

It is important to reflect throughout your personal statement – What did you gain? You should justify and give examples of skills and character. A good way to structure this would be through the PEEL structure – Point Evidence Explain Link. Your personal statement should also be honest as you could be asked about anything mentioned on there for interviews.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T MEET THE REQUIRED ENTRY GRADES?**

- Foundation/Access to medicine – The number of the foundation courses in the UK change year on year, but the majority of these courses are aimed to bridge the gap between students from less privileged backgrounds who don't necessarily meet the grade requirements to enter directly. The application criteria used by universities varies, but if you attended a school/sixth form, live in an area that does not have a high progression rate into higher education, or you are the first in your family to apply to university, you are likely to have these options available to you. Keep in mind that these courses are also competitive, so other areas of your application must be at a high level for you to be successful.
- Alternatively, you could do a 3-year undergraduate course in preparation to studying medicine. Although this is the longest of the three options, as a postgraduate applicant you can apply for four year courses – this brings the total time in study to 7 years, only one year more than a foundation year and a 5 year undergraduate course. It's also important to consider a solid base of scientific knowledge you can gain during your undergraduate course, as well as an easier introduction to life as a student and the challenges of living away from home.
- Taking a year out of study can be quite helpful in giving you enough time to assess your options. You could also use the time to gain valuable work experience, start an enterprising project or prepare for interviews and admission exams to strengthen your application in other areas.
- Occasionally, you can find places at medical schools in clearing around the time results are released.

# PREPARING FOR A MEDICAL CAREER

## WHAT TYPES OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES COULD HELP PREPARE ME FOR MEDICINE?

It is important to part-take in activities that you are passionate about e.g. volunteering at care home/ hospice, religious roles. An ideal extracurricular would allow you to gain a lot of knowledge from and show commitment which is important for medicine. You should also consider engaging in a variety of extracurricular e.g. sports, playing an instrument - shows a range of skills. For a 3rd A-level you may do it on something you enjoy rather than a science based subject.

## WHAT BOOKS/ PODCASTS ARE USEFUL FOR MEDICINE?

### BOOKS

- Current: Every book written by Atul Gawande (the Checklist, Being mortal, better etc.), Do no harm by Henry Marsh, Unnatural causes by Dr Richard Shepherd, War doctor by David Nott
- Classics: The immortal life of henrietta lacks, the house of god, Bad science/Bad Pharma by Ben Goldacre, The man who mistook his for wife for a hat by Oliver Sacks

### PODCASTS

- RCP Medicine Podcast, Big Picture Medicine, Simply Medics Podcast, Dr Matt's and Dr Mike's Medical Podcast, Revision ones = Zero to Finals, Geeky Medics

### YOUTUBE CHANNELS

- Osmosis, Armando Hasudangun, Zero to Finals, Geeky Medics, Ali Abdaal

## WHAT TYPES OF TEACHING STYLES DO UNIVERSITIES OFFER FOR MEDICINE?

There are 6 approaches to the training provided at medical school:

1. Traditional
2. Integrated
3. Problem based learning (PBL)
4. Case based learning (CBL)
5. Enquiry based learning (EBL)
6. Multi-learning

The three main types taught in the UK are traditional, integrated and PBL.

Traditional courses offer two initial years of pre-clinical work, with basic study of medical sciences only. This is followed by 3 years of more clinical/hospital based work. The last three years will also include lectures on practising medicine. The only medical schools to offer this are Oxford and Cambridge

An integrated approach is most common amongst medical schools in the UK and can include PBL. These courses teach pre-clinical and clinical knowledge simultaneously to create a more body systems based approach.

PBL is a patient-oriented approach where students are given medical cases to resolve and learn from through group work, guided by a tutor. This is supplemented by academic and clinical learning. Very few medical schools use this approach purely and often blend it into an integrated structure.

## HOW DO YOU KNOW WHICH COURSE TEACHING STYLE IS BEST FOR YOU? (PBL VS TRADITIONAL VS INTEGRATED)

The first thing to do is evaluate how you learn and compare that with the learning styles. PBL involves a lot more independent learning and group work, traditional is a very linear and structured way to learn where integrated is a systematic approach so you will learn the science behind something then experience it in a clinical setting. Going for open days and asking questions is the next step to deciding on the type of course that suits you best because current students will be able to give you the pros and cons of each teaching style, as well as how confident they feel about what they have learnt.

## AWARDS / BURSARIES/ SCHOLARSHIPS?

- <https://rmbf.org/medical-students/competitions-and-awards/>
- <https://www.sgul.ac.uk/for-students/student-support/student-finance-and-funding/finance-advice/other-sources-of-funding/prizes-awards-and-competitions>
- Royal Society of Medicine - <https://www.rsm.ac.uk/prizes-and-awards/prizes-for-students/>
- Akindolie Medical Scholarship - <https://funkeabimbola.com/medical-scholarship>

## ANY MORE QUESTIONS?

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