

Admissions Tests for Medical & Dental Schools

Types of test

At present, there are three different admissions tests which may be used in selecting candidates to study medicine and, in some cases, dentistry. The tests may be used as part of the admissions process for both fast-track graduate entry and the traditional undergraduate course. The tests are:

- UKCAT – UK Clinical Aptitude Test
- GAMSAT – Graduate Australian Medical Schools Admissions Test
- BMAT – BioMedical Science Admissions Test

Individual medical and dental schools decide which, if any, of these tests it will use in selection - details should be on their website.

Important points to note

- It is your responsibility to enrol for the test(s) required by the institutions(s) to which you apply.
- If you apply to two or more schools requiring the same test, you only need to take the test once.
- Tests are only offered at certain times of year, and at selected locations. Be careful not to miss deadlines to register and take the test, which could be weeks before the UCAS application deadline. Further information will be on the test provider's website. Tests may only be taken once in any given year.
- Leave plenty of time (at least 2-3 months is recommended) to practice test taking techniques and, if necessary, brush up on relevant science / numerical subjects. Institutions tend not to recommend particular preparation courses.
- All tests involve a fee. This is stated on the test provider's website, along with details of any bursaries.
- Candidates with disabilities should check with the test provider what special arrangements can be made well in advance of taking the test.
- It is not a case of 'pass or fail'. Institutions will set their own criteria. Some will use it to decide who to interview (along with the UCAS form), others may only use it after interviews, perhaps in cases of 'borderline' candidates who interviewed well. Results are sent separately to the individual institutions to which you have applied, so your course choices are not seen by the others.

The tests

UKCAT (UK Clinical Aptitude Test)

UKCAT is the most popular admissions test, with around half of medical schools and two thirds of dental schools using it as part of the application process, some for undergraduate courses and others for graduate-entry programmes.

UKCAT focuses on general aptitude and attributes considered to be valuable for health care professionals, not science content. It currently comprises the following multiple choice subtests:

1. **Verbal reasoning** - ability to logically consider written information and arrive at a reasoned conclusion
2. **Quantitative reasoning** – evaluating and interpreting data presented in various formats to solve numerical problems (not just a Maths test)
3. **Abstract reasoning** - ability to identify relationships from information provided in the form of shapes
4. **Decision analysis** - ability to make sound decisions and judgements using complex information (new for 2016 and therefore not currently scored as part of the UKCAT)
5. **Situational Judgement Test (SJT)** – non-cognitive test where you comment on the appropriateness or importance of a range of possible responses to a given real world scenario

There is a choice of test date between 1 July and 5 October 2016 for 2017-entry (you must register for a test between 3 May and 21 September 2016). Total test time is two hours. Results available at the end of the test.



Advice from UKCAT is that you should familiarise yourself with the question styles, format and varying requirements of each test and practice answering the types of questions that may be presented. There are practice questions and tests on the UKCAT website plus a tutorial about how this computer-based test works. A useful book, 'Passing the UK Clinical Aptitude Test and BMAT' by Rosalie Hutton, Glenn Hutton and Felicity Taylor, is available to borrow from the Careers Service although UKCAT doesn't endorse any particular books or courses. Also see the Careers Service guide to 'Psychometric tests used in selection' for information on aptitude tests in general and ask us about 'Profiling for Success'.

For more information, including fees for taking the test, see: www.ukcat.ac.uk.

GAMSAT (Graduate Australian Medical Schools Admissions Test)

GAMSAT, a paper-based test, comprises three sections:

1. **Reasoning in Humanities and Social Sciences** - multiple choice questions requiring analysis and interpretation of written and diagrammatical information
2. **Written Communication** - two short writing tasks based on stimuli such as social commentary / current affairs or famous quotes (there's no correct answer, assessors are looking for ability to articulate and develop arguments or discuss relevant issues effectively)
3. **Reasoning in Biological and Physical Sciences** - multiple choice questions in Chemistry, Biology and Physics.

Total test time is 5 ½ hours. The one and only test date for applications for 2017-entry is Wednesday 14 September 2016 (registration runs from early June until 4 Aug 2016; 14 August with a 'late fee').

Preparation should include refreshing your knowledge of A-level Physics and first year University-level Chemistry and Biology, eg revision books (www.s-cool.co.uk/a-level) or a short course. Practice your general aptitude test technique – see the Careers Service guide to 'Psychometric tests used in selection' and ask the Careers Service about 'Profiling for Success'. Read widely, from broadsheet newspapers to periodicals to novels. Think about, and understand, what you are reading. Look for the implied meaning in what you read. For the written test, form opinions and judgements that you can work into interesting pieces of writing. GAMSAT does not endorse any particular texts or preparation courses.

GAMSAT recommend that you work through at least one of their electronic practice publications to evaluate preparation needed, particularly in the sciences - see the GAMSAT website for details (registrants get a free copy). The Careers Service has older, paper versions of the practice materials (but still useful!) available to borrow.

For more information, including fees for taking the test, see: www.gamsatuk.org

BMAT (BioMedical Admissions Test)

The BMAT test has three parts:

1. **Aptitude & skills** - multiple choice / short answer questions assessing generic abilities in problem solving, understanding arguments, data analysis and inference
2. **Scientific Knowledge and Applications** - multiple choice / short answer questions assessing knowledge of science and mathematics
3. **Writing Task** - choice of stimulus questions on scientific ideas or concepts of learning, one of which must be answered in a single page of writing

Total time for this paper-based test is 2 hours. Preparation should include refreshing your knowledge of GCSE Physics and A-level Chemistry, Biology and Maths for example by using revision books (www.s-cool.co.uk/a-level) - check BMAT's online 'Assumed Subject Knowledge' guide first to identify your weaker areas. A guide and specimen papers are available to download from the BMAT website and the official 'Preparing for the BMAT' guide from Cambridge Assessment is available on loan from the Careers Service. Practice your general aptitude test technique – see the Careers Service guide to 'Psychometric tests used in selection' and ask about 'Profiling for Success'. Read widely, as recommended for GAMSAT, above.

The test is delivered only once each year, usually early November. The standard entry closing date is early October, thereafter candidates can apply up until a later closing date in mid-October but this incurs a 'late fee'.

For more information, including fees for taking the test: www.admissionstesting.org/our-services/medicine-and-healthcare/bmat/about-bmat