

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.
- 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 for what minimum scores they will accept. 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 three quarters of medical schools and over 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. **Decision making** - ability to make sound decisions and judgements using complex information
3. **Quantitative reasoning** – evaluating and interpreting data presented in various formats to solve numerical problems (not just a Maths test)
4. **Abstract reasoning** - ability to identify relationships from information provided
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, usually between the start of July and the start of October (ie, before you submit the UCAS application form) - you must register for a test, usually between early May and mid September. Total test time is two hours. Results available to you at the end of the test, to help you decide which universities to apply to, but not sent to your chosen universities until late October / early November.



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. You may also find books useful, such as 'Passing the UK Clinical Aptitude Test and BMAT' by Rosalie Hutton, Glenn Hutton and Felicity Taylor, although UKCAT doesn't endorse any particular books or courses. You may find it useful to practice psychometric tests in general, not just UKCAT ones, so you can improve your test-taking technique. See www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/applications/psy for links.

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. There are two test dates per year - March and September (registration closes well in advance of the test date). You must have taken GAMSAT before you submit your UCAS application; taking it in the March means you'll have your results before the UCAS deadline in October and it may help you choose which universities you should apply to.

Preparation should include refreshing your knowledge of A-level Physics and first year University-level Chemistry and Biology, eg revision books or a short course. Practice your general aptitude test technique – www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/applications/psy 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 recommends 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).

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 Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Maths for example by using revision books - 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. You may also find books useful, eg, the official 'Preparing for the BMAT' guide from Cambridge Assessment. Practice your general aptitude test technique – www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/applications/psy. Read widely, as recommended for GAMSAT, above.

The test is delivered twice a year, in September and November. Taking it in September means you'll have your results before the UCAS deadline in October - which can help you decide which universities you apply to - although double-check that universities will accept your results from the September test. You'll need to register with BMAT well in advance of the test date.

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