

# Getting into Medicine as a Graduate: Key Points

## Courses and entry requirements

There are three options open to graduates wishing to study medicine, all of which are very competitive:

**Undergraduate degree**, usually 5 years, studying alongside those coming straight from A-levels or equivalent. Applications are generally welcomed from those undertaking a first degree; usually a high 2:1 is expected as a minimum. Some ask for a science based degree others only require science at A-level (usually grades A or B). Many also require good GCSE grades. The application procedure for graduates is no less rigorous than that for those coming fresh from A-levels. A few schools which have both an undergraduate and graduate medicine programme will only allow graduates to apply for the 4-year 'fast track' degree.

**Undergraduate degree inc. foundation year**, suitable for candidates without a science background, the additional foundation year provides necessary knowledge in chemistry, physics and biology.

**4-year 'fast track' degree for graduates**. Most fast-tracks are only open to those with a first degree in a relevant science-based subject but a small number offer places to non-science graduates who can demonstrate sound scientific knowledge and the ability to learn quickly. A high 2.1 is usually the expected minimum, although a small number of schools will consider people with a 2.2 if they have extensive caring / healthcare related experience. Some schools may consider a graduate with a 2.2 if they have then successfully achieved a good Masters or PhD, others won't. Always check with individual medical schools.

For more information about individual courses and entry requirements, use the UCAS course search facility: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com). Not all courses, particularly the fast-track ones, are open to international students so check with medical schools first. If you are interested in studying abroad, refer to websites such as the World Directory of Medical Schools [www.wdoms.org](http://www.wdoms.org) or European University Central Application Support Service [www.eunicas.co.uk](http://www.eunicas.co.uk). Thoroughly research the course and its validity if you wish to work as a medical professional back in the UK or another country; check validity with the GMC [www.gmc-uk.org](http://www.gmc-uk.org).

## The application process

- Check out entrance requirements at the medical school(s) of your choice to make sure you are eligible before applying for entry. If you don't think you meet the requirements, contact the medical school to see if they will still consider you – or what you would need to do in order to be considered. Understand the demands of a medical degree – think carefully about why you want to do it and weigh up all the pros and cons.
- All UK applications must be made online via the UCAS website: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com). If you have questions about the UCAS process, post a question on Facebook ([ucasonline](https://www.facebook.com/ucasonline)), Twitter ([@ucas\\_online](https://twitter.com/ucas_online)) or call them on 0371 468 0 468. The deadline for applications is 15th October in the year before the intended start date. If you miss this deadline, it is extremely unlikely that your application will be considered.
- No more than four choices of medical school should be included on the UCAS form. Some candidates are tempted to include a different degree course in their selection as 'insurance' (eg, physiotherapy) but think VERY carefully about this. Although admissions teams cannot see your other choices, your personal statement would have to try to cover both courses – what might this imply about your commitment to medicine? Seek help from a Careers Adviser if you wish to discuss your options.
- When applying, you will need to demonstrate clear evidence of: sound motivation; realism in your idea of what work as a doctor involves and possession of the personal qualities required of a good doctor (e.g. compassion, resourcefulness, stamina and perseverance). Selectors will be particularly interested to know about any relevant and recent work experience, including voluntary work, work-shadowing, etc. For more details about writing an effective personal statement, pick up a copy of the Careers Service information sheet **UCAS Personal Statements for Medicine or Dentistry**.



- A good academic reference is expected. Talk to your tutor or someone else from your academic department who knows you well, explaining what you think are your key selling points. Do this well in advance of the UCAS deadline - contact potential referees before the summer vacation.
- You may wish selectors to see highly relevant supporting materials, such as a portfolio of your observational work, your CV, or additional references if and only if these will add strength to your application. These cannot be included with the UCAS form but can be sent separately to admissions staff in individual medical schools once you have your UCAS application number. Don't overwhelm admissions teams with additional materials as there's no guarantee that they will read them. Make sure your personal statement contains all the most relevant information about you.
- Many medical schools ask you to undertake an admissions test, often before the UCAS deadline. For further information, see the Careers Service information sheet **Admissions Tests for Medical & Dental Schools**.
- Medical schools will interview candidates only if they are sufficiently impressed by their UCAS form. For help with preparing for interviews, see the Careers Service information sheet **Preparing for Interviews at Medical or Dental School**.

## Selection criteria

Selection criteria vary between institutions although the UCAS form, interview and admissions test (if required) are all very important. Try to find out exact selection criteria from each admissions team before you apply and also how much emphasis they place on the UCAS form, your performance at interview and your test results.

## Funding your studies

You should give careful consideration to how you will fund your studies. To keep abreast of any changes to the funding system, or if you have questions, contact the NHS Student Bursaries team: [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students); Tel: 0300 330 1345; Facebook (NHSstudentbursaries) or Twitter (NHSBSA\_Students). You can also seek advice from the Students' Union Advice Centre: [su.sheffield.ac.uk/advice-support](http://su.sheffield.ac.uk/advice-support).

By way of example, the following information applies to 2015-entry for English domiciled students (2016-entry onwards details yet to be confirmed) and is based on current tuition fees of up to £9,000 per year:

- **4-year graduate-entry courses** - students will have to self-fund the first £3,465 towards their tuition fees in year one but can apply for a tuition fee loan via Student Finance England (student loans company) to cover the balance. For years two to four, the NHS will pay £3,465 each year towards tuition fees. Any fee charge above the £3,465 level must be met by the student, although they can apply for a tuition fee loan from the Student Finance England to cover this. Students may also be able to apply for a loan to help meet living costs through Student Finance England for all four years but they can also apply for an NHS bursary in years two to four (£1,000 non-means tested award plus a possible means-tested award). Graduates don't start paying back Student Finance England loans until they are earning over £21,000 a year. No other government grants are available for the duration of the course.
- **5 or 6-year undergraduate courses** - students will be responsible for their own tuition fees and living costs until the 5<sup>th</sup> year of study, although loans to cover living costs may be possible via Student Finance England for eligible students (but there's no tuition fee help). From the 5<sup>th</sup> year of study onwards, the NHS will pay your tuition fees. Eligible students from 5<sup>th</sup> year onwards will receive a £1,000 non means tested NHS award and can also apply for a means-tested NHS bursary. They can also apply for a reduced maintenance loan from Student Finance England to top this up. Student Finance England loans do not need to be repaid until the graduate is earning over £21,000 a year. No other government grants are available for the duration of the course.

For advice on alternative sources of funding, some good starting points are:

[www.money4medstudents.org](http://www.money4medstudents.org); [www.prospects.ac.uk/funding\\_postgraduate\\_study.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/funding_postgraduate_study.htm); [targetpostgrad.com/funding](http://targetpostgrad.com/funding) and [www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/worktypes/study](http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/worktypes/study). Make enquiries at the medical schools themselves in case they have bursaries or other sponsorship available.

## Some additional information sources

The Careers Service runs talks about 'Applying for Medicine or Dentistry as a Graduate', which provides a good overview of issues to consider. Also look out for events around working in healthcare:

[www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/events](http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/events). You can also view introductory briefings via the Careers Service website, see: [www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/presentations/gettingmedicine/player.html](http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/presentations/gettingmedicine/player.html) and [www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/presentations/medicinetests/player.html](http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/presentations/medicinetests/player.html)

In addition to the above resources, the Careers Service has a range of useful publications ranging from 'Getting into Medical School' (an essential guide to information on each stage of the application procedure) through to 'So you want to be a brain surgeon?' (a very useful guide to careers in the different medical specialities). Call in to see us at 388 Glossop Road (behind the Students' Union Building).

### General information about medical careers -

- Prospects ([www.prospects.ac.uk/types\\_of\\_jobs\\_health.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs_health.htm))
- British Medical Association ([bma.org.uk/developing-your-career](http://bma.org.uk/developing-your-career))
- General Medical Council ([www.gmc-uk.org/information\\_for\\_you/13920.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/information_for_you/13920.asp))
- Good Medical Practice - [www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/good\\_medical\\_practice.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/good_medical_practice.asp)
- NHS Healthcare Careers: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk). This includes information about the various specialities within medicine including salary and conditions, labour market and vacancies and opportunities for career development.

### Researching course and medical school choices -

- Check the individual Medical School website; email or telephone the admissions team if you have any questions
- Unistats - [unistats.direct.gov.uk](http://unistats.direct.gov.uk)

## Physician Associate – a possible alternative?

Working under the supervision of a doctor or surgeon, Physician Associates obtain medical histories, conduct comprehensive physical exams, request and interpret tests, diagnose and treat illnesses and injuries, and counsel on preventive health care although they cannot prescribe. Salaries for qualified Physician Associates are Band 7 (around £30,000-£40,000).

Training involves a 2-year PG course for those with a life science degree and can be studied at around 15 different institutions, including the University of Sheffield (for the full list see the NHS Healthcare Careers website). Entry requirements vary, some 2.1 and some 2.2 or above. Apply directly to the institution offering the course (deadlines vary).

Fees are currently £9,000 per year for UK/EU (non-EU fees are usually higher) and there is currently no NHS funding or student loan available. Check out Career Development Loans.

For more info, see [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/explore-by-career/doctors/careers-in-medicine/physician-associate](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/explore-by-career/doctors/careers-in-medicine/physician-associate) and Faculty of Physician Associates at the Royal College of Physicians [www.fparcp.co.uk](http://www.fparcp.co.uk)

The NHS Healthcare Careers website also has information about the range of allied health professions including podiatrists, dietitians, orthoptists, orthotists, paramedics, physiotherapists, radiographers and speech and language therapists: [www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles)