

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. 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 or European University Central Application Support Service www.eunicas.co.uk. There's also an interesting online talk <http://goo.gl/9h5uhi> by www.medicaldoorway.com and exhibitions by prospective medical schools listed at www.mdexhibitions.com. 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.

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.
- Many medical schools ask you to undertake an admissions test, often in the summer or early autumn before the UCAS deadline. For further information, see the Careers Service information sheet **Admissions Tests for Medical & Dental Schools**.
- All UK applications must be made online via the UCAS website: 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). For more details about writing an effective personal statement, read the Careers Service information sheet **UCAS Personal Statements for Medicine or Dentistry**.
- A good academic reference is expected although don't rely on it to impress admissions team. 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.
- Medical schools will interview candidates only if they are sufficiently impressed by their admissions test results and/or UCAS form. For help with preparing for interviews, see the Careers Service information sheet **Preparing for Interviews at Medical or Dental School**.

Work experience

Selection criteria vary between institutions so contact admissions teams before you apply to find out their exact selection criteria, including how much emphasis they place on your test results, UCAS form and performance at interview. One thing that will be high on their list is recent and relevant caring experience, (eg dental practice, GP surgery, hospital, care home or hospice) as well as work shadowing to show you understand the work of a doctor. For more work experience suggestions, read the Careers Service information sheet **Health Related Volunteering in Sheffield**.

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; Tel: 0300 330 1345; Facebook (NHSstudentbursaries) or Twitter (NHSBSA_Students).

By way of example, the following information applies to 2016-entry for English domiciled students (2017-entry onwards details yet to be confirmed):

- **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 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. Students may also be able to apply for a loan to help meet living costs through Student Finance England for all four years.
- **5 or 6-year undergraduate courses** - students will be responsible for their own tuition fees and living costs until the 5th 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 5th year of study onwards, the NHS will pay your tuition fees. From year five onwards, tuition fees will be paid by the NHS Student Bursary Scheme and you have access to a non-means tested grant of £1,000 as part of their NHS Bursary award as well as apply for a means-tested NHS bursary to cover maintenance costs and a reduced maintenance loan from Student Finance England.

For advice on alternative sources of funding, some good starting points are: www.rmbf.org/medical-students; www.prospects.ac.uk/funding_postgraduate_study.htm; targetpostgrad.com/funding and www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/explore/study. Make enquiries at the medical schools themselves in case they have bursaries or other sponsorship available.

Some additional information sources

Careers Service events -

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, all advertised on CareerConnect in MUSE.

General information about medical careers -

- Prospects (www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/browse-sector/healthcare)
- British Medical Association (bma.org.uk)
- General Medical Council (www.gmc-uk.org/information_for_you/13920.asp)
- Good Medical Practice - www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/good_medical_practice.asp
- NHS Healthcare Careers: www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-medicine. 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; contact the admissions team if you have any questions
- Unistats - 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 around £9000 per year (2017 entry) although some fee waivers may be available. For more information, see read the Careers Service handout **Physician Associate: Key Points** and www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/explore-by-career/doctors/careers-in-medicine/physician-associate

Other allied health professions

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