

# The Ultimate Guide to Studying Medicine

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# WHAT'S INSIDE

Becoming a doctor is arguably one of the most rewarding career paths available, so it's not surprising that getting into medical school is very competitive. That said, it is far from impossible and thousands of students successfully secure places at the best medical schools in the world every single year.

Over the past decade, we've been running [residential Medicine summer schools in Oxford](#), as well as [online courses](#) and [internships](#).

There isn't a magic formula to getting into medical school, but we can help you to understand each step of the application process and give you some tips to maximise your chances of success.

Although it's a long journey, getting into medical school is a pretty uniform process, with most of the top medical schools in the UK expecting students to follow the same steps. These are:

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Let's take a look at each of these steps in detail, so you can feel a little more confident about getting into the medical school of your choice.







# About the Authors

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There are lots of guides to Medical School applications out there, so why should you trust ours? Put simply, because the people who wrote it are exactly where you're aiming to be in a few years' time.

We've worked with three Medical students studying at top UK universities to bring you the tips they wish they'd known before they applied.

Allow us to introduce you to...

## Bella

Oxford Scholastica Medicine Tutor  
5th year Medic at Manchester University

Bella is currently a fifth year medical student at the University of Manchester. She undertook an intercalated BSc in Global Health in her third year, and has extensive experience teaching and mentoring young people interested in studying Medicine.



## Louis

3rd year Medic at Bristol University

Louis is a third year medical student studying at the University of Bristol. Currently he is interested in epidemiology, global health and medical history. Outside of med school, he does his best to balance staying up to date on his reading and watch lists.

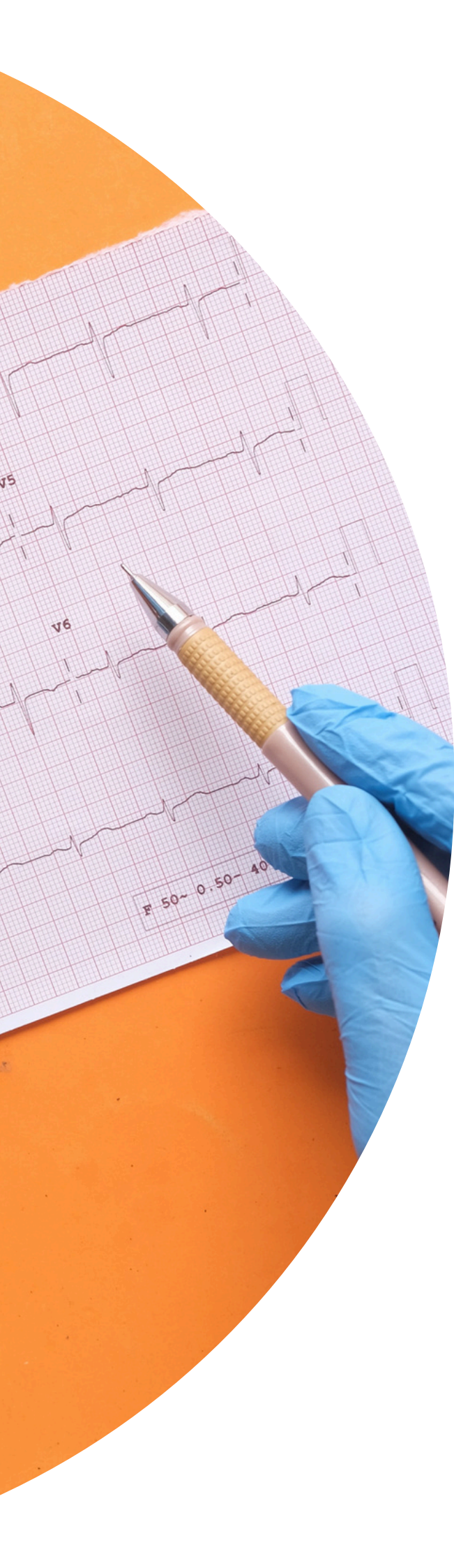


## Diego

6th year Medic at Cambridge University

Diego is a final year medical student at Cambridge University. He graduated in Biomedical Sciences from Barts and The London School of Medicine, with a research thesis on cancer biology and therapeutics. He is planning a career in reconstructive and plastic surgery, hoping to draw together innovations from tissue bioengineering, regenerative and stem cell research.





# Choosing Your Medical School

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If you're applying to one or more medical schools in the UK, you'll have to follow the UCAS application process.

With UCAS, you have five slots to fill but you can only apply to a maximum of four UK medical schools, meaning you have one slot spare to apply to another course if you would like. Some popular fifth choices include Biology, Natural Sciences or Neuroscience, but it's a completely personal decision and some people prefer to leave the fifth slot blank. It's worth bearing in mind that courses other than medicine may have lower entry requirements, meaning the fifth slot may be a helpful insurance choice.

When you're deciding which medical schools to apply to, it's important to remember that you will be spending between three and six years there. You should consider things like location, campus vs city, expense and general culture. In addition to these things, there are some elements specific to medical schools that you should make sure to consider, too.





# Course Structure



**Medical degrees may all see you graduate as a provisionally-licensed doctor, but they have very different course structures. Depending on your learning style, one of these might appeal to you more than the others. We've covered each of them here.**

## Traditional

This is still a very common course structure in the UK, and is the format followed by both Oxford and Cambridge's medical schools. Traditional courses see students spend the first years of their degree learning medical theory across a wide range of disciplines, from physiology to biochemistry. These years will be lecture-heavy and involve lots of independent study time.

In the later years of a traditional degree, students enter the clinical phase of their training, taking part in ward rounds, shadowing staff at hospitals and GP surgeries and applying their in-depth theoretical knowledge to the real world of medicine. There will still be some "academic" learning, but the bulk of students' clinical years will be spent working and learning in real medical environments.

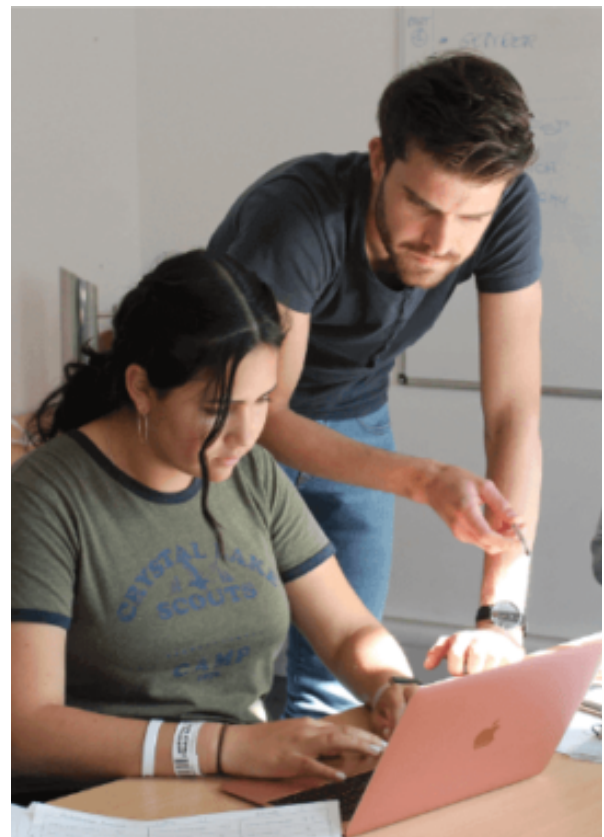
Traditional course structures could suit you best if you enjoy the theoretical side of your studies at school, and prefer to learn something thoroughly before you put it into practice. It's also good for students who enjoy learning different subjects separately.

## Integrated

Integrated medical degrees are similar to the traditional course structure, in that you will spend a lot of your early years in lectures, tutorials and seminars learning a wide range of medical theory. The main difference is that, from the beginning of your time at university, you will also be gaining hands-on clinical experience.

The way in which theory is taught in integrated courses also varies slightly from the traditional option, with teaching units centred around the body rather than the discipline. Rather than tackling all of biochemistry, followed by all of anatomy, you'll work through every aspect of the respiratory system in one go, then every aspect of the lymphatic system.

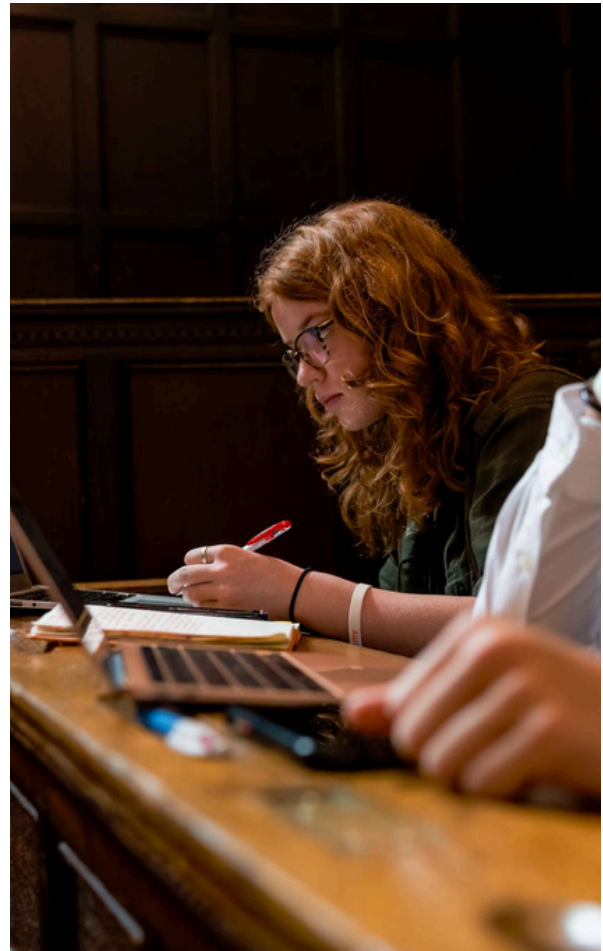
Integrated courses work well for students who learn best by applying their knowledge in a practical setting immediately, and students who are confident diving straight into professional, medical environments. They're also great for students who really enjoy exploring cross-curricular links in their learning.



# Course Structure

Regardless of which course structure you opt for, your medical study will include spending time at a teaching hospital (or several). It's important to consider which hospitals and clinics the universities you're applying to have connections with, especially if you already have an idea of the specialisms you'd like to explore later in your career.

Remember that it is possible to find elective placements and work experience/shadowing opportunities at hospitals that are not affiliated with your university, but it can take more organisation and they may have to happen outside of your regular term dates.



## Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

Pure play problem-based learning degrees – along with similar structures like case-based learning and enquiry-based learning – are quite difficult to come across in the UK, but blended approaches that lean heavily on the PBL philosophy are fairly common.

Problem-based learning is heavily patient-orientated and places medical students in groups to solve medical cases and learn from the process. Learning primarily takes place in small groups and is guided by a tutor, but students will generally be expected to take the lead in discussions.

PBL can be a great option for proactive students who enjoy working in groups and learning from first-hand experience. It's also perfect for those who prefer to direct their own learning, and anyone who may get restless sitting in lectures five days a week.







# Gaining Work Experience

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Work experience is generally a non-negotiable element of a successful medical school application. Schools want to have proof that you understand what a career in medicine involves and you're still committed to pursuing the degree. It's important to remember that admissions boards aren't interested in just seeing a long list of placements - they want to know what you learned from them and why it supports your application.



# Types of work experience

There are lots of different types of work experience that medical schools value, so you're sure to find an option that fits your circumstances. Remember, everything that informs your decision to continue pursuing medicine is important and valid.



## Shadowing

This is the type of work experience most people think of when considering medical applications. It involves contacting a medical professional – preferably working in a field or specialism you are particularly interested in – and asking if you can observe their work for a set period of time. This could involve anything from sitting in on patient consultations to watching surgery to attending ward rounds.



## Voluntary work

Voluntary work is often more hands-on than shadowing. It could involve ancillary work, like cleaning or admin, at a hospital or clinic. It could also involve volunteering to spend social time with long-term patients or care home residents who may not have much exposure to the outside world. Anything that offers you the opportunity to spend time in a medical environment and meet medical staff at different points in their careers is very helpful.



## Virtual Experience

No, we don't mean playing Surgeon Simulator 2. Virtual medical experience has always been incredibly valuable and, with COVID-19 making many in-person opportunities more difficult to access, they're a great option for medical applicants today. Whether you are able to connect with a medical professional who is willing to discuss their experience with you, attend an [Oxford Scholastica Internship](#), or watch YouTube videos made by current medical students, there are endless ways you can use the internet to further your medical experience.



## Extra-curricular courses

Summer schools, institutes and after school classes that centre around medicine can be incredibly informative, rewarding and fun! A programme like [Oxford Scholastica's Medicine summer school](#) blends medical theory you won't have come across at school with hands-on practical experience and the chance to hear firsthand from a medical hero. All of the Oxford Scholastica Medicine activities are geared towards informing your decision to become a doctor and boosting your medical school application.



## Conferences / Events

By attending conferences and events geared towards the study of medicine, you are gaining theoretical knowledge that will help you grasp degree-level concepts more easily, as well as demonstrating a keen interest in the subject. These can also be great places to meet other people interested in studying medicine who you can share your knowledge and excitement with.





# Why a List Isn't Enough



Gaining medical experience to boost your medical school application is less about getting as many placements as you can, and more about proving you have taken steps to familiarise yourself with the realities of a career in a medical field. Being a doctor is a tough job and admissions teams want to make sure you're sure it's the right path for you.

Work experience is also instrumental in helping you figure out which field you would like to specialise in. If you attend one work experience placement that you absolutely hate, that doesn't necessarily mean medicine isn't for you – it could just be that the department or role your experience was in isn't your cup of tea.

A long list of placements tells the admissions team you have the connections or resources to gain access to lots of opportunities. Explaining what you learned from the most helpful placements, as well as what you didn't enjoy about them, is far more valuable and informative.

## Some things to remember when doing work experience:

- Take notes at the end of every work experience session you take part in. List what you did, anything you learned and how you felt about each aspect of the experience. These notes will be a really valuable resource when you come to write your personal statement and prepare for interview.
- It's okay not to enjoy something. Finding one aspect of the medical field tough, or tedious, or unpleasant, doesn't mean you're not cut out to be a doctor! Be honest with yourself, and try to find experience in another field.
- But it's also okay to change your mind. If you try a range of different placements in different aspects of medicine, and you didn't like any of them, it's okay to decide it isn't the field for you. Look into medical research, or other careers entirely.
- Factor in rest! If you spend your whole summer holiday gaining work experience, you'll be too tired to concentrate when you restart classes. Remember to take breaks, do things you enjoy and look after yourself while on your quest for work experience.



# Securing Placements

There are countless ways to secure high-quality work experience in the medical field. We've covered a few of the most common ones, but you should use your initiative to explore all the paths to work experience available to you personally.



## Use your network

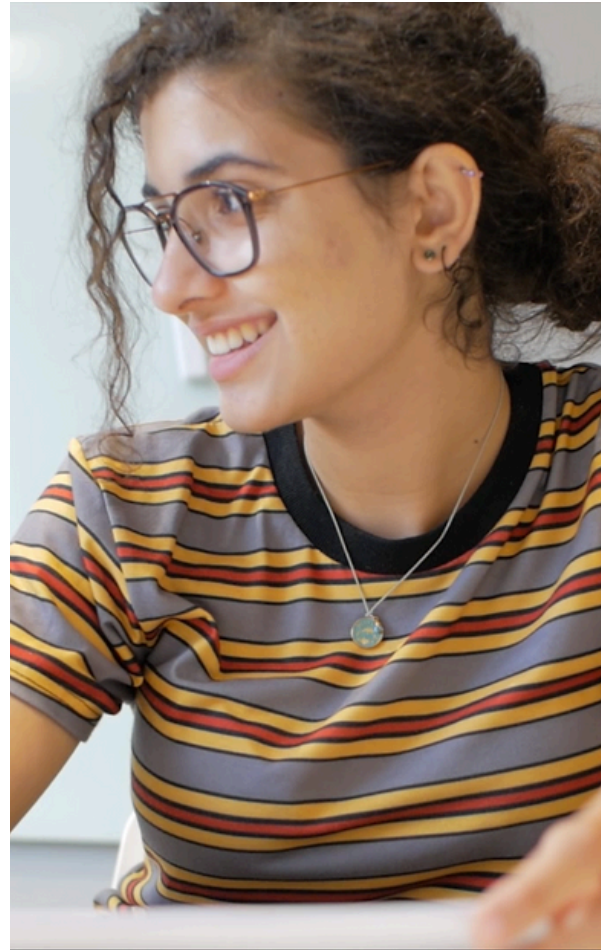
If you, your family or your friends know any medical professionals, use your existing connection to introduce yourself and ask if they know of any work experience opportunities you could take part in. This might be as simple as asking your family member to shadow them for a day, or involve a mutual connection setting up a meeting for you to discuss your options.

We know this route isn't available to everyone, but it's always worth putting feelers out in your personal network. You never know who might be able to help!



## Apply to a programme

As well as more direct outreach options, you can search for medical work experience or internship programmes in your area. These are structured programmes designed to give you an insight into working life in the medical field, and can cover all kinds of specialisms and take a variety of forms.



## Reach out to medical professionals

As well as getting in touch with medical professionals you already know, many doctors and clinical staff would be happy to offer shadowing or work experience opportunities to students who reach out. You should be tactical about who you ask, though; a GP might be better positioned to help than a senior neurosurgeon, both because of their existing time commitments and the nature of their work.

If in doubt, try reaching out to the administrative branch of the practice or clinic you'd like to gain experience in. They might be best placed to suggest doctors or support staff who would be happy to help you.







# Writing Your Medicine Personal Statement for UCAS

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A very important element of a UCAS application for UK medical schools is the medicine personal statement. While your predicted grades, school reference and entrance exam marks demonstrate your intellectual capabilities, the personal statement really allows you to convey exactly why you, rather than someone else with a similar academic profile, should be accepted onto the course.

There is a wealth of conflicting information on the internet about what a "perfect" medicine personal statement looks like. Unfortunately, because the statement is all about you, there is no one formula for this; the most important thing is that you honestly convey your interest in the subject. That said, we've included a few medicine-specific things you can think about when drafting your medicine personal statement.

**Please note: In 2023, UCAS announced changes to the personal statement that will be implemented in 2024/25. This Ultimate Guide will be updated when UCAS release further details. Those applying to UK medical schools in 2024 will not be affected by the changes.**



# Things to Include



## Detail over quantity

You might find it helpful to bear the quality, proof and potential structure in mind when you're planning your personal statement. The admissions board won't want to read a 4000 character list of all your skills, achievements and work experience. Instead, they're interested in how these things will equip you to study medicine at their university.

Don't just say that you're very empathetic, instead mention an experience that you feel really demonstrates your empathy, and then link that quality to your potential to study medicine successfully. Similarly with work experience, rather than listing every placement you've ever done, select the ones that you think demonstrate your potential the best and go into more detail about what you gained from them.

## Provide interview material

If you're applying to a medical school in the UK, chances are you'll be required to attend an interview if your initial application is successful. Your interviewer will have read through your application, including your personal statement, making it an excellent opportunity to suggest some topics for them to ask you about.

They'll never sit and work through your personal statement from top to bottom in an interview, but they might ask you to expand upon any comments they find particularly interesting, or to demonstrate your knowledge further if you mention an area of expertise. This can seem a little daunting in prospect, but as long as you write about the things you have genuinely enjoyed, this gives you a really good base to impress your interviewer with your enthusiasm and knowledge.





# Remember to Be...



## Realistic

Working in the medical sphere is immensely rewarding and well-respected, but it can also be intense, gruelling and often upsetting. You're not just applying for a place on an academic course, you're applying for a challenging career path, and the people reading your personal statement will be trying to work out whether the practicalities of medicine are a good fit for you.

You might therefore want to provide evidence in your medical personal statement that you understand some of the less positive realities of being a doctor, and then reaffirm the reasons you still wish to pursue that career path. If you are more interested in a career as a medical researcher, you can make this clear in your personal statement, too.



## Honest

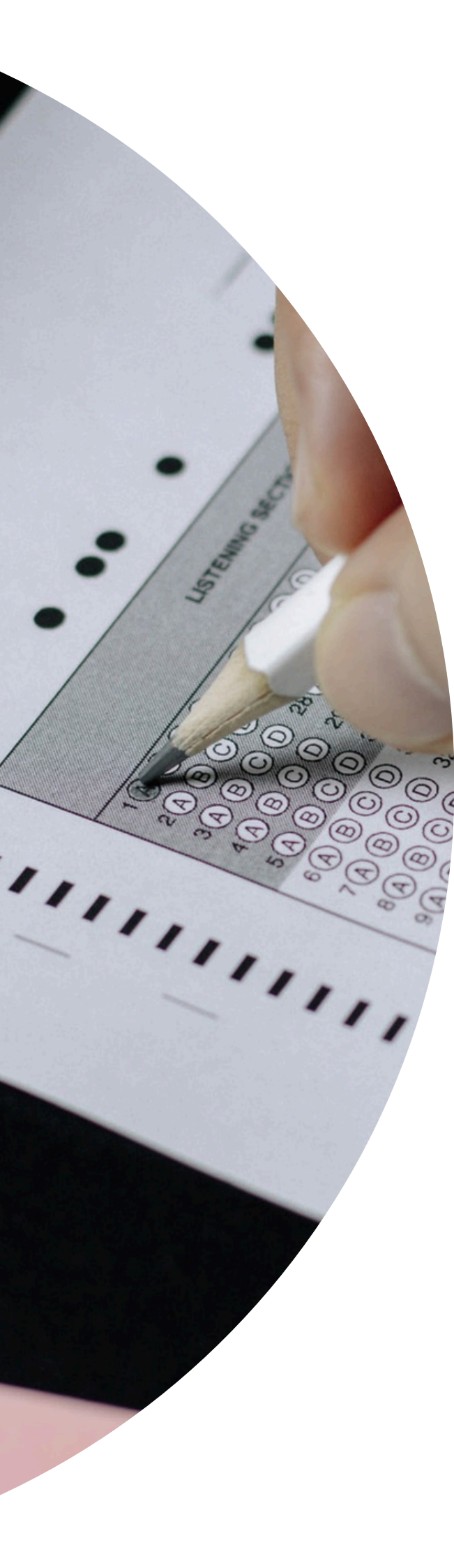
Above all, remember to be honest. In addition to the fact you might get caught out at interview if you've exaggerated your experience or mentioned topics you haven't really explored, the most important role of the personal statement is to reflect who you are as a student and future medical professional.

Admissions boards aren't interested in reading a mythical "perfect" personal statement. They want to get to know a little more about you, to help them decide whether you would be a good fit for their school, and whether their medical school would be a good fit for you. They can't do this if you're not honest with them.

### Personal Statement Key Facts

- ✓ No more than 4,000 characters (including spaces!)
- ✓ It can be no more than 47 lines (including blank line breaks)
- ✓ You can only write one – not different ones for each course or university
- ✓ It's all about you! Make sure your personality shines through





# Entrance Exams

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All UK medical schools, and most international medical schools, will require you to sit at least one entrance exam.

While it might seem like an unnecessary step, given that you already have to achieve certain grades to take up your place at medical school, the reason behind the entrance exams is simple. Medicine is a complex, far-reaching subject that ranges well beyond anything you will have studied at school that your A-Level (or equivalent) grades can verify.

Good grades in Biology and Chemistry are essential, but they don't demonstrate how you would respond to a moral dilemma with a patient. A stellar interview won't necessarily demonstrate your ability to rapidly process large amounts of written information and arrive at a reasoned conclusion. The entrance exams required by UK medical schools, and other schools around the world, are specifically designed to test these more holistic skills.





# The BMAT

The Biomedical Admissions Test, commonly known as the BMAT, is the entrance exam some UK medical schools (including Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College and University College London (UCL)) require applicants to sit.

## Structure

The BMAT is structured in three sections, each targeting a different skillset.

### section 01

is designed to test generic academic skills that will be important throughout your undergraduate study. This group of questions, often called the Thinking Skills section, is made up of 35 questions and takes 60 minutes to complete. All answers are multiple-choice and around half of the marks will assess your problem solving abilities, with the rest giving you a chance to show off your critical thinking and analytical skills.



### section 02

is 30 minutes long, has 27 questions and assesses your existing scientific knowledge and how well you can apply it to different situations. All of the scientific knowledge they test for will be things you can reasonably be expected to have learned about at school already – it'll be things on the syllabus for A-Level / Highers.



### section 03

is very different as, rather than multiple choice questions, you'll be asked to write a short essay in 30 minutes, covering no more than one side of A4, in response to a quote or concept raised in the question. This section is all about your communication skills and your thinking process. You'll get to choose from a range of quotes and statements, lots of which won't be directly linked to medical content.



# The BMAT

## Scoring and Marking

BMAT tests are scored a little differently to other tests, as you get marked on a scale from 1 to 9, rather than just being given the total number of marks you scored.

Sections 1 and 2 are not negatively marked, meaning you don't lose any points for getting questions wrong. Your total points on each of these sections will contribute to your final grade.

Section 3 is marked differently; you'll be given a grade between 1 and 5 for the content of your essay and a grade between A and E for the quality of your written English. The content includes things like answering the question that has been asked, structuring your essay logically, and making good use of your general knowledge. The quality of things like spelling, grammar and rhetorical devices in your essay will impact your written English grade.



## BMAT Summary:

So, what are the key things to remember with the BMAT?

- Practice, practice, practice.
- Remember your timings (Section 1: 60 minutes, Section 2: 30 minutes, Section 3: 30 minutes)
- Keep your options open
- Relax! You've got this!

## Preparing for the BMAT

As with any exam, every student will have a different ideal way to prepare for the BMAT. That said, there are some tips that generally work for lots of students.

For many, practice really does make perfect when it comes to the BMAT. Because it's unlikely to be structured like any other exam you have had to sit, the only way to really become familiar with the experience of taking the BMAT is to practice with real questions. You can find online practice papers on the Cambridge Assessment website, and there are lots of books and resources that offer hundreds of practice questions. The more comfortable you are answering the questions, the quicker you'll go and the more relaxed you'll feel when answering the real thing.

Try not to skip questions – in practice or in the actual test. You're not negatively marked, so you've got nothing to lose by putting an educated guess for any questions you're unsure about. If you don't know something, don't spend lots of time agonising over it; move onto the next question and then go back at the end to put your best guess for the ones you were unsure about.

Finally, make sure that you're applying for both BMAT and UCAT universities. Unfortunately, no matter how much we prepare, sometimes we have a bad day and an exam doesn't go quite the way we'd hoped. You don't take the BMAT until after you've submitted your UCAS, so knowing that you have different options will help to relieve the pressure on the day a little.





# The UCAT



Entrance exams like the UCAT are perhaps the scariest part of the admissions process for prospective medical students; they're likely structured differently to other exams you will have taken and test you on skills rather than revisable content.

Although it's a bit different, you can certainly still make sure you're prepared and set for success before you sit the UCAT! Here is our ultimate guide to succeeding on the UCAT.

The University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT) is used by the majority of Medical Schools in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand to select applicants for interview. Always remember that admission and aptitude tests form only one part of your application to Medical School, and are by no means the most important factor.

The UCAT takes place at several different times throughout the year, so you can sit it whenever suits you. The test is computer-based, but it cannot be completed from home. You will need to travel to a Pearson Vue testing centre and pay a fee. Don't worry, though, bursaries are available for eligible students.

If there is one piece of advice that we want you to take home from this guide it would be, quite simply, to be prepared and know how the test works.

## Structure

The UCAT is designed to test the mental aptitude of prospective medical students, rather than their academic achievements (which are already accounted for with your high school results, such as A-Levels). This is the main difference between the UCAT and the BMAT: the latter tests reasoning skills and general scientific knowledge, while the UCAT focuses on non-academic abilities.

The UCAT is divided into four subsections, plus the situational judgement test. We've broken down the numbers for each section here, so you know exactly how it's structured. Read on for our advice on how to stick to these timings and ace the answers!

Section Name	Number of questions	Time to Answer Section	Types of Question
Verbal Reasoning	44	21 minutes	Questions based on 11 short pieces of text
Decision Making	29	31 minutes	Statistics, chart and diagram-based questions
Quantitative Reasoning	36	24 minutes	Numerical problems
Abstract Reasoning	55	13 minutes	Tests your convergent and divergent thinking



# The UCAT

The final section, the **situational judgement test**, is concerned with medical ethics and tests your social attitudes and the way you would react in different medical scenarios. Here, 69 questions will need to be answered in 26 minutes.

Like most exams, you will not be allowed to bring anything from outside (phones, notes etc.) into the exam room. You will be provided with a blank notebook and pen, and a calculator will be available on the screen should you need it. The time allocation for each subsection seems a bit bizarre, but don't worry, you will have a countdown clock at the bottom of your screen to ensure you always know how much time you have left on each section.



## Scoring and Marking

The score of the UCAT is spread equally across the four main sections (verbal reasoning, abstract reasoning, decision making, and quantitative reasoning). Each section is given a score between 300 and 900 (proportional to the number of questions you answered correctly). The maximum score you can get is therefore 3600, and the minimum is 1200.

Test takers are then divided in deciles, with each decile representing 10% of applicants. The Pearson Vue website provides you with the average scores and breakdowns for previous years, so that you can get a feel of how people perform. In general, a score higher than 650 in each section (2,600 overall) is considered good. A score above 690 (2,760 overall) is considered excellent and is bound to impress admissions officers at your chosen Medical Schools.

The situational judgement test is scored independently, and is given a band score ranging from 1 (highest) to 4 (lowest). Most candidates will score somewhere between bands 2 and 3 (the normal distribution).

The good thing about the UCAT is that your results will be ready immediately – in fact, you will walk out of the test centre with your results in hand.

As always, check how the Medical Schools you're applying to will handle the results. Some Universities won't consider the situational judgement test, some will have cut-offs for certain sections, and others will take a holistic approach and consider the overall UCAT results within the context of the whole application. It's good to go into the exam knowing exactly what the outcome you're hoping for is, and you can only do this if you know what your ideal Medical Schools are looking for.





# The UCAT

**Diego, a current Medical student at the University of Cambridge, has given us his top tips for acing UCAT preparation.**



## Preparing for the UCAT

Unfortunately, Pearson Vue do not release past papers or practice papers. On their website you can find a limited number of example questions (in the Question Banks and Practice Tests sections) as well as the [Preparation Advice and Resources section](#) that will give you practical advice on sitting the test (see [www.ucat.ac.uk/prepare](http://www.ucat.ac.uk/prepare)).

Online there are many UCAT Preparation Packages, not associated or endorsed by Pearson Vue. They are not free and can be quite expensive. I am always wary of pay-to-study resources, but if you can pay the fee then by all means go ahead and subscribe to the question bank.

In addition, there are lots of free resources on the web (including question banks and practice papers) that can be extremely helpful. However, always remember that these banks are not produced or reviewed by Pearson Vue, so the standard may vary.

In terms of timescale, I would advise you to start familiarising yourself with the format of the exam and questions at least one month before the exam date. As the exam approaches, you may want to start doing some of the unofficial past papers online.

The UCAT is a stressful exam, let's be honest. It can feel a bit bizarre, with lots of waffle, and the timings for each section are very tight. However, with the correct mindset, knowing what to expect, and practising consistently, you will ace the exam and stand out from the crowd.

Best of luck to you, and see you soon on the wards!

## My Top Tips

I would strongly advise you to create a study schedule, regularly allocating some of your time each day and week to UCAT preparation. This is the best way to incorporate UCAT preparation into your busy schedule in the Spring preceding A Levels and your UCAS application. In addition, always review your UCAT questions and take time to understand why you got certain questions wrong, and which areas of study you might like to revisit. This is the best way to prepare for the test given the limited amount of preparation resources available.

On the day of the exam, try and answer all questions. The UCAT doesn't use negative marking – meaning you gain points for right answers, rather than losing them for incorrect attempts – so take your best guess. Don't get stuck on a question you can't answer, just move on. Practising at home will also allow you to get a feel of the timing, which can be quite tight.





# Interviews

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Okay, so you've submitted your application, you're studying hard for your entrance exams and you've just found out that at least one medical school would like to interview you. Firstly, congratulations! That means that your application caught their eye, and they think you'd be a great fit for them on paper.

Now, you just need to prove that you're a great fit for them in person too!

There are lots of things you can do to prepare for your medical interview, and we cover some of the most important ones down below. However, the number one thing to remember is to be honest and be yourself. The interview works both ways; the interviewer wants to make sure you're right for their medical school, but you also want to make sure their medical school is right for you. If you're too focused on trying to impress them with your answers, neither of you will be able to find out what you want to.

So, with that in mind...



# Ace Your Interview Prep

## Do Your Research

As soon as you hear you've been invited to interview, refamiliarise yourself with the medical school's website. Remind yourself of all the reasons you wanted to study there, and check to see if they mention the qualities they're looking for in their ideal candidate.

Once you've looked around the official website, look further afield to read or hear real students at the medical school talking about their experience. Maybe there's a blog or YouTube channel run by a current student, or a thread on [The Student Room](#) where grads offer guidance to prospective medics.

In short, find out as much as you can about the realities of the medical school before your interview. Not only will you be able to show a true appreciation for the course and what makes it unique, but you'll also remind yourself of why you're so excited to study there in the first place. Genuine enthusiasm can go a long way in a medical school interview, and it's important to remember why you're putting in all of this work.

## Medical Ethics

As well as researching questions you might be asked, it's a good idea to consider common theories in medical ethics and establish what your position on them is. While you might not be asked about them directly, the ability to weave an awareness of the challenges of medicine and the sensitivity with which philosophical questions should be addressed into your responses will demonstrate your maturity well.

If you have friends or family who also have an interest in medicine, debating medical ethics topics can be a really good way to develop your own opinion while also considering opposing views. Respecting others' opinions – especially when they differ from your own – is a key skill in Medicine.



## Questions, Questions, Questions

You'll need to be prepared to answer a wide range of questions at your interview, from what you think makes a good doctor to why you've applied to that particular medical school.

In addition, there are a range of things that will apply to every question you answer. Remember to be confident when you're speaking, and use sentence starters like "When I was looking at the course online..." and "The one thing about medicine that particularly appeals to me is..." in order to give yourself some time to think through your answers.

Be honest; if you genuinely don't know how to answer something, explain why you're uncertain to the interviewer. Breaking down your thought process and showing that you're not afraid to seek help when necessary are both really valuable if you're studying medicine.







# Getting the Grades

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So, you've done all the applications, taken admissions tests, got your conditional offers from different universities, and chosen your firm choice and your insurance choice. What next?

First of all, congratulations on getting this far! The Medical School application process is no joke, so receiving an offer is an achievement in and of itself. But you didn't go through all of that to not gain a place in the end.

The final hurdle standing between you and medical school is getting the grades to meet your offer. We know that medical schools tend to offer pretty high – whether you're striving for three A's at A-Level, or a 39 in your IB, the hard work is far from over.

We've put together some top study tips to help you secure your offer – and, as a bonus, they'll also help you to stay on top of your workload once you start your degree. There's nothing like forward planning!



# Tips & Tricks

## If it ain't broke...

Don't fix it! The number one thing to remember when studying is that, if you already have a method that works for you, you enjoy and is currently getting you the grades you want, you don't have to change a thing!

It can sometimes seem tempting to try out something new, and sometimes that can lead to really positive results, but if you're already approaching your exam season, now is not the time to start experimenting with a successful process. You might be able to add a couple of the following tips to your existing setup, but don't feel like you have to change it up for the sake of it.



## Notes and Revisions

Lots of people write pages and pages of notes in class, and then abandon them at the bottom of a bag, in a drawer, or in a pile on a desk. That defeats the point of writing them in the first place!

Copying up your notes a couple of weeks after the lesson can act as a really effective means of revising and consolidating the information you learned. Then, when your notes are neatly typed or formatted beautifully, you can actually use them as a revision resource. You're likely to absorb information better when you're reading something you wrote yourself, rather than a dusty old textbook.

## Tomatoes, anyone?

Pacing yourself while you're studying is really important, no matter how close or far away your exams are. One way to make sure you study efficiently, give yourself enough breaks and avoid burning out is by using the pomodoro (that's Italian for tomato, by the way) method.

The official pomodoro method involves setting a timer for 25 minutes, during which you work with no distractions, and then taking a 5 minute break when the timer goes off. Then, every couple of hours, you take a longer break. These timings can be adjusted to best suit your personal workflow, but make sure you keep enough breaks in to maintain your focus throughout the whole work period.



# Tips & Tricks



## Reward Yourself!

Whether you treat yourself to a solo dance party to your favourite song in every 5 minute pomodoro break, or you meet up with friends at the end of every study day, it's important to make sure you reward yourself as you're studying.

Not only will this motivate you to sit down and stick at it when you'd rather be off somewhere else, but you also deserve to recognise your own hard work! Getting into medical school may be the ultimate reward, but that certainly doesn't mean you can't celebrate all of your study successes along the way.

## Past Papers Are Your Friend

So, you've been revising and copying up your class notes, reading textbooks and probably making lots more notes. Unfortunately, cramming content alone won't be enough to ensure you ace your exams – you have to be able to apply what you know within the specific constraints of the exam hall.

Practising past papers allows you to apply your knowledge, while also identifying areas that you might need to revisit. Start by working through the past papers at your own pace, question by question, in your normal studying environment. Then, as exam season draws closer, start timing yourself per question, and work through them in exam conditions (e.g. silence, no distractions, no support materials). Finally, you'll be able to complete entire practice papers in exam conditions with no stress at all!

The more familiar you are with past papers, the more relaxed you'll feel when it comes to the real thing.



Unfortunately, we don't have a magic formula that will guarantee you meet your offer for your dream medical school. However, if you get your study technique right after submitting a successful application, personal statement and passing interview, you've put yourself in the best possible position. Put in the work and believe in your own capabilities, and we're confident that you'll do wonderfully.





# BEFORE YOU GO...

We hope you've found this Ultimate Guide to Studying Medicine both interesting and useful – you're now well-prepared to take your next steps in your journey to becoming a doctor!

We've put together a checklist for you to help make sure you stay on track and are in the best possible position to get the edge in your medical school applications. You can print or save this page and tick off the steps as you complete them.

Best of luck with your applications – and remember, our blog, Report and courses will always be ready to continue supporting you!

Bella, Diego, Louis and the Oxford Scholastica team

## Take our Medicine Report and Career Test

Our free [Personalised Academic Report](#) will help you to identify the areas of your application that you might want to focus on further, while our [Career Test](#) can suggest different medical specialisms you could consider for your wider career.

☐

## Secure work experience

Work experience is one of the most important aspects of a medicine application. Whether you volunteer in a hospital, complete an Oxford Scholastica [Medicine Internship](#) with us, make sure you've got experience on your CV.

☐

## Write your personal statement

...and then rewrite it. Personal statements are an integral element of your UCAS application, so you'll want to write more than one version before you submit. Make sure you ask for feedback from friends, parents, teachers and mentors, and submit a final draft you're really happy with.

☐

## Submit your UCAS application!

When you're happy with everything, you can submit your application! Remember, the hard work doesn't stop here, so keep preparing for your interviews once you've submitted your UCAS. You might want to keep Medicine front of mind with an [Online Course](#) or [Summer School](#).

☐



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