

Information for specific groups

This page offers information for specific groups of people who may be thinking about applying to medical school. It will be useful if you're from a non-traditional background, if you're a mature student or if you have a disability or medical condition.

doctor on phone

Remember that:

- whatever your background, disadvantage or age, you need to be able to cope with the demands of medical training
- [financial support](#) ^[1] is usually available. You don't have to pay back your student loans until you start earning. Additional support may be available to people experiencing financial hardship. The [Royal Medical Benevolent Fund](#) ^[2] has information about the support it can offer.

We have information on medical school for three specific groups:

- a non-traditional background
- mature student
- disability or medical condition

• **From a non-traditional background?**

Traditionally, medicine has attracted people from educated families with a higher than average household income and perhaps who have one or more relatives who are doctors. These days, organisations that provide NHS healthcare are keen to attract people from a wider range of backgrounds. This results in a more diverse workforce and is good for patient care.

There are a number of initiatives to increase the number of people who apply to medical school from non-traditional backgrounds. This is known as 'widening participation'. This might apply to you, eg if you go to a school where students don't tend to go to university or if no one in your family has been to university.

Schemes and initiatives to widen participation include those described below.

- Some medical degrees include a medicine with a foundation/gateway year ^[3] to prepare you for medical education. Our coursefinder tool ^[4] gives information on widening participation schemes for medical schools
- Many medical schools do outreach activities to raise awareness of medicine as a career, give you guidance on applying, increase your confidence to apply and expose you to student role models. Find out about possible talks or other activities at your school or college
- You may be able to attend a summer school or taster course at a medical school. Ask your teachers or look on medical school websites
- Support and mentoring programmes are available to improve social mobility. These are arranged through organisations such as the Social Mobility Foundation ^[5], Bright Journals ^[6] and Brightside ^[7]
- Access to Medicine ^[8] courses are designed to help students without the traditional entry requirements to get into medical school (read next section on mature students)

The British Medical Journal (BMJ) has a useful article on schemes to widen participation ^[9] and the British Medical Association (BMA) has a guide to widening access schemes in medical schools ^[10].

Find out more by reading:

- a first-hand account of a medical student who has achieved her dream ^[11]

• Are you a mature student?

There are no upper age limits, but medical schools will take into consideration the long training required to become a doctor and how many years' service you could provide.

As a mature applicant, make sure that you emphasise in your application the advantages you have over younger students. For instance you may:

- have life experience that will help with various aspects of the work. This will be valued by admissions staff
- be more emotionally resilient than younger students
- have already developed certain transferable skills
- have experience in healthcare or a related role
- have more focus and motivation than younger students

If you don't have the usual entry requirements for medical school, you could consider an Access to Medicine ^[12] course. These are designed for mature students. Courses usually last one year, full time. It is important to check with individual medical schools whether the access course you are considering is acceptable for entry. Not all medical schools accept them and even if they do, you would normally need to gain a distinction. It's

always a good idea to find out the destinations of past students.

As a potential mature student, there are a number of considerations.

- do you have plans in place to cope with your other commitments? Remember that you will have a lot on your plate and you will, at times, have to work unsocial hours
- if you've been away from learning for a while, how easy will you find it to get back into study?
- will you have the stamina needed?
- how will you feel about studying with younger students? If you do a four-year Graduate Entry Programme, you're more likely to be with other mature graduates

• Have a disability or medical condition?

If you have a disability, medical schools should provide you with information about the facilities available to you. If you have a medical condition, this should not jeopardise your career in medicine unless it has an impact on your professional fitness to practise. You can find out more in Gateways to the Profession ^[13] on the General Medical Council website.

Source URL:<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/why-study-medicine/information-specific-groups>

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/financial-support-university/financial-support-medical-and-dental> [2] <https://rmbf.org/get-help/help-for-medical-students/financial-help-for-medical-students/> [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/going-university/studying-be-doctor/applying-medical-school/medical-school-courses> [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/looking-course> [5] <http://www.socialmobility.org.uk/> [6] <https://www.brightjournals.org/> [7] <http://www.thebrightsidetrust.org/> [8] <https://studyinghealthcare.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/MSc-infosheet-access-courses.pdf> [9] <http://careers.bmj.com/careers/advice/view-article.html?id=20000808> [10] <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/career/studying-medicine/widening-participation> [11] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/going-university/studying-be-doctor/information-specific-groups/real-life-story-lydia-acquah> [12] <http://www.medschoolsonline.co.uk/school-leavers-access/> [13] http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/gateways_guidance.asp