

## Medical school courses

To train as a doctor, the first stage is to take a degree at medical school.

"Although a certain level of academic aptitude is needed, don't let it put you off if you fear you're not clever enough."

Read Rebecca's experience of medical school. [1]

There are various types of courses:

- standard, five-year programmes
- programmes that include a foundation year
- courses for graduates eg four-year accelerated programmes
- overseas programmes
- courses that include an intercalated degree [2]

You can find courses in medicine offered in the UK, by searching our course finder. [3] You'll also find information on the academic requirements for medical school.

## Entry requirements

Medical schools set their own academic entry requirements, so it's important to check these with individual schools. However, for all courses entry means:

- you'll need excellent GCSE and AS level results
- gaining high grades in your A level or equivalent qualifications
- passing an interview [4]
- demonstrating that you have developed some understanding of medicine, for example through relevant paid or unpaid experience [5] and/or work shadowing
- usually taking an admissions test [6]
- health and background checks
- you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values would apply in your everyday work as a doctor. Find out more about NHS values. [7]

## Skills and interests

You need to prove that you:

- have the capacity to learn and retain lots of information
- have a genuine understanding of, interest in and commitment to medicine
- have the necessary analytical and reasoning skills, the ability to think quickly and have an enquiring mind
- have excellent people skills
- have other skills such as time management and leadership skills
- are a well-rounded person (eg by having some non-academic interests)

## Financial support while studying at university

Find out about financial support while studying medicine at university [8]

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Standard entry, five or six year courses

The majority of students take a five-year 'standard entry' course in medicine (note, there are a few that are six years long, as they include an intercalated degree [2]).

For entry you need at least three A levels (or possibly equivalent level 3 qualifications) at very high grades. Most medical schools expect you to have at least two science subjects and usually specify chemistry and sometimes biology. If you don't have an A level in either biology or chemistry, you may need an AS level in the subject, but check with the individual medical school.

Alternative level 3 qualifications, such as a relevant BTEC Level 3 National or Access to Medicine qualification may be acceptable. You may need to offer relevant AS/A levels alongside.

It is essential to check up-to-date entry requirements with individual medical schools, ideally before choosing your level 3 qualifications.

Use our course finder [9] to search for all approved degree courses in medicine.

Read more about the different types of courses in medicine in the Medical Schools Council's publication: Entry requirements for UK medical schools [10]

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Courses with a foundation/gateway year

### Medicine with a Preliminary Year

These courses take the form of either a five-year standard entry medicine course with an additional year at the start, making a six-year course, or sometimes the preliminary year is taken as a standalone one-year course.

This course is designed for those who achieved highly at A level, or equivalent, but who did not take the required science subjects. This extra year gives students the necessary science training to catch up. It is not a means of boosting the grades of those who do not meet the entry requirements of a standard entry medicine course.

### Medicine with a Gateway Year

These medical degrees are designed for those who are of high ability but who may be coming from situations where they have had barriers to their learning.

The courses can take this into account in different ways, for instance by using 'adjusted criteria' to change the entry requirements for applicants from low participation areas.

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Courses for graduates

There are a number of routes for graduates through medical school. You could:

- apply for four-year 'accelerated' Graduate Entry Programmes (GEPs), available at some medical schools. These courses are very intense and you'll have shorter summer holidays
- apply for standard, five-year programmes. This would give you more choice as not all medical schools offer four-year courses

As a graduate entrant, most medical schools expect you to have at least a 2:1 degree, but if you have a postgraduate qualification, this might be less important. There may also be GCSE and AS/A level (or equivalent) requirements.

Normally your degree should be in a science subject, but some courses accept non-science subjects. If you don't have the necessary degree grade or subject, you could consider taking an Access to Medicine programme before applying.

You may be expected to complete the Graduate Medical School Admissions Test (GAMSAT) or another admissions test [6]. Competition for places is particularly high for four-year GEPs, although this varies from course to course.

It's important to contact medical schools directly for details of graduate entry programmes and to check their entry requirements.

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## **Funding**

You should check the financial commitments of graduate entry, especially if you already have student debt from your first degree and/or are used to earning money from employment.

Read our information about financial support for medical and dental students. [11]

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Overseas programmes

You could also apply to a medical school overseas (eg Charles University in Prague or St Georges in the Caribbean).

It is essential that you research such options carefully. Find out:

- the entry requirements (these are often lower than in the UK)
- whether the course is taught in English or in a language in which you are proficient
- the fees – outside the European Union you will be classed as an international student, so fees may be high and you may not be entitled to financial support
- whether you would be eligible to do the Foundation Programme in the UK after your degree. This is really important, as with most non-UK medical schools you will usually need to complete an internship year and this means you will be given full GMC registration. Having full GMC registration means that under current rules you will not be eligible for the full two-year foundation programme. This means that it will be much tougher than usual to get into training in the UK

There are also some courses run in the UK but using a foreign medical school curricula eg School of Health and Neural Sciences, Nottingham.

If you are a UK national and want to work in the UK as a doctor after achieving an overseas qualification from a medical school outside the UK, EEA or Switzerland, you have to pass the Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board (PLAB) [12] test to gain registration. Find out from the General Medical Council (GMC) [13] whether the degree you would get would make you eligible to sit the PLAB.

You would also have to take PLAB if you are a national of a country outside the UK, EEA or Switzerland who graduated from a medical school outside the UK.

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**Source URL:** <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/applying-medical-school/medical-school-courses>

### Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/applying-medical-school/medical-school-courses/real-life-story-rebecca-peatman>

[2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-be-doctor/your-medical-training/intercalated-medical-degrees>

[3] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field\\_leading\\_to\\_a\\_career\\_in\\_tid=165&field\\_qualification\\_type\\_tid=All&field\\_study\\_mode\\_tid=A](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field_leading_to_a_career_in_tid=165&field_qualification_type_tid=All&field_study_mode_tid=A)

[4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-be-doctor/applying-medical-school/interviews-medical-school>

[5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-be-doctor/applying-medical-school/gaining-experience-medical>

[6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/studying-be-doctor/applying-medical-school/admissions-tests-medical>

[7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution>

[8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/study-and-training/considering-or-university/financial-support-university/funding-through-nhs/financial-support-medical-and-dental-2>

[9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder>

[10] <https://www.medschools.ac.uk/studying-medicine/making-an-application/entry-requirements>

- [11] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-university/financial-support-university/financial-support-medical-and-dental>
- [12] <http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/plab.asp>
- [13] [http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/registration\\_applications/acceptable\\_primary\\_medical\\_qualification.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/registration_applications/acceptable_primary_medical_qualification.asp)