



# A journey to medicine: **Routes into medicine**

March 2017

Start



## A journey to medicine: Routes into medicine

### How to use this booklet

This is the second of five booklets developed for teachers and advisers in secondary schools and colleges. It provides guidance on the different routes into medicine, as well as the entry requirements.

This booklet sits alongside the Medical Schools Council's Entry Requirements for UK Medical Schools, which is produced annually (available at [www.medschools.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Entry-requirements-for-UK-medical-schools.aspx](http://www.medschools.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Entry-requirements-for-UK-medical-schools.aspx)). This contains information on entry requirements for all of the UK's publicly funded bachelor's degrees in medicine.

This booklet is particularly aimed at those schools and colleges which have limited experience of supporting students in their application to medicine. It has been produced by the Medical Schools Council and is endorsed by all 33 publicly funded undergraduate medical schools in the UK.

The information relates to UK medical schools only. It is correct and accurate at the time of publication (March 2017), and relates to the 2017–2018 admissions process. It will be updated annually but we advise you to check individual medical school websites.



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## Standard Entry Medicine

**This is the route that the majority of medical applicants take.**

The course is usually five years. In some institutions it can take six years. Some students can also take longer if they choose to take an intercalated degree.

It can have different abbreviations, such as MBBS or MBChB, but all result in the bachelor's degree in medicine. An MBBS is a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery. An MBChB is the equivalent in Latin, *Medicinae Baccalaureus, Baccalaureus Chirurgiae*.

Contextual factors may be taken into account as part of the application process for standard entry.



## Graduate Entry Medicine

**This is a possible route for those who have already obtained an undergraduate degree. In many cases Graduate Entry Medicine will be four years but in one medical school it is five.**

If your students think they may wish to apply for this option in the future then they should consider the undergraduate course they take beforehand. Many medical schools will wish to see the first degree in a health- or science-related course. They should also remember that entry to these courses is equally as competitive as for standard entry, if not more so as there are not as many of these courses available.

Second degrees are as a matter of course not fully supported by Government loans or bursaries.

Students resident in England and Wales will be expected to make some contribution towards their tuition fees, although not the full amount. Students resident in Scotland and Northern Ireland will be expected to pay full tuition fees.

Students across the UK are entitled to bursaries and/or loans to cover living costs. The amount and type of support differs in the year of study and also the country the student is resident in.

Some medical schools will also supplement the cost through bursaries or scholarships.

The universities of St Andrew's and Dundee will soon launch a graduate entry course within Scotland. The full details of the course and the funding arrangements for students have yet to be finalised, but will be available soon.

For more information on graduate entry course requirements and the financial support currently available, check individual medical school websites.



## Alternative entry routes

### Many medical schools have alternative entry routes into medicine.

These routes involve an additional year, resulting in typically a six-year course. Alternative entry routes come in two main types:

- For students who have done well at A level but did not take the required science subjects. Science training is provided for students to progress to medicine, It does not act as a booster for those who have taken science subjects and not achieved the grades required.
- For students who have the potential to succeed at medicine but are from backgrounds where they have experienced educational or social disadvantage

These alternative entry routes will either be embedded into the medical programme or a stand-alone year (requiring a pass to proceed to the medical degree).

Sometimes these alternative routes are referred to as foundation years. This should not be confused with the Foundation Programme, which is a period of practical training following graduation.



# Entry requirements

**Entry requirements are reviewed annually so remember to check individual websites for the most up to date information.**

The types of qualifications required are listed below.

## GCSEs and Scottish National qualifications

GCSEs and Scottish Nationals can be a good predictor for a student's ability to succeed at medicine. It is important that students from age 13 are aware of the importance of their Level 2 qualifications for their onward progression to medicine.

Medical schools know that there can be significant changes in performance from Level 2 to 3. If that is the case, ensure that you talk about the improvement in the student's academic performance within the academic reference on the UCAS form.

The use of Level 2 qualifications varies between medical schools. Medical schools will each specify their own minimum requirements for Level 2 qualifications. This can vary by subject and grade. For example, entry requirements may take the following forms:

- At least grade B at English language and mathematics
- Nine subjects at GCSE, to include English language, mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics (or science and additional science GCSEs); minimum grades AAA AAA BBB. SQA: Standard Grade (Credit); Intermediate or National 5: at least seven subjects, including English, mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics; minimum grades AAA AAB B
- Six subjects at minimum grade B including English language, mathematics, double/additional science or chemistry and biology.

Some medical schools may weight the Level 2 qualifications and, due to the highly competitive nature of admissions, the minimum may not be sufficient to gain an offer. Encourage your students to check how their Level 2 qualifications may be used in the application process.

Medical schools are aware of the significant changes in Level 2 qualifications due to the reforms that have taken place. They will take a mixture of GCSEs, including those that have been taken under the reformed format and those which have not.

## A levels and Scottish Highers

Medical schools will specify the grades and subjects required at A level, AS level and/or Scottish Highers.

Medical schools are aware that some schools and colleges may not offer AS levels. Some medical schools specify that AS levels will not be considered, even if a student has taken them.

If your school does not offer AS levels, include confirmation of this policy within the academic reference. Students will not be disadvantaged in the admissions process.

Offers will be expressed as a list of grades and subjects required. It is likely that at least two of the A levels will be specified. Chemistry and biology A levels are usual requirements. Examples include:

- AAA at A level. Subjects include chemistry and/or biology at A or AS level. A minimum group of AAABB at Scottish Highers including chemistry and/or biology.
- A\*AA at A level including chemistry and biology. AS grades are not used. AAAAA in Scottish Highers and AAB in Advanced Highers including chemistry and biology.

Medical schools may specify that some A levels are not considered. These can include critical thinking, further mathematics, citizenship studies and general studies.

For students taking a reformed physics, biology or chemistry A level, some medical schools may require students to have a pass in the A level science practical. If required, it will be listed in the offer.

Students studying in Scotland are advised to take Highers, Advanced Highers or the International Baccalaureate. The Scottish Baccalaureate will not form part of the entry requirements for medical schools.

Encourage your students to check the entry requirements of the particular medicine courses they are interested in.

“Make sure that you choose your subjects carefully, to give you the best chance of exceeding the minimum academic requirements. Some A levels and Highers are not accepted as contributing to an academic score, for example A level general studies and SQA higher dance. Sometimes there is no requirement, and therefore no advantage given, to obtaining the three sciences required in one sitting, that is Highers in S5 for Scottish students or at A level. Make sure you do your homework before you make your subject choices.”

Dr Karen Foster, Admissions Lead (Medicine),  
Aberdeen Medical School

## Entry requirements

### International Baccalaureate

The International Baccalaureate is accepted at all medical schools.

The offer will be made in terms of the number of points alongside the subject and points required at the higher level. For example:

- 36–38 points with 6,6,6 at Higher level to include biology and one other science from chemistry or physics.
- Minimum of 35 points from six academic subjects, including chemistry or biology plus a second science at Higher level. Grades of 6,6,6 at Higher level and 6,6,5 at Standard level usually required. No grades below 5 accepted.

### Extended Project Qualification

The Extended Project Qualification will not be part of the offer. However, it does provide students with a means to demonstrate their ability to learn independently and their research skills. Encourage your students to talk within their personal statement about the skills and knowledge they gained from completing the project.

### Access to medicine

Many medical schools will accept students who have taken an access to medicine qualification. This is not a route for students who have simply underachieved in their A levels and medical schools are very unlikely accept these students.. When considering applicants for access to medicine courses, medical schools are often looking for students who:

- Left school at 16 years of age
- Have not taken A levels
- Have clear circumstances accounting for time out of education (like raising children, caring responsibilities or illness)
- Have undertaken a different career and are looking for a career change

Students should be encouraged to check their eligibility with individual medical schools before embarking on an access to medicine course.

### For more information

Entry Requirements for UK Medical Schools:  
[www.medschools.ac.uk/News/Pages/2017-entry-requirements-booklet-released.aspx](http://www.medschools.ac.uk/News/Pages/2017-entry-requirements-booklet-released.aspx).

### Student activity

30 minutes

Ask your students to choose four medical courses. Ask them to consider the entry requirements and list:

- The requirements at GCSE or Scottish Nationals (subject combination and grades)
- The requirements at A level or equivalent (subject combination and grades)
- Any other requirements that are listed

For each course ask your students to consider:

- Do they have the required GCSE or Scottish National qualifications?
- Are they doing the A level (or equivalent) courses required for that course?
- Is there anything that they are unsure of?



The Medical Schools Council represents the interests and ambitions of UK medical schools

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