



Admissions to Medicine in 2021

Executive summary

There has been a marked increase in applications for medicine at UK universities from 2020 to 2021 (23,720 for 2020 entry to 28,690 for 2021 entry). This very large number of applications is made up of increases in both students applying for the first time (24,220) and those who are reapplying (4,470).

The number of places available to study medicine is regulated by the different UK governments and controlled through intake targets. There are around 9,500 places to study medicine each year. Places for successful candidates from 2020 who were required to defer entry to 2021 may be funded by the government separately and in addition to the annual number of places available.

The consequence of this rise in applications is that the selection criteria universities use in 2021 are likely to be stricter than those used in 2020.

UK Admissions to Medicine 2016 - 2021

Year	First time applicant	Reapplicant	Total	% Reapplicant
2016	17050	2050	20100	15.2%
2017	16490	2720	19210	14.2%
2018	18250	2480	20730	12.0%
2019	19530	2900	22430	12.9%
2020	20670	3050	23720	12.9%
2021	24220	4470	28690	15.6%

Source: UCAS cycle applicant figures for medicine, 2016-2021

What does this mean for applicants?

The selection criteria used by universities may be stricter this year. This may comprise higher scores required for aptitude tests (UCAT, BMAT, GAMSAT) and/or higher grades expected for secondary qualifications (e.g. A level, GCSE, Scottish Highers, IB) and/or other criteria (e.g. interview performance). Since interviews, which are used by all UK medical schools, are resource intensive, it is likely that a smaller proportion of applicants will be offered interviews this year as well, even if the same absolute number of interviews are conducted.

It is important to note that many medical schools use contextual admissions policies to gauge an applicant's academic potential by placing their previous qualifications in the context of their socioeconomic and/or educational background. Medical schools will continue to consider contextual information when making admissions decisions to ensure that applicants from underrepresented backgrounds are not further disadvantaged by the upsurge in applications.

Over the last few years, some medicine courses have offered a small number of unfilled places through UCAS Adjustment or Clearing and we expect that this will happen again in 2021. Others may use reserve lists to offer unfilled places (if any) after results day to applicants who have already been interviewed and judged suitable.

There are now multiple routes into medical school which include graduate entry programmes and access routes for mature students. Guidance about [different routes into medicine](#) for any applicant who is unsuccessful on their first attempt can be found on the Medical Schools Council's website.