



What makes a good doctor?

Did you know?

There is a list of core values and attributes needed to study medicine, and this list has been endorsed by all medical schools. It sets out what medical schools are looking for so they can recruit and train students to make good doctors.

Useful stuff

WHAT DO MEDICAL SCHOOLS WANT TO SEE?

Medical schools want students who have commitment, perseverance, initiative, concern for others and the ability to communicate. Every medical school will highlight the particular qualities they are looking for on their websites.

You should be able to demonstrate:

- Motivation to study medicine and genuine interest in the medical profession
- Insight into your own strengths and weaknesses
- The ability to reflect on your own work
- Personal organisation
- Academic ability
- Problem solving
- Ability to deal with uncertainty
- Risk management and an ability to deal effectively with problems
- Honesty
- Ability to take responsibility for your own actions
- Conscientiousness
- Insight into your own health
- Effective communication, including reading, writing, listening and speaking
- Teamwork
- Ability to treat people with respect
- Resilience and the ability to deal with difficult situations
- Empathy and the ability to care for others.

More information about each of these attributes is included in the Medical Schools Council's statement, which is based on the NHS values (see More help and advice).

Key dates

Before your final year at school or college ensure you have considered how your attributes match those required to study medicine, and the evidence you have.

This information is endorsed by all undergraduate medical schools in the UK who are members of the Medical Schools Council. The information relates to UK medical schools only. It is correct and accurate at the time of publication (July 2020), and relates to the 2021 admissions process. It will be updated annually but we advise you to check individual medical school websites.

What you should do...

The most important first step is for you to understand what being a doctor is really like. The roles can range from being a GP based in the community, dealing with patients every day, to an obstetrician working in maternity care and women's health, through to a pathologist working with samples from patients to identify their illness.

Being a good doctor is about interacting with others. With patients, you need to be able to build a relationship through listening and finding out their concerns and ideas. Your behaviour shapes how much they trust you and are willing to share. You then apply your knowledge to try to manage the issue in partnership with the patient. Being a good colleague is equally important, having a good work ethic, being calm under pressure and resilient. There will be moments of excitement and happiness, as well as sadness and stress; dealing with both is important.

Top facts

- There are over 50 different medical careers.
- There is significant training that begins at university and continues once qualified. Doctors need to be constantly learning and developing their skills.

Be aware

If you have received a caution from the police or a criminal conviction or have been subject to disciplinary proceedings then let the medical school know. Medical schools expect future doctors to take responsibility for their actions so it is important to be honest with them about your personal history.

What they say...

“The ability to listen to a patient is fundamental. Training at medical school for the past six years has enabled me to hone my communication skills. I have placed particular emphasis on being able to elicit a patient's concern, and explore what they already know about their presenting complaint. Approaching patients with an open mind using effective communication helps to ensure patients are treated using a holistic patient-centred approach – fit for practice during the 21st century.”

Labib Hussain, fifth year medical student, GKT School of Medical Education, King's College London.

More help & advice

Take the NHS Careers Quiz: www.stepintohenhs.nhs.uk

Health Careers provides information about medicine specialties:
www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles

Medical Schools Council's statement on values and attributes needed to study medicine:
www.medschools.ac.uk/media/2542/statement-on-core-values-to-study-medicine.pdf

Test yourself

Look up the four domains within the Medical Schools Council's 'values and attributes needed to study medicine'.

- Do you have the values and attributes required?
- How will you demonstrate the values and attributes using examples from your life and experiences?
- What do you need to do in order to build your skills and competencies?