

# Differences between medical schools



MSC Medical Schools Council  
Selection Alliance

## Did you know?

The number of places at each medical school is limited by the Government.

## Useful stuff

There is significant competition for places and medical schools differ in many ways. It is therefore important you choose a medical school which suits your academic profile, skills and attributes. Make sure you are aware of the differences and find somewhere that suits you.

Make sure you know about the structure of the course. An intercalated degree usually involves an extra one or two years of study, leading to the award of an additional bachelor's or master's degree. Some medical schools require students to do an intercalated course. Others provide this as an option and eligibility can often depend on grades.

The location makes a difference. You will be studying at medical school for up to six years, with limited holiday periods, so it is important you are somewhere you like. Location can also make a difference to students' placements. Some medical schools will have placements that require more travel than others.

## Top facts

- The choice of medical school does not impact on the type or the location of placements you undertake after graduation.
- You can graduate with a MBBS or MBChB, but all mean a degree in medicine.

## Key dates

**Attend open days during year 12 to find out more about individual medical schools.**

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...

Consider your choice of medical school carefully. You need to find the best environment in which to learn and develop.

It is important that you find out about the different ways medicine is taught in different medical schools. Some learning and teaching styles work very well for some students, while other students find them quite difficult to adapt to. You need to work out which type best fits your individual strengths.

There are many different teaching styles, and medical schools often use a combination of approaches. One common method used is to undertake pre-clinical training, which is the study of basic medical sciences for the first two or three years. During this time contact with patients and clinical placements will be limited. This is then followed by clinical training during which students will work in hospitals and general practice under the supervision of practising doctors, alongside attending formal teaching sessions. However, there are other courses where there is a mix of clinical placements and formal teaching from the start of the course.

Many medical schools use self-directed approaches, such as problem-based learning. Some medical schools may use these types of learning activity more than others. Problem-based learning focuses on learning from clinical cases and is often associated with more frequent patient contact in the early years. Students are given medical cases to explore and learn from, guided by group work with a tutor as well as self-directed learning. Problem-based learning is an 'open inquiry' approach where facilitators play a minimal role and medical students themselves guide the discussion.

## Be aware

The structure and teaching style of medical schools varies significantly.

## What they say...

"We have a 'spiral' curriculum in medicine, which means that we circulate through topics, regularly returning to them throughout the years, refreshing our minds and honing our craft. If you're like most students, it begins as an endless swamp of learning to wade through. As the swamp becomes more familiar, however, the mud turns to water and the connections and understandings of physiology and clinical approach become more visible and manageable. So wellies turn to wetsuits and squelching turns to swimming!"

**Neil Calderwood, fourth year medical student, Brighton and Sussex Medical School.**

## More help & advice

Refer to individual medical school websites for information on the learning and teaching style adopted.

## Test yourself

**Think about how you learn best. Do you like learning by:**

- Working in small groups
- Engaging directly with people
- Considering a problem, and through that learning about the subject
- Understanding the principles first and then how to apply them.