

## Essential Information for Those Wanting Medicine or Dentistry Notes Compiled October 2015

### Starting Your Research:

<http://bma.org.uk/developing-your-career/medical-student/entry-to-medical-school>

Website of the British Medical Association.

[http://www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk/considering\\_medicine/introduction.aspx](http://www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk/considering_medicine/introduction.aspx)

Excellent. An essential and comprehensive guide for everyone who is considering medicine. Includes – is Medicine for you? Advice on work experience; Choosing a Medical School etc..

[http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/undergrad\\_outcomes.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/undergrad_outcomes.asp)

Website of the General Medical Council. The GMC sets the knowledge, skills and behaviours that medical students learn at UK medical schools: these are the outcomes that new UK graduates must be able to demonstrate.

### Do you have the right personal qualities?

- Interpersonal communication
- Energy and determination
- Honesty and integrity
- Ability to deal with stress
- Good knowledge of health issues
- Open mindedness, adaptability
- Ability to reflect
- Good time management
- Cultural awareness
- Willingness to collaborate/team work
- Responsibility/leadership

### Are you prepared for a long period of training?

The initial degree courses at University for either Medicine or Dentistry last for at least five years. Trainee Doctors must follow this with a two year Foundation Programme working in hospitals, before they can even begin to specialise. Both professions have continuous further training throughout their working lives

### Will you achieve the grades required?

Competition for both these courses is intense.

**GCSEs** are very important – you should have **mostly A\*/A** grades.

At **A** level, offers tend to be **A\*AA – AAA**. **Successful candidates will often have A\*A\*AA or higher**. All Universities for Medicine, and some for Dentistry, ask you to take an additional **Selection Test** – UKCAT & also possibly BMAT.

### The GWIST Framework

**All these elements need to be in place if you are to have a chance of success:**

- **Grades** – Excellent GCSE and A level grades (above.)

- **Work Experience** – A range of different settings.
- **Interview (or MMI – multiple mini interview.)**
- **Subject** – your interest in the subject shown in the personal statement.
- **Tests (BMAT or UKCAT)**

#### Consider also:

Are you a hard-working student? (Be honest!)

How well do you cope under pressure, and in stressful situations?

Are you prepared for a lot of hard work and exams?

Are you squeamish?

Do you like working with people; could you show evidence of this?

Have you done any work shadowing, or relevant voluntary work?

Dentists also need excellent manual dexterity.

#### Applying Through UCAS

You must apply early – by Mid October.

You can only apply for a maximum of **4 courses** for Medicine or Dentistry. You can leave the 5<sup>th</sup> choice blank, or put a suitable alternative course.

Look carefully at the courses offered. Consider the full range of Medical Schools, not just the London ones.

Be prepared to only get 1 University offer – this often happens. If you really want to be a doctor or dentist, you'll go anywhere.

#### The BMAT and UK CAT

Tests - designed to test aptitude rather than knowledge to try to find the best potential doctors. Different universities use it in different ways. Some look at overall scores, some at subsections, some only interview those who have got over a certain mark, others just use it as a guide. Best advice is to do both tests and then apply according to results – can use scores to own advantage. For UKCAT see [www.ukcat.ac.uk](http://www.ukcat.ac.uk). For BMAT see [www.admissionstesting.org](http://www.admissionstesting.org).

#### UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT) [www.ukcat.ac.uk](http://www.ukcat.ac.uk)

This test must be taken by anyone wanting to apply for either Medicine or Dentistry. It is used by the majority of medical schools. Taken at a testing centre, in the summer between years 12 and 13. It is strongly advised that you register to take the test at the earliest date which will suit you.

#### BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT) [www.bmat.org.uk](http://www.bmat.org.uk)

For entry to Medicine at some universities. For 2015 entry these will be Brighton & Sussex, Cambridge, Oxford, Imperial, Leeds & UCL. The test is held in schools in early November of Year 13.

#### Work Experience

##### **Relevant work experience is essential**

- demonstrates commitment to medicine
- helps you to appreciate what the job involves
- gives insight into practicalities of doing medicine
- teaches valuable communication and interpersonal skills
- demonstrates the pros and cons of the job

**How much is enough?** There is no definitive answer and you could even say that you can never have enough. The competition for Medicine is very high and so someone will always have more work

experience than you. Try to get as much experience as you feasibly can; start gaining it as early as you can

**This is absolutely essential for anyone who is considering a career in Medicine.**

[http://www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk/considering\\_medicine/work\\_experience.aspx](http://www.medicalcareers.nhs.uk/considering_medicine/work_experience.aspx) **Voluntary Work/Work Shadowing**. It has lots of detailed information and advice. It can take a while to find a suitable placement, especially as everyone has to have background checks before they start. It is best to start doing voluntary work before you go into 6<sup>th</sup> Form – perhaps in the summer after GCSEs.

### **Work shadowing**

Some hospitals do run work experience & work shadowing, but can be difficult to get a place on them. Universities are aware of the difficulties. You will have more chance of success in the 6<sup>th</sup> form. *Hospitals usually only accept applications from people who live locally to them. Other good alternatives include voluntary work in a hospital with the Royal Voluntary Service, & a Care or Nursing home with the elderly.*

**At the time of writing, (October 2015) Wexham Park has been taken over by Frimley Health Foundation Trust and is in the process of reorganising work shadowing & work experience schemes. . Check on <http://www.heatherwoodandwexham.nhs.uk/work-experience>. Volunteering may well be the best way forward until they have a system in place. See below.**

**I understand the following contacts are current (October 2015):**

- Mick Stone for Healthcare Sciences including pathology [mick.stone@fhft.nhs.uk](mailto:mick.stone@fhft.nhs.uk) He is also Volunteers Manager.
- Rachel Buggs is also part of the volunteering team [rachel.buggs@fhft.nhs.uk](mailto:rachel.buggs@fhft.nhs.uk)
- Eileen Daniel is the Speech and Language Manager [eileen.daniel@fhft.nhs.uk](mailto:eileen.daniel@fhft.nhs.uk)

It is also worth applying to individual departments e.g. directly to the Physiotherapy Department as there is no formal structure as yet. It may yield some success!

**Two local hospital trusts which often accept applications are:**

Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals <http://www.ashfordstpeters.nhs.uk/work-experience>

Hillingdon and Mount Vernon <http://www.thh.nhs.uk/jobs/workexperience.php>

For Dentistry specifically - shadow at least one dentist over a period of time (preferably both NHS & private) and observe a range of procedures. Try also to spend some time in a hospital department.

**Work experience** needs to involve helping others/work with people. **If you are unable to secure a hospital placement, make the most of other options. Ideal places include hospitals, GP surgeries, nursing homes, schools (especially those with special needs units.) Hospices may be a possibility. Placements within the NHS even if they are only admin roles are relevant as they help give an understanding of how the NHS runs.** Anything which involves talking to patients / helping people is very valuable.

- Be as flexible as possible and start as early as possible to look for placements.
- To get the most out of it work hard, be punctual and polite, take advantage of every opportunity, take notes and reflect on experience.
- Keep a log detailing your work experience (or a period of voluntary work.) Demonstrate how you have reflected on your learning.

### Other Activities

- Get involved in extracurricular activities – youth clubs, charity shops, mentoring/tutoring, Duke of Edinburgh, St Johns Ambulance, clubs, teams etc. You need to explain how and why these things are relevant to medicine application.

### **At school:**

- Form a medical society – ethical discussions, research sessions, meet previous applicants (ex-pupils at medical school), practise UKCAT, interview practice.
- Research courses thoroughly – check admissions interview style, AS module scores needed
- Taster courses – Royal Society of Medicine, EPOC, Medlink
- Keep interests broad – attend school science society lectures and other science related activities
- Keep yourself informed – [www.bbc.co.uk/news/health](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health)  
<http://bma.org.uk/news-views-analysis>

### Volunteering

- You'll need to show commitment by volunteering on a regular basis / over a substantial period of time.
- Some voluntary opportunities are available for those aged 14+. For example, at some **hospitals** including Wexham Park in Slough, anyone aged **14+** can volunteer with the charity **Royal Voluntary Service** (RVS) – opportunities include the hospital café & shop. Acting as a **Hospital Trolley Service** volunteer is particularly useful. This involves going round the wards bringing refreshments & a friendly face to older patients not able to go to the shop. See <http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/volunteer>
- You can look on the national database of volunteering opportunities [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)
- Slough Volunteer Centre, Central Library, 85 High Street, SL1 1EA, 01753 528632  
Email:doit@volunteerslough.org.uk [www.volunteer.slough.gov.uk](http://www.volunteer.slough.gov.uk)
- **For** volunteering in the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, see <http://rbwm.communitydatabase.co.uk> or ring 01753 524176

For dentistry, you will need evidence of manual dexterity: e.g. playing musical instrument, craft work, needlework.

**The comments on the range of work experience and volunteering required also apply to dentistry.**

### Advice from the Admissions tutor for Medicine at UCL

- Before your application – start to compile a “portfolio” of medical news stories and scientific issues, and keep updating it. You can then refer to this in your application and interview. They will be particularly interested if you have followed issues over a period of time.
- Work experience/shadowing. Medical schools are aware that this is a difficult issue. Work with the elderly and children in other settings is also very valuable, especially over an extended period. Go to an A&E waiting room on a Saturday night, and observing what goes on! It isn't just the amount of work experience that matters, it's what the applicant learns from it i.e. good and bad patient experiences – what would you have done differently?

- Read medical school websites carefully – do your research so you know exactly what they offer, and what they’re looking for.
- Personal Statement – they prefer to have the names of any hospitals visited for work experience – don’t just say “local”. They want to see that you’re well-rounded, and quirky things can be good.
- Admissions tests – prepare well - use the UKCAT and BMAT websites. You may also find some books useful, but do *not* spend money on expensive preparation courses – it’s not necessary.
- Interviews - No trick questions, but interviewers will *keep pushing* applicants, to check that they are intellectually robust. Don’t over-prepare for specific questions. They will re-phrase questions if you’re not clear. They will be assessing your *attitude* – inappropriate attitudes include cold, arrogant or inflexible. They will also be assessing your communication skills and will look for clear expression and good listening skills. Ethical questions – They’re not interested in your opinion, but how you express and defend it.

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