



A S H B O U R N E C O L L E G E



Medicine Booklet

Information to Supplement the AMSP

Updated February 2018

Ashbourne Medical School Programme Booklet

This booklet is reviewed every year by staff at Ashbourne College. The 2018 version was revised by Amy Youngman. Amy joined Ashbourne in September 2015 but has spent the last nine years working with medical students, guiding them through the application process. She is Head of faculty for the Natural Sciences and teaches biology in addition to running the medical program. Amy runs the medical sessions each week, and will be the first point of contact for all students wishing to apply to medical school. Amy also interviews for UCL medical school which puts her in a strong position to conduct mock interviews. By having a member of staff dedicated to all medical students, it ensures each student receives individual attention and assurance that they are supported throughout the entire application process.

In recent years, valuable contributions have been made by:

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ashbourne Medical School Programme (AMSP) has evolved and developed for over 36 years since Ashbourne College was established in 1981. It was designed to give students the best possible chance of entering a UK Medical School. This booklet provides information about what Ashbourne College has to offer its medical candidates and guidance for students in both the AS and A2 years on how to prepare themselves to apply to read medicine. It also contains some important information about entry requirements to medical degrees for both first-time applicants and re-sits.

Prospective Medical Applicants Need To:

- Achieve high **academic** standards. We expect all students to achieve A grades in their AS exams if they are to apply for medicine in their second year.
- Have gained suitable **work experience/volunteer work**
- Demonstrate good **communication skills**.
- Be **well-rounded** individuals (have hobbies and interests)
- Have **researched** the profession and be well-informed about issues within medicine.
- Have a genuine **ambition** and determination to become a doctor.

Students on the AMSP will be provided with...

- A thorough understanding of what a medical career will involve
- BMAT and UKCAT preparation
- Interview preparation: both traditional and MMI's
- UCAS help: The personal statement and how to know where to apply
- Assistance in securing work experience placements
- The opportunity to discuss medical ethics and current medical issues with other prospective medical students during weekly meetings
- The opportunity to talk to current doctors and Ashbourne alumni who are now at medical school



Students meet every Tuesday in Y1Lab 1-2

2.0 WHAT IS MEDICINE?

- Medicine is a **five/six year** course studied at university and in hospitals which qualifies you to become a **doctor**. A six year course generally involves a year where you complete a BSc.
- "Doctor" is a broad term encompassing many careers including GP (general practitioner), surgeon, specialist (pathologist, anaesthetist, etc). Completing a degree in medicine is the only way to **legally** become a doctor in the UK.
- Medicine is a **rewarding** and **varied** career. It is also very **demanding** and **challenging** and you need to be 100% sure that this is the career for you before embarking upon the course.
- Although most doctors work for the **NHS**, there are opportunities in other exciting settings such as the armed forces, prisons or the Home Office working as a police surgeon.
- Entry into Medical School is not based on solid academic achievement alone. Students need to be **well-prepared** and **well-informed** about issues in medicine, be comfortable in the **interview**, gain suitable **work experience** and have a genuine and strong **ambition** to become a doctor.
- Medicine is also emotionally and spiritually demanding and skills such as interacting with patients and managing extremely stressful and distressing situations are essential to becoming a successful doctor.

VITAL STATISTICS:

- **King's College London** selects approximately 400 medical students from around 6000 applications each year.
- **UCL** selects approximately 334 medical students from around 2500 applications each year.
- **Imperial College London** selects approximately 505 students from around 2400 applications each year.



3.0 THE MEDICAL COURSE

A standard medical course is **5 years**. After successfully completing the course you graduate as a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (usually **MBBS**). Some universities offer a **6-year** course to students who are academically suitable to study medicine but haven't completed the correct subjects at A-Level. These "**Foundation**" courses provide a pre-medical year learning the scientific background required to continue onto the standard course.

Approaches to teaching

The Traditional Approach	PBL (Problem Based Learning)	The Integrated Approach
<p>Long Established</p> <p>Lecture-based style</p> <p>Becoming increasingly less common</p> <p>A definite pre-clinical divide</p>	<p>Problem-based learning</p> <p>Becoming increasingly popular</p> <p>A patient-orientated approach</p> <p>From year 1 onwards, students are heavily involved in clinical scenarios, with the focus on the student to demonstrate self-motivation and proactive, self-directed learning</p> <p>Designed to get away from the traditional, 'spoon-fed' approach</p>	<p>A compromise between a traditional course and a PBL course</p> <p>They have patient contact from the start BUT there is a huge variation in the amount of contact from school to school</p> <p>Basic medical sciences are taught concurrently with clinical studies</p>

- It is important that students understand which approach is better suited to their learning style before making a decision as to which medical school to apply to.

Intercalated courses

At some universities the course is “**intercalated**” and lasts for **6 years**. In these courses, an extra degree is earned alongside the medical degree – usually a **BSc**. This gives the student an opportunity to gain a **further qualification** and also broadens their **research** and **individual study** skills. Usually you gain this qualification after 3 years of the pre-clinical medical course. Medical schools with **compulsory** intercalated courses include Imperial, Cambridge, Oxford, UCL and Bute (St. Andrews). People may choose an intercalated course to extend their knowledge of a specific subject and it may confer an advantage in some competitive fields of medicine; it does, however, lengthen an already long degree course.

Elective

This is an opportunity to practice medicine anywhere in the world for two months during your clinical years. Electives range from running outreach clinics in developing countries to accompanying flying doctors in Australia. You may wish to spend time working on a research project (there is often funding for this). Some students find time to travel for a few weeks after their elective. In general, however, the elective is self-funded so many students prefer to remain in the UK.



***Dr Rebecca Wood** attended Imperial College London in 2003 and is now working as a GP in Birmingham. These photos were taken in Tanzania when she was on her Elective.*

What makes up a medical student's timetable?

here's UEA, year 1, unit 1, week 1

UNIT 1 – BEING A PATIENT, BEING A DOCTOR		Week 1 – Well patient, well doctor			
	Monday 22/09/08	Tuesday 23/09/08	Wednesday 24/09/08	Thursday 25/09/08	Friday 26/09/08
0900	09.00-11.00	Seminars: Nucleic Acids I MED 0.02	Independent Study	Primary Care (Groups A-I – all day)	Lecture: Introduction to Clinical Skills LT 2
0930	Group Work Brainstorming	Is diet an important intervention for health? MED 2.02 Booze and fags (the effects of alcohol and nicotine on the body) MED 1.02 Why do people engage in risky behaviour? QB 0.08		Consultation Skills (Groups J-Q)	
1000		Seminars: Curing or caring? MED 0.02	Independent Study	Initiating a patient centred consultation (09.00-13.00)	10.00-13.00
1030		Nucleic Acids II QB 0.08 History and principles of the NHS MED 2.02 Values-based medicine MED 1.02			Group Work A-Q
1100	Lecture: The importance of ethics to medicine DRA STU 0.01	Seminars: The eukaryotic cell I QB 1.03 The role of the doctor in society MED 2.02 Looking after oneself, as a doctor MED 1.02 The doctor-patient relationship MED 0.02			
1200	Research Methods Introduction: the research process DRA STU 0.01	BREAK	IPL1 – A – Meeting 1 PBL Groups A, B, C, D, E, F		
1230			Recreation		BREAK
1300	BREAK	Independent Study			
1330					Wrap-Up Session
1400	Consultation Skills Lecture: Initiating a patient centred consultation DRA STU 0.01	Research Methods Lecture: the research process II C HALL 01.19 MAIN			LT 1
1430					Lecture: Study Skills
1500	Lecture: What is a healthy diet? DRA STU 0.01	Lecture: The importance of law to medicine C HALL 01.19 MAIN			LT2
1530					Independent Study
1600	Independent Study	Independent Study			
1630					

LABORATORIES

The amount of time spent in a lab has recently decreased and this varies from one university to another. If you intercalate a degree, there may be more opportunity for lab work.

LECTURES

These usually comprise a whole year group (up to 300 people). They usually last an hour and will be mostly delivered by a medical professional. Some lecturers try to make things interactive but generally you will be required to listen, look at slides and take notes.

SEMINARS AND TUTORIALS

These are in much smaller groups and are intended to look at topics in more detail or develop academic skills. These will be more interactive and there may be discussion facilitated by a demonstrator.

DISSECTION

Previously all medical schools did a full body dissection, but now increasingly videos and computers are used to learn anatomy. Some universities still do a full body dissection; some just do prosections (parts of the body).

CLINICAL SKILLS

Clinical skills labs are run by nurses who teach you how to take blood, do funduscopy, breast exams, catheterise, etc.

ON THE WARDS

In the later years of the course teaching takes place on the wards. You may be asked to present cases or demonstrate conditions and practice your clinical skills. This is also an opportunity to see how the team in a hospital works together.

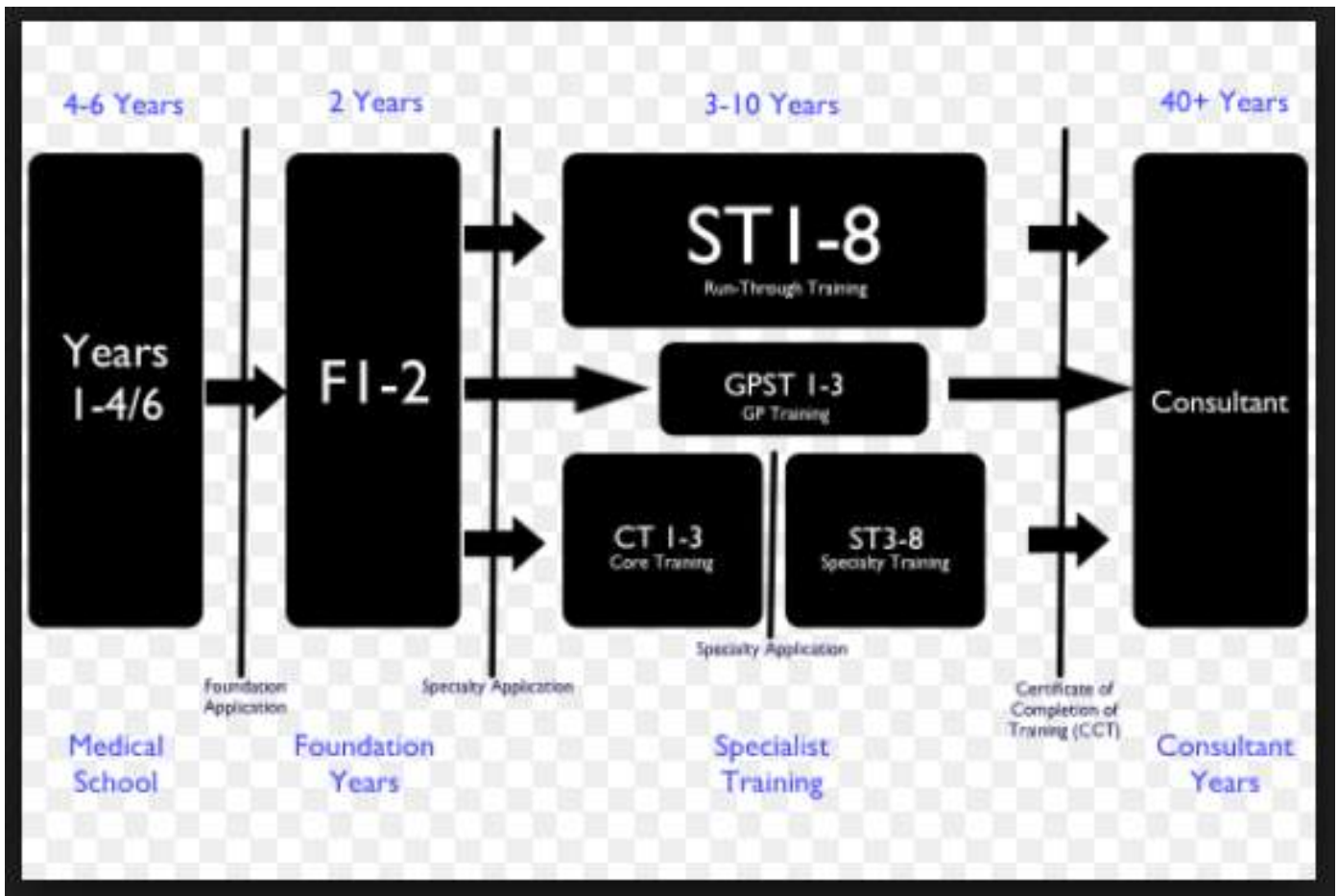
THEATRE

You may be asked to "assist" in operations towards the end of the course. Theatre is an opportunity to practice anatomy and physiology.

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Extra reading is essential as not all the work can be taught in lectures alone. Project-based work also has to be carried out in your own time.

4.0 CAREER PATH



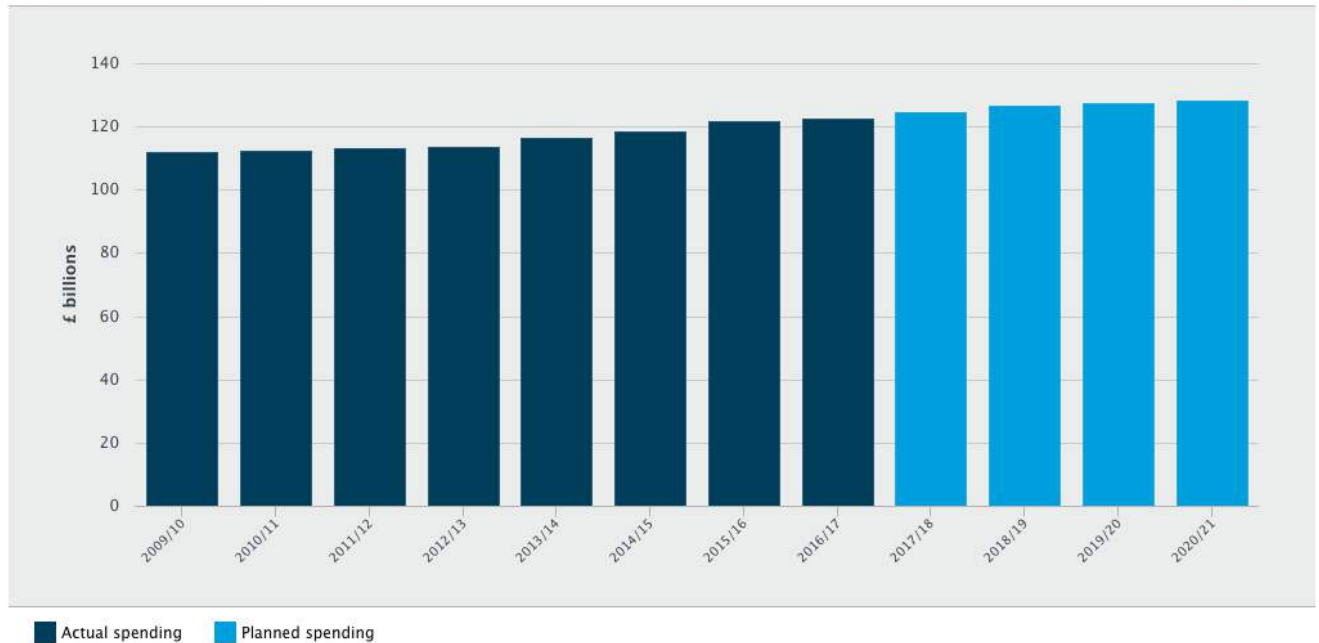
During the F1 year, students only hold provisional registration with the General Medical Council - full registration is granted on completion of the first year. During F1, students rotate through 3/4 jobs in different **hospital specialities**. The GMC specifies that these must include General Medicine and General Surgery (General Practice is not allowed). The focus of the F2 year is the assessment and treatment of the acutely ill patient and also encompasses generic skills such as teamwork, time management, communication and IT skills.

Following the Foundation Programme is a training period known as **Speciality Registrar (StR)**. This involves structured specialist or general practitioner training programmes and leads to the award of a CCT - **Certificate of Completion of Training**. To become a GP you must spend 3 years as a Speciality Registrar; for a hospital speciality, you carry out 6 years of training before qualifying as a Consultant. Previously doctors were required to take the relevant Medical **Royal College** membership examinations whilst still an SHO, but under the new system, the exams are taken later on during year 1/2 of the Speciality Registrar Training Scheme.

5.0 THE NHS

Budget

Department of Health budget



Data are the Department of Health total Departmental expenditure limit (TDEL). Figures are expressed in real terms at 2017/18 prices, using deflators published by the Office for Budget Responsibility in November 2017. Source: Department of Health annual report and accounts 2016/17; Autumn Budget 2017; Office for Budget Responsibility November 2017 Economic and fiscal outlook: Economy supplementary tables.

5.1 History and Reform

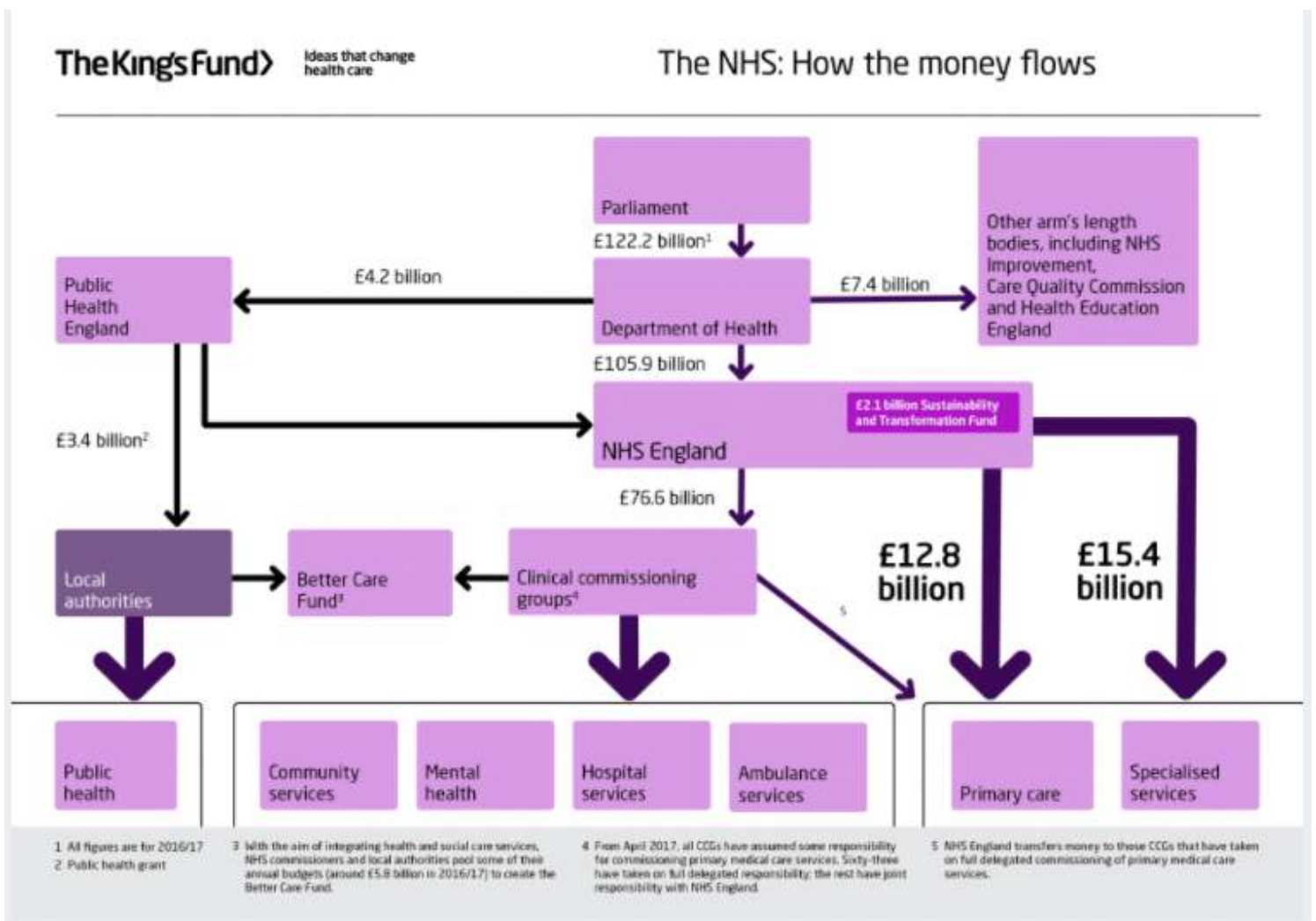
The National Health Service:

- Is the **publicly funded** health care system in England
- Currently employs 1.5 million people
- Is the 4th largest employer in the world
- Provides the majority of healthcare in England
- Has become an integral part of British society, culture and everyday life

Private health care continues in parallel to the NHS and is paid for mostly by private insurance. This is used only by a **small percentage** of the population and as a top-up to NHS services.

NHS services are largely **“free at the point of use”** and paid for by taxes. Responsibility for the NHS lies with the government – the **Department of Health** (DH). The DH is currently led by Secretary of State (and cabinet minister) **Jeremy Hunt** and includes ministers whose job it is to provide strategic leadership to the NHS and social care organisations.

5.3 NHS Structure and Funding:



5.5 Criticism

The NHS has frequently been a target of criticism over the years regarding:

- Length of **waiting lists** for consultations diagnostics and treatment
- Levels of **antibiotic-resistant bacteria** in hospitals (e.g. MRSA and *Clostridium difficile*)
- Problems with the NHS **IT update**
- Decreasing availability of **NHS dentistry**
- Lack of availability of some treatments due to their **cost ineffectiveness**
- Hospitals and trusts running into **debt**

Some of these have resulted in people seeking medical care **overseas** ("health tourists").

There have also been a number of **high-profile scandals** [e.g. Alder Hey organs scandal (Redfern Report), Bristol Heart Scandal (Samantha Rickard) and the Harold Shipman murders.

More recently, there has been a great deal of press about the difficulties junior doctors are facing. The full dispute is explained fully on the BBC website:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-34775980>

Essentially, the government wanted to alter the terms of junior doctor's contracts, making previously 'unsociable hours' 'sociable'. The overall result of this was a decrease in salary for junior doctor's (despite the fact the government would increase their basic rate of pay). This change in contract led to junior doctor's striking and a mixed response from the public, although many were in support with the doctors.



6.0 Would I make a good doctor?

More importantly – do you **want** to be a doctor? If you have the desire to achieve, then you can build up the skills required to gain a place at medical school and become a good doctor. If you have thought carefully about what the training and career entails and you think this is the career for you, then go for it. You do, however, need to address the following key skills and check whether you can demonstrate these in your activities or whether you need to work on developing them.

6.1 The Key Skills Needed To Become A Successful Doctor:

Your **academic** skills will be tested by the A-Level grades you achieve. Some of your numerical and reasoning skills will be tested by the BMAT/UKCAT. There are a lot of "soft" skills that are required which will be tested through your UCAS form and interview:

- **Integrity** – veracity and honesty – you will be responsible for personal and sensitive information. You must adhere carefully to codes of conduct and base your actions on a strict set of values. You must also be loyal to your patients and colleagues.
- **Communication** – both with patients and other doctors, written and oral. Listening is often as important as talking.
- **Interactive** – you will need to be able to work effectively in a team, get along with people, and liaise with individuals and groups.

- **Flexible / proactive** – you will often be in a highly pressurised environment, so you need to have the initiative to think on your feet and come up with swift solutions to new problems.
- **Tenacity / determination** – the career path for a doctor is long and scattered with obstacles. There are exams, tests and interviews all the way through and competition is fierce. You need to be undeterred by these challenges and continue to work hard to achieve the final goal.
- **Commitment** – not only is the course itself long, but at times you will work long hours for little return and the job will be emotionally and physically exhausting. You need to be self-motivated and enthusiastic enough to make it through the hardest times. **Resilience** is a key attribute.
- **Enquiring mind** – medicine is a fast-moving field and you will need to keep on top of new discoveries and developments. Sometimes there is no correct answer to problems and you may need to challenge some of the evidence put before you.
- **Compassion** – at the end of the day, medicine is about caring for the welfare of others. Often it is advice and reassurance that are required rather than a specific drug or treatment. You often need to be sympathetic and sensitive to both patients and relatives as you may be a key source of support at a very emotional time. Empathy is important, as is a non-judgmental attitude.
- **Scientific approach** – you need to be methodical in your assessment of problems. Medicine is all about assessing symptoms, diagnosing illness, testing your prediction, devising a treatment and then monitoring its progress.
- **Leadership skills** – a senior doctor may run a department that will involve managing other doctors/support staff as well as time and financial management. You will need to be self-motivated and confident. Even if a candidate doesn't exhibit leadership skills now, they must have the potential to be successful in a leadership role.
- **Position of responsibility** – you will need to make important decisions that will impact the lives of others. You will need to remain calm and focused through stressful and pressurised scenarios.
- **Breadth of interests** – you should have a range of hobbies and demonstrate that you are an interesting person who has other interests besides medicine. It is important that you know how to escape from work and relax in your spare time; otherwise, you may not last long in the profession.
- **Stamina** – you must be able to deal effectively with stress and not let pressurised situations affect your judgement or ability to carry out your duties.

- **Limitations** – no one is perfect and it is important that you can reflect on your strengths and weaknesses in order to develop yourself and work to your greatest skills.
- **A sense of humour** – may also be key – especially as a junior doctor!

6.2 Being A Doctor:

POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewarding – you get to see your actions really making a difference to people’s lives • Challenging – new cases and situations every day • Well Paid at the higher levels pay levels are competitive with those in industry • Intellectually taxing – you have to think on your feet; things are never routine • Job security – there is a structured career progression provided you work hard • Work with people – you work as part of a team and meet new patients every day • Make a difference – your actions may mean the difference between life and death for someone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly competitive – there are often more applicants than places at all levels • Long hours – especially as a junior doctor, you will be expected to work night shifts and be “on call” regularly. • A junior doctor’s salary is roughly £23,000 which is not much considering the cost of studying medicine for 6 years. • Long career path – it takes many years to get to GP/consultant level • Stressful – there is a lot of pressure to meet time limits and standards; many cases may need dealing with at once; all may be emergencies • Responsibility – mistakes may impact the lives or health of others • Hard work – there are no “easy” days • Emotionally draining - you will be dealing with people who are upset and you may have to break devastating news

7.0 MAKING THE DECISION TO GO TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

It is not an easy decision whether to bite the bullet and apply to medical school. The **challenges** are stacked up in front of you and you need to be **determined** enough to face them. Even if **you** are convinced you want to be a doctor, you should still gain as much **insight and experience** of the career as possible to give you the best chance of **convincing** a medical school that you would be a good candidate.

There are lots of sources of information and experience that you should explore to prepare you for making your decision and then your application:

- 1) Work Experience / Voluntary Work
- 2) Insight Courses or conferences
- 3) Websites and blogs
- 4) Reading books and journals

7.1 Healthcare And Experience:

Work experience is a **requirement** for nearly all medical schools. As well as demonstrating **commitment and motivation** in your UCAS form and at interview, it is a good way of helping you decide whether medicine really is the career path for you. You may be able to do some work "**shadowing**" which will give you an insight into how the profession functions and what the day-to-day routine is like. It is advisable to try and get experience of both **primary and secondary care** environments. If neither of these is possible, then some kind of voluntary work in a **social care** environment may be adequate.

KEEP A DIARY

This will help you reflect on your experiences and to remember specific incidences to talk about at interview

ACT EARLY AND BE PERSISTENT

Places are limited and hospitals are busy places. Being committed enough to secure a placement will demonstrate your motivation for achieving a place at medical school. Be polite but persistent.

OBSERVE THE PROFESSION

It is more important that you pay attention to what a doctor does, how he/she communicates and how he/she works as a team, etc. rather than trying to remember specific procedures or diseases

COMMITMENT

It's often better to try and get a few hours experience a week over a period of time than a one-off stint

DON'T TURN ANYTHING DOWN

Experience is difficult to find. Even an afternoon or a one-off observation can be useful.

ARRANGE IT YOURSELF

This shows a proactive approach. Try to avoid doing work experience with family members

Ideas for finding work experience:

- Phone your local **NHS Trust** – many of them have specific people employed to help find students work experience.
- Speak to your **GP** – if they can't give you any experience they may know of another surgery that can help.
- Use **existing contacts** – friends, family who can put you in touch with a colleague.
- **Government advice:**
<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople/Workandcareers/index.htm>
- Phone the admissions department of your nearest **medical school**
- Visit the websites below:
- <https://www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/volunteer-with-us>
- For information about work experience at Queen Mary University or at your nearest Medical School (St Bartholomew's Hospital/ The Royal London Hospital) visit the Queen Mary Work Experience page
<http://hr.qmul.ac.uk/workqm/workexperience/>

Work Experience contacts:

- For all departments associated with London Imperial (St Mary's Hospital, Charing cross etc) - contact the Charing Cross Medical Education Centre on 0203 313 3289 or check the website:
<https://www.imperial.nhs.uk/careers/our-roles/work-experience>
<https://www.medschools.ac.uk/studying-medicine/applications>
The pre-med programme recruits in twice-yearly cycles so be ready to complete an application form around mid- late September or during February. The Education Centre provides a spreadsheet of all available opportunities and students should organise their placements through them.
- **Chelsea & Westminster Hospital** – contact Work Experience Co-ordinator, Tapiwa Agere on 020 3315 8834,
workexperience@chelwest.nhs.uk or check their website:
<http://www.chelwest.nhs.uk/about-us/working-here/work-experience>.
Due to a high number of requests on a weekly basis they are unable to arrange placements on behalf of students. In order to carry out work experience you must contact a consultant/ manager directly (there are a list of consultants on their website).

Student Work Experience Placement Procedure

We have a rigorous policy and procedure regarding the placement of Work Experience Students within the Trust. Please note the following:

- All placements have to be over 16 years of age (≥17 for any placements involving Theatres/Emergency Department, ≥18 for Paediatric/Gynaecology placements.)
- Placements will be processed for students who live and go to local schools and colleges within the Boroughs of Hammersmith, Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Middlesex, or inner London areas only.
- A one week placement
- **Overseas students are not processed via this Department**
- Anyone who shadows in Main Theatres must be over 17 years of age.
- All students must ensure that they:
 - Have permission from the Consultant/Manager regarding their placement
 - Email evidence must be given to the Work Experience Manager regarding the placement.
 - **Dates must be clarified at point of acceptance with the Consultant.**
 - **The Work Experience Manager does not organise dates for students.**

Pre-placement documentation is processed by the Work Experience Manager and this consists of:

- **Application form**

Occupational Health Form – health form must be signed and stamped by the GP, dates and proof of immunity must be provided for:

- **MMR – two doses of the vaccination are required** (forms will not be processed without two vaccinations)
- **Chickenpox – if you have not had chickenpox, you must arrange the vaccination (Varicella – 2 doses) students cannot attend without chickenpox immunity**
- **TB/BGG immunity not compulsory**

Please do not forward your forms without these, as it will delay the process.

- A character/academic reference from their school/college - **An actual reference must be provided.**
- Under 18 Consent Form (Please note applicants that are 19years and over must provide DBS clearance)

The above documentation is essential and must be completed, prior to any Work Experience placement taking place. **NOTE: All forms must be returned together, as part completed documents will not be accepted.**

Equal Opportunity Form

- Please note the Equal Opportunity Form is voluntary and does not affect your application
- Please look at the Trust Website for details on Imperial / Overseas and Internship students, as these are not processed via the Work Experience Department.

- **Voluntary Services Department at University College London Hospital** - contact Shana De Silva on 0845 1555 000 or email volunteering@uclh.nhs.uk (this is a general email however all members of the volunteering department check this). In order for a student to gain work experience they must be over 18.

- **St John's Hospice** – contact the volunteer coordinator Sophie Grey by email in the first instance at sophie.grey@hje.org.uk or by telephone on 020 7806 4049. Voluntary work with St John's or other hospices requires as long a term commitment as possible. Sophie encourages students to register prior to or early into their A-Level course to allow time for completion of security checks. The minimum commitment at St John's is one year with a minimum of one, three-hour shift per week.
- **Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital** – Check their website: <https://www.rnoh.nhs.uk/about-us/get-involved/volunteering>. If you have problems online can you ring the volunteer coordinator Lisa Haig on 0208 909 5394 or email rnoh.volunteering@nhs.net.
- **Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton** – contact Anne Thickett on 02084876798 or email friends.qmh@stgeorges.nhs.uk. They do not usually place medical students however it may be worthwhile to contact them and see. They usually expect volunteers to come once a week for a year.
- **Ealing Hospital** – contact Bambi Gami lnwh-tr.workexperience@nhs.net or call 0208 967 5085. (Work experience is usually only available to students living in the borough of Ealing)

Many of these contacts will only consider applicants who are able to commit to medium to long term volunteering; this is because each student placed must have a Criminal Record Check, which can take 8 – 12 weeks to complete. If you need help with managing your time you can discuss this with your personal tutors.

Voluntary work is important even if there is no clinical contact whatsoever. It demonstrates commitment, a positive attitude and a level of communication. It also helps you to become aware of different social groups and their differing healthcare needs. Volunteering could include **visiting old people's homes** and **working in a youth centre**. It is **rewarding** and helps develop some of the skills needed for a career in medicine; for example, hospice volunteering gives you a valuable insight into the **emotional side** of working with the terminally ill. You may also be able to volunteer in a counselling role such as **Childline or the Samaritans**.

Just gaining experience of a hospital environment can be invaluable experience, so getting a job as a **hospital porter** or **support worker** can be advantageous (look on NHS jobs website, in newspapers, at nursing agencies).

LINKS:

Volunteer Centre – www.volunteer.co.uk. They can help find volunteering roles for students (eg. mentoring, visiting care homes). There are two ways to sign up for this:

1. Visit their online database <https://do-it.westminster.gov.uk/> & sign up
2. Visit their weekly drop in centre (Thursday between 10am-3pm). A member of their team can help you look for and sign up for volunteering opportunities. (To check when their next drop in date is, please see their website).

Do it - www.do-it.org.uk/

Volunteering England - www.volunteering.org.uk/

St John's Ambulance volunteers - www.sja.org.uk/sja/volunteer.aspx. If you are under 18 you can sign up for the St John's Ambulance youth programmes <http://www.sja.org.uk/sja/young-people.aspx>

7.2 Insight Into Medicine Courses

There are various courses run, usually by universities, which provide:

- 1) An insight into life as a medical student and as a doctor
- 2) Invaluable information to help you decide if medicine really is for you
- 3) Preparation for parts of the application procedure

One of the most established courses is the 4-day Medlink course at Nottingham University. This is highly recommended for students interested in medicine for December of their AS year. There are lectures, seminars and practical sessions covering specific medical issues as well as advice on applications / UKCAT etc. There are also shorter courses and seminars that may be closer to home; various options are listed below:

1. **Medlink** – Nottingham - Medlink Intensive course (2 day residential course to give you practical knowledge and work experience - 17th/18th December 2018) <https://medlink-uk.net/shop/product/medsim/> This focuses specifically on the application process, personal statements, interview technique (traditional & MMI) and the Medlink Exhibition <https://medlink-uk.net/medlink-free/>. The event will be published on the website soon.
2. **Medsim Intensive**- Nottingham - (A 'hands on' practical residential weekend - 2018 dates to be confirmed). Students will have the chance to learn skills such as suturing, keyhole surgery, triage, ophthalmology and clerk and diagnose real patients. This can be booked by visiting their website <https://medlink-uk.net/medsim/>.
3. **Medicine & Health Sciences Exhibition, Kensington** - This event will be held on July 4th 2018. There will be short seminars and representatives from medical schools and other medical science options will be present at the event. To book this, keep an eye on Medlink website.
4. **Premed** – Imperial – Saturday 7th April 2018 and Saturday 1st September 2018 (1 day) – presentations and interactive workshops <http://www.premed.org.uk/course-facts/>
5. **The Scientific Basis of Medicine** – St George's www.summerschool.sgul.ac.uk

University of London Taster Courses Spring/ Summer Schools

Title	Age	Places	Type	Time	Dates
Taste of Medicine Spring School	Year 12	45	Non Residential	9.30am - 4.30pm	Tuesday 3 – Friday 6 April 2018
Taste of Medicine Summer School	Year 12	45	Non Residential	9.30am - 4.30pm	Tuesday 3 – Friday 6 July 2018

6. Young Persons Medical Conference -

<http://www.oxbridgeapplications.com/the-young-persons-medical-conference/>

7.3 Websites and Blogs

- A UK Doctors Blog: <http://nhsblogdoc.blogspot.com/>
- The Internal Optimist – a medical students blog: <https://internal-optimist.blogspot.co.uk/>
- Aspiring Docs Diaries: <http://aspiringdocsdiaries.org/>

7.4 Reading

Students should also start broadening their wider reading. You may be asked about **topical medical and scientific** issues in an interview, so you should be up-to-date and well informed. You should read a broadsheet **newspaper** every day and also try and refer regularly to specific medical **websites or journals** e.g. New Scientist / Student BMJ (see list in interview section).

There are now a few books available **written by doctors** which are a great read and highly recommended:

1. Do No Harm: Stories of Life, Death and Brain Surgery Hardcover – 13 Mar 2014 by Henry Marsh

2. This is Going to Hurt: Secret Diaries of a Junior Doctor - The Sunday Times Bestseller 2017 by Adam Kay



Amy's favourite!

3. Your Life In My Hands: A Junior Doctor's Story Paperback – 30 Nov 2017 by Rachel Clarke

It is also recommended that you read some popular **scientific books** especially on more ethical or controversial issues. The following are a good place to start:

1. Brave New World – Aldous Huxley
2. The Selfish Gene – Richard Dawkins
3. The God Delusion – Richard Dawkins
4. Language of the Genes – Stephen Jones
5. The Double Helix – Watson & Crick

6. The Private Life of the Brain – Susan Greenfield
7. The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat and other Clinical Tales – Oliver Sacks
8. What We Believe but Cannot Prove: Today’s Leading Thinkers on Science in the Age of Certainty – John Brockman

8.0 CHOOSING A MEDICAL SCHOOL

8.1 Medical Schools In The UK

Although all the medical schools have a core syllabus, as we have already seen, the courses are often structured very differently. Some integrate the pre-clinical and clinical sides of the course more than others, some teach purely via lectures and tutorials whereas others focus on problem-based learning (PBLs), and although all offer Student Selected components at some point, the timing and amount of these varies. You need to think carefully about the **type of course** that suits you and use the school’s websites and the appendix at the end of this document to choose the universities that would fit your requirements.

Other factors you may wish to take into account when choosing which medical school to apply to are:

1. **Location** – city v. campus based – do you like the city? (You will be there for at least 5 years)
2. **Entry requirements** – typical grades / retake policy
3. **Reputation** - league tables / talking to students
4. **Specialist** medical school v. large, multi-disciplinary university
5. **Facilities** – accommodation / social aspect / extra-curricular

8.2 Retake Policy

You may have missed out on your A-level grades the first time around and are hoping to improve your grades with a retake course. **Fewer and fewer** medical schools are accepting students with retakes. Some still do accept them and can view them as an indication of **perseverance and dedication**, but they will often ask for **straight As** in the retakes and may put a **time limit** on when they must be completed by. Of the schools that do accept retakes, most will only do so if you already hold a conditional offer with them and have only missed out narrowly on the required grades.

Make sure that if you are retaking some A-levels, you only apply to those universities that are sympathetic towards retakes or else you will be wasting an application. Where a university states that it will accept retakes only in **“exceptional circumstances”** this usually means illness or bereavement, and you may need to show evidence of this (e.g. a letter from your GP).

PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU A RETAKER, YOUR CHANCES OF BEING OFFERED A PLACE ARE EXTREMELY SMALL. YOU SHOULD THINK VERY, VERY CAREFULLY ABOUT YOUR CHANCES OF SUCCESS BEFORE YOU DO SO.

See the appendix on entry criteria for up-to-date information on which schools accept retakes. It is **your responsibility** to **check** these details before you make your applications. Be aware that in general medical schools **always** prefer first-time candidates and so you cannot assume that retaking is a viable alternative.

Be aware that the “terminal units” (units 5 and 6) of science A-levels for at least one major examination board are no longer offered in the January examination. This makes it very unlikely that a full retake of all units in a subject in January is possible.

8.3 Medical Schools in Ireland

There are six medical schools in Ireland, one in Northern Ireland (QUB, which you apply to through UCAS) and five in the Republic of Ireland:

- University College Cork (UCC)
- National University of Ireland, Galway
- Royal College of Surgeons Ireland
- University College Dublin (UCD)
- The University of Dublin (Trinity College)
- Queen’s University Belfast (QUB)

Applying to an Irish university is **not an easy option** and most medical schools demand **straight A grades**. However, it costs €45 and allows application to another 5 Medical School in conjunction with UCAS. The Irish education system rests with the Department of Education and Science at university level is **free** to all students from EU countries. Entry requirements need to be checked carefully as they are usually in **point format** to fit with the Irish education system. Applications are generally made through the **Central Applications Office (CAO)** and can be made either online or via a paper application form by the 1st February (1st May for late applications). Be aware that applications to Queen’s University Belfast are made through UCAS not through CAO.

HPAT – Health Professionals Admission Test, Ireland

Universities in Ireland now require you to take a test similar to the UKCAT called the HPAT. It is a 2.5hr test focusing on

- i) Logical Reasoning & Problem Solving
- ii) Interpersonal Understanding
- iii) Non Verbal Reasoning

Registration opens at the start of November and has to be taken at a test centre in Ireland in late February; check online for the exact dates as they change slightly each year. You must register for the test online by the 20th January, however leave yourself plenty of time as there are things you will need to do in advance such as acquiring a CAO number. Registration costs €95.

Beware – Applications for Queen’s University Belfast are through UCAS and you are required to sit the UKCAT

- Ø Central Applications Office - www.cao.ie
- Ø Education Ireland (overview of Irish Universities) www.educationireland.ie
- Ø HPAT website – www.hpat-ireland.acer.edu.au

8.4 Medical Schools Overseas

The following courses are purely overseas courses, are not applied for through UCAS and are not (usually) affiliated with a UK university:

Charles University – Prague, Czech Republic

1st Faculty of Medicine – www.lf1.cuni.cz

Charles University offers a 5-year medical course and the degree is fully recognised by the EU. In order to apply you must send in a specific application form (which you can download from their website) and then take an entrance exam. The best way to make an application is through an agency (Medical Doorway - <https://www.medicaldoorway.com/>) the agency will be able to assist you throughout the entire application process, including enrolling you in the required entrance exams. To contact the agency you can give them a call 01782 898 151 or send an email to hello@medicaldoorway.com.

The deadline for completing the form is generally in May and there are usually a couple of dates for the exam (April and July). The cost of the course is 360,000 CZK per year which doesn't include accommodation, meals, books, etc.

The course is taught in English, but you will need to develop basic skills in Czech to communicate successfully with patients during the ward rounds. The course offers lessons in Medical Czech over the first 3 years.

Palacky University – Olomouc, Czech Republic - <https://www.upol.cz/en/>

Palacky University offers a 6-year General Medicine course taught in English. In order to apply you need to pass three A-level subjects – Biology and Chemistry are mandatory and Physics and Maths are recommended. You require AAB (no more than 3 years old) to be invited for an interview, although you may be considered for an entrance exam with alternative grades (Bs and Cs). The exam is a multiple-choice test in Biology, Chemistry and Physics or Maths. The deadline for application is in May, although you may apply later than this if places are still available. The exams/interviews are in the first half of July (in the UK) and sometimes in August if any places remain. The cost of the course is €10,500 per academic year.

To learn more about the required entrance exams you can visit their website <https://www.medicaldoorway.com/events/palacky-university-entrance-exam-25th-august-2018/>

Maskarysk University – Brno, Czech Republic - www.med.muni.cz

Maskarysk University is based in Brno and offers a 6-year course culminating in a M.D. in General Medicine. The cost of the course is CZK249,000 per year.

Students are accepted on the basis of a written entrance exam in Physics (or Maths), Chemistry and Biology. Applications must be made via the university's specific application form by the end of April, although late entries may be accepted. During the course, you will be given lessons and exams in the Czech language in order for you to be able to communicate effectively with patients.

University of Pecs – Pecs, Hungary - www.pote.hu

Pecs offers a 6-year medical course in English split into 2 pre-clinical and 3 clinical years with a one-year rotating internship. There are around 100 places on the English course each year. There is also a 5-year Dentistry course with around 20 places. In order to apply, you need to fill in an application form and you may then be invited to take an entrance examination at any time between February and July. Applicants with A-levels in either Chemistry and Biology or Biology and

Physics can be granted exemption from the entrance exam (C grades or above). There are, however, around 4-5 applicants per place and these are candidates from all over the world, so applications should be made early. The deadline for applications is at the end of June (late applications may be considered). The tuition fee for the course is USD\$16,750 per year.

Semmelweis University – Budapest, Hungary

www.sote.hu/english/

Semmelweis has an English Language Programme that runs a 6-year Medical course. This is 2 years of general medical studies, 3 clinical and one is a rotating internship. There are around 120 places. Applications should be made via the university application form no later than June. Qualified applicants will be invited to sit 2 entrance exams, written and oral. You can find a guideline of topics that will be covered in the exam on their website

<http://www.studyhungary.hu/index.php?pageID=19>. Students will also be required to have an interview. Applicants should choose one of the university representatives who can help guide them through the application process, a list of the representatives can be found on their website

<http://semmelweis.hu/english/prospective-students/our-representatives/> The course costs USD\$9100 per term.

Szeged University – Szeged, Hungary

www.szote.u-szeged.hu/angoltit/english/

This is a 6-year course similar to those at Pecs and Semmelweis. The first two years serve as the foundation of basic medical knowledge and from the third year, theoretical training is extended with regular clinical practice. Applicants must be over the age of 18 in the year of application. The deadline for applications is at the end of July (late applications may be considered) and applications are made via an application form. There is a written and oral exam in Biology, Chemistry and English (a list of topics is available). The cost of the course is around USD\$16,00 per year.

Medical University of Gdansk (MUG) – Poland

www.ed.amg.gda.pl

This is a 6-year degree taught in English based on the Northern coast of Poland. The entry requirements are similar to the UK, i.e. a conditional offer is given on A/AS grades and also a possible interview. Applications need to be submitted between the start of May and mid-June. The tuition fee is 44 000 PLN per year.

St George's University – Grenada, West Indies

www.sgu.edu

The School of Medicine offers three years of premedical sciences as a foundation for Medical Sciences so as to accommodate students from different academic backgrounds. UK students offering A-level grades will be assessed and placed into the appropriate term depending on their academic background. If your A-Level grades are good enough, you may only have to do the final year of this course. On applying via an application form, candidates may then be invited for an interview – this will probably be held in the UK. There are two intakes into the medicine course per year, one in August and the other in January. Costs are around US\$12,000 per term.

LINKS:

- Czech Medical University Courses Admissions Service (EMUCAS) – <http://emucas.com/> This is the body which oversees UK applications to Czech Universities. Based at Abbey College in Malvern.

- Study Hungary – www.studyhungary.hu
- This is the best organisation to contact regarding any application to a Hungarian University in the first instance.
- List of countries and med schools:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_student

9.0 HOW TO APPLY: What Admissions Tutors Look For

“We are looking for students with high academic ability who have thought deeply about what it means to be a doctor and who show enthusiasm for life and an interest in people. Medicine is an immensely rewarding career, and demands commitment, hard work and physical and emotional stamina. If you think that it is the right career for you, we hope you will apply to St George’s. I advise you to submit your application early.”

Dr Phillip Hay

Sub-Dean for Medical Admissions at St George’s

9.1 A-LEVELS

All Medical Schools require **Chemistry** at A-level and **at least one other science**; most require Biology to at least AS level. See the table in the appendix for the specific entry requirements for the schools you are interested in. The average offer for Medicine is A*AA.

The **GCSE requirements** vary from one school to another (check the appendix for these). It goes without saying that you have to have a very strong academic background to be considered (i.e. mostly **A* and A grades**). Students who do not have the ability to gain A grades at GCSE and A-level will probably find the medicine course and career too challenging for them, and should be realistic about considering other alternative careers.

Some medical schools ask for a pass in other exams such as the **UKCAT** and **BMAT** exams (see section below). For **Oxbridge**, you also need to fill in a specific entry form in addition to your UCAS form. **Overseas students** especially need to make sure that they read the university prospectuses very carefully to ensure that they meet all the specific entry requirements.

Medical school applicants will also be tested on their **non-academic** qualities and qualifications. Personal attributes required to become a successful doctor will be examined through the UCAS form and also usually at interview. Medical applicants also need to demonstrate **other interests** outside the academic curriculum such as music and sports, which develop personal skills and make a **more rounded individual**. Teamwork and responsibility or leadership are key skills that need to be demonstrated through school clubs, societies, social groups, etc. (*Don’t forget ATC – Ashbourne Theatre Company and the School Revue*). Before a medical school candidate can be admitted to university, he or she must complete a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check of previous convictions, and have been successfully vaccinated against Hepatitis B. This takes several months, as a test to show the vaccination has produced antibodies needs to be carried out 4-6 weeks after the vaccination.

9.2 UCAS Form:

- All applications to UK medical schools need to be made via the UCAS website in the same way as any other university applications. The UCAS applications open in mid September and this years' deadline is the **15th of October.**
- You can apply to only **4 medical schools** on your UCAS form. This leaves you an **extra place** on your form if you wish to apply for a different course e.g. biomedical science. Students are often worried about what to do with the extra place and it is something that you need to think seriously about. The medical school will not see the other courses you have applied for unless you apply for two courses at the same university. Some people like to use the extra place as a **backup** in case they change their mind about doing medicine after applying.

N.B. You cannot apply for veterinary medicine or dentistry as your other option. As medicine courses are so competitive, it is always a safe option to apply to an additional **non-medical course** to maximise your chances of getting a university offer. It is usually possible, if you don't receive any offers for medicine, to start a non-medical course at a university and then **re-apply** through a graduate-entry programme later on. Be aware that these courses, however, are often even more competitive to get onto.

N.B. Even if you are applying to a non-medical course, you should tailor your personal statement to medicine. Other degree programmes are aware that students apply to their courses as a backup to other degrees and are sympathetic to it.

Filling in the Form

The importance of a well-prepared UCAS form cannot be overemphasised. Writing the full form will take **AT LEAST** a month of work. In preparation, you need to obtain the originals of all examination qualification certificates, or good quality photocopies, by the beginning of the Upper 6th year. The final version is submitted on-line.

There are 6 sections on the form:

- 1) Registration Details: basic personal data such as date of birth and current address
- 2) About You: further personal details such as nationality and fee code
- 3) Your Courses: you can only enter Medicine for 4 courses (see above)
- 4) Your education: details of schools, qualifications and grades
- 5) Your Employment History
- 6) Personal Statement (see below)

Personal Statement – STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

The personal statement on your UCAS form is your chance to convince the universities that you have thought carefully about a career in medicine and you are **committed and motivated** enough to make a good doctor. It is your opportunity to **stand out** from the crowd and the primary way in which a choice can be made between you and another equally suitable candidate.

Only **500 words** are permitted so it is imperative that you are as **concise** as possible and that everything you write is completely relevant. If you are interviewed, you may well be asked about material from your personal statement, so make sure that it is **truthful** and you will be able to add to the information you have given on the form.

You need to:

- a) Explain why you wish to study medicine and the factors that influenced your decision. Think hard about what attracts you to medicine and **avoid clichés** (e.g. "I have always been fascinated by..." and "Ever since I was a child ...") You should explain how your choice was a result of considered **research and deliberation**. *If you can't answer this question, should you really be applying?*

WANT TO FOLLOW IN YOUR PARENTS' FOOTSTEPS?

A common reason for wishing to study medicine often cited by medical applicants, is a desire to "follow my mother/father who is/was a doctor". This may be why you had an **initial interest** in medicine, but it is not sufficient to base your whole application on a desire to emulate a family member.

In fact, candidates whose parents are medics may be **treated more harshly** as the admissions panel believe that students with a medical background should be able to clearly demonstrate, to a greater extent, what they have learned and what they know about the profession.

- b) Demonstrate your **commitment** to medicine by:
 - i. Describing any **work experience or voluntary work** that you have done, what you learnt from it and how it helped you decide that medicine is right for you
 - ii. Listing any **conferences or courses** you have been on and what you gained from them
 - iii. Knowing your subject and being up-to-date – you need to demonstrate knowledge of **topical issues** in the field of medicine that interest you and describe why you are interested in certain areas.
- c) Highlight the specific **personal attributes** you have that would make you a suitable candidate to be a doctor. You need to back these up with specific examples via achievements in sport, music, hobbies and other interests. Medical schools want to see that you can **work in a team** and also **hold a position of responsibility**. (See section on personal attributes of a doctor).

Hobbies and interests are vital to your application for medicine to demonstrate that you are a well-rounded individual. People who are totally absorbed in their studies to the exclusion of all else will lack some of the personal attributes that are key to making a good doctor.

Don't just list or state achievements and attributes, you need to backup each statement with a specific example. Then be prepared to expand on these points

in an interview. Commitment is really important and the medical school will want to know how long you have been pursuing your hobby, why you do it, what you gain from it and whether you have achieved anything. Interests that involve groups, teamwork and communication are essential for demonstrating key skills for medicine.

WHICH SOUNDS BETTER? :

I am good at organising things and at motivating others.

As captain of the School 1st XI, I learned to organise team training sessions and the importance of motivating others on the field ...

I have been playing the guitar for three months in my bedroom.

I have played the trombone since I was nine, have passed grade 5 and play in the local band.

Even if you are not musical or sporty, you can mention things like charity fundraising, The College Revue, languages, photography, travel or web design. Your personal statement is exactly that – **personal** – and should be written by you, in your own personal style. No one else should be able to tell you the best way to write it, although it may be worthwhile looking at some examples to get an idea of the kind of content you should be including.

Reference:

Your personal tutor will write your reference. A good reference needs to be earned and the tutors will be honest and frank. Personal tutors may contact previous schools to obtain further reference information. To earn a good reference is essential to be a good student. Ensure you are on time for lessons and with homework, avoiding creating unnecessary work for your tutors. Participate with enthusiasm in classes, and be consistent in your approach to work.

9.3 Entry Exams

In addition to sitting A-levels, most medical schools require you to sit another entry exam specific to medicine.

9.3.1. UKCAT – UK Clinical Aptitude Test

What is the UKCAT?

- The test helps universities to make more **informed choices** from amongst the many highly-qualified applicants to medical and dental programmes.
- It helps to ensure that candidates selected have the most appropriate mental abilities, attitudes and professional behaviour required for new doctors and dentists to be successful in their clinical careers. It is used in collaboration with other admissions processes such as the UCAS application and academic qualifications.

- The UKCAT does **not** contain any curriculum or science content. It focuses on exploring the **cognitive powers** of candidates and other attributes considered to be valuable for healthcare professionals.

Test Format

Subtest	Items	UKCAT timing*	UKCATSEN timing**
Verbal Reasoning Assesses ability to critically evaluate information that is presented in a written form	44 items	22 minutes	28 minutes
Decision Making *** Assesses the ability to make sound decisions and judgements using complex information	TBC	32 minutes	39 minutes
Quantitative Reasoning Assesses ability to critically evaluate information presented in a numerical form	36 items	25 minutes	31.5 minutes
Abstract Reasoning Assesses the use of convergent and divergent thinking to infer relationships from information	55 items	14 minutes	17.5 minutes
Situational Judgement Measures capacity to understand real world situations and to identify critical factors and appropriate behaviour in dealing with them	68 items	27 minutes	34 minutes
Total Time		120 minutes	150 minutes

*You will take this test at an external centre between **July 2018 – September 2018**. You are responsible for booking and taking the test yourself.*

9.3.2 BMAT – Biomedical Admissions Test

www.bmat.org.uk

Test Format

Structure of the BMAT (2 hour exam)

The BMAT has **3 sections**:

Section 1 – Aptitude and Skills

Duration: 1 hour

Number of Questions: 35 multiple choice or short answer questions

This section tests the generic skills of problem solving, understanding argument, data analysis and inference.

Section 2 – Scientific Knowledge and Applications

Duration: 30 minutes

Number of questions: 27 multiple choice or short answer questions

This section tests your ability to apply core scientific and mathematical knowledge and principles (typically covered by the age of 16 in non-specialist school science and mathematics courses).

Section 3 – Writing Task

Duration: 30 minutes

Number of Questions: one question must be answered from a choice of four.

This section tests whether you can demonstrate the capacity to develop ideas and communicate them effectively in writing.

The BMAT takes place twice a year but Ashbourne students are encouraged to sit in in November. **Ashbourne is a registered test centre** for the BMAT. You receive the results by the start of December. Students on the AMSP will be trained for the BMAT and will be provided with a book full of practice questions.

9.4 Interviews

- The majority of medical schools interview the top candidates before offering places. These can take place anytime between November and April. It is important to **prepare** for these in advance and also **practice** giving answers to some of the more common questions out loud.
- Interviews are not designed as a form of torture! Interviews are a useful tool to determine if you are capable of making **quick and rational decisions** that you can explain clearly under **pressure**. They test your **communication skills, enthusiasm and motivation**. You should be able to demonstrate that you have thought a lot about medicine and the issues surrounding it.

There are two types of interview:

1. **The Traditional Interview**
2. **MMI's (Multiple Mini Interviews)**

Traditional Interviews



- The exact format will vary from medical school to medical school, but it is common to be interviewed by 2-3 people, at least one of whom will be a doctor.

** Amy Youngman is now on the **interview panel at UCL Medical School** and can provide practice interviews and invaluable advice on the format and kind of questions asked. **

What the interviewer wants to find out:

- who you are and what you are doing now
- why you want to be a doctor / how you made the decision
- what you have done to find out if medicine is the right career for you
- what you learnt during your work experience
- what aspects of the course particularly appeal to you
- whether you have a realistic understanding of what a career in medicine involves
- what your other interests are
- whether you have good communication skills / enjoy working with other people
- whether you demonstrate an active interest in health/medical issues

Think through your answers to possible interview questions. You don't need to (and shouldn't) learn answers off by heart but you should have a good idea of what you would say in reply to the more commonly asked questions so that you come across confidently on the day.

Examples of questions asked at medical school interviews:

- 1) *Why do you want to be a doctor?*
- 2) *What alternatives have you explored? Why not be a nurse?*
- 3) *What qualities do you think patients appreciate in a doctor?*
- 4) *What qualities do you have that would make you a good doctor?*
- 5) *What are your best / worst qualities?*
- 6) *Why have you chosen this university? What do you think of our course structure?*
- 7) *What are your views on public and private medicine and the governments Foundation Hospitals?*
- 8) *What is the difference between primary and hospital care?*
- 9) *What is the National Health Service? What issues are currently predominant within the service?*
- 10) *How do you see Britain's healthcare system in 20 years time?*
- 11) *What single healthcare intervention could change the health of the population the most?*
- 12) *Will your personal / religious beliefs conflict with your duties as a doctor?*
- 13) *What is an epidemic?*
- 14) *Why are we so healthy compared to the Victorians?*
- 15) *What is the difference between a virus and a bacterium? Against which are antibiotics effective and why?*
- 16) *What is MRSA and how has it arisen?*
- 17) *Why is the SARS outbreak so worrying?*
- 18) *What is homeopathy? Do you approve?*
- 19) *Do you think / why is research important? What limitations are there to medical research?*
- 20) *Tell me about something medically related that you have read in the press recently.*
- 21) *Describe a situation you have been in which was stressful. How do you deal with stress?*
- 22) *How would you deal with death and the dying?*
- 23) *What do you think are the advantages / disadvantages of PBL (problem-based learning)?*
- 24) *What do you think you will find the most difficult about a career in medicine?*
- 25) *Tell me about your work experience. What did you learn from it?*

- 26) Research has shown that "integrity" is an important quality in a doctor. What do you think is meant by this and can you give an example of a situation in which acting with integrity might be important?
- 27) Give an example of when you have worked in a team.
- 28) If complaints were made about you as a doctor how would you respond?
- 29) Do you think that doctors need to ask for consent when taking organs from a dead person? What if it were only a blood sample?
- 30) What have been the most significant advances in medicine in the last 10/20/30 years?

MMI's



- A multiple mini interview consists of a series of short, structured interview stations used to assess non-cognitive qualities including cultural sensitivity, maturity, teamwork, empathy, reliability and communication skills.
- Prior to the start of each mini interview rotation, candidates receive a question/scenario and have a short period of time (typically two minutes) to prepare an answer.
- Upon entering the interview room, the candidate has a short exchange with an interviewer/assessor (usually about 8 minutes). In some cases, the interviewer observes while the interaction takes place between an actor and the candidate. At the end of each mini interview, the interviewer evaluates the candidate's performance while the applicant moves to the next station. This pattern is repeated through a number of rotations. The duration of the entire interview is usually about two hours.

MMI's are becoming increasingly popular as it reflects how you will be examined when at Medical School (in OSCE's)

Do you have any questions for us?

You should prepare a couple of questions to ask at the end of the interview as usually the interviewer will ask if you have anything to ask them. Good questions are often ones relating to their specific course that show that you have researched their specific university well and have a genuine interest in their medical school. However, do not feel that you have to ask a question if all your topics have been covered already. It is often safer to ask no questions at all than to show a lack of research or to repeat things already mentioned in the interview. Thank the interviewer, smile and say goodbye before you leave the room. It always pays to **leave a good impression**.

10.0 WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM ASHBOURNE?

Firstly, you must remember there are **no guarantees**. Most people who apply to medical schools will not take up a place. Competition is fierce and increasingly strong. We pride ourselves on the quality of assistance we provide to potential medical candidates and to the UCAS procedure in general.

10.1 Teaching

Good quality year 12 grades are needed, as the **predicted grades** in the UCAS application will be based on these. This is particularly important for overseas candidates who may not have sat GCSE or equivalent examinations; for such candidates, the year 12 grades will be the only graded external examination qualifications on the UCAS form. Although retakes are an option, all medical candidates should look to achieve solid AS grades at the first attempt.

In addition, subjects taken only to AS level can contribute to your overall scores and are essential for admission to some of the most competitive courses, particularly when only 3 subjects are taken at A2 level.

You can expect:

- To receive **6 hours of tuition** per subject per week in the lower sixth. This will continue into the upper sixth; however, an additional 2 hours per subject per week will be provided where necessary to provide support to any students who need to retake papers in their second year. (One year intensive students can expect to have 6-8 hours of tuition in each subject per week).
- Class sizes not to exceed **10 students**
- **Enthusiastic teachers** who will take an interest in your studies and your application to medicine and appreciate your specific needs and requirements. Your tutors will always put **your best interests first** and will be on hand to offer assistance outside of class whenever they have no other teaching commitments.
- **Medical seminars** on topical medical and scientific topics using up-to-date materials and journals
- **Visiting speakers and guest lecturers** throughout the year
- The opportunity to attend **medical lectures and seminars** off the premises (see section on medical courses). Ashbourne is well situated for such events and they are organised regularly; Imperial College Medical School is a 10-minute walk and University College, London is a 15-minute tube ride. Medical applicants are urged to attend these events to broaden their interests and keep up-to-date with current medical and scientific issues.



On Tuesday 20th February 2018, members of the AMSP attended a lecture at the Royal Society of Medicine.

10.2 Your Application

You can expect:

- Amy Youngman (Head of the AMSP) and your personal tutor to guide you through every step of the application process
- **One-to-one assistance** with your application and **personal statement** where appropriate
- Mock interviews with Ashbourne staff as required
- A fair and thoughtful **personalised reference** for the UCAS form and for any work experience

10.3 Preparation for UKCAT and BMAT

- Students are prepared for these tests during their weekly sessions in year 12.
- They are provided with their own copies of 2 books containing lots of practice questions.
- Ashbourne also recommends the following course:

<https://www.ukcatcrashcourse.com/>

6med | **UKCAT** CRASH COURSE

The intensive, one-day course run by medical students.

Part of the 6med Crash Courses network.

 [Dates & Locations](#)

[£109 - Register Now](#)

Indeed, Amy attended this course in 2015 in order to see whether it was something we could promote, and was very impressed by it.

10.4 What If There Are Any Problems With My Application?

Your personal tutor will check your application before it is submitted to ensure that it is free from errors. However, other problems may arise after your application has been sent. There are, for instance, occasionally technicalities that overseas students need to ensure they have completed before they are offered a place. You will be responsible for this yourself; however, your personal tutor will

assist you in any way he or she can and you can expect them to be **committed** to ensuring everything possible is done to ensure your application runs smoothly.

10.5 Work Experience

Ashbourne will not find work experience for you; however, we will assist wherever we can in **recommending places and people** to contact and by giving guidance as to the appropriate types of work experience to look for. We will also assist by giving **references** where necessary. Ultimately, however, work experience should be organised by the student as this demonstrates a committed and pro-active attitude during your application.

11.0 MONEY

Undertaking a medical degree is likely to be a big financial commitment, particularly if you intend to also study a foundation year or an intercalated degree course. Medical students have been shown to incur a debt of around £25,000 and this could rise to the predicted average of debt of £67,000 by the time you graduate now that caps on tuition fees have been lifted.

Expenses are likely to be:

- 2) **Tuition fees** of up to £9,250 per year depending on the course and the university
- 3) **Living expenses** for up to 6 years
- 4) **Books and equipment** for your studies
- 5) **Electives** if you choose to go abroad

It is important to remember, however, that there are many forms of financial support available to you and also that you will be entering a **well-paid and secure career**.

It is important to remember that there are different rules for funding depending on your **nationality** – even if you are English, Scottish, Irish or Welsh.

Fee Loan

In this type of funding, you will get a “fee loan” during your time at university to cover tuition fees and you will have to pay this back gradually once you start earning over a certain amount (i.e. tuition fees don’t have to be paid for until after you graduate).

Student Loan

These are available to all students to cover living costs and are administered by the Student Loans Company (www.slc.co.uk). These are partly means tested and vary according to where you live / study and your personal circumstances. All student loans must be repaid at a rate of 9% of all income over £15,000 per year (you do not start repayments until you are earning this amount).

Maintenance Grant

From 2006, a new maintenance grant is being introduced for students from lower income households (dependent on parental income). This can provide an extra £2,906 of funding. Those students eligible for all or part of this grant, however, will not receive the full student loan entitlement. Essentially a part of the

maximum student loan is converted into a grant and so doesn't have to be paid back.

NHS Bursaries

The NHS pays the tuition fees and provides bursaries to students in years 5 and 6 of non-graduate entry medical courses and in years 2-4 of graduate entry courses. Again eligibility and entitlement criteria are complex and vary according to personal circumstances.

Scholarships

Many universities offer grants and bursaries especially to students under severe financial hardship. There are a number of scholarships that can be applied for, but often these are specifically for graduate students. Check individual university websites for these.

Other sources of income:

- Part-time work (time may be limited on a medical degree)
- Parental contribution
- Local charities
- Access to Learning fund
- Bank overdrafts (graduate accounts)
- Professional study loans / Professional trainee loan schemes

LINKS:

www.money4medstudents.org

www.studentmoney.org/

www.slc.co.uk/

www.aimhigher.ac.uk/student_finance/

12.0 ALTERNATIVES TO MEDICINE

If you decide, after doing some research, that medicine may not be right for you or that you are not capable of the academic requirements, there are various similar subjects that may be more suitable and are worth considering. None of these are less rewarding or less worthy than medicine; a good physiotherapist or optometrist is a more valuable member of society than a poor doctor.

12.1 Dentistry

It is important to realise that dentistry should not be viewed as an easier alternative to medicine. Dentistry is often **more demanding** academically and entry to dental college generally requires higher AS and A2 grades.

Whereas a doctor will only specialise in one area of medicine or type of treatment, a dentist is responsible for examination, diagnosis, treatment, surgery, X-ray and post-treatment patient care. Dentistry is not just drilling teeth; it also includes oral hygiene, dental reconstruction and dietary advice or even primary care such as diagnosing oral cancers or identifying cases of child neglect.

There are many current changes in the **NHS** that affect the way dental practices are being run; you need to keep abreast of these changes and develop an **opinion** on the increasing number of dentists opting to enter the more lucrative private sector.

Entry Requirements

If you wish to apply for a degree in dentistry, then assume that you will get an **A*AA** offer. You should be capable of achieving straight As at A2 level and some universities will not let you apply unless you have BBB at AS level. Most places require you to take both **Biology and Chemistry** at A2. (See appendix for entry requirements).

If you have **retaken your A-levels** you are highly **unlikely** to obtain a place to study dentistry, unless you have genuine and extenuating circumstances and you have applied previously and held an offer from that university.

Ashbourne can arrange mock interviews and discussions with **Dr. Douglas Miller**, a practising dental surgeon.

12.2 Veterinary Science

Again, veterinary science is definitely **not an easier option** than medicine. There are only 6 schools offering veterinary medicine and so the competition for entry is **much** keener than for medicine.

As with medicine, the opportunities for **specialisation** within the career are very wide. There are microbiologists, parasitologists, pathologists, surgeons and equine specialists, etc. You will, however, have the opportunity to treat many more species than a medical doctor does and so the training is even more gruelling and rigorous. You will need to decide whether you want to be employed by:

- 1) The Government – the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA – www.defra.gov.uk)
- 2) An animal charity such as the RSPCA (www.rspca.org.uk)
- 3) A pharmaceutical company
- 4) A private practice

Each is in itself varied and increasingly specialised.

Veterinary medicine is a **physically tough** and dangerous career as many animals are not keen on veterinary treatment! There is a huge demand for veterinary doctors willing to work in **large-animal** practice in agriculture. Many vet graduates choose careers in **small animal** practices in urban areas as these are less dangerous and physically hard and generally offer a more convenient lifestyle. This has led to a surplus of small animal vets in England.

Dealing with animals does not isolate a vet from the need to be able to **communicate** effectively with humans. Informing a person that his or her pet is too sick for economical treatment requires **sensitivity and empathy** as much as dealing with sick people. Equally difficult is telling a farmer that you may need to cull all of his livestock to contain the outbreak of a disease, hence seriously compromising his livelihood and only source of income.

Entry Requirements

Veterinary medicine has arguably the most demanding entry requirements of all courses. Students should aim to study **Chemistry and Biology** and another science. Most applicants to veterinary medicine will probably have taken **4 A-levels** and secure **A grades** in each. If you have taken or are considering taking **retakes** at A-level then you almost certainly will **not** be successful in getting into Vet School. You are also highly unlikely to find any Vet courses listed in clearing. See appendix for entry requirements for the 6 UK Vet Colleges.

British Veterinary Association - www.bva.co.uk

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons - www.rcvs.org.uk

12.3 Optometry

Optometry is a healthcare profession concerned with **eyes** and the visual system. It requires a level of **commitment** similar to medicine. The degree involves a BSc followed by clinical training and so is similar to a medical degree. An optometrist is concerned with preserving or restoring vision to people to help them live fulfilling, unhindered lives. The loss or depletion of good visual activity can be an extremely debilitating disorder.

The allure of a degree in optometry might be driven by a desire to become a **specialist** in a highly intricate piece of anatomy. You should certainly have a strong interest in the sciences, in particular practical aspects, as **problem analysis and problem solving** are frequent features of an optometrist's daily work.

The optometrist, like a GP, is a healthcare professional and as such should possess good interpersonal and **communication** skills. Additionally, you will require a good degree of **business acumen** as optometrists are generally managers of their own business and appoint their own staff.

Institute of Optometry – www.ioo.org.uk

College of Optometrists (UK) – www.college-optometrists.org

12.4 Physiotherapy

Being a physiotherapist isn't all about rushing onto the pitch during a premiership football match. Although there may be an opportunity to work with professional **sports** people, physiotherapists are also employed in **industry** and **private practices**. However, the majority of chartered physiotherapists work for the **NHS**.

You will be responsible for treating patients with a wide range of diseases, both communicable and non-communicable. Physiotherapy is also a vital part of the **rehabilitation** process of patients who have:

- a) suffered accidents
- b) undergone surgery
- c) been confined to bed for long periods of time

If you opt to work for the **NHS** you will find yourself part of a team that may include osteopaths, occupational therapists, prostheticists as well as more usual hospital staff such as doctors and nurses. As such, you must be a **good team member** with excellent communication skills. You should have a keen interest in **human physiology** and in **practical science skills**. Physiotherapy is a "**hands on**" approach to healthcare that incorporates a wide range of mechanical equipment in addition to your own hands.

Physiotherapy is extremely **competitive** and hugely oversubscribed. Entry requirements are lower than those for medicine and only candidates expressing a real desire to become a physio will be considered. Ashbourne can help you assess the strengths of your application and to help you build on weaknesses. Work experience is vital if you intend to be taken seriously.

Entry Requirements

A relevant **Biological Science** (Biology, Human Biology or in some cases Sports Studies) will almost always be required to full A-level. Another science subject is also recommended.

12.5 Pharmacy / Pharmacology

If you are interested in a **rigorous and demanding** medical sciences degree, then Pharmacy may be for you. Pharmacists are responsible for advising patients of appropriate medications and hence carry a large degree of **responsibility**. You will be responsible for preparing and dispensing drugs for sale and for counter prescriptions. You will lead a **team** of assistants and be required to work lengthy hours in busy and often **stressful** situations. Pharmacists also work in hospitals. The course is demanding and popular; hence, entry requirements are often high.

Entry Requirements

A-level **Chemistry** and at least **one other science** (Biology preferred) will be prerequisite.

12.6 Nursing

For every doctor in the NHS, there are 10 nurses; every doctor knows that without a nurse, nothing happens. The demands for a nursing course are as heavy as for doctors but it can be an extremely rewarding career. Changes in the structure of the NHS has placed **greater responsibility** on ward nurses, so they are now able to **diagnose** patients, **prescribe** and **dispense** some medicines, **refer** patients to other specialists and carry out nearly all the duties of a doctor. This has been reflected in **improved pay** scales and conditions for nurses.

Entry Requirements

Nursing does not require such high academic grades as medicine at A-level; 2 A-levels and an AS level will generally suffice. **Biology** and **one other science**, preferably Chemistry, are needed; the most important requirement is a high level of **commitment**.

There are two routes into nursing:

- 1) The degree programme through university study is more academic than the alternative:
- 2) Nursing school in an NHS hospital. Basic nurse training takes 2-3 years after which there are numerous specializations on offer.

12.7 Biomedical Science

Biomedical Sciences (BMS) is often seen as either a backdoor to medicine or as "medicine-lite". However, BMS is **very demanding**, as students will need to master a greater **depth** of academic knowledge than medical students whilst remaining familiar with clinical practice and medical applications. BMS contains a high proportion of chemistry and biochemistry and incorporates a substantial amount of **independent** academic research. Most BMS degrees last for 4 years including a 6-month or year-long **research project**.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO ENTER MEDICAL SCHOOL AFTER GRADUATING IN BMS?

Yes BUT It is extremely difficult and competition is very fierce.

The number of candidates attempting this route has increased enormously in the last few years; the number of those who are successful has not. Candidates must have:

- **Achieved good grades in the final examination**
- **Worked hard preparing for medicine, e.g. working in hospitals as a researcher or volunteer.**

Students with a BMS degree have the same chances of entering medicine as any other science graduate. Courses with postgraduate entry only are offered at the Universities of Swansea and Warwick.

BMS graduates usually continue in **academic or industrial research** in a university or pharmaceutical company; candidates should consider carefully whether this is the career path they wish to pursue.

12.8 OTHER OPTIONS

If you are still interested in a degree in healthcare or medical science but don't feel any of the options above are suitable for you, there are other alternatives to choose from. The tutors at Ashbourne will advise you on the suitability of any of the courses below as well as help you to choose the most appropriate establishment:

Chiropractics
Food Science and Nutrition
Occupational Therapy
Sports Science
Equine Science

Podiatry
Forensic Science
Osteopathy
Immunology

13.0 WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T GET IN?

There are two stages at which you may not succeed in getting into medical school:

- 1) You may not obtain an offer
- 2) You may hold an offer but not gain the grades required to fulfil that offer

Not obtaining an offer

It is important to remember that not getting a place at medical school can often simply be a reflection of medical schools in the UK being vastly **oversubscribed**, with competition for the limited number of spaces being **very tough** indeed.

CONSIDER – Do you still want to study medicine?

Medical schools try to select the people that they think will make the best doctors and who have the correct **ability and motivations** for studying medicine, but even some students choose to leave mid-course and some will fail exams. The selection panel has a responsibility to make the **right decision** for the medical school, and you have a responsibility to yourself and to your potential future patients to make sure that you are making the right choice. **Examine your reasons** for wanting to study medicine carefully. If in doubt, or if you have felt pushed in the direction of medicine, it may be better to look at **alternative courses or careers** (see section on alternatives to medicine).

In this case, your choice in the 5th space on your UCAS form may provide a suitable alternative. It is worth researching this option well so that you are well prepared to make a decision if you get no offers from medical schools.

THINK – Why was I not successful?

You may wish to approach the medical school that you applied to and ask for some constructive **feedback**. You may also consider reviewing your **personal statement**.

If you are convinced that medicine is the correct career for you and you want to persist in your applications, you have several options:

- 1) Look into **overseas medical schools** that may still accept applications for the forthcoming year. These often accept candidates with slightly lower grades
- 2) Take a **“year out”** and re-apply the following application round. This gives you time to **polish your application**: gain more work experience, re-write your personal statement, practise your interview technique, etc. The extra time should be used **constructively** to boost your next application as you will need to convince a medical school that you are a **better candidate** than you were in your first application. If you are using the time to re-take some A-level modules, you need to check which medical schools will accept this.

Be aware that if you reapply in later years, you must **retake the UKCAT/BMAT** as this is only valid for university entry in the year that you take the test.

Not obtaining the right grades

As a medical applicant, you will have been a high achiever academically, so your A-level results are likely to be good even if they are insufficient to gain a place at medical school. If you have received an offer and your grades are only a **few percentage points off** those required *and* you are a **strong candidate otherwise** (extra-curricular, work experience, a good interview), it is worth discussing the issue with the **admission tutor** at the Medical School in question (see contact details on the table in the appendix).

If you did achieve good grades, it is worth contacting the medical schools you applied to, to see if they have unfilled places. Clearing is another option, although it is **rare** for medical places to appear in clearing and you will almost certainly need to have applied before to the medical schools you contact.

14.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION WEBSITES:

General Medical Websites:

www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/medicine

www.medschoolsonline.co.uk

www.newmediamedicine.com

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

www.mmc.nhs.uk

www.iime.org

www.bma.org

Individual Medical School websites – see Appendix tables

Books:

- Passing the UK Clinical Aptitude Test and BMAT – Walker, Buckton, Hutton & Hutton (Law Matters Publishing)
- Thinking Skills – John Butterworth & Geoff Thwaites (Cambridge)
- Medical School Interviews – George Lee & Oliver Picard (ISC Medical)
- Medical School Undergraduate Prospectuses