



Medicine

United Kingdom medical training has a long history of excellence and of offering training to overseas doctors. Leaders in medicine throughout the world have received their medical education in the UK. Its hospitals and other clinical settings are renowned for the quality of their teaching and their influential medical research. In the UK your medical training will be extensive and demanding. It will equip you with practical experience as well as professional practice.

Checklist: why study medicine in the United Kingdom?

- UK medicine is respected worldwide and UK qualifications are widely accepted.
- UK undergraduate medical schools take 7.5 per cent of their intake from overseas.
- Overseas doctors who qualify in a UK medical school can make the same professional progress in UK hospitals as graduates from the UK and European Economic Area (EEA).
- There are well-established postgraduate training routes for international students and postgraduate training can lead to membership or fellowship of prestigious professional societies and colleges.
- One-year pre-medicine courses are available for those with high-grade passes in arts subjects who want to study medicine.

1 What can I study?

What is the nature of the undergraduate course?

UK undergraduate medical training is designed to give you a firm grounding in the basic medical science subjects. You would also be taught clinical and diagnostic skills. You could take an intercalated degree course, which would give you the chance to study a medical science subject in depth and also gain a BSc degree.

Where can I do an undergraduate medical degree?

There are currently 31 medical schools in the UK: the Medical Schools Council website (www.chms.ac.uk) provides links to the websites of all the UK medical schools.



Are all courses the same no matter where you take them?

No, there are variations in the curricula and in the teaching methods. The qualification can be Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery, expressed as MB ChB or MBBCh, MBBS, BMBCh, BMBS – depending where you graduate from. All courses must comply with the demands of the General Medical Council (GMC) and the guidance outlined in *Tomorrow's Doctors*.

Tomorrow's Doctors is a set of recommendations by the GMC, which identifies the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour expected of new graduates. It also provides the standards for UK medical schools that the GMC will use to evaluate the quality of undergraduate teaching and assessment. This document can be found on the GMC website at www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/undergraduate_policy/tomorrows_doctors.asp.

How long is the course?

Usually five years, but it can be six if you take an intercalated degree. In order to complete basic medical education in the UK, you must also complete a period of foundation training for two years – known as F1 and F2. European Directive 93/16 stipulates that a student must complete 5,500 hours of study or six years of basic education.

Four-year graduate entry programme

In the last few years a number of medical schools have introduced fast-track graduate entry medical degree programmes. The accelerated graduate entry programme (GEP) leads to the same qualification as the usual undergraduate course (MB ChB, etc.) but takes only four years to complete. GEPs are currently offered by the following medical schools:

- Queen Mary, University of London
- University of Nottingham
- University of Southampton
- Swansea University
- King's College School of Medicine (London)
- University of Bristol
- University of Leicester
- Imperial College London
- University of Newcastle
- University of Oxford
- St George's, University of London
- University of Warwick
- University of Birmingham
- University of Cambridge
- University of Liverpool
- Keele University.

Competition for GEP places is very intense and you will usually need at least an upper second-class degree or the recognised equivalent. Some of the GEPs are open only to life science graduates or health science graduates, but those at St George's, Cambridge, Newcastle, Nottingham, Southampton and Wales are open to graduates of any discipline (including arts graduates).


Are there alternatives to studying at a medical school?

Yes. There are other primary medical qualifications awarded in the UK that entitle the holder to provisional registration with the GMC. These are licentiate degrees for surgeons and physicians, run by the United Examining Board and administered from the Society of Apothecaries (www.apothecaries.org). If you wish to find out whether there is currently an opportunity to apply for these degrees, you should contact the Society of Apothecaries for further information.

Can I study as a postgraduate doctor in the UK if I have a medical degree from overseas?

If you are undertaking an academic course such as an MSc or PhD, that does not include a clinical component, you are not required to register with the GMC. Any courses that have a clinical component may require registration with the GMC. Your institution will be able to advise on this.

If you want to take up a salaried clinical training post you will need to be registered with the GMC to practise medicine in the UK. To register you must have a recognised medical qualification. A new requirement is being introduced that means doctors must demonstrate their continuing fitness to practice in order to remain registered. This is called revalidation.



The medical register shows who is properly qualified to practise medicine in the UK. Containing about 200,000 doctors, it is maintained and updated daily by the GMC.

The GMC has altered the registration process for medical graduates who qualified in Australia, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa and the West Indies before 31 October 2003 or the University of Malaya before 31 December 1989. Please consult the GMC website for current guidance on registration in the UK (www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/registration_applications/join_the_register.asp).

One of the recent changes to postgraduate medical training is the introduction of Foundation programmes. All UK medical graduates will enter a two-year Foundation programme immediately following graduation. The Foundation programme forms the bridge between medical school and specialist/general practice training. Trainees will have the opportunity to gain experience in a series of placements in a variety of specialties and healthcare settings.

The first year, F1 is the PRHO/internship year where doctors are required to work under provisional GMC registration.

All applicants who have received their primary medical qualification from a medical school outside the UK are required to submit evidence of their eligibility before applying. The procedure and documentary evidence required can be found at www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk/pages/home.

Non-EEA doctors, who have not taken their medical degree in the UK, and who require a work permit to take up a post within the Foundation programme, should be aware that an employer will need to demonstrate that there are no suitable UK or EEA applicants for the post before applying for a work permit on the doctor's behalf.

Once doctors have completed the Foundation programme, they apply for a speciality-training programme. A new speciality training structure started in August 2007. Further details are available on www.mmc.nhs.uk.

The National Advice Centre for Postgraduate Medical Education (NACPME) is an information service for overseas-qualified doctors who wish to train in the UK. It is administered by the National Health Service (NHS) on behalf of the Department of Health. NACPME aims to provide doctors with as much information as they need about postgraduate study or practice in the UK. You can access a NACPME factsheet at www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/nacpme or see contact details for NACPME in the section below entitled 'Where can I find more information?'.

What issues should I consider as an international student?

Undergraduates

Prospective students should read *Tomorrow's Doctors* on the GMC website for detailed guidance on medical undergraduate training and the conduct expected from medical students - www.gmc-uk.org/students/index.asp

Postgraduates

Following the completion of undergraduate medical training, you cannot carry out any clinical training involving the exercise of the privileges of doctors unless you have registered with the GMC. Enquiries about registration should be made to the GMC at least nine months in advance of coming to the UK.

International students with UK medical degrees intending to return to the UK for postgraduate training need to apply for registration.

2 Entrance

Competition for undergraduate places at medical schools is intense. There are far fewer places than applicants, and there is a government-imposed limit on the number of places that can be offered to students from outside the European Economic Area (EEA). Depending on the size of its intake, each medical school is given a limit on the number of places it can offer to non-EEA students. This is generally between six and 16 places. When allocating these few places, some medical schools will give preference to students from countries where medical training facilities are inadequate or non-existent.



What academic qualifications would I need for a first degree?

- Three A-levels at good grades. Applicants should usually have two science subjects plus one other A-level, which may be an arts subject. For specific information refer to the admissions information of the medical school to which you wish to apply.
- Five Scottish Higher passes at good grades. It is not necessary to have Scottish qualifications to be considered by a Scottish medical school but you should look at each school's requirements.
- Medical schools usually accept International Baccalaureate and European Baccalaureate qualifications.
- A good understanding of both written and spoken English. Schools usually require a minimum score of 6.5 on the IELTS exam. Ask your local British Council office where and when you can take the test.

What else would I need?

The personal qualities required include commitment, perseverance, initiative, originality, personal integrity, concern for others, and the ability to communicate. You will find it helpful to consider the GMC guidance on undergraduate training contained in their publication *Tomorrow's Doctors* for a list of the outcomes that medical students will need to demonstrate at the conclusion of their degree.

Some UK medical schools require candidates for undergraduate medical courses to take the BMAT (Biomedical Admissions Test) or MSAT (Medical Schools Admissions Test). Candidates for graduate entry may be required to take the GAMSAT (Graduate Australian Medical School Admissions Test). The results of these tests are used alongside the candidate's other application information to inform the admissions process. Make sure that you check whether you will have to sit a test.

The University of Cambridge, University of Oxford, UCL and Imperial College London all use the BMAT. GAMSAT is used by Peninsula for entrance to the five-year course and by other schools to assess applicants to accelerated graduate entry courses (candidates would have to check individual admissions information as graduate entry courses do not all use this).

For entrance to medicine or dentistry in September 2008, 24 medical and eight dental schools in the UK will be using the UKCAT (UK Clinical Aptitude Test) to supplement traditional measures of achievement. It will form only one part of the selection process and each school will determine the weight given to results. The test will be taken at Pearson Vue centres, which are widely distributed across the world. Check individual university admissions pages to find out whether you will be required to sit the test. You can find more information on the UKCAT website (www.ukcat.ac.uk).

Access to medicine courses

If you do not meet the entry requirements, you may want to consider taking a one-year Access to Medicine course. Access to Medicine courses are currently offered by:

- City College, Norwich
- Manchester College of Arts and Technology
- College of West Anglia, King's Lynn
- Sussex Downs College, Lewes.

Not all medical schools accept this qualification and applicants should check the entry requirements of individual schools. The course at West Anglia is the most widely accepted. Search for access courses at www.ucas.co.uk/access.

What are the entry requirements for the four-year graduate entry programme?

- Usually at least an upper second honours degree or the recognised equivalent.
- Most schools require your degree to be in the life sciences or the health sciences, but St George's and the University of Nottingham at Derby will consider graduates of any discipline.



How do I apply for a degree?

All applications, including those for graduate entry programmes, must be made through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). You must send your application to them by 15 October the year before you wish to start your course. This is three months earlier than the UCAS deadline for other courses. You can apply to a maximum of four medical schools.

UCAS now requires online application through its 'Apply' service at www.ucas.com/apply/index/html.

Checklist: undergraduate applications

- Always consult the individual medical schools to see what academic qualifications they ask for.
- Are your academic results good enough?
- Can you afford the fees?
- Can you show the personal qualities that medical schools ask for?
- Is your English fluent enough? Check the individual requirements of the medical schools to which you wish to apply.
- Have you taken one of the aptitude tests required by most medical schools?

3 How can I register as a professional?

Please refer to the GMC website – www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/registration_application/join_the_register.asp.

Doctors must be registered with the GMC to practise medicine in the UK. To register they must have a recognised medical qualification. A new requirement is being introduced that means doctors must demonstrate their continuing fitness to practise in order to remain registered – this is called revalidation.

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4 Next steps

Checklist: your next steps

- Do your initial research for courses on www.educationuk.org or www.chms.ac.uk.
- Ask a school whether or not they require the IELTS and UKCAT, BMAT, MSAT or GAMSAT tests.
- Apply by 15 October through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). You should use only four of your choices for medicine, though you can still choose two other courses.
- You will normally be expected to attend an interview. A few medical schools will excuse this, or arrange for the interview to be held in your own country.

5 What else do I need to know?

The regulations for entry into the UK are constantly changing and it is vital that you check the Home Office Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) website (www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk) on a regular basis and check locally with your British Mission so you are aware of how UK immigration procedures will affect you.



With the introduction of the new Australian-style points based system you will need to keep even more up to date with the new immigration system changes when applying for a visa or work permit. For information on the points based system go to: www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/managingborders/managingmigration/apointsbasedsystem/.

For advice on working in the UK: www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk.

For advice about visas: www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk.

For practical advice on living in the UK download *Studying and living in the UK* from: www.educationuk.org/bc_img/body/articles/pdfs/stud_live_uk.pdf.

6 Where can I find more information?

The British Council has produced the Education UK portfolio to provide international students with a wide range of information and guidance that will help them find out more about studying on a UK course and other important issues, such as applying to study, entry clearance and living in the UK. The portfolio includes:

- The Education UK website and a number of country websites containing locally relevant information – www.educationuk.org
- *Your guide to: UK Undergraduate and pre-university**; *Postgraduate and MBA**
- *Your guide to: UK universities, colleges and schools handbook**
- *Club UK* magazine*, also available online at www.educationuk.org/clubuk
- *Postgraduate UK* magazine.*

*The publications are available at a selected number of British Council offices for students to use.

The Education UK websites are a valuable source of information, with a database of over 450,000 courses and profiles of institutions which contain details of entry requirements, course fees and some offer a virtual tour of their campus.

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BMA – British Medical Association

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United Examining Board

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www.apothecaries.org

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

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www.ucas.com

British International Doctors Association

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www.bidauk.org

Other useful resources

Complete Guide to Healthcare Professions – Courses 2007- Trotman, 2007, ISBN: 1906041237 – over 5,000 courses in 18 sections are listed. Information includes entry requirements, descriptions of each discipline and common course characteristics.

Note: please note this book may not be available at your local British Council office.

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information given here is correct and up to date, the British Council accepts no legal liability for its accuracy, currency or completeness.

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