

Applying to Medicine with an Access to Higher Education Diploma

Thinking about studying Medicine?

Medicine is one of the most competitive university courses in the UK, but every year Access to HE students successfully gain places. Planning ahead is essential because there are important deadlines and requirements that happen before and during your Access course.

Be aware of the earlier application deadline

Applications for Medicine are submitted through UCAS much earlier than most undergraduate courses. **The current deadline is 15 October.** Make sure you know the current application deadline for the year you are applying, as missing it usually means waiting another year to apply.

Where to find Medicine courses

The easiest way to search for Medicine courses is through the [UCAS Course Search](#). You can search by subject, university or location and compare entry requirements, course length and admissions tests.

Remember that every medical school sets its own admissions criteria. Before applying, always check:

- Whether they accept the Access to HE Diploma.
- Which Access subjects and units they require.
- GCSE requirements*
- Whether the UCAT is required.
- Their interview process.
- Any work experience expectations.

****Don't assume universities will make exceptions to GCSE entry requirements.** If a medical school states that applicants must have, for example, Grade 6 in GCSE English, Mathematics and Science, applicants who do not meet these requirements are unlikely to be considered, even if they have excellent Access grades. Always check the published entry requirements carefully before applying.*

Alternative healthcare subjects

Medicine is highly competitive, so it's worth considering related healthcare professions as well. These careers offer the opportunity to make a real difference to people's lives and may have different entry requirements.

You might also be interested in:

- Adult Nursing
- Children's Nursing
- Mental Health Nursing
- Midwifery
- Paramedic Science
- Physician Associate/Physician Associate Studies (where available)
- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Radiography (Diagnostic or Therapeutic)
- Operating Department Practice
- Pharmacy
- Biomedical Science

Many of these professions also offer excellent career progression and opportunities to specialise.

Preparing your UCAS application

Medicine applications take time to prepare, so don't leave them until the last minute.

Register for the **UCAS Hub** as early as possible so you can begin completing your application and keep track of key deadlines.

Give yourself plenty of time to:

- Complete all sections of your application.
- Prepare your personal statement responses.
- Check your qualifications and course choices.
- Allow your college enough time to review your application, provide your reference and submit everything before the UCAS deadline.

Although many medical schools no longer score personal statements directly, they often use them during interviews, so make sure everything you write reflects your genuine experiences and is something you are happy to discuss in more detail.

Book your UCAT early

The University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT) is required by most UK medical schools. For many Access to HE learners, this is the step that causes the biggest problems because the booking window opens between June and September—often before your Access course begins. Testing places can fill quickly, so if you are considering Medicine, research whether your chosen universities require the UCAT and book your test as early as possible. Do not wait until your Access course has started.

Your UCAT score is just as important as sitting the test. Many medical schools use it when deciding who to invite for interview, and a low score can prevent an otherwise strong applicant from progressing. Preparing thoroughly for the UCAT and giving yourself enough time to practise can make a significant difference to your application.

Understand the different types of Medicine degree

Not all Medicine courses are the same. You may come across:

- Standard five-year Medicine programmes.
- Medicine with a Foundation or Gateway Year, designed to widen participation. Be aware that many of these programmes do not accept an Access to HE Diploma as an entry qualification, so always check individual university requirements.
- Graduate Entry Medicine (usually four years), intended for applicants who already hold a degree.

Check all entry requirements

Academic qualifications are only one part of a successful application. Depending on the university, you may also need:

- A UCAT score (or another admissions test where applicable).
- Relevant work experience or evidence of commitment to caring professions.
- A Multiple Mini Interview (MMI) or traditional interview.
- A satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Occupational health screening and evidence of required vaccinations.
- Evidence that you meet GCSE requirements, particularly in English, Mathematics and Science.

Research universities carefully

Entry requirements vary considerably between medical schools. Before applying, check each university's admissions policy to confirm that:

- They accept the Access to HE Diploma.
- Your Access course meets their subject requirements.
- Whether they require applicants to have had a break from full-time education before starting an Access to HE course. *Some medical schools expect applicants to have spent at least three years out of education before beginning their Access Diploma.*
- You understand any additional requirements, including admissions tests, interviews and GCSE expectations.

Preparing for interviews

Most applicants who are shortlisted will be invited to interview. Medical schools use different interview formats, with the most common being Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs).

To prepare:

- Practise answering questions about why you want to study Medicine.
- Reflect on your work experience, volunteering and life experiences.
- Keep up to date with NHS and healthcare issues.
- Practise communicating clearly and professionally.
- Ask your tutors to arrange mock interviews or MMI practice.

The Medical Schools Council provides excellent guidance on interview formats, mock MMIs and interview preparation.

Common reasons Access applicants miss out on Medicine interviews

- Not booking the UCAT before the booking window closes.
- Achieving a UCAT score below the university's competitive range.
- Not meeting GCSE entry requirements.
- Applying to universities that do not accept the Access to HE Diploma.
- Missing the UCAS application deadline.
- Not checking individual university requirements carefully.

If you're unsuccessful

Not receiving an offer doesn't mean your dream of becoming a doctor is over.

Take time to understand what could strengthen your application for the next cycle. You could:

- Request feedback where available.
- Improve your UCAT score.
- Gain additional healthcare or voluntary experience.
- Consider completing another qualification before applying for Graduate Entry Medicine.
- Explore other rewarding healthcare professions.

Many successful doctors did not receive an offer the first time they applied. A well-planned reapplication can be much stronger than an initial application.

Useful resources

These organisations provide reliable, up-to-date information:

- [Medical Schools Council](#)
- [British Medical Association \(BMA\)](#)
- [UCAT](#)
- [UCAS Medicine advice](#)
- [Medicine personal statement guide | UCAS](#)

Top tips for Access to HE learners

- ✓ Start researching medical schools before your Access course begins.
- ✓ Book your UCAT during the June–September booking window if required.
- ✓ Keep evidence of any work experience or volunteering.
- ✓ Check every university's requirements individually rather than assuming they are all the same.
- ✓ Speak to your Access tutor early if you are planning a Medicine application so they can support you throughout the process.

Planning ahead is the key to success.

Because Medicine applications begin much earlier than most university applications, it's a good idea to start researching courses and requirements **before** your Access course starts. This gives you enough time to book the UCAT, gain any relevant experience, prepare your UCAS application and meet all the deadlines.