

MAYBE MEDICINE?



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

- DIFFERENT KINDS OF MEDICAL DEGREES
- APPLYING TO STUDY MEDICINE
- UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS IN MEDICINE
- GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN MEDICINE
- APPLICATION TIPS
- INTERVIEW TIPS
- ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
PATHWAYS INTO MEDICINE
- RURAL PATHWAYS INTO MEDICINE
- THE LIFE CYCLE OF A DR



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY
SCHOOL OF RURAL HEALTH

Western NSW
Regional Training Hub

CONTACT: LINDA CUTLER

western-nsw.regional-training-hub@sydney.edu.au



DIFFERENT KINDS OF MEDICAL DEGREES

The Australian Medical Student Association (AMSA) defines medicine as an exciting and rapidly evolving career where you will work with people to make a meaningful difference in their lives. A medical career will lead you to an area of practice you'll enjoy with choices of over 23 specialties, and 81 fields of specialty practice. The first step in becoming a doctor is to complete either an undergraduate or a graduate degree in Medicine.



Visit the Australia Medical Student Association to learn more and engage in their community of practice:

<https://www.amsa.org.au/>

What is the difference between undergraduate and graduate medicine?

Undergraduate medicine is available to a broad range of applicants. Applicants may apply directly after high school or if they have completed some or all of an undergraduate degree. Graduate medicine sometime referred to as post-graduate medicine is only available to applicants who have finished a degree. If you have a degree, you can still apply for an undergraduate program.

Undergraduate Medicine

Undergraduate programs are taught over either five or six years depending on the university. They have a **minimum requirement of the completion of Year 12** (or equivalent studies):

Examples of people who can apply for an undergraduate medical program include:

- If you have just completed Year 12
- If you have taken a gap year after Year 12
- If you have completed some or all of an undergraduate university degree

Graduate Medicine

Graduate medicine is available to applicants that have **already graduated with a Bachelor's degree** from a university,

No preference is given to graduates with degrees in particular subject areas however data indicates a majority of applicants complete undergraduate degrees in either a science or health related discipline. Graduate entry medical programs are four-year programs.

What is the difference between an MBBS and an MD?

There are two main kinds of medical degrees in Australia. Different Universities award different degrees upon completion of the various medical programs.

- MBBS stands for Bachelor of Medicine/ Bachelor of Surgery
- MD stands for Doctor of Medicine, and involves components of research

The MD is considered a Masters level qualification, whereas MBBS is a Bachelor's degree. Despite this difference, all medical degrees offered by medical schools in Australia are equivalent for the purposes of commencing practice as a doctor. They do not have a bearing on your future career path as a Doctor in Australia.



WHAT'S THE BEST FIT FOR ME?

Making the Choice

Many people are clear on their decision to become a doctor and are keen to enter directly into medical school from high school. It is also wise to consider other options prior to choosing between undergraduate and graduate entry medical programs. Individuals who may think they want to be a doctor but are not confident in the decision or if the timing is right for them now, may elect to undertake other study and go into medicine later as a graduate student. They are also able to apply to the undergraduate program at any time after they leave high school. It's never too late and you won't be too old to study medicine.



Which degrees will help me prepare for Medicine?

For some individuals, they may decide to undertake an undergraduate degree in an area of interest which may be health related or may not be in the health field. Some of the undergraduate degrees for example radiography, pharmacy, nursing or paramedicine do give students a profession prior to commencing medicine as well as providing valuable experience working in the health care system prior to undertaking a medical degree. It also may provide a part time income stream while they study to be a doctor.



My undergraduate degree in Pharmacy has set me up well. There are a few nurses and paramedics in my cohort – we seem to be good at talking to patients... That's what we're being trained to do, and I'm already doing it.

You can see the impact of life experience within the students. One of our students is a trauma nurse – you see how they interact with patients, and you can just see them being a doctor. The paramedics are amazing at simulations, and I love to buddy up with them. They bring a different perspective.

– Sam, Student Series

Can I afford to study medicine?

The Commonwealth Government provides funding for Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) for medicine and each year of medical study incurs a cost of approximately \$11,000 per year which is repaid as a Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) debt making medicine financially accessible to all Australian citizens. It is important for applicants to check the fees associated with each University they select. In any CSP, regardless of the total HECS debt (which may include the undergraduate degree cost), it is repaid as a percentage of wages over time.

Some private universities offer full fee paying medical programs and may charge up to or over \$400,000 for the full program. For example, course fees for the Bond University program which is considered an accelerated direct entry program delivered over 14 semesters (4 years and 8 months) at 2023 rates is slightly more than \$422,240 (\$30,160 per semester) with fees paid at the beginning of each semester.

HOW DO I GO ABOUT APPLYING FOR MEDICINE?

First things first - plan ahead!

Planning ahead is essential. It is advised that each applicant who is considering applying to medicine creates a timeline 12 to 15 months in advance of starting a medical degree. This will ensure important dates regarding applications and selection criteria are not missed and all options are clearly outlined. In addition to the resources provided here, current medical students recommend the following website and forum: <https://pagingdr.net> as a resource to use in planning and working through the steps to medical school applications.

MAKE A GAME PLAN!

- Am I eligible for Undergraduate and/or Graduate medicine? (p.2)
- Where in Australia do I want to study (and does that matter)? (p. 5)
- Use these two pieces of information to look at which Universities offer the course at my level of study. (p. 5)
- What are the entry requirements for my preferred Universities? Visit UAC/GEMSAS/University of Sydney/Flinders and/or Monash to consider:
 - Which Admissions test would I need to complete (UCAT/GAMSAT)? (p.6)
 - Are there additional requirements such as interviews (p. 7), portfolios or written applications?
 - Is there a pathway entry for me? (pp. 8 - 10)
- What are the key dates I can't miss? Try making a calendar to map your plan over the course of the 12 - 15 months so nothing gets left to the last minute or missed.

Undergraduate Medicine



Applying for an undergraduate medical degree is a combination of applying through the University Admissions Centre (UAC) and completing additional admissions requirements set out by each University. This process starts early in the year, so allow plenty of time! Visit the UAC website to explore different programs' entry process and check the key dates: <https://www.uac.edu.au/>

Graduate Medicine

GEMSAS is the Graduate Entry Medical School Admissions Guide. The GEMSAS consortium offers an online application and matching system for applicants to Australian Graduate entry medical schools (excluding the University of Sydney, Monash and Flinders University which require a separate application submitted directly to the university). The GEMSAS application process is generally common to all the other Graduate medical schools but is subject to the specific requirements outlined for each medical school. Applicants must consult the GEMSAS and university websites for more detailed and specific information and for updates. It is recommended to contact each University's Medical Admissions office to ensure you have the correct application criteria.



Visit the GEMSAS website for key dates for entry into a GEMSAS Graduate medicine programs: <http://www.gemsas.edu.au/key-dates/>

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS IN MEDICINE

There are generally three components of the application process: UCAT, an application, and additional documentation as specified in the admission information. The following medical schools offer undergraduate programs and require a UCAT score as a component of their applications:



New South Wales

- University of Newcastle/ University of New England
- UNSW
- Western Sydney University
- Charles Sturt University/Western Sydney University Joint Medical Program

Victoria

- Monash University
- University of Melbourne

South Australia

- University of Adelaide
- Flinders University

Queensland

- The University of Queensland
- James Cook University
- Bond University

Northern Territory

- Charles Darwin University (offers a Bachelor of Clinical Sciences as entry into Flinders four-year medical program based at Charles Darwin University)

Tasmania

- University of Tasmania

Western Australia

- Curtin University
- The University of Western Australia

GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN MEDICINE

There are generally three components of the application process: GAMSAT and GPA scores, an application, and additional documentation as specified in the admission information. Graduate programs that require a GAMSAT as part of their application process include:

New South Wales

- University of Sydney (Sydney and Dubbo)
- Macquarie University
- University of Notre Dame Australia (Sydney)
- University of Wollongong

South Australia

- Flinders University

Australian Capital Territory

- Australian National University

Victoria

- University of Melbourne
- Deakin University

Western Australia

- University of Western Australia
- University of Notre Dame Australia (Freemantle)

Queensland

- The University of Queensland
- Griffith University
- Bond University

Note: Monash University provides a Graduate Entry Medical Program, however, the GAMSAT exam was removed as an admissions criterion in 2017 and is no longer required. Domestic applicants for the Graduate Entry Medical Program at Monash University must have completed one of the approved bachelor degrees at Monash University - that is to say that external domestic applicants are no longer accepted. The UCAT is still required for the direct entry program at Monash.

EXAMINATIONS & TESTS FOR MEDICAL DEGREE ADMISSION

All applicants (except Monash Graduate entry) will sit either the University Clinical Aptitude Test for Australia and New Zealand (UCAT) or the Graduate Medical School Admissions Test (GAMSAT).

UCAT

All individuals applying to an undergraduate entry degree are required to sit an exam called the **University Clinical Aptitude Test** for Australia and New Zealand (UCAT). The UCAT is designed to assess general attributes and skills gained through prior experience and learning. It is used as a selection criterion for all undergraduate medical schools in Australia.

Many high school students who have undertaken the test report it is quite different to high school exams as portions of the test are not knowledge-based. The UCAT exam is a two-hour computer-based test with five separately timed sub-tests:

- Verbal Reasoning
- Decision Making
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Abstract Reasoning
- Situational Judgement

The test takes two hours and is highly time-pressured so that many students will not finish every question. There are test centre locations across Australia including Dubbo, Paramatta, Port Macquarie, Armidale, Newcastle, Sydney and Wagga Wagga in NSW.



It is important to prepare for the test and there are UCAT practice tests available online and are provided at no charge by UCAT at <https://www.ucat.edu.au/ucatanz/practice-tests/>

For more information about UCAT such as eligibility, test dates, practice tests and which Universities require UCAT, please visit: <https://www.ucat.edu.au/>

GAMSAT

To enter a four-year graduate program the **Graduate Medical School Admissions Test** (GAMSAT) score is required as a component of the application process. GAMSAT evaluates the nature and extent of abilities and skills gained through prior experience and learning, including the mastery and use of concepts in basic science as well as the acquisition of more general skills in problem solving, critical thinking and writing.

GAMSAT is divided into three separately timed sections designed to assess performance in the areas of:

- Reasoning in Humanities and Social Sciences;
- Written Communication; and
- Reasoning in Biological and Physical Sciences

In 2023 the cost was \$518 and results are valid for two years. It is recommended to contact each University's Medical Admissions office to ensure you have the correct application criteria.

The GAMSAT is offered twice a year and registration to sit the test is five months in advance. For example, registrations for the March sitting are open the previous November to January prior to the March sitting.



It is important to prepare for the test. ACER offers a range of practice tests (fees associated):

<https://gamsat.acer.org/prepare/preparation-materials>

Please go the GAMSAT website for more information: <https://gamsat.acer.org/>

INTERVIEW TIPS

Interview Preparation

Interviews are an important part of undergraduate and most graduate entry programs. Undergraduate entry programs usually have interviews held during November which may take place before and after the final Year 12 exams. It may prove beneficial to speak with ex-students or friends who have had an interview at the medical school/s you are applying to. Interview skills need to be developed and practiced over a period of time.

One of the most important things to remember is to be yourself and be honest with your answers to questions. Most medical schools also look favourably upon work experience, volunteer work and paid work in a hospital, General Practice or community health-based setting. Please check the admissions criteria for each university as they do vary.



Types of Interviews

One of the most important things to remember is to be yourself and be honest with your answers to questions. The most commonly used interview format is the **Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)**. A MMI usually consists of 6 to 10 stations each lasting 5 to 10 minutes in length with a two-to-three-minute break between each station. There may be a rest station and the participant can take a break. During the two to three minutes in between stations, the participant may be given information on the next station they are about to enter to allow time for them to mentally prepare. The stations may involve questions based on ethical scenarios, role playing with actors (and an observer), abstract puzzle solving, or interview questions on your motivations to do medicine and why you are a good candidate. The format of the interview allows for a fresh first impression for each station so that even if the participant did not perform well in one station, it does not impact the scoring on the rest of the stations.

Some universities may offer **semi-structured interviews** consisting of 1 - 3 panel members. These usually consist of a set of questions that the University has prepared combined with questions relating to your answers on the application form/portfolio as part of the application process, so make sure you know it well and be prepared to expand on what you have written.

You think you want to try and fit this ideal mould of the 'ideal student', but that ideal student doesn't actually exist. The interviewers are more concerned about getting to know you as a person and getting to know your perspectives than they are about having you fit some idealised version of what a medical student should be. I recommend highlighting your best aspects that are unique to you. You don't have to make yourself fit into any mould.

- Bree, Student Series



If you prefer to listen to student's telling their stories about applying to medicine, then go to the Destination Medicine Student Series <https://www.destinationmedicine.com.au/> and you may find many of your questions will be answered.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PATHWAYS INTO MEDICINE

Many universities offer entry pathways into Medicine specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

The pathways are provided for several reasons:

- to increase representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people studying Medicine;
- to contribute to a culturally appropriate workforce;
- to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people;
- and to contribute to social justice.

For example, the University of Sydney has an Indigenous strategy across the university with a pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to gain entry into the graduate Medical Program.

Evidence shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are underrepresented in tertiary education, so facilitated entry pathway programs help to work towards achieving equity in this area. The pathway programs offered vary from university to university and depends on whether the program is for undergraduate study or graduate study. Most graduate medical programs require applicants to complete and pass the Graduate Medical School Assessment Test (GAMSAT), as part of the application process; whereas some of the undergraduate entry pathways offer their own testing and assessment processes.

It is highly recommended you contact the individual university for further information and clarification regarding pathways into medicine for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The first point of contact should be the Indigenous Centre, which will have dedicated staff who can answer your questions and provide assistance with the application process. If there is no Indigenous Centre, you should direct your enquiry to the University's Admissions team. For contact details see out page on 'Where can I go for advice?' (p. 10)



No one else in my family has a medical career. And there's not many other people in my family who've been to university. There are times where I question what I'm doing, and times where people will outright say you're getting above yourself.

That can be quite difficult and a real struggle to continue to persevere and to listen to the people who are supporting you rather than those who are putting doubt in your mind.

If it's something that you even have an inkling that that is what you would like to do, then jump in. There is so much support. So, I would say absolutely go for it – the support and the help that we can give our mob to improve their health is absolutely worth it.

**– Dr Stephanie Pollard,
Ngemba Woman & Doctor-in-Training Series**



RURAL ENTRY PATHWAYS INTO MEDICINE

All medical schools in Australia are required to have a minimum 25% of the student cohort to have a rural background. It is up to each university on how they meet the quota, some universities have specific alternative entry programs specifically for rural students and others may give students bonus points to their University Admission Score (ATAR).

It is important to enquire whether there is an alternative entry program for students with a rural background at each Medical School you are applying to, as the application and selection process may vary from the general entry pathway.

This pathway exists because research acknowledges that despite efforts to increase the medical workforce in rural and remote Australia, there is a continued shortage of both General Practitioners (GP's) and Non-GP Specialists. This means that geographic disparities in patient access and health outcomes persists. The Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training program is an initiative of the Commonwealth Government to increase rural training and the recruitment of students with rural backgrounds, to address rural workforce needs. Research evidence has shown that enrolling students of a rural background increases the likelihood they will practise in rural areas upon graduation.

I grew up in regional Victoria. My mum is an incredible Rural Generalist. She's done extra training in paediatrics and obstetrics, and is a fantastic mental health GP. She works in GP education and local health governance. Seeing the array of hats my mother has to wear, and the depth and meaning of having that kind of doctor in a small country town, left a really significant mark of what I think a doctor should be, not just in their career, but in their community. She's such an incredible role model for me, particularly as a young woman as well, seeing that kind of female role model in my life has been pretty amazing.

- Amy, Student Series



WHERE CAN I GO FOR ADVICE?

It can be hard to know where to turn for up-to-date advice and support to help you make the right decisions for your personal circumstance. In addition to university websites, your careers advisor, or someone you know who is a medical student/doctor, here are some of the best places to source reliable information.

REGIONAL TRAINING HUBS

You may not have heard of a 'Hub' before, but if you live in regional Australia, chances are there is one close by. We are here to assist future medical students, medical students on rural placements, and rural doctors in training to have vibrant and exciting careers in rural medicine. That means we are here to chat with you about what steps you need to take to pursue your aspirations. Think of us like a local encyclopaedia of all things rural medicine. You can scroll through the table on the commonwealth link below to find your local Hub and other rurally based training opportunities across Australia.

<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/rhmt#contact>

INFORMATION FOR ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER APPLICANTS

The Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA) provide support and information to Indigenous people who are considering medicine as a career. They assist and support individuals in understanding the various medical schools and what they will have to offer to that individual. To connect with AIDA, visit: <https://aida.org.au/>



AIDA
AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS
DOCTORS' ASSOCIATION



<http://www.limenetwork.net.au/students/pathways/>

The Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education (LIME) Network has online resources for future medical students to figure out which university or medical degree is best suited to them.

ONLINE RESOURCES & POCASTS



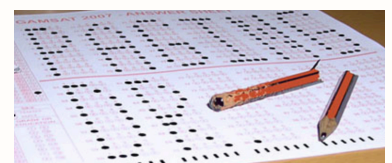
Advance Med

Blogs, video and coaching resources for furthering your career and applying for medicine, particularly helping to develop skills to interview well.

<https://advancemed.com.au/career-doctor-videos/>

PagingDr Forum

A forum for discussing all thing medical school admissions, medical school and life as a doctor with people a step ahead in the med school journey. <https://pagingdr.net/>

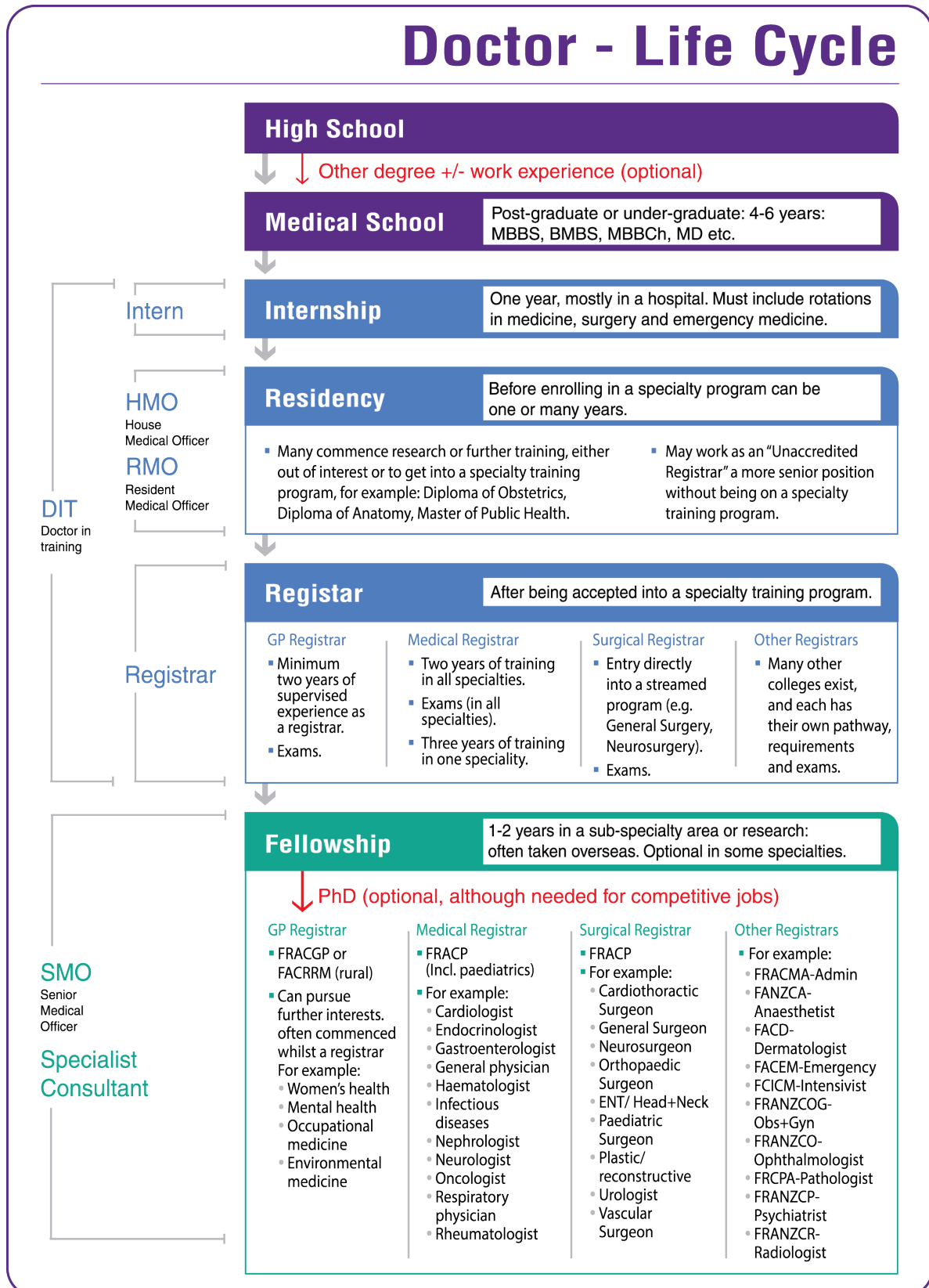


Destination Medicine - Student Series

A podcast sharing created by a collaboration of Regional Training Hubs to share stories of rural medical students navigating getting into medicine. Check out the Destination Medicine Guide to getting into medicine on the back page. <https://www.destinationmedicine.com.au/>

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU FINISH A MEDICAL DEGREE?

Getting into medicine is an amazing achievement in working towards your goals to become a doctor, but don't forget that it is the start rather than the whole journey. It won't be until many years after your graduation that you are fully qualified. Here are some of the next steps you might take.



THE DESTINATION MEDICINE GUIDE TO GETTING INTO MEDICINE



YOU CAN ACTUALLY DO THIS

Doubting your ability? Quit it. Lots of different people apply for and are successful in getting into medicine, so don't let self-doubt get in your way. Listen to [Tristan's story](#) about finding your place in medicine.



CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Mentors really help. Try and link in with current medical students or your local GP. Having some wise counsel and clear guidance can really help when it feels a bit much. Hear about [Angus's winding path](#) to Medicine



PREPARE WELL

Admissions Tests and Interviews are pretty stressful, so allow time and space to prepare using the resources linked in this guide and some of [Laura's helpful tips](#) provided by our current students for you.



BE YOURSELF

When it comes to interviews, and medicine in general, authenticity counts! Don't try and predict what an interview wants to see - they want to see you! Every student is unique - [just ask Lily.](#)







ENJOY THE RIDE!

Nobody can fully prepare for studying medicine. Every student will wonder what they've gotten themselves into! Take a leaf out of [Daniel's book](#) - study hard, make friends, take on feedback, enjoy the ride.



**"Ultimately,
if Medicine is your passion,
if it's your dream,
if it's what you need to do
to be happy in your life,
you just have to do it."**

- Amy, Student Series

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