

FIND *your* FUTURE

Current course & year: Graduate Entry Medicine Year 2

Current university: University of Sheffield

Tell us a little about why you wanted to apply to study medicine?

For me I became a bit disillusioned with research science and wanted something that had more immediate impact on the health of people. Having Crohn's Disease always gave me a particular interest in disease, illness, and how these affect society. Naturally being chronically ill has given me a massive appreciation of the NHS and for certain contributed to me wanting to work in the NHS. Having a career for life isn't half bad either. Overall, I think the degree satisfied my interest and aids who I want to be in the future.



What sort of person do you think this would suit? (i.e. personal skills, qualities and values)

There isn't one sort of person medicine suits, and I think this is quite a reductive question. I could give you the cliché answers of kind, caring, smart, confident etc. but you have heard all of these before if you're reading this case study. What truly matters is that you are 100% certain that it is the career that YOU want, not what anyone else wants for you, and that should give you the drive to pursue this career. (And that is what admission tutors look for; that you are informed about the career and that you are certain it is for you).

How are you finding the course in comparison to what you expected?

I knew the degree would be hard work before I started since I lived with medics while at UCL and knew quite a few through work. What did strike me is the style of learning is quite different to a science degree, where science is more about depth, medicine is more about breadth and at a fast pace. Other than that, I expected my course to be more integrated but turns out it's the most traditional integrated medicine course, although that didn't bother me.

What are the best aspects of your course and what are the most challenging?

I always enjoy moving to new places and meeting new people which is something you do a lot in medical school. The change in style from science to medicine was a bit challenging, and my having a year out to work surprisingly impacted my ability to study!

When did you start thinking about applying for medicine as a second degree? (i.e. was it always your plan to study medicine? Did you decide whilst you were studying your first degree?)

I didn't think of it as a second degree, but a third! It was not always my plan to study medicine. After my undergraduate I completed a master's degree at the University of Oxford in Immunology and initially wanted to pursue a PhD there or at the Crick Institute. However, I realised I didn't want that right now in my life and worked as a research assistant at the Jenner Institute. After years of talking to both research scientists and clinicians, and seeing where these disciplines meet in vaccine clinical trials, I finally decided medicine was the path I wanted to pursue.

On reflection, are there any aspects of your first degree that you feel were of particular benefit in securing your place to study medicine?

My first degree had zero bearing on my securing a graduate-entry medicine beyond the grade to fulfil academic requirements, and it being a life-science degree for some courses. GEM students come from a vast variety of universities, having a UCL degree did not make me special. It did come in handy during medical school as my first degree contained a lot of physiology and some clinical medicine. The things I did outside of my degree, personal experiences, and excelling in the entrance exams that secured my places.

How did you find the application process? (i.e. on top of your first degree, did you take time out to concentrate on your application / gain relevant experiences?)

I personally did not take time out to concentrate on the application more time out to fully ensure it was the career I wanted. I gained hospital experience during my masters in case I wanted to apply to medicine, and during my time working in clinical trials. I also volunteered at a care home back home in between terms of undergrad, for no particular reason other than that I enjoyed it. For me it was important to reflect on why I was doing these experiences and what they meant to me and later on how those situations could reflect into medicine. I think because I took the pressure off myself by not deciding medical school was for me until the last minute, I was able to reflect more effectively. I think my overall life experiences and reflecting on them made the application process quite straightforward for me. The key thing is to be organised. Know what you need to do. Plan. Do. Remember to give yourself adequate breaks! And if you need to take time out to apply in a different cycle that's okay, use the time out effectively, medical school will still be there next time!

What tips would you give students hoping to apply for graduate entry medicine? (i.e. any particular skills, knowledge, experiences, volunteering, extracurricular activities, tips for application process)

Getting into medical school is hard, getting into a GEM course, is even harder. The sheer number that apply compared to the very limited spaces makes it extremely competitive. The medical school application process can essentially be thought of as jumping through a series of hoops they have decided are important. Before applying look at the specific criteria of each course as it varies quite a bit. Dirty little secret, your personal statement is not that important, most places will not use it before interview, and a few won't use it at all. Just ensure everything in it is truthful, and that you are **reflective** of the experience you have. Side note: Clinical experience in a hospital is not essential for application (except Nottingham I think); this stops bias towards students who have parents as medics or just happen to know medics. As long as you can reflect on what you have done and how that extends to medicine then you will be grand. The vast majority will have the academic requirements so do not rely on this as a differentiator. Most medical

schools do not consider degrees after that requirement has been fulfilled. Get really, really, really, I can not stress this enough, really good at the entrance exams, the UCAT in particular requires 90th decile and above for GEM usually. This is the hurdle most people fall at and will essentially secure you an interview. The GAMSAT score lasts 2 years so you could feasibly sit it in advance! Just remember to practise, practise, practise as most universities will rank according to entrance exam after academic criteria. Once at interview my best advice is a cliché but be yourself and most importantly be honest with your answers. Make sure you are informed about what being a doctor is and that it is truly what you want as a career. Familiarise yourself with good medical practise (not loads of detail), and the duties of a doctor. Make sure you know how each of the medical schools you gain interviews at undertake your interviews; I had everything from MMI, to group, to panel! GEM is hard work to get into and hard during it, but it'll be worth it in the end (and you won't have to pay the tuition fees out of your own pocket like those on the undergraduate courses!)