



## Applying to UCL Medicine MBBS BSc from UPCSE

The Undergraduate Preparatory Certificate for Science and Engineering (UPCSE) is UCL's one year foundation programme for international students. It enables students whose High School qualifications are not recognised by UCL for direct entry to progress to undergraduate courses in mathematics, physical sciences, life sciences, medical sciences and engineering. Progression from the course to undergraduate courses is through the UCAS system.

Progression to MBBS BSc medicine is also possible from the UPCSE course but the arrangements are different in a number of respects from all other subjects.

UCL medicine MBBS is a six-year programme including an integrated BSc leading to awards of Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery.

Competition for a place at Medical School is fierce. Approximately 2500 applications to the Medical School are received each year, for a total of 322 places of which only 24 are reserved for overseas students. Up to 700 applicants are selected for interview.

### Minimum Age

Students must be 18 years of age at the time they start the medical degree course at UCL. Applicants who apply but would be under 18 at the start of that year's course will be considered for a deferred place or advised to reapply as appropriate. The early clinical contact in the programme means that younger students cannot be admitted as they would not be able to fully participate in the course.

### Qualifications that need to be obtained on the UPCSE course for medicine

Applicants must study the biology and chemistry modules on UPCSE and achieve scores of 75% in each subject. In addition, they need to have GCSE or iGCSE qualification in mathematics of at least grade B. The English language requirement for medicine is an IELTS level of 7.5 overall with at least 6.5 in each sub-score. This corresponds to an overall score of 75% in EAP on the UPCSE course with at least 65% in each sub-score.

Students on the UPCSE course have two possible strategies to follow in applying for medicine:

#### 1) Applying after completing the UPCSE course.

This is the route recommended by UCL medical faculty. They say: *In our experience, students who apply after successfully completing the UPCSE are able to make stronger applications than those who are currently on the course. This is because these students have already secured the required grades, had additional time to pursue work experience and the opportunity to improve their English while attending UCL.*

This is in accord with our experience that students who have applied for medicine in the October they have joined the UPC have not been successful.

Students taking this option need consider what they will do in the year in which they apply. Students who require a visa to reside in the UK can only do so if they remain in full-time education. However, it is not possible to begin an undergraduate degree and then transfer to medicine. A good way to spend this year would be to gain experience of working in the medical field.

## **2) Applying at graduate level**

For students entering at graduate level the UCL medicine programme is five years in length. Other UK universities offer an accelerated four-year programme for graduates. There are a number of courses that UCL offers which are suitable for students with an interest in medicine and from which students could progress to medicine at graduate level. These include Biomedical Science, Applied Medical Science and Neuroscience.

### **Application Process**

Application from UPCSE to UCL medicine is through **UCAS**. Applications for medicine are made by the end of **the second week of October** of the year following completion of the UPCSE course. The number of choices for medical courses is limited to four of the five options. However, because of the limited number of places available for medicine in the UK, the number of universities accepting places from students who have completed foundation courses such as UPCSE is very limited.

### **BMAT**

All applicants for UCL medicine need to take the BMAT (biomedical admissions test). This takes place in early September for some centres and the second week of November for all centres. It is a two-hour exam and consists of three sections:

**Aptitude and skills:** Generic skills in problem solving, understanding arguments, and data analysis and inference.

**Scientific Knowledge and application):** This paper tests the ability to apply scientific knowledge typically covered in school Science and Mathematics by the age of 16.

These two sections consist of multiple-choice questions. The overall scoring is on a scale from 1 – 9. The average mark is 5. Students progressing to interview stage need to achieve a score of at least 6.

**Writing Task:** This tests the ability to select, develop and organise ideas, and to communicate them in writing, concisely and effectively. This task is marked for content on a scale of 0 – 5 and also quality of English on a scale A – E. Most candidates selected for interview obtain the highest grades, A5. The BMAT test makes no provision for non-native English speakers. Students for whom English is a second language need IELTS reading and writing level of around 7.5 to be able to perform adequately.

### **UCL Interview**

UCL Medical faculty interviews approximately 30% of applicants for medicine. Selection for interview is based on the following criteria: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/medicalschoo/undergraduate/mbbs-admissions/faqs/select.pdf>

- Predicted and actual grades. Although there is no simple relationship between academic performance and whether or not a student will make a 'good' doctor, there is evidence that those with low grades or those who need to re-sit examinations are more likely to have academic problems with the programme (a strong performance in Chemistry and Biology, is advantageous).
- Previous experience (both personal and through work experience or volunteering), particularly if it has involved contact with the healthcare profession or laboratory work, or if the candidate has been involved with the sick, disabled, very young or elderly, and, importantly, is able to reflect on their experiences.
- Demonstration of motivation to study Medicine and an appropriate attitude.
- Other interests, for example music, travel, sports, or any activities that are considered to broaden the general education of the candidate.
- Evidence of teamwork, leadership and communication skills.
- The referee's assessment of academic ability, study skills, motivation for medicine and personal qualities.
- BMAT scores. High scores in each section will strengthen an application. Candidates with scores that are below the average for their cohort are unlikely to be successful. The average scores are posted on the Medical School website in November/December.

**Repeated applications:** It is possible to make repeated applications but the policy of UCL Medical School not to reconsider an applicant who has previously been unsuccessful following interview in a previous application cycle.

### **Summary**

In practise, most candidates on the UPCSE course whose interest is in medical science progress to undergraduate courses in that field keeping open the option of applying for medicine at graduate level. UCL now has a number of attractive and innovative programmes. In particular, there are the following courses within the Faculty of Medical Science: **BSc Applied Medical Science, BSc Cancer Biomedicine, BSc Nutrition & Medical Sciences** and **BSc Medical Sciences & Engineering**. Within the Life Science Faculty, there are courses in **Biomedical Science, Human Science, Neuroscience, Pharmacy** and **Pharmacology**.

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