



## **Introduction**

Student Selected components represent one of the 'choice' elements of the MBBS programmes which, when added to the 'core' elements, enriches students' learning and allows students to tailor what they learn to their individual needs and interests. SSCs are a core requirement of all undergraduate medical programmes: The General Medical Council suggest student choice elements should make up a minimum of 10% of course time. SSCs are an integral part of the curriculum, enabling students to demonstrate mandatory competences while allowing choice in studying an area of particular interest to them.

The aim of the SSCs is to provide you with an opportunity to study additional topics which are not included in the core MBBS curriculum, to study topics of interest in more depth, to engage in a more meaningful way in an area of practice that you have enjoyed, or allow you to further develop skills or understanding. They should additionally allow students to develop one or more generic skills which will be useful in the practise of medicine such as team-working, essay-writing, PowerPoint presentations, researching, teaching, or patient advocacy.

## **SSCs at UCL**

Our aim at UCL Medical School is to offer an imaginative range of SSCs, varying in content, experience and assessment so that students have real choice to pursue a wide range of areas of interest. SSCs are concentrated in the early years and final year of the course. In total SSC make up just over 10% of the overall UCL MBBS programme<sup>1</sup>.

## **Organisation of SSCs**

In years 1 and 2 the choice elements of the course are organised longitudinally, in half-day slots over a number of weeks. In the final year the SSCs are organised in blocks of time: the elective period for eight weeks, one four-week block before finals and one four-week block after finals.

The SSCs are offered in 'domains' and in keeping with GMC guidance students are strongly encouraged to select SSCs across the domains to ensure they develop a wide range of knowledge and generic skills mapped to the GMC requirements of development as a scientist and scholar, practitioner and professional<sup>2</sup>. We offer a very wide range of SSCs that should address the needs and interests of all students. However, in exceptional circumstances a student may apply for a self-organised SSC where there is no existing SSC provision; this may include research projects, established volunteering projects and, Year 6, SSCs abroad where no equivalent SSC is available in the UK.<sup>3</sup> A description of your selection of SSC's and a record

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<sup>1</sup> Percentage of total curriculum time in years 1,2, 4, 5 & 6 as the integrated BSc year is an entirely 'choice' year of study

<sup>2</sup> *GMC Outcomes for Graduates 2015*

<sup>3</sup> There is a course requirement to spend no more than 12 weeks of the programme *in total* away from UCL. This includes time spent abroad as part of SSCs and the elective period. Final Year pre-finals self-organised SSCs must be clinical placements and in specific areas which are not available in the UK as set out on the Year 6 Moodle page.

of achievement, both faculty generated reports and your own record of achievement, will be recorded in your portfolio.

SSCs in the early years focus on a very wide range of areas including: clinical practice, underpinning science, and subjects more generally related to your medical studies such as arts and languages. SSCs in the earlier part of the final year (pre-finals) tend to focus on opportunities to learn new generic skills such as teaching or management, to revisit previous areas of learning, or to focus on possible intended career pathways.

The Preparation for Practice SSC after finals has a more vocational focus; allowing for shadowing-type opportunities, career focused activities and preparation for foundation year.

### The SSC element of the MBBS curriculum

When?	What?	How?	Detailed information
Year 1	A range of biomedical and non-medical topics including science based topics, clinical specialties, languages as applied to medicine, humanities, library based research projects	Two eight-week or one 16 week block – on Thursday afternoons	See <a href="#">Year 1 SSC Moodle page</a>
Year 2	A range of biomedical and non-medical topics including science based topics, clinical specialties, languages as applied to medicine, humanities, library based research projects	One eight week block – on Friday afternoons	See <a href="#">Year 2 SSC Moodle page</a>
Year 6 (pre-finals Specialist)	A range of clinical attachments, domains related to practice such as teaching or management	One four-week block	See Year 6 SSC Moodle page
Year 6 (post-finals Preparation for Practice)	A clinical 'Preparation for Practice' SSC, taking place after Finals exams, providing an opportunity for students to prepare for the transition to Foundation Year 1 and gain experience that will be especially relevant as they approach their first year as qualified doctors	One four-week block	See Year 6 SSC Moodle page

You will receive a grade for each SSC you complete. This will form part of your overall achievement in the MBBS programme and be recorded in your student record as well as in your portfolio. **Satisfactory completion of the required number and range of SSCs is required for progression.**

## Ensuring the development of a range of generic skills

There are many competencies that can be developed during SSCs. These include self-directed learning skills, research skills, team-working etc. Selecting SSCs across a range of SSC domains ensures students develop the widest possible range of generic skills. SSC providers will help guide you towards the generic skills that are addressed within their SSC as well as the topic related content. We strongly advise students to choose SSCs from across the domains as they select their SSCs across the six years of the programme.

DOMAIN	GMC domain addressed	EXAMPLES of SSCs in this domain
<b>Clinical/vocational</b>	<i>Doctor as professional Doctor as practitioner</i>	Clinical attachments including FY 'Shadowing', Who Cares?, Anaesthetics, Cardiology, Surgery, clinical leadership, quality improvement or audit projects etc.
<b>Underpinning science (clinical or basic sciences)</b>	<i>Doctor as scientist and scholar</i>	Challenge of antibiotic resistance, Epithelial function in health and disease
<b>Research oriented/library projects</b>	<i>Doctor as scientist and scholar</i>	IT tools in the biomedical sciences, Exploring research in women's health, research projects, library projects, etc.
<b>Arts/humanities/social sciences</b>	<i>Doctor as professional Doctor as practitioner</i>	Teaching and learning, Medical languages, Anatomy: from Rembrandt to Grey's, and Anthropology

Information about individual SSC's on offer and application processes, including deadlines, and factsheets A-D are all found at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/medical-school/staff-students/course-information/ssc>

## The SSC programme: the FAQs

### Do I have to do SSCs?

SSCs are a compulsory part of the course. Satisfactory completion of the SSC element of years 1, 2 and 6 are required for you to progress to the next year of the course/be awarded your MBBS.

### Do SSC grades count towards my MBBS award?

The MBBS is a pass/fail qualification. The grades for SSCs 'count' in that satisfactory completion to at least a 'pass' level is required for progression, but the grade does not contribute to any decile ranking. There are however a significant number of prizes associated with SSCs and prizes are important in some application processes. The SSC grade also makes up part of your student transcript.

## **What happens if I fail an SSC?**

It is hard to fail an SSC if you put in some effort, attend regularly and display professional behaviour. If you do fail you will be offered an opportunity to re-take the assessment or take an alternative assessment as directed by the SSC provider.

In Years 1 and 2 students who fail an SSC at the first attempt or who are referred for non-completion of an SSC are capped at Grade D (Borderline) at the second attempt. Candidates who fail at the second attempt may be permitted a further attempt after a repeat period of study but may not progress to the next year of the MBBS programme until the SSCs are completed satisfactorily. The mark for this further attempt will be capped at Grade D (Borderline).

If you fail an SSC in Year 6 you will be given a compulsory appointment to see a member of the student support team. A personalised plan will be recommended to the academic lead for SSCs, and if he/she agrees, this plan, which may contain further attendance, a re-sit of the examination element or an alternative assessment, will be put into place to ensure that the end of year examination board has the best possible opportunity to allow you to graduate at the end of the academic year.

## **How do I record achievement in an SSC?**

In the early years, each SSC will generate standard report form outlining your experience, achievements, and grade. This will form part of your student transcript. In addition, you will be required to complete the relevant section in your portfolio that helps you to map achievement and to share this with your personal tutor or anyone who needs to write a reference.

In the Final Year, your SSC supervisor will complete an electronic form on NHS e-Portfolio or complete an Overseas SSC Grade Report Form as part of the end of SSC sign off.

## **How do I ensure that I get allocated my preferred SSCs? Are the allocations done on a 'first come, first served' basis?**

The aim of the SSC provision strategy is to create as broad a choice as possible, including placements that can only take a small number of students. Despite this, we have a very good record of doing our best to accommodate students in one of their top three preferences of SSC. Some SSCs are very popular and over-subscribed every year, others can take a maximum of as few as two students. To ensure you get allocated to one of your preferred choices try to be sensible about the range of SSCs you put on your application. If you chose only oversubscribed SSCs or only SSCs with a very small number of available places, you may be disappointed. The information provided about SSCs indicates the maximum number of students and the SSC administrators can give you information about past significant oversubscription. Allocations are not done on a 'first come first served' basis. Once all applications are submitted the administrative team undertake a matching process to ensure the greatest possible number of students are allocated to one of their top choices.

## **Can I self-organise an SSC in any SSC slot?**

No. Any self-organised SSCs must fall in your timetabled Year 1 or Year 2 block or within your 'pre-finals' block of year 6. This is to ensure that the widest possible provision of UCL SSCs can be maintained in the other blocks. Self-organised SSCs are the exception and not the rule. It is not uncommon for applications for undertaking self-organised SSCs to be rejected by the Divisional Tutor because they do not provide suitable learning outcomes, they lack supervision or measurable assessment outcomes or they breach MBBS regulations. All Self-organised SSCs must be applied using the Self-Organised SSC application form (on the website and Moodle page) and the completed form must be received by the specified deadline. **Applications to self-organise an SSC must gain approval from the academic lead or divisional tutor.** No other member of faculty can approve a self-organised SSC. It is important that you complete the application in good time for consideration by the Divisional Tutor before you make any firm commitments or make travel arrangements. It is important that the application makes it clear why existing UCL provision is unable to satisfy your learning needs. All applications must be done in good time (ahead of the specified closing date for year 1, 2 or 6 applications) so that students whose application is unsuccessful can apply for a UCL organised SSC. For SSCs in Year 6 the application process including timescales and the application form are available on the Year 6 Moodle site. For Years 1 and 2, students should check the Moodle page for timetables and email the SSC academic lead directly at [g.campbell@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:g.campbell@ucl.ac.uk) giving full details of their proposal and reason for the request.

#### **Can I have Time-off-in-Lieu in later years for any extra-curricular activities I have participated in as part of an early years SSC?**

No. Time off in Lieu (TOIL) is not permitted for any reason and students are required to complete SSCs in all five blocks as timetabled.

#### **What happens to the post-finals SSC if I fail my finals examinations?**

You will still be required to complete the Preparation for Practice SSC but this will be tailored to your learning needs. Students who are unsuccessful in the March finals will undertake a structured programme involving a shortened elective (4 weeks,) a 4-week revision programme, and the 4-week Preparation for Practice SSC before re-taking Finals the examination in the summer resits.

#### **What happens if I do not pass the post-finals SSC?**

MBBS programme regulations in the UK specify how many weeks you must attend the course and what proportion of those must be in placements. At the time of taking finals you have not yet completed the required number of weeks to be awarded an MBBS qualification. Additionally, the UCL MBBS regulations specify that you must have passed all components of the programme to be awarded an MBBS. **There is a very real risk that if you do not satisfactorily attend and pass the final SSC you will not be awarded an MBBS at finals examination board and will not proceed into the Foundation Programme.** Don't let this happen to you. Attend, take an active part and enjoy the last few weeks of your course free from the worry about examinations.

### **In what circumstances will I be asked to undertake a directed SSC?**

UCL MBBS regulations specify that you must have passed all components of the programme to be awarded an MBBS. In some exceptional cases, usually due to illness or other absence you will be directed to undertake an approved SSC at one of our associated University Hospital Trusts in the relevant domain that has been missed/where you have made insufficient progress<sup>4</sup>.

### **What should I do if I do not enjoy my SSC/it doesn't turn out to be the sort of SSC I wanted?**

The descriptions of the SSCs are accurate to the best of our knowledge. Read the description carefully before making an application: it may say cardiology, but it might be a research project in a lab and not a placement. If you feel that you have made an unwise choice speak to your SSC provider at the earliest opportunity. There is usually a degree of flexibility in the exact focus of activities during the SSC and you may be able to make adjustments to the learning activities to ensure you get the most out of the SSC. It is not possible to change SSCs once you have started the SSC: this will need to be put down to life's rich tapestry of experiences.

### **What should I do if I am having a terrible educational experience?**

We collect detailed feedback each year from students about all SSCs and this is discussed with providers, especially if feedback is poor. At times we have discontinued SSCs because of persistent poor feedback. If there is a problem during the SSC for example teaching is persistently cancelled, you feel bullied, neglected or unsafe; please speak to the SSC provider or a member of the student support team at the **earliest possible opportunity**. It is your responsibility to act. If you are being provided with a very poor educational experience we will do our utmost to help, which may include removing you from the SSC and making alternative arrangements. Do not simply not attend as if you fail the SSC this may affect progression.