**COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MEDICAL**

**SCHOOL APPLICATION**

**Is there time for medical students to join any societies? I’ve heard it’s really full on…**

* It’s all about organisation. While your timetable may well be busier than many of your friends on other courses, there is definitely still time to have part-time jobs, join societies and have fun with your friends if you plan your time well and know when to say “no”: there will be times where you will have to prioritise work over socialising, but also times when you need a break from your work and for your own sanity, need to prioritise that football practice or orchestra rehearsal. It is definitely easier in your preclinical years though so make the most of them!

**Is it easy to make friends?**

* People find they make friends with people in their accommodation, through people on their course and through meeting people on other courses by joining societies and sports clubs.

**How much multi-disciplinary teaching do you get?**

* From what I have heard, it can really vary depending on the medical school you go to. At Nottingham, a lot of the teaching gets you to think about how an MDT would work together to manage a patient. There are a few activities where multi-disciplinary groups of students are put together to work on a problem or an activity which can be really useful for seeing how other professions are taught and where their knowledge and skills lie. There are also extra-curricular opportunities for getting more interprofessional exposure, such as by attending the interprofessional masterclasses and taking part in other activities. On your placement, by getting involved in patients’ care and what goes on on the ward, you will see how different members of the MDT help care for patients.

**How big is the jump from A levels?**

* It is a tricky time as you go from living at home to living away and being loads more independent which is great. In terms of work, I found that for people intelligent enough to get the grades required to get into med school, the concepts are relatively simple to grasp, it is the speed and volume that can be more difficult. If you keep on top of your work it is definitely manageable. Also, try to get into the habit of understanding rather than memorizing. At Nottingham and Lincoln there are “formative” tests throughout the first 2 years (basically mocks) to help you gauge the type of questions and the depth and breadth of knowledge you will need. But basically, if you can do well enough to get into med school, the jump should be manageable.

**Do you need to be really good at Chemistry?**

* While understanding of basic principles is useful and important, being able to give the IUPAC name for any given skeletal formula or recalling the colours of different ionization states of Vanadium will pale into insignificance (with the possible exception of a select few BMedSci projects, in which case you can easily look up whatever it is you need to know). If you can work at a level where you get the grades you need in Chemistry, and have a solid understanding of the basics, then you’ll be fine.

**Is there any pre-reading you would recommend doing in the summer before starting med school?**

* The short answer is no. While there are bits you can read up on beforehand, whatever you read will likely be rapidly overtaken by what is delivered in lectures. There is way too much content for you to get a head start in everything. Read about whatever interests you, whether it is starting to look up medical conditions your family have been diagnosed with, or following your interest in hearts for example, then there is nothing to lose by doing so. However, not doing a significant amount of pre-reading won’t really put you at a disadvantage, and you might benefit more from spending your holiday enjoying yourself. Reading over some of the relevant bits of Biology (i.e. the stuff about the heart, kidneys, metabolism etc.) at the end of summer will probably be helpful, particularly if you took a gap year.

**What are exams like?**

* Usually most are multiple choice. To do well on these you really have to know the content. To contrast with A levels, it is much more about knowing what the answer is than how to answer the question.
* You will also encounter a variety of practical exams such anatomy spotters, prescribing exams and OSCEs (practical exams where your clinical skills are assessed, not dissimilar to MMIs in format).
* The exams are usually hard. The pass mark in the early years is 40% and is there for a reason. While it is always important to aim for as high a mark as you can, you must quickly get used to going from getting 80%+ or even 90/95%+ in most of your assessments at A level, to being happy with lower numbers: don’t expect to get 98% on your first formative! Remember that people studying medicine are often some of the highest performing students in each year group at school, and the exams are meant to differentiate between you and are therefore challenging, but the vast majority of people do well enough and there is loads of support available too.

**What are your tips for how to perform well at interview?**

* Research your uni and learn what makes the course unique
* Read your uni’s website to see if it has a typical MMI structure
* Practise under pressure
* Reflect on work experience and know your PS inside out
* Be aware of your weaknesses and understand the challenges of a career in medicine
* Don’t rehearse answers
* Stay calm and view each station as a blank slate
* Be aware of your body language

**What to wear for interview?**

* You have to be smart and professional and want to make a good first impression but also ensure that you’re comfy and can move about in it

**Tips for choosing which medical school to apply to (for those who haven’t already)**

* Be tactical and apply to your strengths to maximise your chances
* Be open minded
* Find out what your learning style is and apply to the type of course which best suits you
* Try to talk to staff and students and get a feeling for it
* Use the medic portal comparison tool

**Tips for writing a strong personal statement**

* When it comes to mentioning work experience or volunteering, quality over quantity - rather than list experiences, take time to reflect on one experience and what you learnt from it
* Research the unis that you’re applying to, because many list the qualities that they are looking for in an applicant on their website - try to demonstrate these in your PS
* Use personal experiences and anything unique to you that fuels your desire to study medicine

**How to strike a balance between Med school application and A levels?**

* Make sure to prioritise A Levels enough as I sometimes let my Med school application dominate my time - you still need the A levels to get in once you’re past the interview stage!
* Create a timetable and stick to it!

**Can you get into medicine through clearing?**

* The short answer is yes!
* Medicine is becoming more available through clearing every year.
* Make sure you pick your results up early and don’t just look through UCAS clearing, but also call up universities themselves and ask.
* A lot of medical schools use ‘unofficial clearing’ where they don’t advertise it on UCAS but if someone has shown a previous interest on their website (and put in contact information to say you are), or calls up, they can be offered an interview.

**What’s it like applying and going into medicine when none of your family are from that field?**

* Sometimes it can be harder when it comes to work experience but medical schools do not discriminate against who has a medical background and who doesn’t.

**Can I retake GCSE exams?**

* This depends on the university themselves, some will allow this and others won’t.
* Check on their admission page on their website or email their team.

**Is there any advantage for taking 4 A levels over 3?**

* Once again please check with each university.
* However most only require three A levels and adding a fourth will not benefit you in any way.
* It would probably be best just to focus on the 3 and get the grades than push yourself to do 4.