

# **QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST**

## **SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, DENTISTRY AND BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES**

### **ADMISSION POLICY STATEMENT FOR MEDICINE FOR 2016 ENTRY**

#### **1. Introduction**

It is the policy of the University that all candidates for admission are treated on a fair and equitable basis irrespective of religious belief, political opinion, race, sex, age, marital status, colour, ethnic origin or sexual orientation. However, potential applicants should be aware that under the Medical Act, the minimum age for inclusion on the GMC Medical Register on graduation is 21. This means that it is not possible to admit students on to the five-year programme under the age of 16.

#### **2. Administration of Undergraduate Admissions**

Applications are handled by the academic selector for medicine in the School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences in conjunction with the Admissions and Access Service and the School Office. The academic selector has final responsibility for decisions on Medical applications. These can only be made on the basis of the information given and applicants must show due care and diligence when completing their applications. In particular, full details must be included about qualifications completed or still to be completed.

Applications are received from UCAS by the Admissions and Access Service and assessed for the selector. Any additional information required is obtained and recommendations are made regarding decisions (reject or interview), where possible. After the interviews are completed and following approval by the academic selector all decisions are transmitted to UCAS by the Admissions and Access Service. Requests for feedback are also handled by the Service. In August, the processing of results and the transmission of final decisions to UCAS are again undertaken by Admissions. The Admissions and Access Service, along with the University's Recruitment Officers are largely responsible for schools liaison duties, and is the first point of contact for most schools and candidates. There is very close working relationship between these Offices and the School Office.

#### **3. Admission Criteria**

##### **3.1 The Selection Process**

In "Tomorrow's Doctors" the General Medical Council requires Medical Schools to:

- Publish information about the admission system, including guidance about the selection process and the basis on which places at the school will be offered.
- Use Selection criteria which will take account of the personal and academic qualities needed in a doctor as set out in *Good medical practice* and capacity to achieve the outcomes set out in *Tomorrow's Doctors*.
- Use selection processes which are valid, reliable and objective.

The selection process for Medicine involves two stages:

#### Stage 1: Cognitive Ability

- Consideration of previous academic performance, including school, college and university grades as appropriate.
- Aptitude testing using the United Kingdom Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT)

#### Stage 2: Non-Cognitive Ability

This will comprise multi-mini interviews carefully designed to objectively evaluate non-cognitive skills.

All applicants will be scored at Stage 1 of the selection process and ranked. From this, candidates will be selected for interview (Stage 2) and a final decision about whether or not to make a conditional or unconditional offer will be based solely on interview performance.

### 3.2 Interviews

The interviews take the form of Multi Mini Interviews which are designed to test key non-cognitive competencies for Medicine:

- Empathy
- Problem-solving
- Ethical Reasoning
- Communication Skills

Interviews for 2016 entry will be held on 20, 21, 22 January and 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016

Entry to Medicine is highly competitive and the scores at interview are used to create a rank order. Offers are made to the applicants who rank highest after interview. This ranking cannot be done until all interviews are complete and in view of the work involved after this, it is anticipated that decisions will not be released until the end of March or early April. Should places be available in August, this rank order will also be the primary factor in considering candidates who have satisfied the academic criteria and are not holding an offer with any other Medical School through UCAS.

**Please note that it is assumed that if an applicant presents for interview that they are fit to undertake the assessment. If unwell on the day, a request should be made for an alternative appointment and this will be accommodated, if at all possible.**

### 3.3 UKCAT

The United Kingdom Clinical Aptitude Test is required for admission to Medicine and must be taken during the summer prior to completion of the UCAS application. Full details of how to apply are provided on their website: [www.ukcat.ac.uk](http://www.ukcat.ac.uk). The website includes information on arrangements for those with disabilities or medical

conditions and guidance for applicants on what to do if they are ill on the day of their scheduled test. For all candidates UKCAT will be scored using the overall results from four of the papers. Candidates can obtain up to a maximum of 6 additional points.

Points Awarded	Banding of UKCAT Scores
0	1200 – 1899
1	1900 – 2099
2	2100 – 2299
3	2300 – 2499
4	2500 – 2699
5	2700 – 2899
6	2900 – 3600

For all candidates UKCAT is therefore taken into account at stage 1 of the selection process.

UKCAT has introduced a fifth paper called a Situational Judgement Test, but it has been agreed that the results of this will not be used for 2016 entry except, if necessary, to inform decisions on borderline applicants who have achieved a similar score at interview.

The current scoring system for UKCAT will be reviewed for 2017 entry.

### 3.4 **Personal Statement and References:**

Personal Statements are not scored as part of the selection process. The following is general guidance on what is expected:

(i) candidates are expected to state explicitly that Medicine is their career choice. (Please note that an applicant cannot normally be considered for both Medicine and Dentistry). There should be evidence of commitment and motivation in the personal statement. This should include evidence of what the candidate has done to find out about Medicine as a career. This can be demonstrated in a number of ways including: opportunities for observational experience in a clinical setting, attending medical careers conferences, or undertaking voluntary work in a care setting. Participation in activities within or outside School demonstrating transferable skills such as leadership, empathy, teamwork and communication skills is also considered.

(ii) satisfactory support from the academic referee, particularly relating to the applicant's character, suitability for the course, communication skills and initiative.

### 3.5 **Work Experience**

It is accepted that it can be difficult for candidates to have equal access to clinical work experience and therefore it is not specified as a requirement for admission. Applicants are encouraged to obtain caring experience whether through volunteering or in paid employment as this is valuable in making informed decisions on career options (see 3.4 above).

### 3.6 **Subject Requirements:**

#### **A-levels and AS-level Subject Requirements**

Three A-levels are required to include GCE Chemistry + at least one from Biology, Physics and Maths. A maximum of one VCE/Applied subject at either A-level or AS-level (not both) will be counted. If Biology is not offered at GCE A-level, it is required at GCE AS-level grade B or better. Mathematics and Further Mathematics cannot be counted together at A-level but one may be counted at A-level and the other at AS-level. General Studies is not acceptable at either AS or A-level and Critical Thinking will only be taken into account at AS-level.

#### **GCSE Subject Requirements**

Mathematics, English and Physics (or Double Award Science) are required if not offered at AS or A-level.

**Alternative qualifications**, deemed equivalent by the Medical School, will be acceptable in fulfilment of the subject requirements.

### 3.7 **School leavers Completing A-Levels for the First Time in 2016.**

- When decisions are being made both GCSE and UKCAT performance (see 3.3 above) will be taken into account. GCSEs will be scored using a points system with 4 points for an A\* and 3 for an A grade. The total points score will be based on results in the best 9 subjects, at first attempt unless the GCSE was taken a year early and then repeated at the normal stage

GCSE Short Courses attract 2 points for an A\* and 1.5 for an A grade. Two Short Courses will count as one GCSE in calculation of the best nine subjects. Care is taken to ensure that applicants are awarded the maximum points possible.

BTEC/OCR Level 2 qualifications, considered equivalent to GCSE, are taken into account and a decision as to how many points to award will be dependent on performance in individual units, as well as the overall result(s).

The UKCAT score will then be added to this total.

Candidates will be ranked on the GCSE and UKCAT combined scores and the threshold required to qualify for an interview varies from year to year depending on competition for places and cannot be predicted in advance.

Additional grade As at GCSE and/or Year 13 AS performance (Year 12 in England and Wales) may also be used, but only to distinguish between applicants on the same points score. Therefore where candidates have not cashed in AS-levels, it is helpful if equivalent grades are stated either in the school report or the personal statement on the UCAS form.

For 2015 entry, the threshold to be shortlisted for interview was either 38 points or 37 points together with 4 A grades at AS-level in Year 13 (Year 12 in England or Wales) plus 10 A/A\* grades at GCSE.

Offers are made on the basis of 3 A -levels and a fourth AS-level. For September 2016 the entry grades required will be AAA at A-level plus A in a fourth different AS -level. Module repeats within the normal two year period between GCSE and A-level do not place applicants at any disadvantage. An A-level taken a year early would also be counted.

The requirement for 3 A-levels and a fourth AS-level will remain in place, following qualification reform, across the UK, which will be introduced on a phased basis from 2017. As at present, the Extended Project Qualification will be acceptable in lieu of the fourth AS-level or alternatively, a Grade B in a fourth A-level may be offered.

- **Widening Participation Initiative**

It is recognised that the Stage 1 shortlisting process for Medicine, based on GCSE profile and UKCAT, disadvantages applicants from Secondary Schools in Northern Ireland who may not perform as well at GCSE, or have not had the opportunity to take nine subjects. In the past, a number of these pupils have demonstrated that they have the potential to perform extremely well at A-level.

A Scheme has been approved, which will be reviewed annually. Applicants who have been educated at a Secondary School in Northern Ireland to at least Year 12 will be shortlisted on the basis of AS-level grades (rather than GCSE performance) plus UKCAT results and predicted A-level performance. For the last two cycles of admissions this has resulted in more students from this academic background progressing through to the interview stage.

The GMC requires the School to monitor the performance of students admitted through a Widening Participation stream.

### **3.8 Repeat Candidates**

Due to the competition for places the number of offers made to students resitting A-levels has to be restricted. Normally only those who had applied to study Medicine at Queen's at the first attempt and held an offer (if made) as their conditional firm (CF) choice are considered. In addition they must have achieved AAB+a at first attempt. The offer for repeat candidates is currently AAA at A-level plus A in a fourth AS-level. It is necessary for candidates repeating to retake all written examination components of AS and A2 modules associated with the subject being repeated and the marks in these will be counted in determining if the applicant has fulfilled the

conditions of their offer (if made). The applicant can decide whether or not also to repeat modules with practical/coursework components and the highest of the marks achieved will be counted (irrespective of when taken). Only two attempts at A-levels are allowed.

For repeat candidates at Stage One, 36 points will be allocated for meeting the A/AS-level grades required to qualify for consideration and points then awarded according to performance in UKCAT (as indicated above) to give an overall score for short listing purposes. UKCAT must be retaken as it is only valid for one application cycle.

### **3.9 Applicants who have already Satisfied Academic Requirements (Please also refer to 3.18 below)**

Applications from candidates who have already achieved the normal academic requirements in their second level examinations, for example AAA at A-level plus A in a fourth AS and are applying for Medicine for a second time, will only be considered if they included Queen's as one of their Medical choices first time round ie evidence of commitment to the University is important from the outset. Such candidates who have satisfied the subject requirements, will be awarded 36 points at Stage One. Points will then be awarded according to performance in UKCAT to give an overall score for shortlisting purposes. UKCAT must be retaken as it is only valid for one application cycle.

### **3.10 Starting an Alternative Degree Course**

Applicants who had initially applied for Medicine and who are either repeating A-levels or who have already achieved the relevant A and AS-level qualifications, are strongly advised not to commence an alternative degree course. If they have done so, all examinations taken must have been passed.

### **3.11 Mature Non-Graduate Entry**

Applications from candidates who have had a significant break in study or did not have the opportunity to enter higher education at the normal time are welcomed. Applications from such candidates are considered individually on their merits taking into account academic background, work experience and UKCAT scores in shortlisting for interview. Where offers are made, the normal A and AS-level requirements apply and applicants must also have the appropriate background in the relevant subjects at GCSE, AS and A-level to fulfil the course requirements. Access Course qualifications are not acceptable.

### **3.12 Graduate Applicants (Please also refer to 3.18 below)**

Graduates and those applying in the final year of their degree,, are considered for the normal five-year programme. In making decisions on graduate applications, the full academic background is taken into account. Applicants must have achieved, or have the potential to achieve, at least an Upper Second Class Honours classification in their primary degree and ABB at A-level/A2 B2 B2 B2 B2 B2 at Higher Level in the Leaving Certificate/ABBBB in Scottish Highers at the first attempt. In the case of candidates with a First Class Honours degree or a PhD, a minimum of BBB at A-level

or equivalent in other qualifications may be accepted. Grades will not be averaged ie AAC will not be acceptable in lieu of ABB. However, averaging out above will still be acceptable eg AAC for those with a First Class Honours.

Applicants applying for a second time for entry as a graduate will only be considered if they included Queen's as one of their Medical choices when making their first application on this basis. This includes any attempt made during the final year of their primary degree programme.

Candidates must also have a relevant science background at GCSE, AS and A-level. This must include Chemistry and one other Science at A-level. Biology must be taken to at least AS-level (or acceptable equivalent) and Physics or Double Award Science and Mathematics to GCSE. A grade C is the lowest grade that will be considered in either Chemistry or Biology at A-level/AS-level as appropriate.

For graduates (and those applying in the final year of their degree), at Stage One, 36 points are currently allocated for meeting the criteria required to qualify for consideration and points then awarded according to performance in UKCAT (as indicated above) to give an overall score for short listing purposes.

Applicants from a non-science background but who fulfil the conditions in terms of grades at A-level at the first attempt and degree performance will be considered if they undertake the appropriate Science qualifications on completion of their primary degree. Such applicants are advised to contact the Admissions and Access Service for guidance.

Criteria for admission of graduates are currently under review for 2017 entry. This is likely to relate to points awarded for academic and/or UKCAT performance and will not include changes to A-Level grade or subject requirements where a longer period of notice would be required.

### **3.13 Irish Leaving Certificate Applicants**

When considering applicants Junior Certificate and UKCAT performance (see 3.3 above) are important and these are scored. Junior Certificate is scored with 4 points for an A grade, 3 points for a B over the best nine subjects.

Where offers are made these are conditional on obtaining A1A1(Biology and Chemistry)A1A1A1B2 at higher level in the Leaving Certificate. Grades Cs in English and Mathematics at ordinary level are required if not offered at higher level.

A suitable background in Physics is also necessary and if not taken in the Leaving Certificate, a Grade A in Junior Certificate Science is acceptable in lieu.

### **3.14 Scottish Applicants**

When short listing applicants for interview, previous academic performance and UKCAT are important and will be scored. Applicants with a minimum of AAABB in Scottish Highers are given serious consideration. 34 points are awarded for AAABB; 35 points for AAAAB and 36 points for AAAAA – at the first attempt.

Where conditional offers are made, the standard specified in Advanced Highers is also dependent on performance in Scottish Highers and ranges from AA (for those with AAAAA in Highers) to AAA (for those with AAABB in Highers). In all cases, Chemistry (Grade A) plus at least one from Physics, Biology and Mathematics) are required. Three Advanced Highers are necessary unless applicants achieved five A grades in their Highers. If not taken as an Advanced Higher, Biology Higher is required and Standard Grade Intermediate 2 or National 5 Physics and Mathematics are also necessary.

### **3.15 International Applicants**

The University has a quota of 26 Medical places for students from outside the European Union. Where offers are made, the requirements are currently AAA (including Chemistry and Biology) at A-level or A(Chemistry)AB + A in a fourth AS-level or equivalent in terms of other qualifications. The normal subject requirements apply. In the case of the International Baccalaureate Diploma, an overall score of 36 points is required with 6,6,6 to include Chemistry and Biology at Higher Level. A range of other qualifications including Canadian or Australian High School Diplomas and the HKDSE are also accepted. Candidates should consult the University's website for further information or contact the Admissions & Access Service for advice as required.

International applications are not scored. Previous academic background and UKCAT scores are important as are predicted grades (if applicable) and appropriate evidence of proficiency in English Language. Where applicants have not previously taken any formal examinations (eg either GCSEs or O-levels) they will be considered on the basis of High School reports and this information will also be used to assess whether or not they are able to fulfil subject requirements eg GCSE Physics or equivalent.

The University may choose to interview international applicants either in South East Asia or at Queen's.

### **3.16 Transfer from other Medical Schools**

Because of the intense competition for places to study Medicine and the integrated nature of the course structure, transfers from other universities are not usually considered. However, candidates who commence a course of study may in extremely exceptional circumstances be considered. All candidates must have the same entry requirements as those applying direct from A-level and must have passed any exams taken at University prior to transfer. Homesickness will not normally be considered as a reason for considering an application to transfer.

Applications should be made by the normal closing date of 15 October and the UK Clinical Aptitude Test should be retaken. For applicants who are eligible for consideration an interview forms part of the selection process.

### **3.17 Applicants who have previously withdrawn from Medicine**



Applicants who previously commenced a Medical Degree at any University and have failed exams or been asked to withdraw from the course for any reason will not be considered.

In the interests of patient and public safety, the University may check information provided in your application form with the database maintained by the Medical Schools Council in relation to medical students who have been excluded through Fitness to Practise procedures. The database is accessible only to other medical schools in the UK and the General Medical Council.

### **3.18 Number of Attempts (Applications) Permitted**

In view of the competition for places, it is the policy of the Medical School to restrict the number of attempts a candidate can make to gain admission to Medicine. A maximum of three attempts (ie applications in three different UCAS admissions cycles) overall are permitted (including applications made to other Medical Schools) with not more than two at either A-level or at graduate level. Please also see 3.9 and 3.12 above regarding the need to demonstrate commitment to Queen's. .

## **4. Professional Nature of the Course**

Selection for medicine implies selection for the profession. A degree in medicine confirms academic achievement and in normal circumstances entitles the new graduate to apply to the General Medical Council for provisional registration and to start practising. Fitness to practise issues must therefore be considered when selecting students. The medical course is subject to the University's Fitness to Practise regulations and the GMC's guidelines. In the event of a student being deemed unfit to practise by the Medical School certain information will be shared with the GMC, the medical Schools Council and other Medical Schools in the interests of patient and public safety..

### **4.1 Conduct**

The practice of medicine requires the highest standards of professional and personal conduct. Candidates are therefore required to declare criminal offences and other related matters including cautions (where these are not deemed "protected" see guidance on Access NI website, link below). Entry to medicine will be conditional on a satisfactory criminal records check. International applicants are also required to produce appropriate evidence eg a Certificate of Good Conduct before admission to the degree.

<http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/accessni/disclosures/filtering.htm>

Students entering the medical course will also be expected to sign a Student Agreement and Self Declaration Form every year which places an emphasis on the continuing need for professional behaviour and standards to be maintained. If a positive police check is received or declared during the admission process the School will decide whether there are fitness to practise concerns and if necessary refer the case to the University's Admissions Review Panel. Entry to the course may be refused. During the course the Fitness to Practise regulations of the School will apply.

## 5. Health Issues

### Disability

Issues relating to health are dealt with separately from the formal admissions process and decision making bodies such as interview panels will not be aware that the applicant has declared a health condition.<sup>1</sup>

A disability or mental health condition need not bar a candidate from becoming a doctor provided that they are able to meet the outcomes set out in *Tomorrow's Doctors*. Candidates should contact the School in advance of completing their UCAS application to obtain advice.

Applicants should declare any condition that they have at the point of application because:

- a. Medical schools have a duty to support their students but students themselves have to help the school to do this by being open and honest about their health.
- b. Being open and trustworthy is an important part of being a doctor. Patients and the GMC will expect this of practising doctors. Failure by a doctor on the medical register to disclose a health matter is a breach of this duty.<sup>2</sup>
- c. A student's insight into the impact that their health may have on their ability to study is very important. Where a student has insight, and shows this by seeking appropriate help and support, their health condition rarely prevents them from completing the course. One way to demonstrate insight right from the start is to declare at the point of entry whether you will require additional support.

The occupational health service of the University will be able to advise the medical school whether the student is able to meet the outcomes set out in *Tomorrow's Doctors* and what adjustments the student might require.

If the candidate meets the normal academic criteria for admission to the course but there are concerns over issues relating to health, a special advisory committee separate from the normal admission procedures will be convened. This Committee will take advice from the University's Occupational Health Service before reaching a decision.

### Health Assessment

The Department of Health has issued guidance on Health Clearance for Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV for healthcare workers including students and the University must ensure that students comply with the guidance given in order to protect patients.

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<sup>2</sup> *Good Medical Practice*, Paragraph 79

Medical students will have the following testing offered to them when they enrol. If they refuse testing or test positive at that time or at any time during the course they will be restricted in their clinical activities but should still be able to complete their undergraduate training.

<u>Disease</u>	<u>Test</u>
TB result	Evidence of satisfactory BCG vaccination or Mantoux test
Hepatitis B	HBsAg negative
Hepatitis C	Hep C negative
HIV	HIV 1 & 2 negative