

Key Criteria for Medical Admissions

The Colleges of the University of Cambridge have agreed the following guidelines for interviewers and selectors for Medicine to inform selection. The principles are intended to illustrate the areas that are likely to be tested during the selection process, regardless of the College conducting that process on behalf of the Collegiate University.

The Clinical School makes the following statement¹ about the key qualities of a medical student. They:

- Are knowledgeable about the scientific basis of medicine, including its most recent developments
- Are honest, caring, knowledgeable and competent and equipped to maintain good medical practice
- Show respect for their patients at all times
- Have excellent communication skills for use in the health care of diverse populations
- Understand the importance of physical, psychological and social aspects of patient care
- Possess a sound appreciation of ethical, legal and community issues
- Are able to work effectively in multidisciplinary teams
- Possess the capacity for inquiry and are prepared to continue learning, teaching, evaluation and research throughout their careers and to prepare them fully for their roles as doctors.

These qualities should inform the selection process throughout. In addition the Colleges subscribe to the principles for medical admissions that have been approved by the GMC in the December 2014 Statement on the Core Values and Attributes needed to study Medicine² in addition to the 2004 statement of Guiding Principles for the Admission of Medical Students.

All Colleges' interview processes involve at least one current practitioner and all Colleges will conduct at least two interviews per medical applicant.

The key issues to be evaluated at interview and through other aspects of the selection process fall into three areas:

- Scientific and related competencies
- Personal qualities and communications skills appropriate to a would-be doctor
- Understanding of the professional and career requirements

¹ <http://www.medschl.cam.ac.uk/about/>

² <http://www.medschools.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Statement-on-the-core-values-and-attributes-needed-to-study-medicine.aspx>

1. Scientific and related competencies

- A sound basis of knowledge and skills derived from sixth-form (or equivalent) learning, i.e. a solid knowledge of sixth-form Chemistry and, as appropriate, Biology, Maths and Physics.
- The application of that knowledge to new scenarios and problems, whether at a micro level (e.g. molecular models) or on a larger scale (e.g. whole body problems and systems).
- An interest in the science behind medicine.
- Observational skills.
- Lateral thinking and conceptual flexibility in approaching problems.
- The ability to hypothesize and to think through scientific problems.
- The ability also to avoid jumping too hastily to conclusions or to become too rigidly committed to single arguments or interpretations of scientific problems.

2. Personal Qualities

- Emotional maturity and motivation to pursue a career in medicine.
- Listening and empathy skills and an ability to interact with others, both professional and lay.
- Skills in clear communication of scientific and personal matters both to peers and to lay audiences.
- Team-working skills.
- An ability to see ambiguous and contradictory scenarios for what they are rather than viewing them as simple 'either/or' choices.
- An ability to relate experience (and especially observation or experience of medical matters) to medical issues and to show how their understanding of both the experience and the issues has progressed as a result.
- A capacity for focused hard work and ability to cope with stressful situations.

3. Professional and Career Considerations

- A strong motivation for a medical career and ability to explain and substantiate it.
- A realistic understanding of what a career in medicine entails.
- An understanding of what studying for a medical degree entails.
- An understanding of the 'real world' dilemmas and practical considerations that face doctors, including clinical dilemmas.
- A capacity to understand ethical issues facing practitioners.
- Fitness to practice.
- Social and cultural awareness.
- Self-awareness.
- Awareness of the major current issues facing the NHS (or equivalent national healthcare systems).