



Birmingham Medical Access Day

Student Survival kit





Who are we?

The Islamic Medical Society was founded by a group of enthusiastic medical students over six years ago, who strongly believed that as students we don't have to wait until graduation to start our legacy and make a difference.

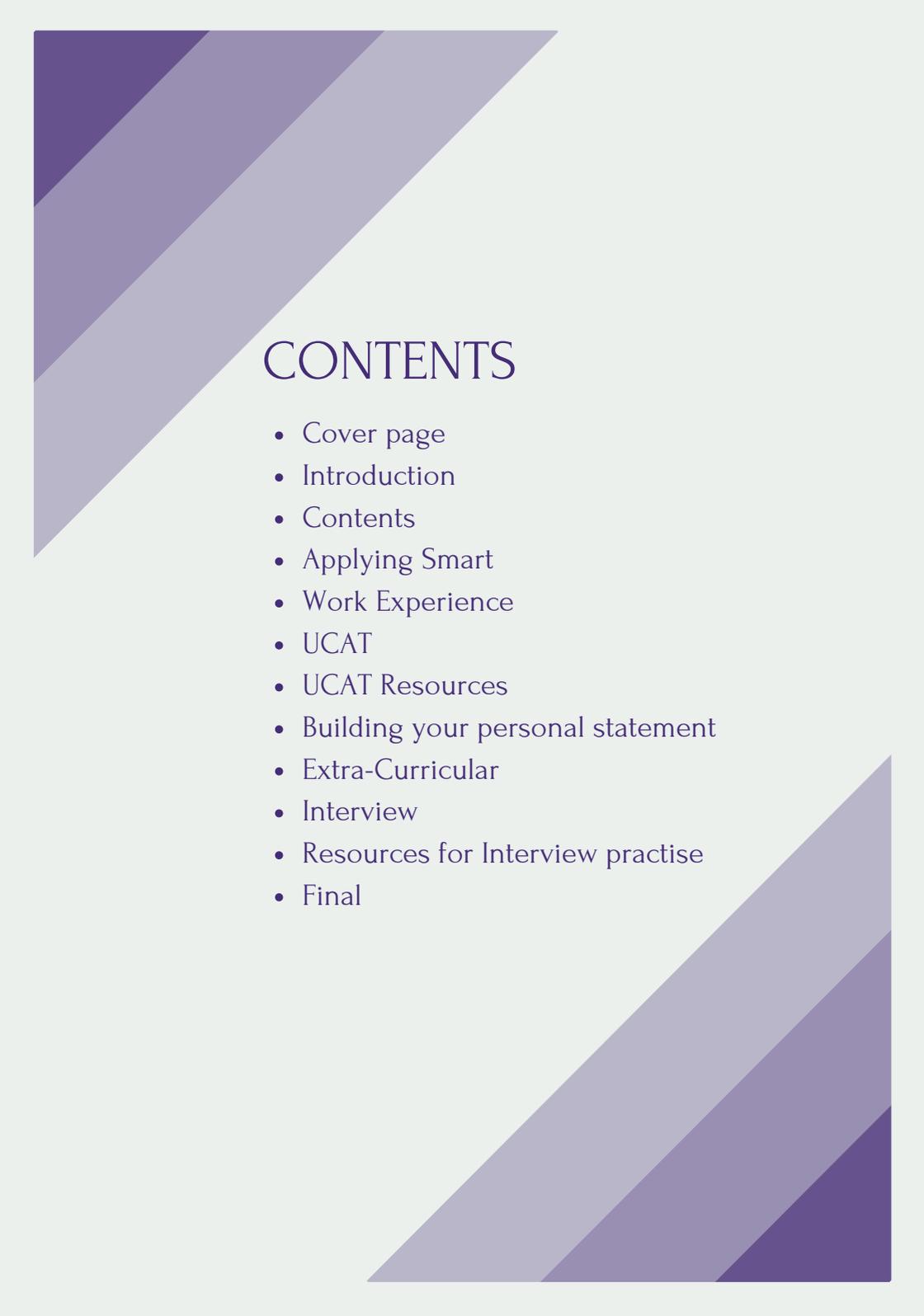
IMed combines the Islamic teachings of compassion and stewardship with the nobility of the healthcare profession we are blessed to be a part of.

At IMed we organise a wide range of events from opportunities to engage in humanitarian and charity work, revision seminars, conferences on healthcare and medical ethics and the best social events for brothers and sisters. We do this to provide our Muslim family with a well-rounded university experience - nourishing them both spiritually and intellectually.

This year, for the first time we have organised an access day to help students who are starting their journeys into medicine and dentistry. We have compiled this booklet as an aid for your continuing journey and we hope you find it useful.

We at IMed wish all of you success in your future endeavours.





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Applying Smart

Play to your advantage!

The Medical school selection process can be tough!

With so many aspects such as the personal statement, UCAT, interviews and A-level grades it can seem almost impossible to excel at everything.

But don't worry you don't need to be amazing at everything in order to secure a place at medical school.

The selection process for each medical school is different - some universities prioritise certain aspects more than others .

If you feel unsure about a certain aspect of your application you can always apply to a university that doesn't prioritise it much.

When applying thoroughly research into the requirements for each university by checking their website, contacting their admissions office and utilising student forums.

Types of learning

Different Medical schools use different learning styles. Here are the main three:

Traditional learning

Students begin their training with two preclinical years which involves the study of the basic medical sciences. This is followed by the 'clinical' years, of approximately three years, during which students learn in a hospital setting and other healthcare setting under the supervision of doctors and consultants.

Integrated learning

Integrated courses which the majority of medical schools have now implemented, integrate what was previously learnt at the pre-clinical and clinical stages, to provide a seamless course.

Teaching methods can include problem-based learning (PBL) and practical clinical skills. Instead of teaching anatomy and physiology etc. as separate courses, the idea is to join them into systems (also known as the systems based approach) where you will take a bodily system, such as the circulatory system and consider the anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, pharmacology, pathology of it all at once.

The new integrated approach also encourages early patient contact and self-directed learning. Much of the teaching has a basis in lectures, supplemented with tutorials and your own self-directed work.

Problem based learning

PBL is a very patient-oriented approach and students can expect to see patients right from the beginning of their course. Students are given medical cases to resolve and learn from, guided by group work with a tutor as well as self-directed learning. Group work, on top of academic and clinical learning, helps students develop communication, teamwork and problem solving skills, personal responsibility and respect for others. PBL is an 'open inquiry' approach where facilitators play a minimal role and do not guide the discussion. Generally there is a more blended approach with more interaction from facilitators and the provision of lectures and seminars etc. to support the individuals learning.

Everyone learns in a different way so take this into account when applying to university!!



Work Experience

Work experience forms the backbone of your application as you will find yourself referring back to your experience both in your personal statement and in your interview .

Types of work experience

Hospital work experience

- on wards
- outpatient clinics

GP surgery work experience

- in appointments
- at reception

Volunteering at disability care homes/elderly care homes

Mental Health Clinics

How to obtain work experience

- Go onto the website for different trusts - most of them will have a section for work experience
- Ask local General Practises if you can do work experience there for a few days
- Utilise your contacts no matter how distant they may seem. One useful contact goes a long way in securing work experience.

KEY: Make sure to apply early preferably 6-12 months before you want your work experience.

Advice for work experience

At work experience you observe and hear so much that it becomes difficult to comprehend what exactly you should be looking out for. Here are a list of things to help you:

- The main thing is reflection. No one is expecting you to come up with management plans and diagnoses. Focus on the human- aspect on being a healthcare professional. Reflect on moments where you saw a health care professional be empathetic towards a patient. Focus on their mannerisms - the way they communicated with a patient.
- Keep a journal at hand and make note of anything interesting you see. If you see something clinical, do some extra reading around the topic as you may be questioned in an interview especially if you also mention it in your personal statement. Likewise, if you observe a particularly interesting interaction between the doctor and a patient record it! Make sure to keep patient confidentiality!
- Focus on what the role of a doctor entails such as teaching, caring, research, treating etc.
- Focus on the qualities a doctor shows such as confidence, empathy, good communication, leadership and note down examples of them.
- Observe the interactions the doctor has with other health care professionals on their team and what this shows about the role of the doctor?

UCAT

The UCAT is a computer-based medical entrance exam currently required by 26 of the universities in the UK. Test dates start in July and end in October, with registration opening in May.

In these two pages, we'll be looking at each section in the test & tips to make sure you get your best score! We've gone through the sections in the order that they come up in.

VERBAL REASONING

- **Number of Questions:** 44
- **Time for section:** 21 minutes
- **Aim** – to assess a candidate's ability to extract key information from large bodies of text.
- **Question types** – deciding whether the answer is true/false/can't tell, or choosing the correct answer from four answer choices.

TOP TIP:

There are long passages of text in VR, and if you start reading them all you won't even have answered half the questions before you run out of time. Be smart about it and perfect your ability to scan through passages to find only key information. Additionally, some of the passages may be about things you know about, but never use outside knowledge to answer VR questions, the answer is always sitting in front of you within the blurb they've given.

DECISION MAKING

- **Number of Questions:** 29
- **Time for section:** 31 minutes
- **Aim** – to assess a candidate's ability to apply logical reasoning, evaluate arguments and deduce answer from data provided in order to reach an answer
- **Question types** – Many different types of questions; some requiring you to manipulate Venn diagrams, others including sections of text from which you have to choose answers.

TOP TIP:

It is very easy to become sucked into DM questions: with one minute per question it feels like one of the most luxurious timings in the test! HOWEVER, don't take the bait - many unsuccessful test-takers will have fallen into a false sense of security with regard to timings in this section and so spent far too long on questions earlier on in the section. The best thing you can do (not only in DM, but in all sections) is to be strict with yourself on timings – if you find yourself going over the allotted time per question, guess an answer and flag for review later on.

QUANTITATIVE REASONING

- **Number of Questions:** 36
- **Time for section:** 24 minutes
- **Aim** – to assess a candidate's ability to evaluate and select answer choices based on numerical data presented.
- **Question types** – tables involving numbers, ratio, manipulation, and other mathematical procedures

TOP TIP:

Do not be too calculator happy in this section; use your whiteboard, and try and do some of the stuff mentally, as this can in fact be quicker than using the calculator!!

ABSTRACT REASONING

- **Number of Questions:** 55
- **Time for section:** 13 minutes
- **Aim** – to assess a candidate's pattern recognition ability.
- **Question types** – deciding the answer based on a group of shapes with an inter-linking pattern, either arranged into sets or series.

TOP TIP :

Always find the simplest box (the one with the least going on) when trying to find a pattern in a set. Run this box through the SCANS (shape, colour, arrangement, number & size) categories and you'll find a pattern for sure. Don't get flustered when the boxes look crazy, because more often than not, the pattern is simpler than you think. The more AR you do, the better you get at pattern recognition, so stick with it!

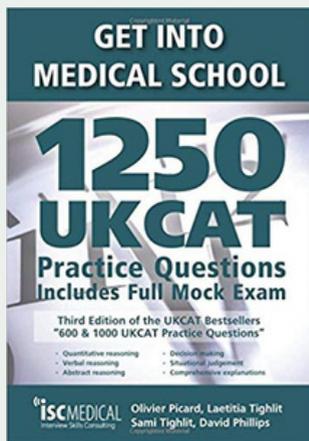
SITUATIONAL JUDGEMENT

- **Number of Questions:** 69
- **Time for section:** 26 minutes
- **Aim** – to assess a candidate's ability to act according to the values of medical professionalism when faced with real-world situations.
- **Question types** – Blurb of info often detailing the situation at hand, and a series of actions that must be categorised as appropriate/inappropriate, important/not important etc..

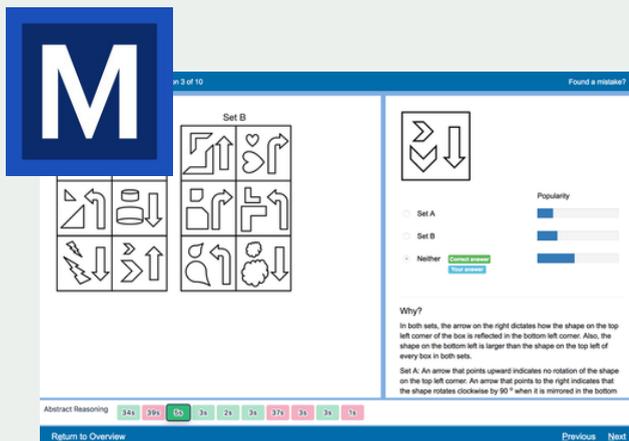
TOP TIP:

A lot of SJ is common sense – don't be rude to the patient + act honestly = quite a successful strategy here! However, you've reached the end of your exam by now, done looooads of questions in the last 2 hours and are probably mentally shattered. SO the biggest thing to keep in mind is DO NOT SWITCH OFF when it comes to SJ! Push yourself to stay attentive in this last 26 minutes, read situations and answer them as quickly as possible and you'll be sorted. GMC's Good Medical Practice is a useful PDF available freely online that will guide you on the values of medical professionalism that this section is all about, and will also come in handy when prepping for interviews!

Resources for UCAT



ISC Medical Textbook



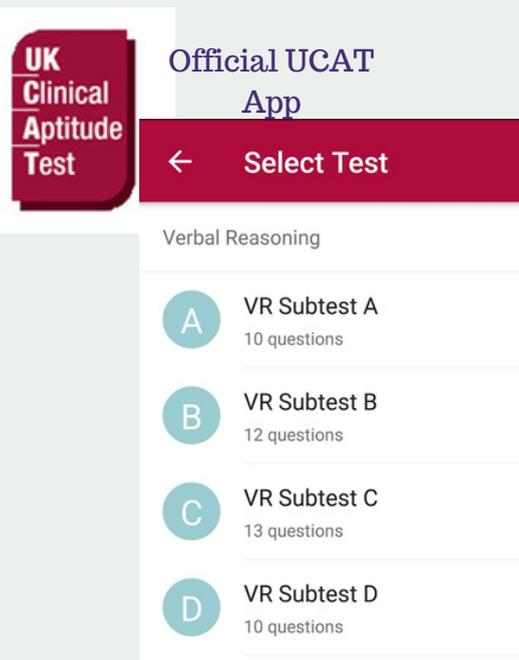
Medify - Website

There's so many UCAT resources available that its difficult to decide which ones to use for revision.

Remember to keep in mind:

1. The layout that suits you- do you prefer to use a textbook or a website ?
2. Irrespective of what resource you use make sure you give yourself enough time to practise. The UCAT isn't something you can cram in a week but rather its about doing a consistent amount of practise over a couple of weeks to brush up your techniques and to consistently improve.
3. Make sure to use the UCAT website as they have a number of practise papers available and these are the most similar to the actual paper.
4. Read reviews for each resource, weigh the pros and cons before making making the decision to use them.

The three resources outlined on this page are what most medical students used to prepare for the UCAT.



Building your personal statement

This is a model example of how you can structure your personal statement

INTRODUCTION

- Attention Grabbing
- Original
- two-three sentences
- Why do you want to study Medicine

WORK EXPERIENCE /VOLUNTEERING

- Medical experiences followed by non medical experiences
- Focus on the insights you have made and how they are relevant to medicine
- Use specific examples

CONCLUSION

- attention grabbing
- should tie in everything you have already written

WIDER READING/STUDY

- Mention any extra reading or research you have done
- this can include an extended project qualification
- the purpose of this to show that you have genuine interest in the field

EXTRA-CURRICULAR

- discuss your hobbies
- discuss roles of responsibilities
- what skills have you gained and how will they be beneficial to you as a doctor.

Building your personal statement

Medicine Personal statement tips

Do's

- Start early- give yourself enough time to write a personal statement that depicts you as a person and why you want to study medicine.
- Reflect from your experiences and link it back to being a doctor- Reflection of what you have seen and things you have done is KEY in writing a good personal statement.
- Get your personal statement peer reviewed off teachers, parents and any healthcare professionals you may know. However, keep in mind that even though their opinion is valuable , it's up to you about what you alter and what you keep.
- Draft draft draft- The more you draft the more refined your personal statement will be.
- Remember, medicine isn't a decision you should take lightly. Medical schools want you to understand the sacrifices you will be making so making a mention of this will be a bonus to your personal statement.
- Good grammar -these are easy marks so make sure to proof read.
- SELL YOURSELF

Dont's

- Use the word "I" too many times
- Start with a cliché opening sentence
- Make it too scientific-science is not equivalent to medicine
- Make it a list of the things you have done
- Copy your personal statement as it should be personal and the system is very accurate in finding plagiarised phrases and sentences.
- Use complicated language to impress the university - rather it is more important that the personal statement flows and make sense
- Don't describe every little thing you saw in placement
- Repeat phrases and experiences as you only have a limited amount of characters

Extra-Curricular

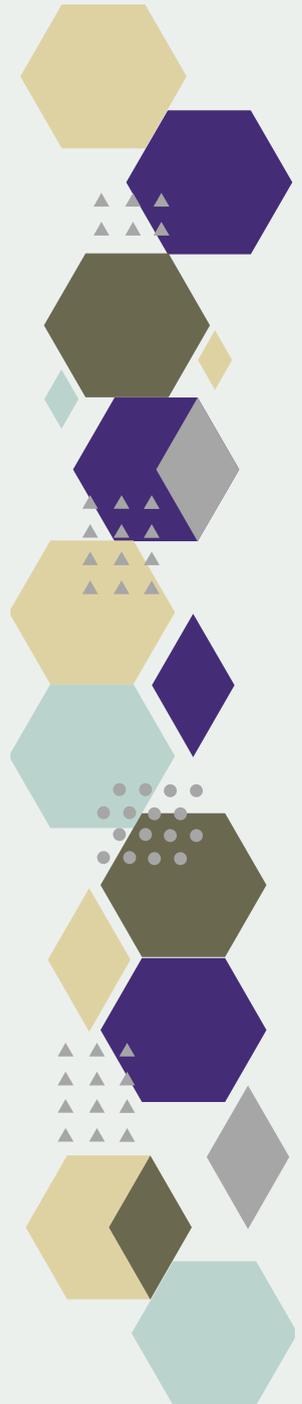
Examples of different types of extra-curricular activities

- Playing a sport -it doesn't matter if you play for a team or play as a pass time, sport is something that is definitely worth mentioning.
- Playing a musical instrument
- Having a job
- Volunteering at a charity shop
- Charity work -Fundraising events, street collections ,helping the less fortunate on a local or international level
- Any roles of leadership that you have e.g prefect at school
- Any community groups or charity groups that you are a member of.
- Hobbies

How to incorporate your extra-curricular activities in your application.

Extra- curricular activities really help you to sell yourself both on your personal statement and during your interview.

When it comes to extra-curricular activities you should refrain from simply listing the things you do outside your academic students but rather the skills you have gained from them and how these skills can be translated to a career as a future doctor.



Interview

The interview is a good opportunity for universities to get to know you and assess whether a career in medicine is right for you. They want to see that you can embody the values and skills seen in a doctor in the NHS including: compassion, respect and professionalism.

This is an opportunity for you to let your personality shine through and is a part of the application process you can really prepare for. A good time to start preparation would be as soon as you submit your UCAS application on the 15th October, or even earlier if you can.

There are 3 main types of interviews that you came encounter: Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs), Traditional Panel Interviews and maybe even Group Interviews. Regardless of the structure of the interview, they are looking for very similar things and you can prepare for all 3 simultaneously.

Types of interview

MMIs

The majority of medical schools now use the MMI format. One major benefit about MMIs is that every station is a new leaf, you have 10 chances to prove Medicine is the course for you so don't

worry if you feel that a previous station didn't go as well as you would have hoped.

Some stations will simply involve you discussing your personal statement (know it inside out) or an ethical scenario, others will require role play and you will need to take on the role of a medical student or a doctor where they can test your interpersonal skills. There will be between 6-10 stations and

each stations lasts no more than 10 minutes each, with rest stations in between.

Traditional Panel Interviews

This will usually involve you sitting across from a panel of 1 to 4 interviewers for about 30 minutes as they ask you various questions usually about your motivations to study medicine, hot topics in the NHS, medical ethics, team work (and other skills a doctor needs) and about the medical school itself. With panel interviews, it is important to remain calm and confident. Make sure you address each person on the panel, not just the person who appears the warmest. Try to avoid falling into the trap of memorising massive model answers because you will appear robotic, rather try and be as honest and true to yourself as you can.

Group Interviews

This is where you will be in a group with other applicants and will be given a task to perform or a topic to discuss in front of the interviewers. This is usually as part of a further panel interview or MMI stations.

Resources for interview practice

Helpful resources

This is a list of medical schools and the structure of their medical interviews and what topics have been covered at each university.

<https://www.themedicportal.com/application-guide/medical-school-interview/medicine-interview-preparation/>

Use the STARR technique (Situation, Task, Action, Results and Reflection) to help you discuss questions where you are asked to 'Give an example of when you ...'

<https://themsag.com/blogs/medical-school-interviews/the-starr-interview-medical-school-interview-techniques>

This a list of the structure of MMIs at UK medical schools (how many stations, how long each one is)

<https://www.uniadmissions.co.uk/list-of-mmi-schools/>

On this page you will find a very extensive list of possible interview questions, categorised into – Background and Motivation, Depth of Interest, Knowledge of Med School, NHS Hot Topics, Creativity and Imagination, Ethics, Empathy, Teamwork, and examples of MMI Circuits (Write down bullet points for each one)

<https://www.themedicportal.com/e-learning/interview/>

General advice on preparing for medical school interviews

<https://6med.co.uk/guides/interviews/5-tips-prepare-medicine-interview/>

A lot of the above websites may advertise features which you have to pay for. It is not necessary to spend money to prepare for your medical school interview, it's all about practising the different types of questions enough times and showing that you have a genuine interest and willingness to take on board the challenges and privileges that come with this career. It is also assessing whether you would be suited to that particular medical school. Don't worry if the nerves are eating away your insides on the day, that is natural and remember that the person on the other side is HUMAN, it's someone's mum or dad or brother. They will have been through exactly what you are going through, remember this and it'll help you calm your nerves and allow you to show them the amazing person you really are.

Disclaimer – the views, information, or opinions expressed in this booklet are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the University of Birmingham medical school. The information contained in this booklet is accurate to the best of the authors’ knowledge at the time writing and no responsibility is assumed for any errors or omissions.



We wish you all the
best!