

# Statement on the core values and attributes needed to study medicine



## Introduction

This statement sets out the core values and attributes needed to study medicine in the UK. This is not an exhaustive list and individual medical schools will also have particular skills or attributes that they are looking for in potential students.

It is important to note that the assessment of academic ability is also an essential part of medical school selection processes. Medical schools are looking for applicants who have the correct academic background and aptitude who are also able to demonstrate the values and attributes set out in this statement.

This statement is mapped to the GMC guidance Good Medical Practice which is the overarching ethical guidance for doctors in the UK. Medical schools in the UK aim to prepare students for practice in the NHS and therefore they are looking for students who have the potential to become good doctors. Other sources used in the development of this statement include the values set out in the NHS Constitution and the MSC's Role of the Doctor Consensus Statement.

The GMC sets the outcomes for undergraduate medical education which are the skills, attitudes and behaviours that medical students should demonstrate before they graduate from medical school. These outcomes are set out in Tomorrow's Doctors and applicants are strongly advised to read these outcomes before they apply as this will give them a sense of what medical school will involve.

## Advice to applicants on using this statement

This statement sets out the key skills and attributes needed to study medicine. These skills and attributes are:

- Motivation to study medicine and genuine interest in the medical profession
- Insight into your own strengths and weaknesses
- The ability to reflect on your own work
- Personal organisation
- Academic ability
- Problem solving
- Dealing with uncertainty
- Manage risk and deal effectively with problems

- Ability to take responsibility for your own actions
- Conscientiousness
- Insight into your own health
- Effective communication, including reading, writing, listening and speaking
- Teamwork
- Ability to treat people with respect
- Resilience and the ability to deal with difficult situations
- Empathy and the ability to care for others
- Honesty

The statement applies these skills to medical practice and links this to medical school expectations of students and applicants.

Applicants are advised to read the statement carefully and to reflect on how they might demonstrate the values and attributes during the selection process. In particular they should think of examples when they have demonstrated these values and attributes. These examples can be used in aspects of the selection process including interviews and personal statements.

Examples can be drawn from a wide range of experiences including:

- Work experience placements
- Experience of paid employment
- Volunteer work
- Participation in social activities
- Educational experience

More advice is available on work experience in the MSC document [Work experience guidelines for applicants to medicine](#)

## The core values and attributes needed to study medicine

### Domain 1 – Knowledge skills and performance

#### *'Develop and maintain your professional performance'*

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Commitment
- Motivation to study medicine and genuine interest in the medical profession
- Insight and reflection
- Personal organisation

Students will learn at medical school the theoretical and practical knowledge needed to become a doctor. However it is important that doctors are life long learners who are committed to providing their patients with excellent care based on the latest findings in medical science. Therefore medical schools will be looking for applicants who have shown a commitment to self improvement and motivation to become a doctor. They will also be looking for students who display a genuine interest in the medical profession.

In order to keep up to date and to improve the standard of care they provide to patients doctors need to be able to reflect honestly on their own practice in order to identify aspects that could be improved. Because of this requirement medical schools are looking for students who have insight into their own capabilities and who will be able to reflect honestly on their own performance, including any weaknesses, during the course.

Medicine is a demanding career and balancing the need to keep up to date with a heavy workload requires a high level of organisational ability. Medical schools look for evidence of an applicant's ability to organise and manage their own time.

### ***'Apply knowledge and experience to practice'***

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Academic ability
- Problem solving
- Dealing with uncertainty
- Resilience and the ability to deal with difficult situations

Medicine is an intellectually demanding career. Doctors need to be able to apply their knowledge in a clinical setting, most particularly applying what they know to the patient in front of them. Patients often have complex medical needs or a range of different medical conditions that can impact on each other. Sometimes the best course of action is not immediately clear to a doctor treating a patient. In these instances the doctor has to manage this uncertainty and apply their knowledge to find a solution.

Medical schools will be looking for academic ability and an aptitude for problem solving based on scientific principles at the point of selection and for evidence of resilience to cope with a demanding career.

### ***'Record your work clearly, accurately and legibly'***

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Effective communication, including reading, writing, listening and speaking. Teamwork

The documents that doctors need to complete such as prescriptions and patient records must be accurate and legible; if they are not then there is the potential for patients to be harmed. Therefore medical schools require a basic level of written English skills from their applicants.

## **Domain 2 – Safety and quality**

### ***'Contribute and comply with systems to protect patients'***

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Manage risk and deal effectively with problems

Doctors need to manage risk on a daily basis; patients with complex needs require doctors to apply their knowledge and to balance the risks involved in different treatments whilst taking account of patients' views and ultimately ensuring their safety. At the point of entry to medical school applicants will be expected to show aptitude for managing risk by showing they are able to balance competing needs and deal with problems in a non clinical setting.

Applicants should think of examples of when they have had to balance competing demands or weigh up the impact of their decisions. These examples could come from activities undertaken at school, work or socially. For example a student may have to balance study with paid employment or may have dealt with a difficult problem during their work experience.

### ***'Respond to risks to safety'***

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Personal responsibility
- Conscientiousness

Doctors must be open and honest when things are going or have gone wrong. Medical schools are looking for applicants who take personal responsibility for their own actions.

Doctors have a responsibility to raise concerns about patient safety both at an individual and organisational level. Therefore medical schools are looking for applicants who are conscientious and have the potential to advocate for patient safety even in difficult circumstances. They are looking for applicants who take responsibility for their own actions.

### ***'Protect patients and colleagues from any risk posed by your health'***

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Insight into your own health

Medical professionals like all people experience poor health. This is not problematic unless it impacts upon their ability to treat patients safely. This means that doctors need to have a high degree of awareness of the impact their mental or physical ill health may have on patients and also understand the importance of seeking and following independent advice from a medical practitioner.

This is why medical schools ask applicants if they have any health conditions or a disability at the point of entry to medical school; they need to ensure that students with health conditions receive the support they need and that they have insight into the impact their condition might have on their ability to complete the course. It is crucial that applicants are open and honest about their health during the application process.

## **Domain 3 – Communication, partnership and teamwork**

### ***'Communicate effectively'***

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Effective communication, including reading, writing, listening and speaking

The ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of different people, often in difficult situations, is essential to all aspects of medical practice. Good communication skills are one of things that patients value the most in their doctors.

Medical schools look for evidence of good communication skills during the application process with the understanding that their students will learn at medical school how to apply these skills in a clinical setting and in different clinical situations.

## ***'Work collaboratively with colleagues to maintain or improve patient care'***

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Teamwork

Doctors must possess the ability to work effectively as a member of a healthcare team, recognising and respecting the skills and attributes of other professions and of patients. They must co-operate with their colleagues in the best interest of patients. This is essential to patient safety and the effective running of a clinical service.

Evidence that an applicant has the ability to be an effective team member is something medical schools look for during admissions processes.

## ***'Teaching, training and assessing'***

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Effective communication, including reading, writing, listening and speaking

Some doctors will take a more active role in teaching, training and assessing their colleagues during their career but all health professionals have a duty to pass on their knowledge to others. During medical school students will begin to develop the skills needed to teach others but at the point of entry to medical school they will be assessed on the core competencies inherent in good teaching, namely effective communication, openness and honesty.

## ***'Continuity and coordination of care'***

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Ability to take responsibility for your own actions
- Conscientiousness

The safe and effective transfer of a patient's care from one healthcare professional to another is essential for good clinical practice. The receiving clinician always needs to receive appropriately detailed information to allow continuity of care based on the patient's needs. Doctors are required to take personal responsibility for ensuring that this happens. Students will learn at medical school the skills needed to allow them to make safe transfers of patients but at the point of selection medical schools are looking for applicants with a sense of personal responsibility that suggests an aptitude for this way of practising. Applicants can demonstrate this by thinking of situations in their life where they have had to take personal responsibility for something; this could be at school, in the workplace or during extra curricular or social activities.

## ***'Establish and maintain partnerships with patients'***

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Ability to treat people with respect
- Effective communication, including reading, writing, listening and speaking
- Empathy and the ability to care about other people

Doctors must treat every patient fairly and with respect and dignity whatever their life choices or beliefs. They must provide treatment in partnership with their patients taking into account patients'

views on their own treatment. Consideration of the likely impact of interventions on patients' personal and social circumstances needs to be taken.

Medical students will learn how to provide this type of care. However, in selection processes, medical schools will be looking for character traits that will support this standard of care. In particular they will be looking for effective communication, the ability to respect other people and their views, and sensitivity to other people's feelings and experiences will also be sought.

## Domain 4 – Maintaining trust

### ***'Show respect for patients'***

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Ability to treat people with respect
- Ability to take responsibility for your own actions
- Empathy and the ability to care about other people

It is important that doctors treat patients with respect at all times. They must remain professional at all times and not pursue personal relationships with patients or allow their personal beliefs to impact on the treatment they provide to patients. They must be open and honest when things go wrong and offer a full apology.

Medical schools look for applicants who display respect, personal responsibility and empathy as these are good indicators that the individual will be able to provide this type of care.

### ***'Treat patients and colleagues fairly and without discrimination'***

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Ability to treat people with respect
- Ability to take responsibility for your own actions
- Empathy and the ability to care about other people
- Effective communication, including reading, writing, listening and speaking

Doctors must give priority to patients on the basis of their clinical need. A doctor's personal beliefs or their view of the patient's lifestyle must not impact on their decision making. They must not deny a patient treatment even if doing so would put their own health or safety at risk. They should raise concerns if they see colleagues behaving in a way which does not respect the rights of patients.

Medical schools look for evidence of respect for others, responsibility, integrity and empathy in potential students as these qualities show an aptitude for providing care to this standard.

### ***'Act with honesty and integrity'***

Applicable skills and attributes:

- Honesty
- Ability to take responsibility for your own actions

Medicine is one of the most trusted professions and doctors must behave in a way that upholds the trust society places in them. This means that doctors should bear in mind their professional

responsibilities both at work and in their private lives. In particular it is important that they do not break the law. Where doctors do not behave in line with their professional responsibilities they must be open and honest about this. For example, doctors must declare if they have received a caution or conviction for a criminal offence to their regulator and employer.

This is why medical schools ask applicants to declare if they have received a caution from the police or a criminal conviction or have been subject to disciplinary proceedings. Applicants must take responsibility for their actions and be honest with the medical school about their personal history.