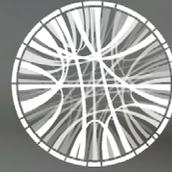




Royal College of
General Practitioners



MSC Medical
Schools
Council
Selection Alliance



INSPIRING AND PREPARING TOMORROW'S DOCTORS

.....
Reflective diary

MY ROUTE TO BECOMING A DOCTOR

Where do I start?

GCSE / Scottish Nationals

All medical schools require different things, as a rough guide they'll ask for a minimum of five GCSE/Scottish National passes at grades A-C (9-4) or equivalent including subjects such as Maths and English.



Top tip!

Medical degrees can have different names, but they tend to fit in to four types:

- Standard Entry Medicine (5 or 6 years)
- Graduate Entry Medicine (4 or 5 years)
- Medicine with a Preliminary Year (6 years)
- Medicine with a Gateway Year (6 years)

For more information visit:

medschools.ac.uk/studying-medicine



A level / Further Education / Scottish Highers

Again, each medical school will have its own entry requirements. Most are looking for the following:

- A*A*A – AAA at A level or AAAAB – AAABB for Scottish Highers.
- Some schools look for specific subjects to be taken such as Chemistry and others offer contextualised admissions which allow entry with lower grades.
- To find out more about each medical school's entry requirements visit:
medschools.ac.uk/studying-medicine/applications/entry-requirements

Top tip!

Medical schools are looking for applicants who have the correct academic aptitude but who are also able to demonstrate the core values and attributes required to study medicine. Find out more at: medschools.ac.uk/studying-medicine/applications



Applying to Medical School

When applying you'll need to:

- Have achieved good exam results throughout school, college or sixth form and have good predicted grades.
- Have developed an understanding of the career through activities such as work experience and volunteering.
- Take an admissions test where necessary such as UCAT, BMAT or GAMSAT.
- Usually attend an interview to demonstrate further the non-academic attributes that you have written about in your personal statement.

Top tip!

Most medical schools will ask you to demonstrate what you have learnt and gained from your work experience, caring activities and voluntary experience. Remember, it is what you have learnt from these experiences that is important – not how many hours you have completed. To find out more about work experience visit: medschools.ac.uk/studying-medicine/applications



MY ROUTE TO BECOMING A DOCTOR

What next?

University Degree

- Study for between 4-6 years depending on your course and choose from 41 medical schools in the UK!
- While at medical school you'll:
 - ✓ Gain relevant skills and experiences in basic medical sciences and practical clinical tasks.
 - ✓ Carry out wide range of clinical placements under supervision, spending time in GP practices, hospitals and specialist clinics.
 - ✓ Sit exams and carry out a wide range of projects that develop skills such as teamwork and communication.



Foundation Programme

- Having graduated from medical school you'll become a foundation doctor – your first paid job as a doctor! You'll carry out two years of training known as F1 and F2.
- The foundation programme involves six different rotations across a wide range of medical specialties. These rotations enable you to gain valuable experience and become competent in basic clinical skills.
- You'll also be able to further develop non-clinical skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership and research.

Progressing to...

Specialty Training

for example General Practice

- To become a GP in the UK, you will need to complete a minimum of three years (full time equivalent) specialty training.
- During these three years you'll typically spend 18-months in hospital posts and 18-months in general practice.
- As part of your training you'll carry out a series of assessments, which once passed – allow you to join the GMC's GP Register.
- For more information visit: gprecruitment.hee.nhs.uk

Top tip!

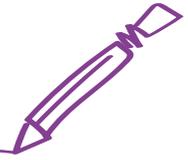
Find out about other medical specialties at:
medschools.ac.uk/studying-medicine/after-medical-school/specialties

To find out more about becoming a doctor head to:
medschools.ac.uk/studying-medicine/after-medical-school



DISCOVER A CAREER WITH ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES AT RCGP.ORG.UK/DISCOVERGP

This reflective diary belongs to:



Introducing your reflective diary

This reflective diary has been produced to support and guide you through any relevant experience you undertake in preparation for applying to medical school. It is split into three sections pre-experience, experience and post-experience. These are clearly marked in the text and are designed to help you think about and gain the most from your experiences.

This diary has been designed to be used as a guide during any 'relevant experience' including...

- ✓ primary care work experience at a GP practice,
- ✓ secondary care work experience in a hospital setting,
- ✓ completing the interactive video platform Observe GP,
- ✓ voluntary work in a care home,
- ✓ suitable paid employment,
- ✓ informal conversations with healthcare professionals,
- ✓ reading relevant literature or listening to relevant podcasts.

It may also be helpful to use this diary to reflect on your experiences during healthcare focused taster days, summer schools or other events.



OBSERVE GP

rcgp.org.uk/observegp

What should you be aiming to gain from any relevant experience?

In the past many medical schools specifically required applicants to complete specific work experience, but now, for many this is no longer the case.

Entry requirements for all 40 medical schools in the UK can be found on the Medical Schools Council web pages: medschools.ac.uk.

What is important, is that applicants gain relevant experience and reflect on these experiences so that they can demonstrate:

- People focused experience of providing a service, care or help to others and that applicants understand the realities of working in a caring profession.
- The values, attitudes and behaviours essential to be a doctor such as being conscientious, good communication skills and the ability to interact with a wide variety of people.
- A realistic understanding of medicine and the physical, organisational and emotional demands of a medical career.

Source: MSC (2017) Guidance on relevant experience for applying to medical school.



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Pre-experience

Reflection helps us
to get the most out
of our experiences





What is reflection?

Reflection helps us to think about our experiences.

We can reflect on the past, the present or even think about the future. It helps us to understand and learn from situations, to develop competencies and to think clearly about career choices. You can use reflection to help you to appreciate what other people are thinking and feeling; and you can use it to explore your own emotions.



It allows you to take notes and makes you think about what you are observing whilst on your placement – so when you actually go to the GP practice you can reflect on what is going on... now it's all gone into my personal statement.



Pupil who completed primary care work experience at a GP practice



Activity: Reflecting in medicine

An important part of being a doctor, or any healthcare professional, is the ability to reflect on their own practice.

What do you think are the benefits of doing this?



Keeping a reflective diary

Using and maintaining a reflective diary will help you get the most out of your experience, whilst allowing you to explore your future career options. It can be used to help you remember what you have seen, challenge how it made you feel and think about the skills you will need to develop.

You should keep on returning to your diary as it can help you write your application to university, prepare for interviews and most importantly decide if this is the career path that you want to follow.

When should I use it?

A reflective diary can be used in a number of ways; be that in a GP practice, in a hospital setting, on a formal work experience programme, whilst carrying out a voluntary activity or even after an informal discussion with a healthcare professional.



What is a reflective diary?

Learning or reflective diaries (sometimes called learning logs or learning journals) are similar to personal diaries – they allow you to record your own feelings and reactions to events or experiences as they happen. By keeping an up-to-date reflective diary you will find it easier to reflect upon your experience, its content, and its effect on your learning and personal development.

Reviewing and reflecting upon your progress is an essential component of your work experience. Reflection allows you to embed learning and, crucially, apply it in our everyday or professional lives. True and accurate reflection demands more than a mere description of events or experiences – it is your interpretation and analysis of events as they affect you and your development that is important.

Therefore, reflective diaries are unique documents that highlight and ‘unpack’ personally important learning experiences. Consider the following account from a student who completed work experience in primary care at a GP practice.



Activity: Student reflections

Underline the key points that stand out in the passage below:



“I wasn’t sure about the value of a reflective diary... I really couldn’t get my head round how writing things down all the time would help my learning. How wrong I was! I found that keeping a diary made me note how I felt at the time about an activity or event. It’s so easy to forget things when you are busy, but by writing my feelings down on paper I took more in. Keeping a regular journal has certainly helped focus my reflective reviews of learning. I found that by looking back on my thoughts and experiences (my reflective diary entries) throughout the GP placement helped me understand more about the subject matter. People skills are so important – observing how the GP behaved and spoke with different people was a real learning experience.”



Making notes: What should I write?

There is no right or wrong way dictating when you should use a diary or what you should write in it. Every diary is different. There are though some general points to follow. It should be:



A record which is useful to you.



An honest account of what happened.



Used to help you jog your memory about what you have seen and how it made you feel.



Written as soon as possible after the event before you forget anything!

Reflective writing isn't always easy. It can be difficult because you should think carefully about the learning activities you embark upon – whether these are in the classroom or on your placement, you can reflect on all learning experiences.

As a starting point; it might be useful to bear the following points in mind when making your reflective notes:

1

Begin with a description of your experience.



2

Explore what you thought and felt at the time.



3

Provide an analysis of what was good and bad about the experience.



4

Draw some conclusions from your analysis and indicate how you would do things differently in the future based on your experience.

It is important to remember that to make the best use of your diary you should try to use reflective writing techniques rather than simple descriptive methods as illustrated below.

Descriptive writing

- > Account is descriptive with no reflection.
- > It tells a story but from only one point of view.
- > Emotions, if mentioned, are not explored.
- > Ideas and/or external information may be mentioned but they are not questioned or linked to possible impact on behaviour.

Reflective writing

- > Clear evidence of 'standing back' from the event, mulling over the material.
- > Multiple perspectives have been included.
- > Self-questioning is taking place whilst considering past experiences, current behaviour and even future development.



Tools for reflection

There are many tools and techniques that have been designed to help you reflect.

Many of these techniques can shape the way you approach and deal with your experiences. We've provided examples of the most commonly used methods below.

Simple prompts

There are lots of prompt words and phrases you can use to help focus your attention around actions you've taken. Prompts such as those provided in the table below are great tools to help you reflect because they are easy to remember and apply to all aspects of your placement.

Prompt words or phrases:	Questions linked to these:
Good / Bad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What went well today/this week? What didn't go so well?
Erase / Rewind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If I could rewind time would I have done things differently? What might be my reasons for changing things?
Why did I do that?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can I identify what shaped my actions in this instance?
Spot check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Am I clear about what is being asked of me? Could I explain what I'm doing right now to others if asked to do so?
Humble pie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have I been challenged today in my thinking? Have I learned lessons from it?
Making a difference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What part have I played in making a difference today?



Activity: Erase and rewind

Spend a few minutes, using this prompt technique to rewind through your last week in school or college.

Use the space below to jot down some notes. If you had the time back, what would you do differently and why?





What, so what, now what?

A slightly more structured approach to dealing with experiences and reflecting upon them is presented below with reference to three distinct question areas.

The first stage is to focus on 'what' – this requires a description of what has happened or what has been observed. The second element determines 'so what' – what did you learn or take from the experience. The final element focuses on 'now what' – what is the impact on you and your learning. There are additional prompt words and phrases you can use within each of the three areas to help support the development of your own detailed reflections. We've included an example below (using the 'what, so what, now what?' approach) of an experience in primary care at a GP practice. It provides a useful mechanism for exploring what has taken place and provides you with some helpful prompts to initiate your reflections.

DATE	<i>15th July</i>
<p>What? Describe the activity or what you have observed.</p>	<i>Observed receptionist processing patients.</i>
<p>So what? What did you learn from this? What did you get out of it? What did you expect to get out of it?</p>	<i>The receptionist dealt with lots of people! It was non-stop. I thought this might be quite a boring part of the placement which would just involve form-filling and other paperwork. I was surprised at how varied the work of the receptionist is in a busy GP practice. Yes, the role does involve a lot of admin-type work but they are also the public face of the practice and the first person a patient sees.</i>
<p>Now what? What impact has it had on your thoughts? Have these changed in light of your experience?</p>	<i>I think a key point that I've taken from this is that reception staff are skilled at dealing with people – they need to quickly determine where to direct or send patients given the information they've received. Reception staff are important 'gate-keepers' in a GP practice but they are also important members of the team.</i>

Templates on page 22...



2

Experience

Reflection helps us
to get the most out
of our experiences



Activity: An overview of your relevant experience setting

At the start of your experience it is useful to get an overview of the setting – from the type of patients they see, to the services they offer. Please use the boxes below to fill in this information.

Who are the members of staff involved in providing care for patients?

What services do they provide?

What is the setting like? *For example, modern purpose built building with patient waiting room, consultation rooms, treatment rooms, reception area.*

Consider how accessible it is for all patients – ease of transportation, ease of access to building, welcoming environment for all.

How does it link to other healthcare services that a patient may need? *For example, the practice has a chemist on site.*

Do the demographics of the local community impact on the services that are provided?

How do patients access the services? *For example, telephone, drop-in or online.*



Activity: Meet the healthcare team

As you meet with different members of the healthcare team find out a little bit about their roles, what skills they think are important for their duties and what academic journey they took to get into their professions.

Role	
Duties	
Key skills	
Route into profession/ key skills	

Role	
Duties	
Key skills	
Route into profession/ key skills	

Role	
Duties	
Key skills	
Route into profession/ key skills	

Role	
Duties	
Key skills	
Route into profession/ key skills	



What to consider when reflecting on your experience

The word cloud on the next page includes the core values and attributes needed to study medicine which have been constructed from the Medical School Council (MSC). You will need to demonstrate understanding and potential in these areas when applying to medical school.

The table below provides space for you to reflect upon specific examples of when you have demonstrated these values, attributes and skills yourself and also when you witness them in action during your experiences.

Value, attribute, skill:	How was the value, attribute or skill demonstrated?

Find out more:
Search online for the PDF document:
'Statement on the core values and attributes needed to study medicine.'



Problem solving



Resilience

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



EMPATHY AND THE ABILITY TO CARE FOR OTHERS



Conscientious

Honesty

DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY



MANAGING RISK

insight into your own strengths and weaknesses



DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Respect

PERSONAL ORGANISATION



Teamwork

RESPONSIBILITY FOR OWN ACTIONS

INSIGHT INTO YOUR OWN HEALTH

MOTIVATION TO STUDY MEDICINE AND GENUINE INTEREST IN THE MEDICAL PROFESSION





A template for you to use: What, so what, now what?

We've taken one of the most used frameworks for reflection and reproduced it as a template for you to use during your placement. *An example is provided on page 12.*

DATE	
What? Describe the activity or what you have observed.	
So what? What did you learn from this? What did you get out of it? What did you expect to get out of it?	
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Now what? What impact has it had on your thoughts? Have these changed in light of your experience?	



3

Post-experience

Reflection helps us
to get the most out
of our experiences



Activity: Reflective questions

We've included some useful reflective questions here to help you make the most out of the experiences you've gained.

Summarise the main activities you participated in during your experiences.

What were the highlights of your experience?

What skills do you think you have gained as a result of your experience?

What has this experience taught you about the realities of medicine?

How would a doctor or healthcare professional utilise the skills you have gained?



Vocabulary and phrases

During your experiences you will most likely hear a lot of medical terminology and vocabulary, some words you will be familiar with and others may be not. Some examples are provided below.

What is the difference between? Two examples are provided below.

Prognosis

A doctor's judgment of the likely or expected development of a disease or of the chances of getting better. A statement of what is judged likely to happen in the future, especially in connection with a particular situation.

Diagnosis

Judgment about what a particular illness or problem is, made after examining it.

Symptom

Evidence of a medical issue experienced by the patient i.e. subjective.

Sign

Evidence of a medical issue detected by a doctor i.e. objective.

Acute medicine/care

This refers to medicine/care that a patient receives in hospital following an injury, operation or illness. It is different to any care a patient receives for an ongoing health condition from their GP.

Primary care

Healthcare provided in the community for people making an initial approach to a medical practitioner or clinic for advice or treatment.

Secondary care

Secondary care simply means being taken care of by someone who has particular expertise in whatever problem a patient is having. It is where most people go when they have a health problem that can't be dealt with in primary care because it needs more detailed knowledge, skill or equipment than the GP has. It is often provided in a hospital. The GP will decide what kind of specialist the patient needs to see and will contact them on the patient's behalf to get them an appointment – this is called a 'referral'.



Use this space to record words, specific language, acronyms, medical conditions and phrases that you hear during your experiences i.e. 'the patient presented with'.



Reference material

If you'd like to read more about reflection and reflective writing, take a look at the following sources:

Bolton, G. (2014) *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development*. London: Sage.

Cottrell, S. (2011) *Critical Thinking Skills: Developing Effective Analysis and Argument*. London: Palgrave Study Skills.

Kolb, D. A. (1984) *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

MSC (2017) *Guidance on relevant experience for applying to medical school*.

Schon, D. A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.

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- Michelle McAvoy, RCGP
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Congratulations for completing the RCGP and MSC reflective diary!

Next steps:

- 1 Check out: medschools.ac.uk/studying-medicine/applications and rcgp.org.uk/discovergcp for more information.
- 2 Listen to podcasts and read articles and books about healthcare and medical practice. Reflect upon what you hear and read.
- 3 Describe your experiences to other people, perfect your ability to articulate and communicate about healthcare.
- 4 Keep this diary!





WORLD
LAND
TRUST™

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