



School pupil FAQs

The aim of your activity should be to help pupils gain a realistic understanding of medicine and to help them make an informed career choice.

Below you'll find further information to help you answer some of the most frequently asked questions when engaging with school pupils.

Why did you decide to become a GP?

Evidence has found that pupils benefit from knowing that other people can feel uncertain and unsure.

If you weren't sure what you wanted to do when you were at their age, this can be both reassuring and powerful. Explain how you came to your career decision.

What is it like being a GP? What does a typical working day look like?

You as a GP are uniquely placed to answer this question and share your day-to-day experience.

It is important that pupils are aware of both the benefits and challenges of any career they consider. They are unlikely to know that GPs can have extended roles or portfolio careers. They are unlikely to know that 90% of patient care in the NHS, is seen through a GP, they too are unlikely know that over 1 million consultations take place in the UK every day.

It would be useful to clearly outline the skills and experiences you are required to have to become a GP and to explain what a ten-minute consultation with a patient is like.

What subjects did you study, and what grades did you achieve?

Try to avoid recommending specific universities. This can confuse pupils but, hearing of your journey can be useful.

Every medical school is set up to train and educate exceptional doctors. Bear in mind, that some medicine degree programmes better suit certain pupils i.e. due to length, style of learning and location of university.

Selection processes can also suit certain applicants i.e. some medical schools weight personal statements to decide on who to interview, some only look at personal statements after selection for interview.

Pupils are recommended to do their research in advance of selecting their university choices.





What does a medical school interview consist of? Do GCSEs/ Scottish Highers matter?

Direct all pupils to the Medical Schools Council webpages (medschools.ac.uk) – they have dedicated resources that list entry requirements for all UK medical schools including GCSEs and Scottish Highers. Very few medical schools accept BTEC qualifications. Individual university webpages are also required to contain information about their selection process to medicine.

You may wish to share your experience of the application process but bear in mind changes are likely to have occurred and every university approaches this differently.

I don't personally know a doctor, can you help me get work experience?

Most medical schools require applicants to have gained a realistic understanding of medicine. One of the ways applicants can gain this is through undertaking relevant work experience but often this is difficult to obtain unless you have direct access to healthcare networks and contacts.

Often gaining work experience becomes a 'tick box' but pupils should be considering whether medicine is right for them i.e. they are making an informed choice and they understand and can reflect upon the skills and values required to be a doctor.

Explain to pupils:

- What is important, is not how much work experience an applicant has but how they reflect upon it.
- Advise pupils to visit rcgp.org.uk/discovergp to download a copy of our reflective diary. This resource can be used by pupils on any relevant work experience i.e. in primary or secondary care, volunteering in a care home or during part time work. Pupils should not only be able to describe what they see but have reflected upon it and be able to articulate their understanding of a career in medicine. Provide an example where possible e.g. do they know what person-centred care is, have they ever witnessed it?
- Medical Schools Council (MSC) have dedicated resources (medschools.ac.uk) that outline what constitutes as relevant work experience alongside the core values and attributes required from medical school applicants. Direct pupils to view these webpages where possible.
- It is recommended that pupils approach multiple locations for work experience, asking for one day rather than multiple days or weeks.
- In addition to work experience, applicants can learn a great deal about the realities of medicine through reading relevant books, articles and listening to podcasts i.e. BMJ 'Talk Medicine'.

The RCGP has guidance for members wishing to deliver work experience in their practice. Contact schools@rcgp.org.uk for or visit rcgp.org.uk/discovergp for more information.

