

Information for Parents and Students

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WELCOME

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to MedEntry, and congratulations on making the decision to pursue a career in the medical field. Medicine is a rewarding career, with the potential to make lasting and positive change to the community.

No doubt you will have started considering the various universities that offer medicine, or considered sitting the UMAT. At MedEntry, our aim is to assist you in entering medicine by providing preparation for the UMAT exam, as well as for interviews and university admissions requirements.

In this guide is some basic information about how to get into medical school, the difference between various universities and what MedEntry can offer to assist you.

For more information, please visit www.medentry.edu.au, or call us on 1300 MedEntry (for New Zealand, 00613 9359 9960).

Regards,

The MedEntry Team

OBTAINING ENTRY INTO MEDICINE

Entry criteria

University websites can be difficult to navigate and their selection criteria for medicine are often unclear.

Every university differs slightly in how they go about selecting students for medical and health science courses. You should research each university individually to see what their criteria are and which course will suit you best.

In general, entrance into undergraduate Medicine, Dentistry or Health Sciences in Australia is based on three criteria:

- Your high school results, or ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank)
- Your score in UMAT (Undergraduate Medical and Health Sciences Admissions Test)
- Your score in an interview or oral assessment (note: some universities also require a written application)

Most Australian universities require a combination of your UMAT score, a medical interview and finally ATAR score to gain entry into medicine.

This is very different to most other courses which require ATAR alone.

These three criteria can be equally weighted, or some universities may put more emphasis on a particular criterion. Furthermore, universities may look at a particular UMAT section score rather than your UMAT score as a whole.

In general, the undergraduate medicine selection process can be summarised as follows:



Course pre-requisites

Some universities will also require specific pre-requisite subjects to be studied in your final year of high-school, such as chemistry for Monash University. Others may only ‘highly recommend’ that you study these subjects. Thus, students need to ensure they select subjects that will satisfy these requirements. If you do not study a particular prerequisite subject and/or obtain a sufficient study score in that subject, you will not be eligible for entry into undergraduate medical courses at some universities.

Generally, many Australian/NZ universities require:

- Satisfactory completion of English or other English/Literature subject
- Satisfactory completion of Mathematics, Physics and/or Chemistry. Please note this differs between universities so it is important to research the particular university(s) you are interested in.

Don't I need a really high ATAR/high school score to study medicine?

No, you do not necessarily need a top-tier ATAR to gain entry into an undergraduate medical course in Australia/NZ. Respective universities differ, but in general it is the combination of your UMAT, ATAR and interview score that will help you to gain entry. Generally, the higher your UMAT score, the lower your required ATAR.

However, this does not necessarily work in the reverse because once your ATAR drops below 99.90 a poor UMAT score will not be overlooked for entrance into your preferred medical school. Thus a high ATAR score does not negate the need for a high UMAT score, whereas a high UMAT score will lessen the need for a top-tier ATAR score.

For most candidates to be eligible for entry into undergraduate medicine, they will need to score highly on the UMAT first. Without a sufficient UMAT score even an ATAR of 99.95 may not be enough to allow entry into your preferred university for undergraduate medicine.

Students should also be aware of what universities have as their minimum required ATAR. The required ATAR for undergraduate medicine for all

A top-tier ATAR is not the sole determinant of whether or not you will gain entry into undergraduate medicine in Australia/NZ.

universities will vary slightly from year to year. Furthermore, the minimum score published on a university's website may not always be realistic. For example, although in theory it is possible to gain entry into UNSW with an ATAR of 96, the median ATAR of students studying medicine there is in fact around the 99.7 mark.

Given how difficult it can be to achieve such a high ATAR, your performance in the UMAT exam will be the key to enabling entry into these courses. A high UMAT score will reduce your need to obtain a top-end ATAR result.

In fact, the UMAT can be a good way for students to shore up their chances of gaining entry into medicine prior to final high school exams, since UMAT results become available in September each year. A very high UMAT score will take the pressure off students studying for their exams, because it will lower the required ATAR that they need to gain entry into their chosen medical course.

A high UMAT score can help take pressure off students wishing to gain entry into undergraduate medicine as it lowers the required ATAR.

Administrative Information

Students should be mindful that if they choose to apply interstate they will need to register with the various state academic authorities, for example, VTAC (Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre), UAC (University Admissions Centre – for NSW students), QTAC (Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre) etc. Registering with only one of these academic authorities will not automatically register you with the others. Be mindful of the VTAC, UAC and QTAC closing dates (usually the end of September each year).

Be mindful of VTAC, UAC, and QTAC closing dates as they are often surprisingly early in the school year.

More Information

For more detailed information and approximate ATAR and UMAT scores required for each university, MedEntry students should refer to the University Admissions guide on the LMS. Course requirements for individual universities (for school leavers as well as for mature age students) will also be covered. MedEntry can assist students in completing their written applications for specific universities via the Application Review Service.

Entry for mature age students

For mature age students, some universities use GPA (Grade Point Average), UMAT score and interview score. Universities such as the University of Western Sydney (UWS), Newcastle, New England, Tasmania, Otago and Auckland use UMAT and not GAMSAT (Graduate Australian Medical Schools Admissions Test) for graduates.

If you cannot gain entry into an undergraduate medical course, you have the option of taking the graduate entry medicine pathway.

What is the difference between the graduate and undergraduate medical entry pathways?

An undergraduate course means you enter your chosen course straight away i.e. you commence studying medicine at university straight out of high school. A graduate course means you must first complete an undergraduate degree in another area of study, such as science. Then, assuming you have:

- maintained a high enough GPA
- scored highly on the GAMSAT
- scored well in an interview (usually a multiple mini interview or MMI)

you will obtain entry into medicine and will be able to begin your medical degree.

In general, the graduate pathway is longer and more expensive than the undergraduate one. If you are sure that you wish to pursue medicine, it is far less stressful, less expensive and less time consuming to obtain entry via the undergraduate pathway. As one example, undergraduate medicine allows you to get out into the field and practice earlier than graduate medicine. Undergraduates will obtain more experience compared to those who take the graduate medical entry pathway (for example at Melbourne University) who end up practising much later in life.

The graduate pathway is best for those who are very unsure of their career path or who are unable to obtain entry via the undergraduate route.

WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

Three years from completing high school

Your research on different university requirements should begin now! Make a shortlist of universities at which you would like to study medicine. Note down each university's selection criteria and any pre-requisite subjects they may require. This will help you choose your subjects for your final year of high school. It will also encourage you to focus on your weaknesses if one of these subjects, such as English, is required by your preferred university.

Begin looking for work experience and volunteer work in the medical field. This may include work at your local aged care facility, hospital, medical centre or other volunteer organisation. It is important that you begin this early, as you will be busy in the later years of high school. Having quality work experience or volunteer work on your university application and being able to talk about it in your medical interviews will set you apart from other medical school aspirants. Most universities will expect that prospective candidates will have done some work experience so they understand the role of a health professional. Volunteer work demonstrates to the university that you truly are a well-rounded individual who cares for the community and are pursuing a career in medicine or health science for the right reasons. Importantly, participating in this kind of work will give you a real taste of what is required to succeed and excel in the medical field but also whether or not this type of work is right for you.

Some students start preparing for UMAT before their final years of schooling, and if you are motivated, go for it! The earlier you start preparing for a generic skills test such as UMAT, the better. Most of the skills needed to succeed in the UMAT exam need to be developed over a period of time. Note that you will not be able to actually sit the UMAT exam until your final year of schooling.

Make a shortlist of universities at which you would like to study medicine. Note down their respective selection criteria and also any pre-requisite subjects that they may require.

Volunteer and work experience will set you apart from other medical school candidates

Two years from completing high school

Make sure you are studying the required prerequisite subjects needed by your preferred medical course. Your remaining subjects should be subjects that you enjoy and excel in, but also those which will help you to obtain a high ATAR score. You can also obtain advice on choice of subjects during the MedEntry UMAT course.

MedEntry recommends that you begin your UMAT preparation at least a year prior to the UMAT exam. Because the UMAT is a skills based exam, you cannot 'cram' for it in a short period of time. You need to learn, practice and master the skills required to succeed in the UMAT over a period of time. Furthermore, the sooner you begin your UMAT preparation, the less stress you will be under next year, when you will be busy with your final exams.

Also ensure that you have done some work experience and/or volunteer work in the medical field (see information in section above).

Final year of high school

If you haven't already done so, your UMAT preparation needs to begin now!

Unlike your school subjects, the UMAT is not a content-based exam. The UMAT aims to measure a student's aptitude and suitability for studying a medicine or health science course, and therefore is a unique exam. Success in the UMAT exam will depend on your skills in answering specific UMAT style questions, rather than knowledge-based questions.

UMAT preparation should be treated like an extra school subject and you should allocate your time accordingly. UMAT is in July so you will need to dedicate significant amounts of time in the early months of the year to prepare.

Consider which universities you would like to apply to, and if you have not already done so, research their entry requirements. Remember that some universities have specific prerequisite subjects that are required, some will

Because the UMAT is a skill-based exam, you cannot 'cram' information for the UMAT in a short period of time.

UMAT preparation should be treated like an extra school subject and you should allocate your time accordingly.

require a written application, and some weight various sections of UMAT differently. This will help you plan your year.

In general, MedEntry recommends applying to as many universities as possible (even those interstate). This is because almost all universities require an interview to obtain entry, and interviews by definition are subjective. You therefore cannot be guaranteed entry into any one particular university, even if you perform excellently in UMAT and ATAR.

Make sure you have registered with your relevant state admissions authority eg. VTAC, UAC, QTAC. If you are applying interstate you will need to register separately for each one of these. Enrolling for one will not automatically enrol you for the others. Registration for all admissions authorities can be completed online.

You should also consider researching scholarships offered by different universities. Rural students should check their additional eligibility through universities' rural entry schemes as these will often slightly lower ATAR and UMAT requirements. Non-ATAR based Scholarship applications often close well before ATAR results are released so if you are interested in scholarships, it is important to start investigating your options early in the year.

Once you have sat the UMAT and depending on how you went, you will need to start preparing for the medical interview or MMI required by your desired university. Check the interview dates for each university and make sure that you will not be away when interviews take place – sometimes dates can clash with schoolies or family holidays, for example. Most universities will not reschedule interview dates, so you will need to work around them!

What if I don't do well in UMAT?

If you do not do well in UMAT but have performed reasonably well in your ATAR, you can resit the UMAT and gain entry into undergraduate medicine the following year. However, some universities will not accept students who have commenced an undergraduate degree elsewhere. For example, you cannot begin a science or biomedicine degree at Melbourne University and then transfer into medicine at Monash University (as

Some universities will NOT accept students who have commenced an undergraduate degree elsewhere

Monash only takes ‘school leavers’). Furthermore, for the limited number of universities that do accept non-school leavers, the number of places available decrease.

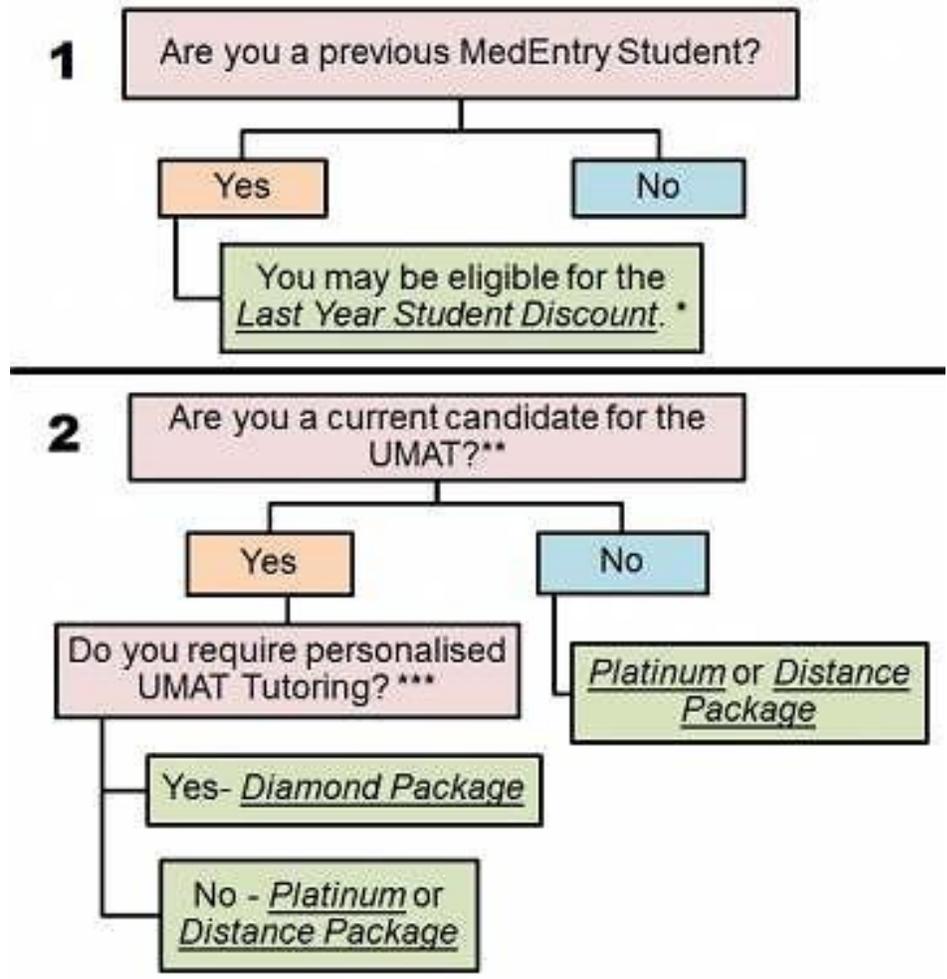
Alternatively, instead of commencing an undergraduate degree, you could take a gap year and re-sit the UMAT that year. The advantage of this is that you are still considered a ‘school leaver’. All universities offering undergraduate medicine will still consider you, and the number of places available to you will not decrease. In addition to preparing for UMAT, you could seek paid work, work experience and/or volunteer work in a health related field which would not only help you confirm that medicine is the career for you, but will also help you significantly in interviews and written applications.

Note that one university in Australia, JCU (James Cook University), does not require UMAT for entry into medicine. If you do not do well in UMAT, you can still apply to JCU. Keep in mind however that the focus of this course is rural and tropical medicine. If you are a city-based person without significant experience in rural areas, admission can be difficult.

Ultimately, the decision you make will depend on a number of factors, and particularly your ATAR and UMAT scores. Guidance will be provided as part of the MedEntry UMAT course. However, unless you choose to take the graduate pathway and sit GAMSAT, all routes will require you to succeed in UMAT – it is crucial to being able to study undergraduate medicine.

WHICH MEDENTRY PACKAGE SHOULD I CHOOSE?

MedEntry has packages to suit all your UMAT needs. The Platinum Package is by far the most popular package and is the package recommended by MedEntry. Simply follow the flowchart to see which package will suit you best for the UMAT.



Footnotes from flowchart:

* Previous Student: A student who has enrolled in a MedEntry package in the previous year. The discount will be applied when you checkout.

** Current Candidate: students in the latter half of year 11 or first half of year 12 (for Australian students).

***Students will be tutored by one of MedEntry's tutors – all of whom have performed outstandingly in the UMAT (and usually ATAR) themselves.

Students living in rural or remote areas or overseas can enrol in the Distance package. However, a Platinum Package is highly recommended as there may be information provided in the two day UMAT course that is not available elsewhere. Many students from overseas (e.g. South Africa, Singapore) fly in just to attend the MedEntry UMAT course because it is so valuable.

Description of Packages

All packages include access to the LMS (Learning Management System) – an online, interactive system that provides immediate feedback. The LMS contains a wealth of information and resources, including 10 full-length practice exams (with an option to add an extra 5 exams), drills, guides, forums, an unlimited question trainer and more. All of our resources are regularly updated to reflect changes in the UMAT from year to year.

The Platinum and Diamond packages also include a two day UMAT course, which is run by experts in the field. The UMAT Courses provide a comprehensive approach to all three types of question in UMAT, as well as covering interview technique. The courses are engaging, interactive and enjoyable for students. Feedback from past students consistently state that the courses are useful not only for UMAT, but for high school study and life in general. An important part of the course is the opportunity to sit a simulated exam under timed conditions, and receive feedback on your performance, including your predicted UMAT score. This is helpful for planning your preparation in the lead up to the UMAT exam.

Distance package:

- Suitable if
 - You have previously attended a workshop and require continuous skill development online
 - You are unable to travel to a two day course (for example, rural and overseas students)
- In this package, you will receive online LMS access

***Choose from the
Distance Package,
Platinum Package, or
Diamond Package.***

Platinum package:

- Suitable for most students, and also if
 - You have not attended a MedEntry two day UMAT Course before
 - You would like to attend a two day Course again or sit another practice exam, as new information is often highlighted in our Courses.
- In this package, you will receive the following (please see above for inclusions):
 - Online LMS access
 - 2 day UMAT workshop

Diamond package:

- Suitable if you require comprehensive UMAT preparation
- In this package, you will receive:
 - Online LMS access
 - 2 day UMAT workshop
 - Personalised UMAT tutoring sessions
 - Medical Interview training session (to be used after the UMAT results are released)
 - University Application Form Review Service.

The information above is intended to be a recommendation. You may find that another MedEntry package suits you better. Students are able to upgrade their packages at any time.

UNIVERSITY RANKINGS AND PRESTIGE: HOW MUCH DO THEY REALLY MATTER FOR STUDYING MEDICINE?

Is studying medicine at Melbourne University more prestigious than studying at Monash? Is studying medicine at University of Sydney more prestigious than studying at University of New South Wales (UNSW)? In the end, does it really matter?

Prestige, prestige, prestige. It's a word often heard echoing from the halls of the oldest universities and perpetuated by certain people who may state: 'my son will only obtain his the degree from The University of...'

When selecting your preferred university for medicine, we would suggest that there are factors to consider other than university rank and prestige. Unlike other professional practice areas such as law, the number of medical graduates is controlled by the government. Thus a career in medicine offers a safe and guaranteed job because the need and demand for medical professionals is always there. This is reflected in the success of medical graduates finding jobs after completing university. The Good Universities Guide states that virtually all Monash medicine graduates find work within a year of completing their undergraduate medical degree. Once you graduate, you will obtain an Australian Medical Board licence to practice irrespective of which university you graduate from.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that while a university as a whole may hold certain prestige, medical courses differ in how they are viewed. A university that overall may not have the 'best' reputation may have a medical course that is considered outstanding. This is particularly the case for the 'newer' universities (eg. Monash University) who have adopted novel, practical and successful teaching methods compared to 'older' universities.

What are university rankings based on, anyway?

The vast majority of university rankings are based on the research output of the university. This involves: the number of PhDs obtained by academics at that university, the journals in which those academic papers are published, and the number of times such papers are cited by other academics and journals. University rankings do not tell you which universities produce

When selecting the university with the right medicine course for you, we would suggest that there are other factors to consider that are more important than university rank and prestige.

The vast majority of university rankings are based on the research output of the university. They do not tell you which universities produce graduates with the greatest success in the medical field.

graduates who have the greatest success in the medical field or who specialise in those more prestigious areas of medicine (such as Dermatology, Ophthalmology, Surgery and specialist Physician training).

Older universities tend to maintain their higher rankings despite a steady decrease in their entrance scores or changes to the structure of the medicine courses offered. Furthermore, older universities will have more connections with older generations of professors and academics. These individuals would have attended university at a time when universities such as Monash or UWS did not exist or were just beginning to offer relevant medical and health science courses, and so may not recommend such courses.

Most university rankings also do not take into account to a great extent other factors such as student life on campus.

So what is the best way to rank medicine courses offered by different universities?

It is almost impossible to come up with a sound ranking system for universities because the notion of what is the ‘best’ university is highly subjective. Perhaps the most effective way to judge a university is by its popularity which can be determined by several factors:

- *Is the required entrance score or other entry requirements consistently increasing?*
 - If the answer is yes, then it’s fair to say that the university’s popularity is also steadily increasing.
 - If the answer is no, then ask yourself why: it may be because the university has increased the number of medical places available and thus ‘diluted’ the entry requirements, or more likely, the popularity of that university’s medical course and medical pathway is in decline.
- *What is the retention rate?* Good universities should not have an attrition rate of more than 10%.
- *How many students from that course go on to practice medicine in highly sought after specialties?* University websites and some other independent websites will provide such statistics.

Is location important?

In an ideal world, we would all be able to walk to university or work in less than five minutes. The reality of the situation is that in most instances you will have to travel some distance to your desired university.

Many students who face the dilemma of choosing to study medicine at Monash or Melbourne, or USyd or UNSW may consider the graduate entry pathway simply because USyd or Melbourne are located more conveniently. However, even if it takes you an hour or more to drive to Monash or UNSW, overall you will save far more time than taking the graduate medical entry pathway.

For the mathematically inclined:

There are 8765.81 hours in a year. If you spend 2 hours a day commuting for an entire university year (4 days a week average) that's 272 hours (assuming 34 weeks of university per standard university year).

272 hours is far less than 8765.81 hours, which is how much time it will take you to complete one year of an undergraduate degree, if you chose the graduate pathway.

That's assuming that you only complete one extra year of a degree (most graduate entry courses are two years longer than undergraduate ones) and gain immediate entry into post-graduate medicine.

So, taking the undergraduate entry pathway, you would have at least 8493.81 hours to spare. 8493.81 hours that you could spend doing anything else. Not to mention the potential earnings you will have accumulated while others pursuing the graduate route are still studying, as well as the additional costs incurred if pursuing graduate medicine.

Furthermore, unlike other degrees, in medicine you will usually only be on campus for the first couple of years. Subsequent years will be in hospital placements which can be situated anywhere in your state. You will usually be able to put in your preferences for where your placement will be, and you can choose one which is closer to home.

It doesn't matter if it takes you an hour or more to drive to Monash or UNSW, because overall you will save more time than taking the graduate medical entry pathway at Melbourne Uni or USyd

Further things to consider

Simply attending a so-called prestigious university will not guarantee a top-tier job in your desired field of medicine. When looking at applicants, assessors will consider a number of factors – references, resume, previous work experience, performance in an interview and grades received at university. The actual medical school you attended is far less important (and usually not even part of the selection criteria).

Which is the ‘better’ course?

A broken arm is a broken arm no matter which state of Australia you live in or which university you attend. Being qualified to practice medicine means you can practice throughout Australia. This is unlike some other professions, such as law, where the qualifications will only be valid on a state to state basis. Furthermore, the study of medicine focuses on the application of proven, objective medical knowledge to a patient problem. All doctors throughout Australia are required to follow the same set of standards and guidelines set out by Colleges and the Medical Board of Australia. Therefore, the content of medical courses between universities will not differ greatly, although the style of teaching may.

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Factors to consider other than a university’s rank

We strongly suggest you consider factors other than university rank and prestige when deciding which medicine course is best for you.

For example, consider the following:

- Will you be able to study what you want to do straight away, rather than having to wait until your postgraduate degree is completed?
- The added cost of pursuing a graduate degree – including additional years of study and the fact that universities can (and do) charge more
- Will you be able to get a taste for what medicine is really like early on (undergraduate courses) so you know if it is the right course for you?
- Will you be guaranteed a place in your desired medical school (undergraduate courses) with no uncertainty and stress?
- Student wellbeing and welfare
- Student success post-university

- Student opportunities within your course (eg. overseas placements) and extra-curricular activities
- Quality of teaching staff
- Style of teaching
- Social opportunities (eg. clubs)

An important factor outlined above is that if you choose an undergraduate degree, you will be able to start studying what you truly want to study straight away. Having just finished an extremely stressful final year of high school the last thing you want is have to continue studying hard in order to maintain a GPA or WAM (Weighted Average Mark) high enough to gain entry into post-graduate medicine. There is also the additional stress of having to prepare for and sit the GAMSAT (a six hour test that also includes knowledge based and essay writing components) as well as interviews.

In summary, if studying medicine is really what you want to do, then you should aim to get out into the field and begin helping others sooner rather than later.

SUGGESTED TIMELINE

A suggested timeline for students in their final year of schooling is displayed below.

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Task</i> |
|---------------------|---|
| As soon as possible | Research university entry requirements and deadlines Consider enrolling in a MedEntry UMAT preparation course |
| December to June | Register for UMAT |
| Start of June | Deadline to register for UMAT |
| End of July | Sit UMAT |
| September | UMAT results released |
| Late September | Deadline for applying to universities (including written applications) Deadline for applying to state based academic authorities |
| October-January | Interview offers released (date of release varies depending on university) |
| November onwards | Consider enrolling in a MedEntry Medical Interview Training Session |
| November-January | Interviews conducted (dates vary depending on university) If you have not already done so, ensure you obtain work experience or volunteer work in a health related field |
| January | University offers released |
| January / February | Seek advice from MedEntry on the appropriate course / university to select, if necessary |

DISCLAIMER

Disclaimer

The purpose of this guide is to outline some important issues to consider when pursuing a medical degree. Recommendations are based on experience and aim to assist students and parents in their decision making. All students and parents are strongly encouraged to thoroughly research all aspects of admission themselves in order to make a fully informed decision. All information contained in this guide is accurate at the time of writing.

Additional questions?

If you have any additional questions regarding any matter relating to UMAT, interviews or university admissions, please get in touch with the MedEntry UMAT preparation team.