

WORK EXPERIENCE

DURING COVID-19



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is work experience?

Work experience is any experience or activity that helps you understand and prepare for medical school, and what a career in medicine involves. Work experience can take many different forms from regular volunteering work in a healthcare setting (nursing home/clinic/health facility) to a one-week experience in a hospital setting shadowing a doctor, or voluntary or paid work interacting with the public or in a caring role such as involvement in the Scout/ Guide associations, volunteering at a charity shop or homeless shelter, or at a sports club. There is no right – wrong experience. Work experience is a way to gain first-hand understanding on a personal level of what studying medicine and “being a doctor” might entail. This can include any experience of working in a responsible, public facing role where good communication skills are important and/ or in caring or charitable roles. It is important that you have some relevant work experience to help you decide if medicine is the correct career path for you.

Why is gaining work experience important?

A career in medicine can be a fascinating and very fulfilling role, but it has significant challenges, and it is not the right career for everyone. Work experience is a way you can reflect on the skills, values, behaviours and attitudes necessary for working in healthcare. It can help you gain a clear insight into what it would be like to be a healthcare professional today and how the multi disciplinary team works, and help you decide whether medicine is the right career for you.

As a School, we are interested to understand what you have learnt and what reflections you had of your experiences in a healthcare or non-healthcare setting. If the skills you learnt from life experiences, hobbies, school life align with the skills you require for your chosen career path, then these can be drawn upon as well. We would ask you about it in your personal statement and during the interview process – so it is important to be truthful about your experiences. Even if it was not what you expected or your ideals of medicine and the reality did not match.

What type of experience do I need? Do I need to do my work experience in a hospital setting?

We do not specify or recommend any specific type or duration of work experience for applicants as it is more what the individual takes out of the experience rather than the placement itself. Any amount of community or volunteer work is looked upon favourably and should demonstrate evidence of working as a leader and as part of a team. Work experience does not need to take place in hospital settings and could be a chance to explore other areas such as elder care contexts.

What has changed in the context of COVID-19?

It has been more difficult for many to gain work experience in healthcare settings due to COVID-19. Hospitals and surgeries have stopped opportunities for clinical observation. You may need to look at alternative resources to gain insight into clinical work such as online platforms or explore your experience where you have worked in a setting where you can interact with the general public or for any evidence of working successfully within a team. It's important to remember that all new applicants to medicine this year will be in the same situation and that medical schools are aware of this, and will be understanding.

Is gaining online experience as useful as in-person experience?

The clinical environment is changing rapidly and with the increase of online clinics and appointments being conducted remotely, gaining online experience can be as useful as in person experience. Providing the online work experience gives you a useful insight into what a future career as a healthcare professional can involve, it can be just as useful as in person work experience. We are looking at your understanding of the profession and of caring roles more generally and there are a number of virtual experiences that can give you a very good idea of this.

Does the experience have to be medically related?

Definitely not. We look for "future medics" who have participated fully in school or college life. They have made the most of the opportunities available and can reflect on experiences of society beyond their immediate environment and can demonstrate they understand what it is like to work in a responsible, caring role (engaging with a wide range of people, displaying some of skills and attributes essential to be a successful doctor, including teamwork, leadership, good communication skills, resilience, commitment and empathy).

How to make the most of work experience:

Keep a reflective diary

- o Keeping a reflective diary allows you to reflect on what you have observed and show an understanding of the skills and attributes a career in medicine requires.
- o Consider – what did you enjoy about your work experience, what did you find challenging (and why)?; reflect on the way the professionals/ volunteers you were observing communicated with each other and the people they were caring for – what was done well, what could have been improved on?

How could you use this experience in a future career in medicine? What insights did you gain into caring for other people? What will you find challenging or enjoy about this? How did the professionals show their commitment to the role? How did they deal with challenging aspects of the role? How would you deal with these aspects?

Decide beforehand what you want to get out of it

- o Focus on areas that you want to observe or reflect on and ask your supervisor when organising, or at the start of the work experience if there will be opportunities for this

Think about how you'll talk about your work experience in your interview and UCAS Personal Statement

- o We are less interested in the details of what you have done, than what you have understood about the environment your work experience was in and how this has given you insights into what a career in medicine involves.
- o We would encourage reflective consideration of your work experience in your UCAS statement, and in your interview.