

Subject Descriptor: Medicine

Some medical schools will accept standard Access to HE diplomas for entry to foundation years. Typically, these require all non-academic criteria to be met (e.g. aptitude tests, interview) prior to entry; progression from the foundation year to year 1 of medicine is then dependent upon meeting the required academic standard in the foundation year. Many schools will accept specific Access diplomas – usually titled “Access to Medicine”, “Access to Healthcare Professions” or something similar – for direct entry to year 1 of medicine. However, acceptance of Access to Medicine diplomas is patchy: many schools will only accept certain Access to Medicine diplomas, while others won’t accept any. The range of diplomas accepted by a particular medical school is often based on historical precedent rather than strict academic considerations.

The aim of this specification is to bring greater standardisation to diplomas badged as Access to Medicine. This will allow those medical schools that do accept Access students for direct entry to have greater confidence that an unfamiliar diploma will be very similar in selection, content and assessment to those that they currently accept. It may also encourage medical schools that do not currently accept Access students to review their admissions policies on the basis of a clear definition of what an Access to Medicine student is.

UK medical schools select students mainly through sixth-form level-3 academic qualification routes: A-levels, Scottish Highers/Advanced Highers, International Baccalaureate, etc. Their priority in selecting students from non-traditional backgrounds is that these should have studied the academic subjects typically offered by A-level applicants, and that this study should be at a similar standard to A-level, albeit probably with less breadth than would be usual for A-levels.

Consequently, the highest priority is given to **chemistry and biology**, rather than to specifically medical topics such as anatomy, physiology and pathology. The latter will be learned at medical school; the medical schools would prefer all students to begin from a similar level and will not necessarily be impressed by Access students who have already studied these subjects. Medical schools will also want to see strong evidence of ability

in **English language** (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and basic **mathematics**. These should usually have been achieved at the required grades at GCSE prior to application, although some schools will allow them to be sat (or resat) during the Access year. However, some application of these subjects in the context of medical science and patient care should be included in the diploma programme. Additional medically related behavioural and social sciences – particularly psychology – are desirable but not generally essential.

2. Summary of requirements for this subject descriptor

Mandatory subjects	Minimum credit requirement at graded level 3	Minimum credit requirement at ungraded level 2/3
1. Chemistry	12	
2. Biology/human biology	9	
3. Other science/mathematics	9	
4. Use/comprehension of numerical data		3
5. Study skills		3
6. Professional behaviours		3
Total credit values	30	9
Credits remaining within the 60 required for the Access to HE diploma	15	6