

Build your Portfolio for Medical School

*How to build your candidacy starting
from Sec 3 / Grade 9 all the way to
your application year!*



The Ultimate Resource For Future Medical School Students

Every year, thousands of aspiring doctors in Singapore apply to medical school locally and abroad. It's a difficult journey: medical school applications involve challenging entrance exams, personal statements, a robust portfolio of experiences, and a notoriously difficult interview process — all on top of regular schoolwork and exams.

The best applicants know that the path to medical school is years in the making. You should be spending the 3-4 years before you apply exploring your options, deepening your knowledge of medicine, and gaining hands-on experience that will allow you to succeed both as a medical student and a future doctor.

In this eBook, we've crafted a handy timeline to help guide you as you move towards your medical school aspirations. We've also compiled the latest trends in medical school admissions, especially with relation to the impact of COVID-19 on applications. This eBook should give you all you need to start building your strongest possible med school application. We're rooting for you!



Medical School Timeline

It's important to begin your medical school preparations well in advance. This timeline is not a checklist; rather, it is a guide for you to think about how to build a strong foundation of knowledge and experiences that will come in useful when applying to medical school.

HOT TIP:

One of the most important things to keep note of while you prepare for medical school applications is why you want to pursue medicine. Some ways to do that include investing in work experience (an internship at a hospital can tell you if the job really is for you), research, and talking to others in the medical field — all of which will help you make informed choices as you apply to med school!



Non-Application Years

(Sec 3 / Grade 9 onwards)

Sec 3 / Grade 9

- + Think about what subjects interest you, and explore them outside of class. Try medicine-related reads like "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat" by Oliver Sacks or "Complications" by Atul Gawande. A useful framework when reading these books is to consider what was interesting/confusing/complicated in them, and what you want to learn more about - this will help guide future explorations in the subject.
- + Explore a variety of extracurricular interests, including volunteering; these can help develop soft skills like empathy, communication and humility, which are all crucial for a career in medicine.
- + Continue to do well in school - a strong track record is important! Focus especially on your science subjects - and remember, don't drop Chemistry! You can't apply to many medical schools without it.

Sec 4 / Grade 10

- + By now you should know what extracurricular activities fit your profile best. Start focusing on 3-4 activities - try to excel in those, and build up the foundation for leadership positions later.
- + Choose your A-Level and IB subjects wisely - make sure you have checked entry requirements at the schools you want to apply to. Make sure to keep your IGCSE science textbooks with you -- you'll need it later when you prepare for the BMAT!
- + If you have family members or peers with careers in medicine or related fields, ask them about their experiences. This will help you broaden your field of interest in the subject. Talking to others who are doing what you want to do will also tell you what to look forward to - it'll help you realize whether medicine really is for you!
- + Source volunteering/ community service opportunities that you find meaningful - and stick with it!

JC 1 / Grade 11

- + At this stage, you should have narrowed down your extracurricular interests to 2-3 activities that you excel in. You should actively try to aim for leadership positions and have contributed positively to your organisation(s) at this point.
- + You should foster strong relationships with your teachers, so that you can count on a favourable reference from them in your year of application.
- + In addition to internships/job shadowing, you should also have a strong track record of volunteering, having built up this commitment over the last few years.
- + Brainstorm your personal statement ideas - think about what you want to say, and how you will back it up.
- + Start preparing for medical school applications - this means thinking about standardised tests, interviews, and so on.
- + Continue to focus on your grades - you need nothing less than excellent academics to make it to medical school!

Application Year

JC2/Grade 12



All year around

- + Consider your options carefully - which country, and which schools are you applying to? Do make sure to check that your med school choices are accredited by the Singapore Medical Council, if you intend to practice medicine in Singapore.
- + Focus on improving or maintaining your school grades - you will need a predicted AAA at the A-Levels or a 42+ on the IB to have a competitive shot at most top schools.

March - May

Decide whether the universities you are applying to require standardised tests - for example do you need to take the BMAT, the UCAT, or both?

Start brainstorming ideas for your personal statement.

July

- + UCAT Test Season begins.
- + Receive UCAT results then finalize your UCAT school choices.

August

- + Start approaching your teachers for your reference letters.

October

- + Last UCAT test dates.
- + October 15th - All medical school applications to the UK are due.

November

- + Second BMAT test date. Results cannot be factored into school selection - this is after you submit your UCAS applications.
- + Interview offers for UK universities start rolling in, and will continue until March of the year after.

December - March

- + Interviews for medical schools are held during this period. Note that you'll usually be informed of an interview 2-3 weeks before it is held.

May

- + You'll receive your admissions offers to UK medical schools! Keep your fingers crossed!

NOTES

Singaporean and Australian medical schools do not accept predicted results or give out conditional offers. This means that you can only apply to these schools after your A - Levels or IB exams, meaning that you will be applying after JC2 / Grade 12. You can only apply to UK medical schools with your predicted results.

However, the rest of this timeline, including standardised testing and how to build up your portfolio before your year of application, is still relevant to you — so do keep it in mind!

The Impact of Covid-19 on Your Applications

In the UK, students apply to universities in two application rounds: October 15th for Oxford, Cambridge and medical schools; and January 15th for all other applications. According to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), the number of applications **increased substantially** for both application rounds this year — both in Singapore and globally!



Singapore

In Singapore specifically, the number of applicants for the October 15 round (to Oxford, Cambridge and medical schools), increased by roughly 8% compared to last year.



Internationally

Globally, there was a 14.74% increase in international applicants in the January 15 application round; for medical school and Oxbridge applications, there was an increase of 6.52% in international applicants from 2019 to 2020.

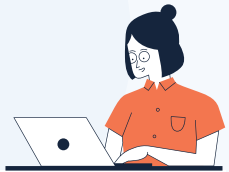
This data suggests that despite the pandemic, the appeal of UK universities (and UK med schools!) remains high — and despite the complications COVID-19 brought to this application year (such as remote interviews, canceled or reduced standardised testing dates, disruptions to the school year), applications still increased.

What this means for you

With the shift to virtual learning, along with disruptions to many industries as a result of COVID-19, we know that some of the traditional activities you could have used to build your medical portfolio have been interrupted. However, admissions officers are especially aware of the fact students have struggled to obtain work shadowing or work placements during COVID-19, and will take this into consideration when evaluating your application.

With that in mind, we have compiled some ways for you to demonstrate your aptitude and commitment towards medicine in these “non-traditional” times.

Take it Online



Online CCAs

Students are increasingly taking advantage of their tech-savviness to participate in online activities and CCAs related to healthcare. One example of a recent project developed by an incredible Crimson student is a peer-to-peer led anti-drug initiative where a Crimson student attended a school whose students struggled with alcohol and drug abuse. Acknowledging that students may take warnings more seriously from their peers, the student developed an initiative that was peer-led.

The program, which enlisted the help of expert external university drug and alcohol coaches, was conducted online to give students a way to freely access information rather than being forced to learn in a classroom. The student also organised a special program for their school's senior prefects and other student leaders to train them on how to identify at-risk peers and take the best actions to help them. The program gained broad media attention, and editorials were written about the initiative in national newspapers!

Online Courses

We encourage students to fully explore their intellectual interests by taking online courses via platforms like EdX, Coursera and [Crimson Global Academy](#). While you can't study medicine as a subject in your A-Level or IB classes, you can get a headstart on your medical degree by taking related university level coursework online. From classes like "Introduction to Pharmacology" to "Bioethics" — the world is your oyster!

Attending virtual conferences and academic events

A hidden benefit of COVID-19 is that in-person events from all over the world have gone digital — which means that you can access them all from the comfort of your own home! This provides an ideal opportunity for you to attend pre-med and medical events at universities around the world to get a sense of what topics you'd like to specialise in in the future. We encourage you to follow Students' Unions at your top choice medical schools on social media to stay up to date with their events — and attend them when you can!

Online Shadowing

One of the biggest challenges to any medical student during COVID-19 is the inability to pursue clinical attachments. However, in 2021 - like most things - work shadowing and clinical attachments are also possible online! Many reputed programs, including those run by the UK's Brighton and Sussex Medical School provide online alternatives to work experience - including the option to virtually shadow practising physicians.

Recommended Resources

Medical schools are looking for applicants who can demonstrate that they have developed an understanding of some of the realities of practicing medicine - both the exciting and the arduous. Below are some book and podcast recommendations to help you start exploring different areas of medicine:



Books & Readings

- ***The Emperor of All Maladies* - Siddhartha Mukherjee**
 - Pulitzer-prize winning author and pathologist, Dr. Mukherjee, writes about the history of cancer from its first documented occurrence thousands of years ago to modern developments in controlling and curing the disease.
- ***Do No Harm* - Henry Marsh**
 - Written by neurosurgeon Henry Marsh, this book has been described as "An unforgettable insight into the countless human dramas that take place in a busy modern hospital, and a lesson in the need for hope when faced with life's most difficult decisions".
- ***Final Exam: A Surgeon's Reflections on Mortality* - Pauline Chen**
 - In this book, Dr. Chen explores the complexities of treating terminally ill patients and the emotional relationships that can develop between doctors and patients.
- ***My Own Country: A Doctor's Story* - Abraham Verghese**
 - In this memoir, Dr. Verghese writes about his experiences practicing medicine in Johnson City, Tennessee while treating patients of the rural AIDS epidemic, and confronting one's deepest prejudices in the practice of medicine.
- ***The Language of Kindness* - Christie Watson**
 - Watson writes about twenty years as a nurse in this vital memoir, which focuses on the compassion and kindness that is central to a career in medicine and care-taking.

Podcasts

- ***BBC Talk Health***
- ***Sharp Scratch by the British Medical Journal***
- ***Talk Medicine by the British Medical Journal***
- ***Royal College of Physicians Medicine Podcast***

For tailored advice on how to adapt your med school portfolio to stand out amidst the challenges of COVID-19, schedule a free consultation with our med school experts [here!](#)

How Crimson can help

At Crimson, we are the world's leading medical school admissions experts.

In the 2020 application cycle, 100% of Crimson students in Singapore got into at least one of their top choice medical schools, including Cambridge, Imperial, King's College London and more!

If you choose to work with Crimson, you'll be paired up with a team of dedicated mentors and tutors with one goal in common - preparing you for your preferred medical schools.

You can expect to receive start-to-finish application guidance with the following:



PORTFOLIO BUILDING

Extracurricular, leadership and work experience mentoring



ACADEMIC STRATEGY

Customized study plans and tutoring for BMAT / UCAT / ISAT / PQA / SJT



MEDICAL SCHOOL INTERVIEW PREPARATION

(MMI + Oxbridge Panel Interviews)
Mock interviews and interview training from current medical school students, medical school graduates and clinical practitioners



PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Comprehensive guidance on essay writing, including idea generation, editing, and proofreading from a team of dedicated essay mentors



CAREER MENTORING

The opportunity to connect with medical professionals and medical school graduates from top universities around the world.



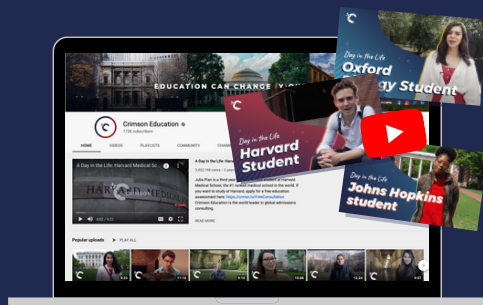
TIMELINE BUILDING

Customised application roadmaps designed for your unique circumstances - actionable advice on planning out your test dates, school commitments, and application writing.



RESOURCES

We believe in giving students and parents around the world access to vital information. We have an extensive network of medical mentors for our students to tap into. We also have the largest [YouTube channel](#) of any educational company that depicts college life and answers all of your big questions!



Our Technology

Crimson App

Each Crimson student is onboarded to our mobile & web app, where students can book sessions and view their tailored timetable of customized tasks.

Video Based

Crimson students are able to connect anywhere in the world with their team through our video-based mentoring.

Personality Test

We utilise psychometrics to pair each student with a team that is optimized to their interests and learning style! Our test was developed through world-leading data science.

You're not in this alone — if you ever need help, your Crimson Education Medical School Experts are just a [click](#) away!

Our medical school consultants would be more than happy to speak with you over a free consultation to discuss your medical school plans, and to give some helpful guidance on how to get started on your applications.

If you'd like to speak with a consultant, book a [free consultation](#) [here](#). We're here to help!



Pay us a visit: we'd love to connect with you!

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