Medicine Online Offer Holders Event – Q&A

We had lots of questions from international and EU offer holders at our latest event, which were answered by our staff and recent graduates. We have split them into sections so you can just read the ones that are important to you:

- COVID-19
- Entry requirements
- Admissions
- About the course
- Assessments
- Intercalation
- Self-directed learning
- European Studies
- Clinical placements
- Student experience
- Accommodation

COVID-19

Q: If there is an oversubscription in 2020 will people be deferred?

A: The UCAS contract is legally binding, so if you meet your A-level requirements, you are guaranteed a place to start this year.

Q: Is there a shortage of international students this year?

A: We don't know how the pandemic will affect the number of international students coming to Manchester this year.

Q: How will our first-year clinical placements be affected by the current situation?

A: First-year clinical placements, are short so it is unlikely that they will be affected.

Q: Are offers reviewed?

A: An offer is legally binding, so if you have a conditional offer and meet the conditions then you will start medical school.

Q: Will social distancing take place in areas such as in halls?

A: It is too early to say, but it is likely that there may be some social distancing measures in place in the following months, including the end of the year, but it depends on how the pandemic turns out.

Entry requirements

Q: What is happening with A-levels?

A-level examinations have been cancelled and measures have been put in place by exam boards for students to receive A-level grades without sitting exams.

We are broadly supportive of the measures introduced by the exam boards. We are confident that the profile of the offer holders will be similar to the profile we have seen in previous years. We will honour all A-level offers. The contract you have on UCAS if you have received an offer is legally binding and, if you meet the conditions, your place is secure.

Q: I am an Irish student and our exams have been postponed until August. How will my admission be assessed?

A: You would need the results by 31 August to be guaranteed a place this year. If they are later than that, we will try to accommodate students where we can but, otherwise, you will be deferred to the following academic year.

Q: What if the predicted grades don't meet my conditions?

A: If you don't get the required grade because of the teacher predictions, we will honor your offer provided you sit the autumn set of exams and you won't need to have a new interview.

Q: If we sit the autumn exams and then get the grades, will we have a confirmed place for the next academic year?

A: Yes.

Q: What happens if you are allocated A-level grades and the grades you are allocated without sitting the exams are lower than your offer?

A: We will follow our standard procedure. If you get the conditions that are specified in your offer, then you are accepted onto the course. If you narrowly missed the conditions, it all depends on how much space we have on the course. We use a ranking of A-level grades and prioritise people who have chosen The University of Manchester as their firm choice.

Q: If we miss the grade for a certain subject, do we only need to retake that subject?

A: Yes.

Q: What will happen if I will take the A-level exams in autumn?

A: We will honor our offers from this year for 2021 if you take the autumn A-level exams and meet the conditions - it will be considered as a deferred entry.

Q: What happens if your A-level results are A*ABB?

A: We have about 390 places. First of all we will fill those with people who meet their conditions of offer and then, if we have any places left over, we would rank people in order of their performance (A-level grades, grades achieved). We'll look at your performance in the core science subjects, as well as interview performance data.

The number of places we have left varies, as there is a natural variability in A-level results and offer holder population. We will not use clearing this year. We will take students we have been happy with throughout the application process, who have met our criteria, who performed well at the interview and who are committed to and interested in Manchester.

Q: Is the University extending the deadline of 31 August for meeting the conditional offer?

A: No.

Q: Is there going to be a difference between students who had taken the A-level exams and those who received predicted grades?

A: No, we will consider them as equal and will not differentiate candidates based on this.

Admissions

Q: How many offers is The University of Manchester giving out to Medicine students this year?

A: We have an applications statistics page so you can track how many applications and how many offers we have made.

Q: How do you get the University ID number?

A: Please look at the emails you received from the central admissions team. If you still can't find it, just drop an email to admissions: ug.medicine@manchester.ac.uk

Q: What is the deadline to respond to offers on UCAS?

A: UCAS is pushing the deadlines back, and these changes can be checked on UCAS Track. The deadline may be dependent on when you have received offers from other medical schools.

Q: Are contextual students accepted?

A: Yes.

Q: If you decide to put Manchester as your insurance, do you still have to submit the offer holder declaration form and occupational health questionnaire?

A: Yes, you need to complete the offer holder declaration form. The occupational health questionnaire needs to be completed only by those who firmed the offer (deadline is 1 June and it's unlikely to be extended).

Q: What happens if I am unable to receive vaccination records?

A: If you have a rough idea when you received those vaccinations, you can put those dates in. If not, please leave a note on the occupational health questionnaire to say that you are unsure and the Occupational Health team will follow this up with your GP.

Q: Is clearance from Occupational Health expected to take longer than usual?

A: Yes. Due to the circumstances, clearance may take longer than previous years.

Q: Does the DBS check look at information prior to your 16th birthday?

A: If you have a conviction of any type, you have to declare that on the offer holder declaration and then you will be contacted by the Admissions team to discuss that in detail. The government is in charge of the DBS checks, so whether convictions up to 16 are part of those or not is not known by us.

About the course

Q: Do I need to prepare for starting medical school?

A: We would recommend that you enjoy the summer, because the course is an intensive five years of learning. If we made you an offer, it means we believe you are suitable for our programme, so you don't need to do any preparations over the summer.

Moreover, you will be taught everything from first principle. You will be sent a link to a site for new starting students with all information you need prior to getting to Manchester.

Q: Do I need to buy clothes/equipment?

A: You don't need to purchase any equipment before starting. There is no dress code for lectures. When you have contact with patients, white medical coats will be required, but you will be informed about this closer to the time.

Q: Are laptops or iPads necessary?

A: The University has several computer clusters available for students to use so these devices are not necessary. They can be helpful to have but are not mandatory. You will also receive iPads from the University in the later years of the course, at the beginning of the Year 3. These are used for mainly for the clinical placements.

Q: What are Practical Based Learning (PBL) sessions?

A: PBLs are designed to create a natural discussion that can help you determine what gaps you have in your knowledge. You have a tutor to guide the discussion and prompt you.

PBLs are only in Year 1 and 2, and then you move to doing themed case discussions (TCDs).

Q: How many people are in a PBL group?

A: There are between 10 and 12 students and one tutor in a PBL group. The PBLs take place two times per week.

Q: Do PBL groups change or stay the same?

A: PBL groups change. We try to get students to make friends and work with different people each semester. The PBL tutor also changes.

Q: Do many people pass?

A: Yes, most people do pass. We only recruit high-performing students, so it is very rare that students fail the programme. We can support students through mitigating circumstances and, if people fail an exam, they can take a resit.

Q: What countries are available for electives?

A: Any safe country in the world – there have been electives almost everywhere.

Q: How many days a week do I need to be at uni?

A: It is a full-time programme. During the early years, there is usually something scheduled Monday to Friday, both mornings and afternoons. Wednesday afternoon is usually reserved for extracurricular activities.

Q: Do I need to buy textbooks?

A: It is recommended that you do not purchase textbooks prior to your arrival at Manchester. The University has numerous online and offline resources available, so you may not need to pay for your textbooks. You will also buy these based on your individual learning needs.

Q: How many lectures are there per week?

A: There are 6-8 lectures in a typical week.

Q: How long are university breaks?

A: In Year 1 and 2, holidays for this programme are the same as in other programmes. In later years, these are not the same because our students are in clinical placements.

Q: How many places are there on the course?

A: There are 397 places in total.

Q: Is there a placement in Year 1?

A: You will have visits for 1 or 2 days over each semester.

Q: How often is reading week?

A: Reading week is two times per semester in Year 1 and 2.

Assessment

Q What are the methods of examination on the course?

A: The examination methods are similar to other medical schools. These include multiple choice papers to assess some theoretical knowledge, presentations, posters, written reports, portfolios and face-to-face assessments with tutors.

When on placements, you will log cases and practical skills to record your clinical competencies.

Theoretical knowledge is tested through single best answers and multiple choice tests in Years 1 and 2 each semester. In most years of the course, you will have OSCEs (Objective Structured Clinical Exams) which are similar to your MMI interviews, but instead of being asked about your work experience, you will meet a patient, take their history and perform examination skills or interpret results.

In the first two years, at the end of the semester you have multiple choice exams that cover all content. You will have your final exam in the summer of your final year. However, there

is an opportunity to take what we call an exempting exam. This is an exam you can do prior to the summer exam in the final year, which takes place in January. If you pass that exam, you don't need to take the finals.

Q: Does the exam each year count towards the result you get when you graduate? If so, what would be the weighting for each year's exam?

A: Medical degrees are different from other degrees, because they aren't classified (eg 1.1, 2.1) and the years aren't weighted. It is a pass or a fail qualification, and you can graduate with honours if you are a high performing student.

Q: What percentage do exams count for?

A: All of the components of the assessment count equally, so you have to pass everything if you want to proceed to the next stage.

You have to complete all the coursework and the exams, as they don't have a specific rating.

Q: What are honest points and how are they received?

A: Honest points are typically awarded to the top 15% of the candidates based on scorings in the exams. Those points contribute to being awarded a degree with honours. More information on this will be provided once you start the course.

Q: Will there be exams for prescribing?

A: Yes, the prescribing exam is in Year 5, usually in the 2nd Semester.

Q: When do semester exams finish in Year 1?

A: Most exams are in May and finish at the beginning of June. More information on key dates can be found here.

Q: What happens with pass/fail in Year 3 and over?

A: If you fail your OSCEs or the progress test, you get a resit attempt. With regards to the clinical placements, most people pass their placements. If you fail, you can remediate at the end of the year.

Intercalation

Q: Are you given the opportunity to intercalate at another university?

A: Yes, if you are interested in a programme that is not offered by our university.

Q: When can students intercalate?

A: Students can intercalate after 2 years of study for a BSc. After 3 or 4 years of study, all students are able to intercalate for master's level, and a few students may choose to intercalate to do a research degree.

Q: Is intercalation a competitive process?

A: There is no competitiveness in allocating intercalation.

Q: How many students decide to intercalate?

A: Although it varies by year, around 40% of the cohort decides to intercalate.

Q: Is there funding available for intercalation?

A: Most students applying for intercalation will self-finance. There may be opportunities for funding, but they are dependent upon individual circumstances. Some people are eligible for the NHS bursaries, which you can apply for after four years of study.

Self-directed learning

Q: What is self-directed learning?

A: Self-directed learning prepares you for a career where you will need to be learning all the time. We equip you for this through PBL sessions in Year 1 and 2, formative assessments where you can check how you are progressing and, from Year 3 onwards, directed clinical and online learning and classes each week where you can speak to clinicians. After Year 2 you will take more responsibility for your learning.

As a doctor, you need to remember the things you learnt in Year 1, as well as the things that you learned as a specialist, so it's really important that you are driving that yourself.

European Studies

Q: How does European Studies work?

A: In the current structure, students with an interest in European Studies apply for it during Year 1. You will have language courses weekly across the next three years of study. Then, in Year 5, there is a language exam which is different depending on the language (German, French and Spanish).

The European Studies programme is supported through an EU scheme called Erasmus+ and at the moment we are able to support it, but we have to wait for the Brexit outcome to see if we remain within Erasmus+ or look for alternative arrangements.

Q: Will European Studies still be running because of Brexit?

A: Language learning won't be affected by Brexit, and you will still have the opportunity to apply for placements in the EU. The structure of the placement may depend on what the British government negotiates with the EU.

Q: Do you need a language at A-level to apply for European Studies?

A: You don't need to have an A-level, but you do need to be able to speak the language at an A-level standard. Your writing and speaking will be assessed when you apply for European Studies.

Clinical placements

Q: How are students allocated to a hospital?

A: From Year 3 onwards, you're assigned to a major teaching hospital. This is where you'll gain most of your clinical experience. Your base hospital will have a team of clinicians, academics and support staff that you will return to for some teaching.

Students are randomly allocated to hospitals. They all have really good teaching and there are no differences in performance between them. There are occasionally mitigating circumstances for students where it isn't possible for them to be based at one of those hospitals, and then we take those into account, but we get in touch with everyone in Year 1 during that procedure.

We have over 700 community placements throughout the north-west, including central Manchester, Lancashire and Wigan.

To allow you to experience all specialties, you may spend time at other hospitals too, for example general hospitals and community general practice.

In Year 3, the experience is kept quite general and then Year 4 focuses on specialties. In Year 5, a series of structured placements will take place. These focus on general medicine, surgery, and acute medicine, allowing you to reintegrate things and prepare you to become a general foundation doctor.

Q: Do you need a car to travel to your clinical placement or can you use public transport?

A: For the majority of placements, public transport will suffice. Some of the most remote placements have hospital accommodation on site in some cases, and we find that lots of students do car share to get to some placements.

Q: Do you still have teaching during the clinical placement years?

A: Yes. You are completely immersed in the clinical environment, but there is still teaching at your base hospital. Teaching generally takes place on Fridays in Year 3 and 4.

Q: Is Manchester Children's Hospital available for clinical placements?

A: Yes, it is.

Student experience

Q: Can you tell us more about student societies?

A: We have a large number of specialty societies within the Manchester Medical Society.

More information can be found on the Manchester Medical Society website and the the University of Manchester Students Union website.

Q: Is it viable to have a job while being a medical student?

A**:** Yes, it is. There are opportunities at the university. Those are usually the best source of income, because they try to adapt their schedules around your timetable. Current students don't recommend more than 14-16 hours of work per week in order to ensure that you can keep up with your studies.

Q: Is there time for socialising as a medicine student?

A: Yes, but you do need to develop good time management skills.

Q: How do you sign up for extracurricular activities?

A: You can sign up for activities during Welcome Week or online all around the year.

Q: How late is the library is open?

A: The University has a number of libraries, which are open at different times. The Alan Gilbert Learning Commons is open 24/7, the Main Library is open until 12am with extended hours during exams time, and the Stopford Library opens until 5pm.

Q: Are commuting costs covered during the clinical placements?

A: There aren't any subsidised travel arrangements for commuting, but if you are considering it, you can let staff know and they will take that into consideration when allocating you to the hospital.

Q: What is the number of mature students?

A: This isn't data that we collect, but typically there is between 8-10%. At the University, we have the peer mentoring scheme and there are often groups of mature students so that they get the chance to know each other.

Accommodation

Q: Can I apply for accommodation for later in the year?

A: You can apply for accommodation as soon as you receive a conditional offer, and you will be allocated a place once your offer becomes unconditional.

We recommend that you apply straight away, because we can't guarantee university accommodation later in the year. Sometimes there are places available throughout the year.

Q: Will I be housed with other medical students or students from other courses?

A: If you are applying for university accommodation, you will be housed with other students.

Q: Do I need to search for accommodation around my allocated hospital?

A: It is not a requirement. We recommend students live closer to their allocated hospitals, but the majority choose to live in student areas such as Fallowfield, Withington and Didsbury. These areas have good transport links and are close to the motorway.

Q: What is the accommodation like?

A: University halls of residence offer a variety of options for accommodation. For more information please visit the Accommodation website.

You can also ask the Accommodation team any questions you may have at: accommodation@manchester.ac.uk.

You can also read students' blog posts on accommodation on the Faculty student blog.

Q: What happens if you live in catered halls and you are part of a sports team?

A: There is plenty of time allocated to when meals are available, because many students are involved in sports activities.

Q: How many students live at home?

A: We don't record this information, but we have several students who live at home in their first year, for example. There are events especially for students who live at home to provide them with the opportunity to socialise with others.

Q: What time of the year do you start looking for student houses?

A: You can start searching for accommodation as early as the first semester, but you will find accommodation options later in the year as well.