

The BMAT/UCAT Guidebook

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General

What is the BioMedical Admissions Test?

The BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT) is a pre-interview assessment for students applying to study in various fields of medicine, biomedical sciences or veterinary medicines by some universities.

What is the University Clinical Aptitude Test?

The University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT) is a pre-interview assessment for students applying to study at a number of UK Medical and Dental Schools.

What Universities require the BMAT?

To apply for medicine the following universities require the BMAT:

- Brighton and Sussex Medical School
- University of Cambridge
- Imperial College London
- Keele University
- Lancaster University
- Leeds' School of Medicine
- University of Oxford Medical School
- University College London

If the university you are applying to is not on this list and you are unsure if you need to take the BMAT, it is best to check the university's admissions website or contact them directly.

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What Universities require the UCAT?

To apply for medicine or dentistry, the following universities require the UCAT:

- University of Aberdeen
- University of Birmingham
- University of Bristol
- Cardiff University
- University of Dundee
- Durham University
- University of East Anglia
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Glasgow
- Hull York Medical School
- Keele University
- King's College London
- University of Leicester
- University of Liverpool
- University of Manchester
- University of Newcastle
- University of Nottingham
- Plymouth University
- Queen Mary, University of London
- University of Sheffield
- University of Southampton
- University of St. Andrews
- St. George's University of London
- University of Warwick

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What is the purpose of the BMAT/UCAT?

The BMAT is designed to assess your cognitive ability and various attributes necessary for healthcare professionals. You will be tested on a variety of different skills including problem solving, application of scientific knowledge and writing skills. It is designed to test both **how you think** and **what you know**.

The UCAT is less focused on academic ability and more to assess your attitude and mental ability focusing on skills deemed necessary for a career in the healthcare profession. It is therefore designed to test **how you think** and not **what you know**.

How many times can I take the BMAT/UCAT?

You can only take the BMAT once per admissions cycle. You can also only take the UCAT once per admissions cycle. You therefore need to ensure you are well prepared for it.

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Do I have to take the BMAT and the UCAT?

It largely depends on what universities you apply to, but there is a high chance you will either take both or just the UCAT. The BMAT is generally seen as the harder of the two tests and is required for more competitive universities.

BMAT Test Specifics

How is the BMAT structured?

The BMAT is composed of three sections lasting a total of 2 hours:

- Section 1: Aptitude and Skills - Problem Solving, Understanding Argument, and Data Analysis and Inference (35 Questions)
All questions in this section are multiple choice and of equal weighting. You will score 1 mark for every correct answer and not gain a mark for every incorrect or unanswered question. You have a total of 60 minutes for this section.
- Section 2: Application of Scientific Knowledge - Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Maths (27 questions)
All questions in this section are multiple choice and of equal weighting. You will score 1 mark for every correct answer and not gain a mark for every incorrect or unanswered question. You will have a total of 30 minutes for this section.
- Section 3: Writing - Write an essay in response to a science-based essay prompt.

You will be provided with 1 A4 page to answer the essay prompt. You will have a total of 30 minutes to complete this section.

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What is Problem Solving?

Problem solving involves looking at problems and finding creative and logical solutions within the given parameters. The questions are often numerical in nature or involve interpreting charts, diagrams or shapes. There are 3 key Problem Solving Skills that BMAT questions will focus on. These are:

- Relevant Section: requires you to analyse information to get a solution
- Spatial Reasoning: requires you to manipulate and compare shapes
- Maths and Logic: calculating and reasoning using information provided in the question

For in-depth tutorials on how to tackle these types of questions, you can access a large number of FREE revision videos at: stepmaths.co.uk/free-bmat

What is Understanding Argument?

Understanding Argument questions are often referred to as Critical Thinking in other admissions tests. It involved analysing statements and arguments, finding flaws in

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them and coming up with your own arguments based on the information at hand. BMAT Understanding Argument questions require you to understand the components of a good argument and be able to pick them apart. There are 3 key Understanding Argument Skills that BMAT questions will focus on. These are:

- Drawing a conclusion, assumptions and reasons from the passage
- Identifying flaws in the argument and evaluating explanations
- Identifying a principle relied upon by the argument

What is Data Analysis and Inference?

Data Analysis and Inference assesses your ability to use information, interpretation, analysis, inference and deduction skills to reach appropriate conclusions from information provided. You will typically be given either a long passage of text or some graphical data. You will be asked to answer up to 5 questions on the stimulus provided.

Do I need to know subject specific content to sit the BMAT?

YES! Section 2 is entirely based on scientific knowledge. You need to have a fairly strong understanding of all 3 sciences as well as Maths to at least GCSE-Level. In order to apply for Medicine, you must take Chemistry and most also take Biology. Given that you might not take an A-Level in a third science, there will be content that you have not studied before which you must study for the BMAT.

What Physics Knowledge do I need for Section 2 of the BMAT?

The Physics Content in Section 2 includes:

- Electricity
- Energy and Force
- The Atom and Radioactivity
- Heat and Temperature
- Waves and their Effects
- Other Applications of Physics

You will almost definitely be tested on the first 2 topics and a range of questions from parts of the next 3 topics. If you did not take Physics A-Level, it is highly likely you will struggle with the final topic and so ensure you know the first 5 topics well and become vaguely familiar with the final one.

What Chemistry Knowledge do I need for Section 2 of the BMAT?

The Chemistry Content in Section 2 includes:

- Chemical Concepts
- Equations and Calculations
- Chemical Analysis and Electrolysis
- Carbon Chemistry
- Products from Rocks
- Reaction Rates and Energy Changes
- Classifying Materials
- Chemical Change

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- Water, Pollution and Energy

Basic Chemical Concepts form the basis for almost every other topic and so you need to know it well. A large proportion of the Section 2 Chemistry questions relate to equations and so being confident with things like molar calculations is incredibly important.

What Biology Knowledge do I need for Section 2 of the BMAT?

The Biology Content in Section 2 includes:

- Cells and Cell Processes
- Organs and Organ Systems
- Nerves, Hormones and Homeostasis
- Genes, Reproduction and Evolution
- Energy Flow

Will there be a choice of question in Section 3 of the BMAT?

Yes. You will be presented with four essay prompts of which you must write a response to **one**.

How should I structure my Section 3 answer?

There is no set structure for how to answer this question but we recommend your answer include the following components:

- Explain: Define all of the key terms in the quote/statement and clearly express their meaning
- Argue: This needs to be objective - typically against the quote/statement. Focus on 3 main arguments and use key examples.
- Weigh up: evaluate and assess the arguments for and against and decide which is more compelling. You can use counter-arguments to highlight this.
- Conclude: This needs to be clear and concise. When writing your conclusion, it is advisable you fall somewhere in the middle of arguing for/against the statement to show you are well-reasoned and have considered all points presented.

You are in no way restricted to these components but remember you have both restricted time and restricted space to write your essay. Avoid waffling to make sure you have enough time and space to offer a well thought out conclusion.

The word limit for the BMAT writing task is 550 – you can be marked down for going over.

What is the mark scheme for Section 3 of the BMAT?

There is no formal mark scheme for this essay section of the BMAT and the exam board has not created model or ideal answers.

Luckily for you, we have created a number of essay plans on our website to help you write a well-reasoned response. To download a FREE essay plan tutorial, visit: stepmaths.co.uk/free-bmat

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The aim is to see how you present an argument in a 'concise and effective way' while being clear and logical.

UCAT Test Specifics

How is the UCAT Structured?

The UCAT is composed of five sections lasting a total of 2 hours:

- Section 1: Verbal Reasoning - Critically evaluate written information (44 Questions)
You have a total of 21 minutes for this section.
- Section 2: Decision Making - Make decisions and judgements (29 Questions)
You have a total of 31 minutes for this section.
- Section 3: Quantitative Reasoning - Critically evaluate numerical information (36 Questions)
You have a total of 24 minutes for this section.
- Section 4: Abstract Reasoning - Infer ideas from information (55 Questions)
You have a total of 13 minutes for this section.
- Section 5: Situational Judgement - Understand real world situations and react with the appropriate behaviour (69 Questions)
You have a total of 26 minutes for this section

You will take the entire test on a computer that will automatically end the subtest once the time is up. Once the test has started it cannot be paused for breaks, but there will be a 1-minute instruction section before each subtest.

How to Apply

Where can I take the BMAT/UCAT?

The BMAT can only be taken at an authorised test centre. You can ask the Examinations Officer of your current school or college to register you and you will be able to take the exam on site. If you have already left school or college, you could go back to your old school and sit the paper there. If neither of these options are available to you, then you will have to search for an authorised test centre to register you.

You can take the UCAT at any of 160 locations in the UK. You can find your nearest centre on the official UCAT website. The availability of test slots will be extremely limited in the last weeks of testing, so expect to travel some distance to an available centre if you hope to test in the later weeks.

When can I take the BMAT/UCAT?

You can take the BMAT in either September or October, but most people take it in October. The standard deadline to register for September is 12th August. The standard deadline to register for October is 1st October.

You must take the UCAT in the year you wish to apply to university for entrance the following year (unless you wish to defer). Tests run from early July to October with the deadline to apply falling in mid-September.

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How can I apply for the BMAT?

You cannot register yourself to take the BMAT; the test centre is responsible for registering you. If you are currently attending a school or college, you can ask the Examinations Officer to register you.

If, however, you are not attending a school or college, then you can visit your old school and talk to the Examinations Officer there and they may register you for the BMAT. If not, you may need to look for other test centres nearby and ask them to register you.

How can I apply for the UCAT?

You must create an online account with Pearson VUE to book the test. You must register for the test yourself - your school can not do it on your behalf. Booking opens on 1st May and will close Mid-September.

Will I be charged to take the BMAT/UCAT?

Yes.

The standard entry fee for the BMAT in the UK is £46.

Some testing centres may also add an administration fee to the BMAT entry fee.

The standard entry fee for the UCAT is £87.

Results

When will I get my BMAT/UCAT score?

For the September BMAT you will receive your score in late September. This means you will receive your score before you apply to university. This may be beneficial to know so you can choose your universities to apply to accordingly.

For the October BMAT you will receive your score in late November. This is after the deadline to apply to university for Medicine and so the universities you have applied to will receive your score automatically and directly.

For the UCAT you will receive your score on the day of your test as you leave the testing room.

How important is my BMAT/UCAT score?

Your test score is fairly important as it is one of the few quantitative measures of a student's academic potential used in the admissions process. Given that most applicants will have received high numbers of A and A* grades, the BMAT/UCAT helps differentiate students who may otherwise appear very similar. Alongside your personal statement and references it helps provide a more holistic view of you as a student and your potential at university. However, it is important to remember that

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there are other indicators of your academic capability throughout your application and the BMAT/UCAT is only one of the parts.

How is the BMAT graded?

Section 1 and 2 are marked from 0-9 with 5 being the average score per section. Given that the score is scaled, a small improvement with your raw score will lead to huge improvements on your scaled score. It is also important to note that you do not need to achieve full raw marks to gain a full scaled score (9).

Section 3 is marked on 2 scales: A-E for Quality of written communication & 0-5 for Strength of argument.

The average mark for strength of argument is 3-3.5 whilst most candidates will score A/B for Quality of Written Communication. This is because they are testing for competence rather than excellence in this section. A grade of C or below, generally indicates a very weak grasp of English and a clear lack of fluency. Section 3 will be marked by 2 examiners and, if there is a large discrepancy between their marks, a third examiner will mark it.

How is the UCAT graded?

The first 4 sections are given a 'scaled' score from 300-900 individually with the average score being 660 per section. The UCAT is marked positively and marks will not be deducted if you answer incorrectly. It is therefore to your advantage to guess an answer if you do not know the answer and are feeling the time pressure.

The final section (Situational Judgement) is scored from 1-4 with 1 being the highest. Full marks are awarded for correct answers with partial marks for choices close to the correct.

What is a 'good' BMAT score?

Given that 5 is the average, anything above that is pretty good. Above 7 is considered impressive, with less than 5% achieving more than 8.

What is a 'good' UCAT score?

Given that the average score per section is between 500-700, scores above 700 in each section (2800 total, out of a possible 3600) are considered competitive. The average total scaled score in 2017 was 2540 out of 3600. Each university will have their own cut-off score and how they will be used in the admissions process. It is best to check the university's website directly to see what they view as a good score.

Can I re-sit the BMAT/UCAT if I am not happy with my score?

Given that you can only take the test once per application cycle, you cannot re-sit it to apply to university the same year. If you desperately feel a re-sit is necessary, you will have to re-apply to university the following year.

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Revision

Where can I find past papers?

Past papers can be found here for the BMAT: stepmaths.co.uk/free-bmat

Past papers can be found here for the UCAT: stepmaths.co.uk/free-ucat

It is recommended you do as many as possible before the test so you are familiar with the types of questions asked and the time pressure faced.

When should I start revising for the UCAT/BMAT?

It is recommended you start revising in the summer before Year 13 if not earlier. The test is unlikely to be similar to any test you have sat in the past and it will take time to familiarise yourself with the format and the skills necessary to sit the exam. Given that the papers are largely skills based (particularly the UCAT), you need time to learn and perfect the skills. This makes cramming just before the test largely unhelpful and, to an extent, counterproductive.

Given that you can take the UCAT from as early as the summer before Year 13, it might be worth working hard at it early on and getting it done before starting Year 13. This will let you focus on your A-Levels and other aspects of your application when school starts.

How should I revise specifically for the BMAT?

The best way to revise for the BMAT is to sit [past papers](#) in timed conditions. It is a highly time-pressured test and so it is necessary to get used to the timings before you sit the exam.

Ensure you know all the content for Section 2 well before you sit the paper. There will likely be content you have not encountered before or at least not for a fairly long time and so it is important to re-learn it so you can apply it in the unfamiliar context of the BMAT.

For help revising for the BMAT, you can access our collection of FREE revision videos at: stepmaths.co.uk/free-bmat

How should I revise specifically for the UCAT?

The best way to revise for the UCAT is also to sit [past papers](#) in timed conditions. It is, likewise, a highly time-pressured test for which it is necessary to get used to the timings before you sit the exam.

It is also a good idea to read newspapers or topical magazines such as the Guardian, Independent or New Scientist Geography research papers and stay up-to-date with current affairs. It is helpful to condense the information you read into short sentences to practise skills for the Verbal Reasoning Section.

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For help revising for the UCAT, you can access our collection of FREE revision videos at: stepmaths.co.uk/free-ucat

Other

What equipment is needed to sit the BMAT?

To take Section 1 and 2 of the test, a soft pencil is required, and a rubber is also recommended. The use of a dictionary, even a bilingual one, and a calculator are not allowed.

For Section 3, a black ink pen is recommended.

The use of correction fluid is not allowed, so get comfortable with crossing out!

Is extra time allowed for candidates whose first language is not English?

No. Extra time is not permitted for candidates whose first language is not English.

What do I do if I need Access Arrangements?

Access Arrangements are available if you have a disability or a special requirement entitling you to support for other exams.

You will need to inform the test centre of your condition before they register you for the BMAT or before you register for the UCAT. You may need to provide details and medical evidence of your disability or special requirement.

What are the guidelines for laptop use in the BMAT?

A candidate using a laptop must not be able to disturb the other candidates and the laptop screen must not be visible to them.

If the candidate requiring a laptop is taken to a separate room then they will require an individual invigilator.

Candidates using a laptop should format their work in Arial font, size 11, single-spaced. The word limit for the BMAT writing task is 550. Automatic spell checkers and grammar checkers must be disabled.

At the end of the test, the candidate using the laptop must be present when their script is printed off, to confirm that the work is theirs. The candidate's name, candidate number, candidate initials and centre number should be clearly written on the printout.

Can I apply for Special Consideration for the BMAT?

Should you feel that temporary illness, injury or other issues affected your test score, you can ask for this to be taken into account as special consideration. A special

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consideration form must be completed within seven days of sitting the test. If you want to apply for special consideration, talk to the Examinations Officer at your test centre as soon as possible.

Good luck for your BMAT/UCAT preparation; if you have any questions, please visit stepmaths.co.uk and contact us!

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