

figures show, as numbers return to pre-pandemic levels. Commentators have also suggested the shift may be due to pay levels, highlighted by a series of strikes, and the gruelling depiction of doctors' working lives in memoirs and TV dramas. But the downturn has only marginally dented the subject's otherwise upward trajectory in demand, and applications in 2023 were still around 20% higher than four years before in 2019. Reapplicants account for significant numbers, as would-be trainee doctors take a year out to improve their applications by doing more work experience, building on their personal statement and resitting the UCAT or BMAT specialist aptitude tests (see chapter 2). Such volume of demand is despite only four medical schools being allowed per application, with the fifth space left for a back-up subject – which most use for a related course requiring lower grades such as biomedical science.

The number of places available to study medicine remains capped by the government. A clutch of medical schools has opened since 2019 to increase capacity, including at Sunderland, Lincoln, Edge Hill, Kent/Canterbury Christ Church and Anglia Ruskin universities. In 2023 9,500 medical students were accepted onto courses, in line with government regulations.

Nearly all schools demand chemistry and most biology. Physics or maths is required by some, either as an alternative or in addition to biology. Universities want to see a commitment to the subject through work experience in hospitals, GP surgeries, a hospice or similar medical setting. Medical schools interview most candidates before making an offer. Undergraduates must be prepared to work long hours, particularly towards the end of the course, which will usually be five years long. Many students are now opting for the postgraduate route into the profession instead, though this is even longer. "The discipline and attributes medicine instils in you lay the foundation for your success as a unique future leader. Medical training equips you to manage change and develops your problem-solving abilities through learning to diagnose, consider and recommend treatment," notes Professor Amir Sam, head of the School of Medicine, Imperial College London.

Medicine	Teaching quality %	Student experience %	Research quality %	Entry standards (UCAS points)	Graduate prospects %	Overall score
1 Oxford	91.6	81.6	67.5	206	99.4	100
2 Dundee	81.9	69.2	57	244	100	97.7
3 Glasgow	76.2	63.1	68.5	240	99.6	97.2
4 Imperial College	85.2	84.3	68.5	192	99.2	96.9
5 Leicester	90.3	87.4	70.2	167	99.6	96.4
6 St Andrews	88.8	88	45.5	214	95.7	96.1
=7 Cambridge	76.1	61.6	76.2	212	99.5	95.6
=7 Edinburgh	75.9	66.7	64	231	100	95.6
9 Bristol	84.9	70.8	71.8	184	99.6	95.3
10 Aberdeen	88.2	80.8	30.5	242	98.8	95.1
11 Queen's, Belfast	84.4	76.5	66.2	188	100	95
12 University College London	77	72.2	70.8	190	99.7	93.4
13 Cardiff	81.9	75.4	55.5	188	100	91.9
14 Queen Mary, London	79.4	74.1	58	192	98.4	91.8
15 Lancaster	87.1	77.4	55	167	100	91.3
16 Hull-York Medical School	83.1	64.4	61.2	167	99.3	90
=17 Exeter	82.1	69.8	53.2	178	100	89.8
=17 Keele	84.9	75.6	49	172	99.3	89.8
19 Swansea	74.6	58.4	66.8	—	98.9	89.5

20 Newcastle	82.1	69	50.7	176	99.2	88.9
21 Manchester	76	61.2	61.3	178	99.4	88.6
=22 Birmingham	74.5	66.3	59.8	174	99.4	87.9
=22 King's College London	71.6	59.3	65.5	177	99.4	87.9
=24 Sunderland	88.1	86.9	30.2	164	—	87.1
=24 East Anglia	78.5	71.4	50	169	99.4	87.1
26 Sheffield	76.5	65.5	51	174	100	86.7
27 Leeds	80.5	71.2	39.5	178	99.1	86.6
28 St George's, London	75.1	62.3	50.2	176	99.3	86
29 Southampton	76.7	67.4	49.5	166	99.6	85.7
30 Aston	77.4	71.4	46	162	—	85.3
31 Liverpool	72.3	70.5	46.8	170	99.2	84.6
32 Sussex	82.2	67.7	32	169	100	84.3
33 Anglia Ruskin	78.4	68.9	33.8	159	—	82.4
34 Plymouth	71.7	62.4	38.2	169	100	81.7
35 Warwick	82.4	70.9	23.2	—	99.5	81.5
36 Nottingham	64.8	40.6	54	167	99.6	80.4
37 Brighton	82.2	67.7	—	169	100	77.6
38 Central Lancashire	82.8	72.5	—	141	78.8	75.2
39 Buckingham	71.1	56.3	—	133	100	69.1

Employed in high-skilled job	81%	Employed in lower-skilled job	0%
Employed in high-skilled job and studying	8%	Employed in lower-skilled job and studying	0%
Studying	5%	Unemployed	0%
High-skilled work (median) salary	£35,000	Low-/medium-skilled salary	N/A

Middle Eastern and African Studies

"Curious about the world's major religions or the key languages of Arabic, Hebrew, Persian and Turkish, not to mention the environment, arts, history, music and literature?" ask Dr Seyed Ali Alavi and Narguess Farzad, School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, SOAS University of London. "Then Middle Eastern studies is for you. The Middle East, the cradle of ancient civilisations and birthplace of writing, is pivotal to contemporary global issues, connecting regions and serving as the hub for energy resources."

One of the smallest categories in this *Guide*, Middle Eastern and African studies degrees attract tiny – and shrinking – student numbers. Just 140 undergraduates began programmes in the subjects in 2022, ten fewer than the year before and down from 250 in 2019, continuing a longer-term downward trend. But modules from the courses in this grouping will have been taken by many students as part of broader area studies courses.

A reshuffle of the table puts Oxford in the lead, its position secured by the second-highest entry standards and the second-best research quality rating. Exeter – which topped the ranking for the past two years – slips to third overall but remains top for research, based on results of the Research Excellence Framework 2021. Cambridge claims the highest rates of student satisfaction with teaching quality and Leeds is in front for students' evaluations of the broad experience. In a high-tariff subject grouping no universities average beneath 145 points (where three As at A-level is equivalent to 144 points) among their new entrants, while the standards are highest at Cambridge.

The absence of graduate prospects scores in the majority of universities in our table is due to student cohorts being insufficient to meet the response threshold for our employment