Introduction

Entry into medicine is highly competitive. Each year, many thousands of candidates apply for just 1,500 places across Australia and New Zealand. As such, it is crucial to understand the processes involved and the skills required in order to maximize your chances of getting an offer.

Universities

The universities that will offer an undergraduate medicine course in 2011 are:
- University of New South Wales
- University of Western Sydney
- University of Newcastle
- Monash University
- University of Adelaide
- University of Queensland
- Bond University (only full feeing places
- Griffith University
- University of Tasmania
- University of Western Australia
- University of Auckland
- University of Otago

Types of Places

There are three types of places available:

- Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) – these places are primarily funded by the government, with the student making deferred contributions of approximately $8,000 per annum

- Bonded Medical Program (BMP) – these places are identical to CSP places, however upon completing their training the student must work for a number of years in a district of workplace shortage. These are mostly rural locations, and the student will often be in their early 30's when they are required to fulfill their obligation. In most universities, 25% of available places are bonded.

- International Full Fee Places – these places are reserved for students who are not Australian citizens. Generally entry requirements will be lower, however the cost of the degree is approximately $40,000 per annum, with payment being required at the start of each year. Students must also be aware that there is some concern that not all international students will receive internships at the end of their degree, and as such may not be eligible to practice in Australia.

Process of Entry

Entry into medicine involves three main components:

- Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) – the student's ranking compared to all other students in the country, calculated from their results in the Higher School Certificate (HSC)

- Undergraduate Medicine Admissions Test (UMAT) – a multiple choice test examining a number of skills required by medical practitioners

- Interview – an interview with representatives of the university, often held on campus. The questions asked are designed to test the candidate's intentions of studying medicine, their likelihood of completing the degree and the suitability as a doctor

Universities use a combination of these components to determine which students will be offered places, however the weighting of each components varies between institutions. For example, the University of New South Wales considers each component equally, whereas the University of Western Sydney uses the ATAR as a cutoff, and then weighs the UMAT and interview marks equally. Regardless, students will have to perform well in all three components to be offered a place.

Key Dates for 2010

Early April	UMAT registrations open
Friday 4th June	Final date for UMAT registration
Wednesday 28th July	UMAT test
August – September	Apply to universities (visit websites for application form)
Tuesday 30th September	Final date to register with UAC
October – January	Interviews
January, 2011	University offers released

It is imperative that students meet the cutoff dates for the UMAT, UAC and the individual dates for each university, otherwise their application may not be considered. Also bear in mind that some universities require an expression of interest to be lodged separate to the application form. Further information can be found on the websites of each institution.

Postgraduate Entry

An increasing number of universities are offering medicine solely as a postgraduate subject, requiring students obtain a degree or complete 3 years of university study before entry. Entry into these courses are based on university marks, an interview and the Graduate Australian School Medicine School Admission Test (GAMSAT), an examination similar in style to the UMAT, but testing significantly more scientific knowledge. Students who wish to study medicine but are not accepted into an undergraduate program should consider completing a science degree and applying for a postgraduate course.

Undergraduate Medicine Admissions Test (UMAT)

The UMAT is an examination designed to test the key skills a future medical practitioner would require. It is requirement of entry into a number of courses, including undergraduate medicine, optometry, physiotherapy and other health sciences.

General Information

Registration for the UMAT opens in early April, and must be completed by the 4th June. This is completed online by visiting http://umat.acer.edu.au/ and clicking "Registration".

The test is held on Wednesday, 28th July at venues close to the Sydney CBD. There are two sessions, one run in the morning and one in the afternoon. Students must attend their allocated venue at the allocated time or else they will not be permitted to sit the test. If there are special considerations (such as illness, car accident etc) then the student may be permitted to sit the test at a later date.

Results of the test are released towards the end of November, and can be accessed online. Provided the student listed their Board of Studies number upon registering, the results will automatically be made available to the universities.

The UMAT is developed and run by the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER).

Test Structure

The UMAT is comprised of three components:

- Section 1: Logical Reasoning and Problem Solving – these questions assess the student's ability to draw conclusions from a brief text or graph, to identify proper scientific method, and also tests basic scientific knowledge

- Section 2: Understanding People – these questions present a scenario or dialogue, and test the student's ability to understand the thoughts and feelings of other people

- Section 3: Non-Verbal Reasoning – these questions test the student's ability to identify visual patterns and sequences

Timing

The UMAT is $2^1/_2$ hours in total.

	Number of Questions	Time (minutes)
Section 1	44	65
Section 2	40	50
Section 3	38	50

Students are not allowed to return to previous sections once the time has elapsed.

Scoring

Each section is equally weighted, however the questions within each section are weighted differently depending on the portion of students who correctly answered them (a question most students answered correctly will be worth less than a question which very few people got correct).

Once the questions have been scaled, each section is given a mark out of 100. These marks are added to give a total score out of 300, which is divided by 3 to give the final mark. In addition, each student is given a percentile for each section and an overall percentile, which demonstrates how well they performed in relation to other students. However, it is the scores, not the percentiles, which the universities use in their grading.

Students wishing to get into medicine should aim to get 165 to 200 as their total score, although it is possible to get offered a place with lower marks, and any higher is a bonus.

Recommended Links

UMAT	http://umat.acer.edu.au/
Institution Websites (click on "Future/Prospective Students" for admission information)	
University of New South Wales	http://www.med.unsw.edu.au/
University of Western Sydney	http://future.uws.edu.au/ug/medicine
University of Newcastle	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/jmp/
Monash University	http://www.med.monash.edu.au/medical/
University of Adelaide	http://health.adelaide.edu.au/students/admissions/
University of Queensland	http://www.som.uq.edu.au
Griffith University	http://www.griffith.edu.au/health/school-medicine
University of Tasmania	http://www.medicine.utas.edu.au/
University of Western Australia	http://www.meddent.uwa.edu.au/courses/undergraduate
University of Auckland	http://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/Default.aspx
University of Otago	http://healthsci.otago.ac.nz/courses/admissions.html