



PHYSICIAN

Mission NOT SO Impossible!

Your One Stop Guide to Medical School, whether it be Canadian, American or International!

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OVERVIEW

“So, you want to become a doctor?”

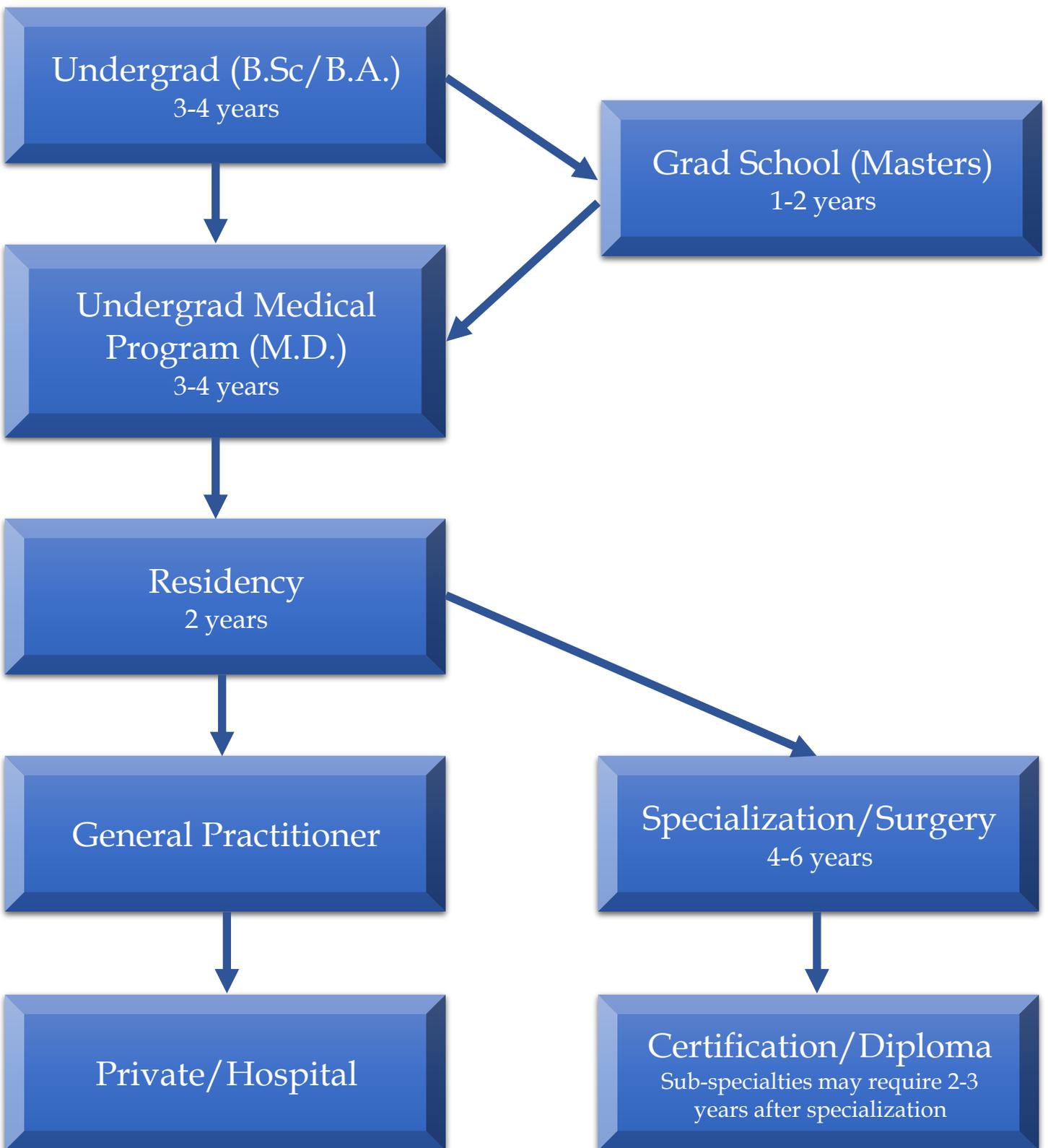
It’s a long and rigorous process, but there are many different ways to get there. The academic standards for medical school are high and the competition is stiff. Students are often interested in learning about as many of the medical school options available to them as possible. Many students are interested in considering medical school options outside of Ontario and this package will help you understand the process and important items to consider if you are thinking about this route.

For the purposes of presenting this information, the material applies to Ontario residents considering studying medicine outside Ontario. Students who are not Ontario residents may still find the information useful, as many of their questions and considerations are similar. Decisions made by an individual considering medical school will be dependent on the exact geographic location where they wish to practice should they be successful in completing schooling and related requirements. The licensing bodies of the specific location should be contacted to confirm all requirement details. It is important not to rely on hear-say from family, friends, or various schools.

As a potential M.D., you should keep in mind that this is like a lab manual. It tells you what to look for when you conduct an investigation, but it is up to you to collect the evidence and analyze it to see if it is working in your favour. Everyone is a little different, so the rules can change and apply differently per applicant. It is always a good idea to check back with medical schools and licensing bodies such as the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, and Ontario College of Family Physicians when investigating your individual pathway. The ideal path towards becoming a licensed physician in Ontario lasts at least ten-years starting from first year university. If you are up for the minimum ten-year challenge, it is wise to prepare earlier than later, or else you’ll find yourself taking a longer and more complicated path.

THE PROCESS AT A GLANCE

The ideal path to becoming a licensed physician in Ontario is as follows:



If you choose to study outside of Ontario, you may encounter difficulties in one of the points along this path. This package discusses what these difficulties may be, what to consider, and what to do to prepare for it.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN APPLYING TO MED SCHOOL

Here is a basic list of considerations to keep in mind when applying to medical school, whether in Canada or anywhere else:

- **Pre-requisite courses:** these can be different for each school, so you must balance keeping your options open at a variety of schools with the need to follow an academic program at which you can succeed
- **GPA cut-off:** different at each school and can be calculated differently
- **Money:** how much is tuition per year, and can you afford it along with living expenses, books, and other social needs?
- **Location:** how do you feel about living away from family and friends, with the demands of medical school making it harder to return for visits; is the location of the medical school a safe one for you?
- **Accrediting bodies and licensing exams:** you should consult with the licensing body of the province you wish to practice in (ie. for Ontario: College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario <http://www.cpso.on.ca>), the licensing body of the country you wish to practice (ie. for Canada: Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons <https://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/home-e>) when considering medical schools outside Ontario to ensure that the programs meet the bodies' requirements.

To learn more about Canada's licensing exams and who is eligible to write each exam, visit the Medical Council of Canada (MCC)'s website: <https://mcc.ca/examinations/> or the RCPSC website for details on testing required: <https://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/home-e>

All these facts may seem impossible and overwhelming. It's complicated, but it's possible. There's a reason why only a select few get into medical school, it's a demanding process that requires thorough preparation. The earlier you begin to think about it seriously, the more time you have to break this

process down into small, manageable steps. Make your checklist of things you need to look up, things you need to consider and prepare for, so that when the time comes you have no regrets.

Of course, it's important to remember that if you do not succeed the first time, you can try again. But when you do, evaluate why you did not succeed at first and maybe consider trying a different route. Going to medical school in Canada (especially Ontario) is the first choice of many students, but there are other options that you can consider too, such as studying in a different province.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS: OUT OF PROVINCE MED SCHOOLS

Admissions Requirements and Standards

- Applications from outside the province may have to meet higher expectations for GPA, pre-requisites, and/or MCAT scores than provincial residents
- Spots allocated for out-of-province students may be approximately 10% or less of available seats; therefore, competition is even higher to obtain a seat

Finances

- Tuition for out-of-province students might be different
- Research local cost of living expenses (shelter, food, miscellaneous expenses)

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS: AMERICAN MED SCHOOLS

Admissions Requirements and Standards

- There are not as many spots reserved for international students. In fact, some schools DO NOT accept out of state or foreign applicants
- American medical schools generally have a stricter set of pre-requisites; verify with each school exactly what they require and what the restrictions are. Different schools may not accept online courses, accelerated high school credits and other special courses as fulfillment of their pre-requisites. In general, most schools demand a specific set of courses, they are not as liberal as some Canadian medical schools. For a list of American med school requirements, see MSAR (Medical School Admissions Requirements) <https://www.aamc.org/>
- American medical schools have a larger range of GPA cut-offs. Some may be higher than Canadian standard, while others may be lower. They differ greatly from school to school, state to state. GPA cut-offs may or may not be different for international or even out of state students. It is a good idea to check how out-of-state/country students are selected via the specific medical school's website or MSAR. One quarter of American medical schools offer a combined college/MD program for students applying from high school. The program lasts for 6-9 years. The first 2-4 years are dedicated to 'pre-med' studies. Upon graduation you receive a B.Sc. and an MD. While this may shorten the time spent studying, some of these schools may still require the MCAT or other admissions tests,

some have higher than average American tuition or have different requirements and may only consider those who are graduating from high school or are recent high school graduates. For more information on combined college/MD programs in the U.S., see the AAMC (American Association of Medical Colleges) website for details:

<https://www.aamc.org/>

Finances

- Tuition costs are much higher than Canadian medical schools. It can reach \$50,000-100,000 per year depending on the university. This is without the housing costs. Since you are going to be an out of state or foreign student, your tuition may cost more, and they do not provide any loans. Usually, the schools require an early payment. At times, the only financial assistance you can receive is through academic merit. Try searching for specific monetary academic awards and their requirements for each medical school you are interested in.

Professional Certification

- You have more licensing exams to write. These exams take a lot of money, time, and hard work to prepare for and 'just passing' is not acceptable for residency and practice. In Canada you are required to write only two exams: MCCQE parts I and II. In the U.S. you are required to write the USMLE Step 1, 2, 3.
- Research the difference between the exams you have to write and which you can omit if you plan to return to Canada. Depending on when you plan to return (after residency or before), you may have to write the MCCQE instead of USMLE Step 2 or 3. These policies may change year to year. Check the Medical Council of Canada website:
<http://www.mcc.ca>
- Further consider that American medical schools do not automatically prepare you for the MCCQE, content and style of questions may differ. Try looking into the differences between the tests and how to prepare yourself if you do study in the U.S. but have to write one of the MCCQEs. For a comparison between the USMLE and the MCCQE, check:
<http://www.mcc.ca> as well as <https://www.usmle.org/> for more information.
- It is easier for grads from US medical schools to transfer back to Canada for practice

compared to graduates from other countries. US MD grads can do their residency in Canada. They are not considered International Medical Graduates (IMG). They go through the same process as Canadian grads via CaRMS (Canadian Resident Matching Service) <http://www.carms.ca>

- There is flexibility on where you want to practice. If you wish to return to Canada, you can. If you want to do residency and possibly practice in the U.S., you can as well.
- Research the requirements of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) for residency training <http://www.cpso.on.ca/> and the certification process for practicing in Ontario via the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Canada (RCPSC) <http://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/home-e> to see how to apply for residency in Canada as a U.S. grad.
- American medical schools with low GPA standards (i.e. 3.0, 3.2) may have higher tuition fees. You must pass each year of study and each licensing exam, or else your money will go to waste. Consider whether your academic skills and background are strong enough for the rigors of medical school

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: INTERNATIONAL MED SCHOOLS

Admissions Requirements and Standards

- Every country may have a different grading scheme and its own educational system distinct from American and Canadian systems. Some schools may also look at high school transcripts. Therefore, it is vital to triple check in detail the entry requirements and educational systems of every international university. Check how these requirements apply to you as a Canadian citizen.
- If you are interested in applying to the UK or Ireland, the following links may be useful for grade conversions:

http://www.studyinbritain.com/info/grade_conversion.asp

<http://www.educationinireland.com/en/>
- Each country might require you to write a different type of medical school entry exam. Not all medical schools require the MCAT. Other medical schools use the BMAT, NMAT, and GMAT

just to name a few. Before you spend time and money preparing for one particular test, it is best to check with the schools you are applying to in order to know specific tests they require (if they require any at all).

Finances

- Research annual tuition and add living expenses to it. Furthermore, learn how the payment works, e.g. if the school requires one full payment right away or if you can pay in installments. If you do not have the money readily available look at international student loans (if any) or any scholarships for which you can apply.

Location

- If you plan to move your family to the country you wish to study in, the school may have a program to help your family with the transition.

Professional Certification

- Check that the school you are interested in is accredited by the World Health Organization (WHO). If the school you plan to attend is not accredited by the WHO, then your medical degree and your license to practice is not valid. Therefore, any studies you pursue in that school are not valid. For a list of the accredited schools, visit: <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/WDMS/PRELIM.pdf> or the World Directory of Medical schools at <https://www.wdoms.org/>
- Some medical schools, especially those in the Caribbean, may use the American curriculum. Students are better prepared to return to the U.S. and write the USMLE. Check what curriculum the school uses and if the school prepares you for the examinations you need to write and if not, how you can prepare for it. If you will be writing the USMLE, check the passing rate of previous students in the school.
- Research which licensing exams you will have to write and where. You may have to write a licensing exam for the country you wish to study in (possibly USMLE steps 1-3) and when you return to Canada (MCCQE I and II). IMGs are able to apply to MCCQE Part I directly starting with the 2019 application as the MCCEE is being phased out. Note that every licensing exam can cost well over one thousand dollars.

- Think about what specialty you are interested in and if previous students in the medical school matched to those specialties. It is a good idea to check the statistics on whether your specialty of interest is frequently matched or not in the medical school you wish to attend.
- In addition, ask about the location of where previous students were matched for their residency. If you are particular about matching to certain locations (especially more populated/urban locations), try checking where previous students matched and the frequency of matching in your location of interest.
- **By attending a medical school outside of Canada and the U.S. you will be considered an IMG upon return to Canada. Check what you need to do as an IMG to be able to practice medicine in Ontario. Visit the website for the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) for the most accurate information:**
<http://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/home-e>
- There are various routes to becoming a certified physician in Canada, depending on when you plan to return to Canada: before you start residency, after you finish residency, after practicing in your country of study for several years, etc. For more information, check the RCPSC Routes to Certification: Royal College: Credentials & Routes to Certification <http://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/credentials-exams/exam-eligibility-e>
- Within each route of certification, there is a different type of assessment you must go through before becoming certified to practice in Canada. For a comprehensive list and description of the different routes to certification and requirements for each route, go to the Canadian Information Centre for International Medical Graduates: Services for IMGs | International Medical Graduates <http://www.cpso.on.ca/>
- Upon returning to Canada, depending on which route you take to become certified, you might not be able to choose where you practice at first. Canadian IMGs meeting the criteria of the Repatriation Program can return to Canada but must practice for a period of time in an underserved area chosen by the Ministry. For more information on eligibility and policies regarding the program, check the Canadian Information Centre for International Medical Graduates as listed in the link above or the CPSO website on the Repatriation Program

Postgraduate Education Certificate of Registration – College <http://www.cpso.on.ca/> or <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/repatriation/>

CAREER ALTERNATIVES IN HEALTH CARE

“None of this works for me...”

Medical school is not impossible but at the same time, it is not possible for everyone. Whether the timing is just not right (financial issues, personal issues) or your profile just doesn't fit (academic background, interests), it doesn't mean having a fantastic health career is impossible. Consider investigating other medically related careers that might contain your skills and interests.

- **Doctor of Osteopathy** – a type of physician who in addition to standard medical training receives training in alternative/manipulative medicine. Licensing and practice is limited in Canada and different from MD.
- **Physician's Assistant** – a clinician who has advanced training and can practice medicine under the supervision of a licensed physician.
- **Nurse Practitioner** – nurses with additional training (usually a master's degree) and can diagnose common and complex medical conditions.

To find out about other alternatives in the medical field and other areas, come to the Career Centre to ask for more information and assistance. The Career Centre can help in a number of ways, as explained in the next section.

HOW THE UTM CAREER CENTRE CAN HELP

Regardless of whether you decide to pursue a career in medicine or not, the Career Centre can aid you in your planning. The following is a brief overview of our services:

Workshops

Attend one of our workshops facilitated by Career Counselors to learn about the careers available to science graduates and post graduate education opportunities. Examples of workshops we offer include:

- Medical School Information Session
- Your Science Degree Under the Microscope

Career Fairs and Special Events

Come to our career fairs to meet representatives from different professional and graduate schools in medicine and other sciences, as well as representatives from different companies hiring science graduates and where to get relevant experience before graduation.

Career fairs we hold annually include:

[Graduate and Professional Schools Fair](#)

[Get Hired: Summer and Full Time Job Fair](#)

[Get Experience Fair](#)

The Career Centre hosts several panel discussions with industry experts each semester. Simply go to the [CLNx](#) (the Career Learning Network) and look under events to see what is coming up and then register. Look out for *career panels* that explore specific career areas in science. Read packages prepared from past career panels pertaining to careers in science on the [Career Centre website](#) such as:

Careers in Biology

Beyond the Stethoscope: Alternative Careers in Health Care

Pharmaceutical and Related Careers

Forensic Science

The Amazing World of Physiology

ONLINE RESOURCES

Tip Sheets and Packages

Read our tip sheets and packages discussing careers in science, how to prepare for medical school and other professional or graduate schools. Our tip sheets are available in print at the Career Center and our website. Our topics include:

Admissions Tests (MCAT, DAT, GRE, LSAT etc.)

Dentistry

Applying to Graduate School

Nursing

Pharmacy

Occupational Therapy

Career Cruising

If you are looking for alternative careers to medicine or you are looking to gain insight on the

daily life of a particular medical specialty, a good place to start is the Career Cruising website. You can access it for free through [CLNx](#) and checking under the 'Resources' tab. Career Cruising includes detailed Career information including: job descriptions, working conditions, earnings, sample career path, education, related careers, interview of people practicing their career, and a day in the life of.

CAREER COUNSELLING

If you feel unsure about your career plans or have made your plans and want to discuss it with a professional, feel free to book an appointment with one of our career counsellors through the [Career Centre](#) website. They offer one-on-one counselling to help you stay on track of your career pursuits.

CONCLUSION

Becoming a doctor is NOT IMPOSSIBLE. However, it is a demanding process that requires intellectual achievements, a lot of hard work, and planning far in advance. As you have seen in this package, there is more than one way to become a doctor. Whichever way you choose, it is a good idea to consider and look further into the points presented here. It is important to remember that the planning never ends. Policies change yearly so you must continuously confirm if your plans are still valid by the time it is your turn to apply for a license to practice.

The details in this package were confirmed as of **May 2021**. You should confirm these points once you start planning your own path to becoming a doctor. If you have any questions about becoming a physician, feel free to visit the UTM Career Centre for one - on - one consultation and more resources.