

Medicine

Written by:

Fauzaan Ahmed (fa414@cam.ac.uk)

Abdullah Nadeem (man61@cam.ac.uk)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Example Timetable

- Most days will be roughly 9-5pm with lectures and practicals, 1 or 2 days you may have a free afternoon
- Supervisions are usually in the evening and you'll typically have an average of 3 per week for the three major subjects (HOM, MIMS and FAB)
- In clinical school (Years 4-6) your timetable will be very different and more self directed with you being placed in different healthcare settings across East Anglia
- Below is an example of week in second year which is not too different from 1st year

Hearing 1 9 – 10am	The Larynx 9 – 10am	Hearing 2 9 – 10am		Hearing 3 9 – 10am	Dr Kankam HNA Supo 9am, B2 Gonville
	Virology I (in person) or Hypersensitivity (TB; online) A 10am – 12pm Classroom, Pathology Building [NEW]			Zoom HNA 10am – 12pm	
	Cardiovascular and renal pharmacol 12 – 1pm	The nature of viruses 12 – 1pm	Cardiovascular and renal pharmacol 12 – 1pm	Consequences of viral infection 12 – 1pm	
		HNA Zoom 1 – 2pm		Jummah 1 – 2pm	
	Kankam supo 2 – 3pm		Virology I (in person) or Hypersensitivity (TB; online) A 2 – 4pm Classroom, Pathology Building [NEW]	MoDA practical 3 A 2 – 5pm Pharmacology Classroom, Pharmacology Building [NEW]	Hifz talk 2 – 3pm
	Rugby training 4:30 – 5:30pm			Rugby training 4:45 – 5:45pm	
Dr Herbert NHB supo 6pm, C1 Gonville	Cafeteria Hall 6:15pm, Old Cour	Dr Krieg Pharma Supo 6pm, K13 St Mary's	Homeless outrea 6 – 7pm	Homeless Outrea 6pm, opposite We	Dr Sale Path Supo 6:05pm, T8 Tree Court
			Formal Hall 7:05pm, Old Cour	Tazkiya 7 – 8pm	Formal Formal 7:05pm, Old Courts Main Hall
Cricket training 8 – 9pm					Interview workshop Saturday Cafeteri 6:15pm, Old Cour

What are Supervisions Like?

Supervisions can take a number of different forms and can vary in style depending on your supervisor. Some supervisors will tend to deliver a lecture in their supervision. Most commonly you will go through the essay you will have written for that supervision and cover what content should have been included and a good structure for that essay. Other supervisions may go through content for the practical paper of the exams in HOM and MIMS.

Overall supervisions are definitely useful but you will definitely learn quickly which ones are worth preparing for in depth and which ones you don't have to invest much time in.

What are labs like?

You will have labs for HOM and MIMS. Labs for both usually last between 2 to 3 hours. Experience of these can be quite subjective. They were a nice change from just doing book work but some of them took quite a while to complete. This can be quite annoying if you have a lot of other work to do at the time.

What is unique about the Cambridge course?

The scientific depth covered in the topics is definitely something unique to the Cambridge course. This is super interesting and grants you a more detailed understanding of the topics that you cover. The essays are something else unique and these form a large part of the examination, these also help grant a holistic understanding of the medical sciences and link

various topics together. However the downside is that this comes at the expense of having less clinical contact in the first 3 years. Furthermore a lot of the scientific detail learnt won't be strictly useful for medical practice as a doctor and is more oriented for research.

Another unique aspect is the intercalation which is done in 3rd year. This is nearly always more chill than the first two years and you can apply to take any subject that the University offers spanning both the sciences and humanities. Most students choose a biological natural science but others dabble in something completely different, some examples are:

- Theology, Religion and Philosophy of Religion
- Management
- Engineering

What did you wish you knew when applying?

How intense the workload is. The workload is a lot and I don't think I had a good idea of that going in. I think this would have made me seek more resources and maybe split up work with friends more.

Favourite and worst thing about your subject?

Favourite - Ability to intercalate and the range of options

Worst - Workload in second year is rough

Application Timeline

The earlier stages of your summer of Year 12 will be mostly spent doing work experience, volunteering, and tweaking your personal statement.

Later in summer comes the UCAT. You can sit your UCAT anytime from mid-July to late September - it would be ideal to sit it sometime in August before school starts again, so you have enough time to prepare for it, but also have enough time for a break after. Everyone's recommended preparation time is different, but the sweet spot tends to be around 4-6 weeks - so you may wish to start revising sometime in July. Cambridge is now using the UCAT exam.

In September, you will be starting Year 13, and beginning to tackle actual A level content. You may be adding final touches to your personal statement, but all-in-all your application should be almost ready to send off.

October 15th, you send off your UCAS application. Your personal statement is now set-in-stone, and you'll have sat your entrance exams (or will be sitting them soon). Between October and November, you can start 'passive' general interview preparation - familiarising yourself with medical ethics, hot topics in the news, and any other relevant reading. Other than that, focus on your A levels - this is a little period of downtime in the application process.

Insha'Allah, in late November, you may get an interview invite from Cambridge. The interview tends to be in early December, usually 2 weeks or so after the invite is sent. It's ideal to start Cambridge interview preparation when you get the invite. It's important to not start too early as to overprepare and burn out - the Cambridge interview is quite tricky in the sense that you can't really prepare for it.

Personal Statement Tips

Do make sure you get a second set of eyes on your personal statement - whether it's your teachers or through the ISoc Mentoring scheme. It's incredibly helpful to have another perspective on it, especially of someone who's been through the application process!

Cambridge will like a bit of science in your personal statement, so do include any further reading or independent research you have done. However, the personal statement is a minor aspect of the Cambridge medical application process overall, so don't worry. Do remember that you are also applying to 3 other medical schools that probably use the personal statement much more than Cambridge does, so do ensure you include what they are looking for as well!

Entrance Test Tips

Medify is a very good tool that I would recommend for UCAT - start with untimed practice questions to get the hang of each section, and then move onto timed practice and eventually mocks when you feel ready.

Put in consistent efforts, no matter how small. Burnout isn't a great experience, so do ensure you take breaks when needed and take time off to do things you enjoy. It's also generally recommended that you take the day before any exam off.

Interview Tips

The Cambridge interview isn't like a typical medicine interview - you aren't asked questions that you can prepare for. It's an interview which tests your ability to think and articulate your thoughts - like a mini supervision. When you are asked a question, always take a few seconds to understand it, collect your thoughts, and then begin to say your answer. Walk your interviewers through your thoughts, showing clear reasoning.

This technique can also be applied to different question types other than spoken. For example, I was asked to draw a graph on a whiteboard; I began by drawing the parent function, then applied the necessary transformations and translocations one-by-one until I had got the final function, ensuring I showed my whiteboard to the interviewers after every step. Talk your interviewers through it all.

I recommend using the science-based questions on the Blackstone Tutors website to get used to the question types that you may encounter. Learn how to discuss something you're not sure about, and how to make an educated assumption with some scientific reasoning behind it. Be able to speak your thoughts out loud.

The interview may begin with a simple A-Level science topic and proceed to develop in complexity. It is important to know your subjects well and be able to speak about and explain scientific concepts that you are expected to know. Further reading could be helpful, but don't worry if you haven't done any. There's no guarantee that you'll be asked upon the topic you read about - a slim chance, even.

Some recommend researching your interviewers' specialties beforehand - I personally didn't benefit from this but know of people who did, as they were then asked questions on those topics. You may be asked about your personal statement as well - I wasn't, but again know of people who were. It goes to show, each college has their own interview style, slightly different from one another but overall testing the same thing - your teachability.

I found that a mock interview was by far the most helpful thing for my application - it's the closest you'll get to the real thing. The ISoc mentoring scheme runs these when the time comes - look to see if your school could be of help too.

Recommended reading/activities

I'd recommend reading further into areas of your A level subjects that you have a genuine interest in - don't do further reading just for your application, do it out of passion! Take part in whatever opportunities you are given, whether it is a webinar, work experience, or a scheme. Find out if medicine is a career that you truly see yourself working in.

I also recommend you take part in any academic activities that you are offered, such as Olympiads. These can be useful to add into your personal statement or reference, to show your academic ability as well as curiosity about your subjects. The Cambridge Chemistry Challenge had even helped me decide which college I wanted to apply to!

Other

Also take the time to see if you wish to see yourself studying medicine at Cambridge. The course here is very science-heavy for the first two years; this may be ideal for some and not so ideal for others who may prefer a degree with early patient contact. There are a lot of opportunities to springboard into academic research, as well as a broad range of intercalations - if all this interests you, then consider applying!

