Making an application to the UK Medical Education Database (UKMED)

2023

UKMED

UK Medical Education Database

Contents

What is UKMED

The UK Medical Education Database, or UKMED, is a resource for researchers to better grasp how medical students, trainees and doctors move through medical education and their future careers. By linking data from pre-university qualifications to course performance and postgraduate training, along with various other measures, it is possible to understand the factors that affect how doctors progress through different training pathways.

Access to the database is controlled through an application process. Applications are taken twice yearly, with information about future application rounds released through the UKMED website and newsletter alerts.

UKMED is run jointly by the Medical Schools Council and the General Medical Council. (GMC) Its pilot phase ran from 2015 to 2016 and following successful evaluation from stakeholders it has been operating since 2017.

Stakeholders

- Academy of Royal Colleges
- Biomedical Admissions Test
- British Medical Association
- Conference of Postgraduate Medical Deans of the United Kingdom
- General Medical Council
- Graduate Medical Schools Admissions Test
- Higher Education Statistics Agency
- Medical Schools Council
- NHS Education for Scotland
- NHS Health Education England
- Northern Ireland Medical & Dental Training Agency
- UK Foundation Programme Office
- University Clinical Aptitude Test
- Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
- Wales Deanery

Who can apply for a dataset from UKMED?

The UKMED application process is open to all applicants, as long as you can demonstrate appropriate preparation and meet the terms of the UKMED data sharing agreement (a sample data sharing agreement can be found in this [document](#)). UKMED data are for research purposes only and cannot be used to make decisions about individual data subjects.

You do not have to be a senior member of staff to apply. For example, medical students and trainees with experience of quantitative data analysis are welcome to apply, as long as you have a named supervisor from an academic institution or relevant organisation and can commit the time. The supervisor will co-sign the contract for accessing UKMED data for research. Accountability lies with the supervisor and their associated organisation for the supervision of the student's research activities, including compliance with the clauses set out in the contract.

Prior to making an application

The research team

1. You should ensure that within your research group, you have identified a Lead Researcher, who is responsible for report submission to the UKMED Research subgroup and leads the project.

2. Within your group, it is crucial to have a statistical expert.

3. Depending on your research question(s) and complexity of the project, you may wish to approach the relevant data provider to request assistance in interpreting the data. We may be able to provide a contact for you.

4. Researchers who wish to undertake a research project where students are part of the team and plan to use the UKMED data for work required by the course, such as a thesis or dissertation are advised to make an application to UKMED prior to when the student will need to complete the work for their course so that we can ensure the data are available when required.

Stage 1 - before making an application

1. All prospective research applicants new to UKMED should complete an initial draft application form containing details about their research question, methods and analysis. You should send this draft to the UKMED team at least one month before the application window opens. You can contact the UKMED team at info@ukmed.ac.uk

2. You will then be able to receive feedback on this draft application form. It is highly recommended you complete this step to strengthen your application and understand which areas need improvement ahead of the live application window.

3. When reviewing the draft, we will report on whether there are sufficient cases with the requested data and when more data will become available.

Things to note

- It may be useful to review GMC Entrant Profiles to help inform your research question. The draft application form also allows opportunities for feedback on your question, eg an estimate of numbers available.

- You should review the scoring criteria before submitting your draft application to ensure you meet requirements (eg governance).

- Data requested need to be specific to the research questions that are being asked – data not relevant to the question will not be released.

- It is worth considering inclusion of demographic data available in UKMED where this is relevant.

- It is recommended you look at previous [accepted applications](#) to check how similar research topics are being addressed. UKMED does not reject applications based on the topic having already been investigated.

- Prepare a realistic timeline. From applying to completing the project usually takes at least 12 months.

- UKMED does not fund research projects. As part of your application, you will need to demonstrate how you plan to resource your research, for example demonstrate that your team have sufficient time within their job plans. Some of the organisations you could approach to explore funding are NIHR, the relevant Royal College or professional body.

Using your own datasets

You may be able to use your own datasets, but you will need to submit these data for matching within UKMED. In order to do this, your data will need to have suitable identifiers (eg GMC numbers, DOB) and you will need to have an appropriate privacy notice on your data collection materials. More information can be sought in this [document](#).

Ethics approval

Researchers are advised to contact their local ethics committee to clarify whether they would need to complete a review process for a project using UKMED data. UKMED can provide further assistance on request.

Making an application

Stage 2 – Making an application

1. All applications are submitted through the UKMED website (www.ukmed.ac.uk). Only one researcher (usually the Lead researcher) should make an account and submit an application. Applications can only be submitted during the application window.

2. The closing date/s for submitting completed applications will be published in advance on the UKMED website.

Stage 3 – Review process

1. Following submission, the UKMED Research Subgroup Members score completed applications independent from each other against the scoring criteria. Members will be able to abstain from scoring a domain if they register conflict of interest or do not have the expertise pertinent to the specific case.

2. Upon completing independent scoring, members of the subgroup will meet and make recommendations to the UKMED Advisory Board. This includes recommendations for approved applications, approved with minor/ major changes and rejected applications.

3. If your application is rejected, but invited for a re-submission, you are able to re-submit within one month of notification. The Chair of the Research Subgroup will re-review your application to see if criteria have been met.

4. The dates for each process are published on the UKMED website once the application window is opened. The lead time between making an application, reviewing and approving applications, confirming the specifications for the data extract, and release of the data can be long. This whole process can take up to three months.

5. In case of approved applications, the title, summary and contact details of the lead researcher as recorded on the application form will be published on the UKMED website.

6. Under most circumstances applications that are approved at the same date will receive their data extracts at the same time. In the event of there being more requests than it is possible to resource, the GMC will work with the UKMED contributors with updates to the UKMED Advisory Board to develop a prioritisation approach.

Stage 4 – Finalising the data specification

1. Once approved, the research team will work with the GMC's UKMED Data analyst to complete a final specification of the dataset to be used in the research. This

specification will be included in the data sharing agreement.

Stage 5 – Data sharing Agreement

1. Once the specification is finalised the GMC as Data Controller will issue a Data Sharing Agreement. This will contractually restrict the research team's use of the data to that required for the completion of the research outlined in their approved proposal.

2. It is important to note that the data cannot be used to support measures or decisions with respect to particular individuals and cannot be processed in such a way that substantial damage or substantial distress is, or is likely to be, caused to any data subject.

3. The GMC require one signed Data Sharing Agreement per organisation the research team is associated with. This can be signed by the lead researcher, but some organisations prefer that is signed by a Head of department or similar person.

Stage 6 – Accessing data and de-identification

1. The GMC will prepare an extract of data that has been tailored for the research question you are asking. This data will be pseudonymised and moved to a secure environment called the 'Safe Haven.' Researchers will conduct their work in the Safe Haven.

2. Your Safe Haven access includes major statistical packages. To complete your work, please make sure you check that the software you plan to use is available within the Safe Haven or request for it to be added with sufficient notice.

3. On completion of the project the GMC as Data Controller will take responsibility for the secure archiving of relevant analysis files for a period of five years, including a copy of the extract provided.

Glossary

Data Dictionary

An interactive [data dictionary](#) is available on the UKMED website.

Safe Haven

The Safe Haven environment is a web accessible Virtual Desktop Environment (VDI) that allows secure remote access to research data provided by HIC Services. It is based on the VMWare View Horizon VDI technology.

UKMED Research Group

A group of experts providing academic support to the UKMED Advisory Board.

UKMED Advisory Board

A group composed of UKMED data contributors.

FAQs

1. What data are held in the database?

For the current data, please consult the [data dictionary.](#) The data are comprised of:

Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency – HESA

- The medical schools attended, including whether the student successfully completed an undergraduate medical course

- Demographic data including ethnicity and measures of socio-economic status

- Data on the students' entry qualifications (A-levels/Highers and equivalents)

Data from aptitude test providers used by medical schools in their selection processes

- University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT)

- Graduate Medical School Admissions Test (GAMSAT)

- The BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT)

Data from the University and College Admissions Service (UCAS)

Data from applications to foundation training

- Situational Judgement Test scores

- Educational Performance Measures

Data on postgraduate markers of trainees' progression

- Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) outcomes from deaneries and Local Education Training Boards

- Outcome of applications to nationally recruited specialty training programmes

- Royal College Membership exams

Fitness to practise data (held by GMC)

- Declarations of fitness to practise made on application for provisional registration with a licence to practise

- Fitness to practise data

Data on doctors' experiences of training from the National Training Survey (held by GMC)

For more information, see the full list of existing datasets. UKMED is currently inviting recommendations for new research questions and associated datasets. Detail on the latest datasets to be added can be found at Potential new datasets.

2.   How are data collected?

Data are collated from pre-existing databases used to administer entry to medical school, entry to postgraduate training programmes, the management of postgraduate training programmes and the evaluation of postgraduate training programmes.

3.   Who is responsible for UKMED's compliance with GDPR?

UKMED is a partnership between various organisations. The governance structure of UKMED means the GMC is the sole data controller under the UK GDPR. The GMC is responsible for ensuring compliance with the data protection legislation and responding to requests about the handling of personal data.

4.   Can I use the data outside of the Safe Haven?

No, the data will only be available within the safe haven.

5.   How is UKMED data updated?

Data are received annually from UCAS and HESA. The GMC's postgraduate collections are annual. All collections are retrospective, the GMC receives the data after the UCAS cycle, academic year or training year has finished.

Useful links

- Application form for draft completion

- 2022 submission and review dates

- Governance

- Data Dictionary

- UKMED Research Process

- Accepted applications

- Linking your own data to UKMED