

Admissions to Medical Schools and Further Mathematics

- At present a number of medical schools state explicitly that Further Mathematics will not be considered in their offers.
- In 2004, there were major changes to the format of AS and A Levels in Mathematics and Further Mathematics.
- The changes mean that those students who now take A Level Mathematics do less statistics than they would have done in the past.
- An unintended consequence of the admission policy of several medical schools is that many students who should now be taking Further Mathematics are not doing so.
- It will now be to everyone's advantage if all medical schools accept at least AS Further Mathematics.

Until September 2004, the Further Mathematics syllabus followed on from that for the single A Level Mathematics and so Further Mathematics was studied almost exclusively in Year 13 after the work for the single A Level had been largely completed. That meant that by the time that students started Further Mathematics they had usually decided on their university courses and were filling in UCAS forms.

That situation changed in 2004, when AS Further Mathematics was redesigned so that it would be accessible to suitable students straight after GCSE, alongside AS Maths. Consequently it is now commonly taken as one among 4 or 5 AS subjects in Year 12. Some students do not continue it to the full A Level in Year 13, others do. So the decision as to whether to start Further Mathematics is now being made a year earlier at a time when many students are still undecided on what to read at university.

This includes many who think they might do medicine and so, based on medical schools' current advice, do not include Further Mathematics in their AS Levels. Those who subsequently decide not to read medicine find they have missed out on a major opportunity. This is a serious problem in that it affects a surprisingly large number of students, many of them going on to read engineering, other sciences and mathematics.

The changes to A Level Mathematics in 2004 also involved a reduction in the number of modules of applied mathematics from 3 to 2. Previously many of those who took the single A Level Mathematics would have done 3 modules of statistics, giving them a very solid foundation. At the most this can now be 2 modules and in practice may often be just one. However, those who take AS Further Mathematics will have the opportunity to make up this deficit and so be as well prepared as their predecessors.

So it would be advantageous to all students, whether or not they proceed to read medicine, if all medical schools were now to accept AS Further Mathematics.

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