



University
of Glasgow

Student's Perspective of SSCs

Top Tips at a Glance



Student Selected Components (SSCs) are modules within the MBChB curriculum that allow you to tailor your studies to subjects of personal interest. At Glasgow, you will conduct a total of three SSC projects in years 2, 3 and 4 (5-weeks in year 2 and 3; 4 weeks in year 3).

Why do an SSC?

SSCs facilitate deeper study, stimulate intellectual curiosity and foster a lifelong approach to learning. You will develop a variety of important skills in:

- Conducting research
- Critical appraisal
- Evidence-based practice
- Team-working
- Communicating effectively
- Time management
- Teaching and education

You have the option to explore medical disciplines that get little coverage by the core curriculum (e.g. tropical diseases, burns, reconstructive surgery).

Common types of SSC:

- Clinical attachment
- Audit
- Research (clinical, laboratory or literature-based)
- Developing clinical skills
- Medical ethics
- Medical education
- Public health
- Fields out with medicine (e.g. humanities, arts, languages, literature)





Choose wisely

- You can choose from a menu of available topics or self-propose one (only in years 3 and 4).
- Weigh up all available options. Challenge yourself and consider unfamiliar topics – you may discover a newfound interest or career option.
- Accumulate a wide portfolio of experiences. This will give you a stronger foundation and allow you to make more informed decisions in the future.
- If you want to do a placement abroad, consider what type of environment you wish to experience. Poorer settings can be overwhelming and require a high level of personal responsibility, but are invaluable learning opportunities if you feel ready for such a challenge. You will need to make all necessary arrangements yourself (e.g. gaining approval, agreeing on a project with a supervisor, funding applications, travel and accommodation).

Plan ahead

- Try and speak to previous SSC students to get their advice.
- Meet with your supervisor before starting your project. Ask them for any suggested background reading you can use to prepare.
- Anticipate the requirements of your project in advance (e.g. start learning any relevant IT or data analysis skills early, begin collecting patient notes or data as soon as possible).

Reflection and feedback

- Reflect on your SSC experience – how has your project enhanced your overall learning and development, how have you learned from any mistakes made and what will you do differently in the future?
- Make the most of your supervisor's advice and support – their feedback is often very insightful as they get to know your strengths and weaknesses over the course of the project.
- You should welcome feedback from anyone you encounter during your SSC (including staff, patients and fellow students).
- Make time to provide constructive feedback. This includes to fellow group members if you were working in a team, and to the SSC organising staff if you have any recommendations regarding the course itself, or wish to highlight something you have particularly enjoyed.

Options after submission

Useful or interesting data can potentially be presented as an abstract or poster at a conference, or used in an audit to inform local clinical practice. You may even have the opportunity to publish your findings in a journal or contribute to a larger study published at a later date. It is worth considering these additional options, as you will be contributing to the medical literature, as well as enhancing your learning portfolio and CV.

SSCs offer an array of exciting opportunities for personal growth and discovery. Through careful planning, you can ensure that you take full advantage of all available opportunities and derive maximum benefit from these valuable experiences.





Further reading

- National Health Service Health Careers. Medical Student-Selected Components [Internet]. Leeds: Health Education England; 2015 [cited 6 May 2020]. Available from: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/medical-school/medical-student-selected-components-sscs>
- Elton C. Choosing student-selected components [Internet]. London: Medical Defence Union; 2013. [cited 6 May 2020]. Available from: <https://www.themdu.com/for-students/student-advice/choosing-student-selected-components>
- Riley SC, Gibbs TJ, Ferrell WR, Nelson PR, Smith WC, Murphy MJ. Getting the most out of student selected components: 12 Tips for participating students. *Medical Teacher*. 2009;31(10):895-902. doi:10.3109/01421590903175361.
- O'Tuathaigh CM, Duggan E, Khashan AS, Boylan GB, O'flynn S. Selection of student-selected component [SSCs] modules across the medical undergraduate curriculum: Relationship with motivational factors. *Medical Teacher*. 2012;34(10):813-820. doi:10.3109/0142159x.2012.701025.

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