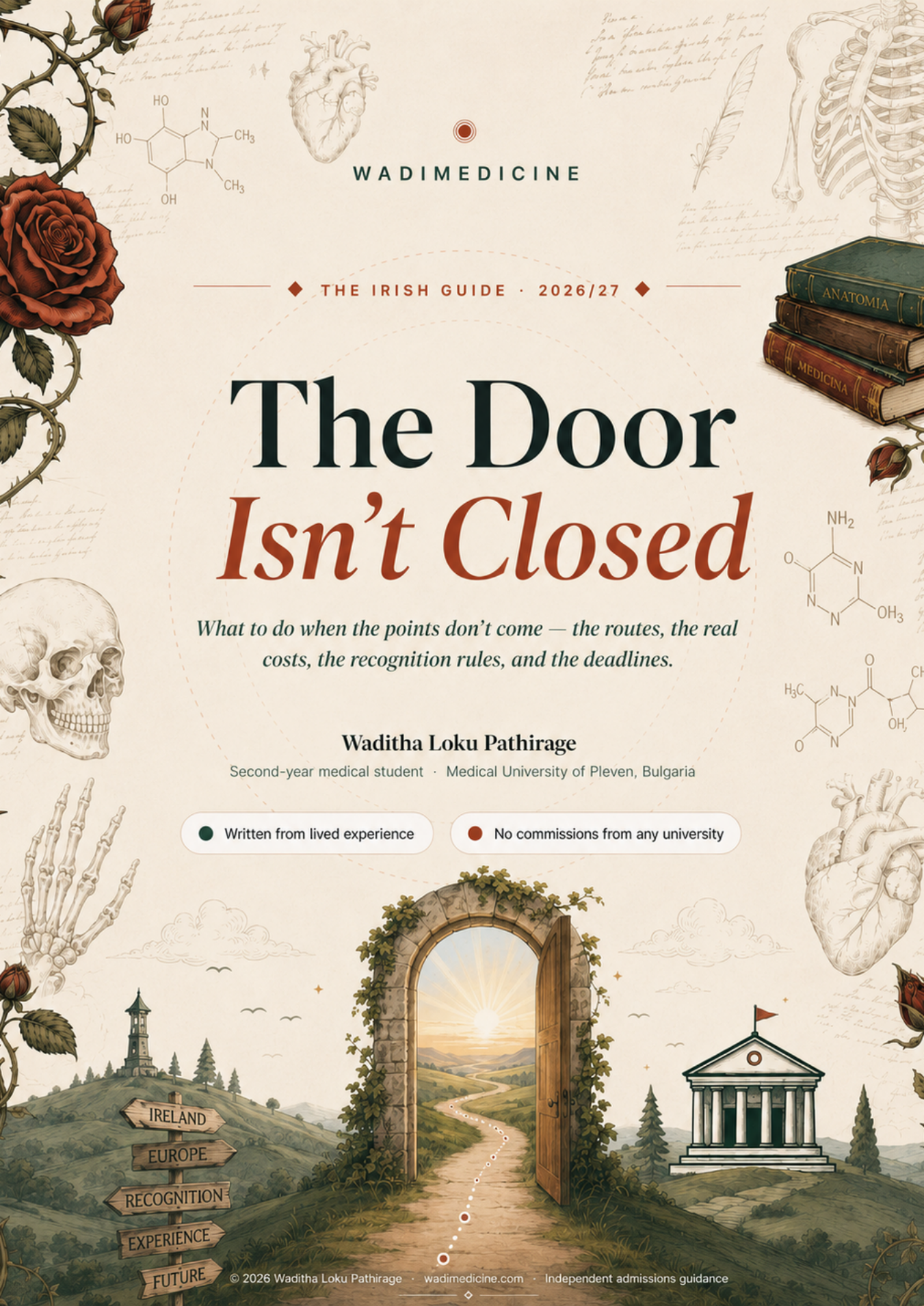


WADIMEDICINE

◆ THE IRISH GUIDE · 2026/27 ◆

# The Door Isn't Closed

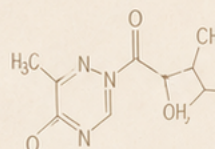
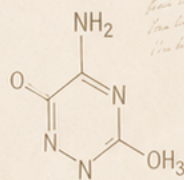
*What to do when the points don't come — the routes, the real costs, the recognition rules, and the deadlines.*

**Waditha Loku Pathirage**

Second-year medical student · Medical University of Pleven, Bulgaria

● Written from lived experience

● No commissions from any university



# If the points didn't come, *read this first.*

Results week is brutal when medicine is the goal. The race for medicine in Ireland is one of the hardest in Europe, and every year capable, hard-working students fall short of a line that moves. If that's your family this year, here is the honest starting point: **missing the CAO offer does not end the road to medicine.** It narrows it to three realistic options.

1

## Repeat the Leaving Cert

A repeat year to raise points and re-sit the HPAT. For some students it is genuinely the right call — and this guide will say so where that's true.

2

## A different degree, then graduate entry

Four years of a science degree, then the GAMSAT and a four-year graduate medicine programme. It works, but it is the longest route (8 years), competitive at both gates, and graduate-entry fees in Ireland are substantial.

3

## An English-taught EU medical school **THIS GUIDE**

Study the full six-year medical degree in English at a university in Europe — Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary and others. Admission is an **entrance exam in Biology and Chemistry** — not CAO points, not the HPAT. Degrees from EU schools are recognised across the EU, including Ireland. Thousands of Irish and UK students are on this route right now. **I'm one of them.**



*This guide covers Option 3 honestly — including when it's the wrong choice.*

What the route involves, what it genuinely costs, how recognition works when you come home, the February intake that buys you time, and the paperwork, step by step.



# How studying medicine *in Europe* actually works.



**6** years

of university — five years of degree, then one year of internship



**5,500+** hours

of training — the legal minimum at every EU medical school



**0**

CAO points needed



## The degree

Exactly the format you'd picture — pre-clinical science first, then clinical years rotating through teaching hospitals, all taught in English, straight from school.

If you can imagine medical school in Ireland, you can imagine this.



## How admission works

Instead of Leaving Cert points, most universities set their own **entrance exam in Biology and Chemistry** — and that's the whole contest.

No CAO points, no HPAT.



## Who this route suits

Students set on medicine and a career in the Irish healthcare system: an application you can actually pass, a price a normal family can plan around, and the same jobs in Irish hospitals at the end of it. Class groups are full of Irish, British, German, Scandinavian and Italian students walking the same road.



## The honest one-line summary:

Same six-year education, same EU standard, same jobs back home — different entry gate, lived abroad. That trade is worth it for some families and wrong for others; the rest of this guide helps you tell which you are.



Leaving Cert



Bio + Chem exam



Six years of medicine



Irish hospitals



## THE QUESTION EVERY PARENT ASKS

# Is the degree even *recognised* back home?

This is the fear behind every kitchen-table conversation about this route, so let's be precise rather than reassuring.



## The short answer: yes — for EU medical schools

Medical degrees from universities in EU member states are covered by **EU Directive 2005/36/EC** on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications. Medicine is one of the professions with **automatic recognition**: the training is harmonised by law across the EU (minimum 5,500 hours), so a medical degree from Bulgaria, Poland or Romania is recognised in Ireland the same way an Irish one is recognised in Germany.

Graduate of an  
Irish medical school

Graduate of an EU medical school  
Bulgaria · Romania · Poland · Hungary...

MEDICAL COUNCIL OF IRELAND  
One register, for everyone.



*Just like a graduate of an Irish medical school, you register with the Medical Council of Ireland — same council, same register, same stamp.*

**What that means in practice for Ireland:** graduates register with the Medical Council of Ireland through the EU route — then it's the same internships and the same hospital jobs as any Irish graduate. The schools in this guide are also listed in the World Directory of Medical Schools (WDOMS). In the UK, these universities have long track records with the GMC — Plevin alone had roughly 300 GMC-registered graduates by 2022.



## “In Europe” does not always mean “in the EU.”

Every country named in this guide — Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Italy — is **in the EU**, so **automatic recognition** applies. A few heavily advertised destinations (Georgia is the common one) are in Europe geographically but outside the EU, and their degrees do not carry automatic recognition.

**Rule of thumb:** EU university = automatic recognition. Everything else = check twice.



*On a call I walk families through the actual Medical Council registration steps for their shortlist — precisely, with the documents named — because this claim is too important to hand-wave.*

THE MONEY

# What it really costs.

—  
**€150**

monthly rent in Pleven starts around here  
— mine is €140

—  
**€400–600**

typical monthly living costs in Bulgaria or  
Romania, all told

—  
**~€15k**

a realistic all-in yearly budget — tuition,  
rent and living together

Indicative annual tuition for English-taught medicine, 2026/27, with typical student living costs. Fees change year to year — always confirm the current figure on the university's own site before committing.

| Country                  | Tuition / year               | Living / month | Feel                           |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Italy (public, via IMAT) | €1,000–€4,000 (income-based) | €700–€900      | Cheapest fees, hardest entry   |
| Romania                  | €5,000–€9,000                | €400–€600      | Lowest all-in cost             |
| Bulgaria                 | €7,500–€9,000                | €400–€600      | Value + big Irish/UK cohorts   |
| Slovakia                 | €10,000–€12,000              | €500–€700      | Quietly good value             |
| Latvia / Lithuania       | €12,000–€15,000              | €500–€700      | Modern, mid-priced             |
| Poland                   | €12,000–€19,000              | €500–€700      | Strong facilities, mid-to-high |
| Hungary                  | €16,000–€19,000              | €500–€700      | Big reputation, priced for it  |
| Czechia                  | €15,000–€24,000              | €600–€800      | Excellent, most expensive      |

## A real example — my expenses for the year

■ Tuition €9,000 ■ Rent ≈ €1,700 ■ Food & everything else ≈ €4,000

≈ €14,700 all-in at Medical University of Pleven — the “~€15k” figure above, made concrete.



### Fees are indicative.

Numbers can shift slightly year to year — treat every figure here as a planning range and confirm the current year's fee with the university before you apply.

## THE MAP

# Where Irish students actually go.

Over a hundred European universities teach medicine in English. In practice, Irish and UK students cluster in a much shorter list:

| Country                   | Schools Irish students use                                   | Entry                                                      | Worth knowing                                             |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bulgaria</b>           | Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Pleven, Trakia (Stara Zagora), Burgas | Biology + Chemistry exam; online sittings, several dates   | Established Irish/UK community; February intake at Pleven |
| <b>Romania</b>            | Cluj (Iuliu Hațieganu), Iași, Timișoara, Bucharest           | Often transcript-based; some exams                         | Lowest total cost among the big names                     |
| <b>Hungary</b>            | Semmelweis, Szeged, Debrecen, Pécs                           | Written + oral (Bio, Chem, English)                        | Prestige option; priced accordingly                       |
| <b>Poland</b>             | Gdańsk, Białystok, Silesia, Kraków, Warsaw                   | Varies — some grades + interview, no exam (e.g. Białystok) | Strong facilities; larger cities                          |
| <b>Czechia</b>            | Charles University (5 faculties), Masaryk, Palacký           | Competitive Bio/Chem/Physics exams                         | Outstanding reputation; hardest exams                     |
| <b>Slovakia</b>           | Comenius (Bratislava), UPJŠ Košice, Jessenius                | English-language science test                              | Under-the-radar value                                     |
| <b>Latvia / Lithuania</b> | Riga Stradiņš; Vilnius; LSMU Kaunas                          | Grades and/or exam + interview                             | Popular with Nordic and Irish students                    |
| <b>Italy</b>              | IMAT public schools: Milan, Pavia, Bari, Bologna...          | IMAT — one ranked, competitive exam                        | €1–4k fees, but seats are scarce                          |
| <b>Georgia (non-EU)</b>   | Tbilisi options, heavily advertised                          | Very accessible entry                                      | <b>No automatic EU recognition</b> — treat with care      |

100+ English-taught programmes

9 countries in this guide

1 set of jobs back home

*The right shortlist is rarely “the cheapest” or “the most famous.”*

It's the intersection of your sciences, your budget, the application calendar you're standing in, and where you'd actually be happy living for six years. That intersection is different for every family — it's the entire job of the Roadmap Session.

## THE SECOND CHANCE

# The February intake: more time, if you want it.

Most European medical schools start in September or October, and a student deciding in August can usually still make an autumn seat that same year. The February intake is something different: **an alternative for families who'd rather not rush**. My own university, Medical University of Pleven, begins its programme in mid-February — one of the very few in Europe with a spring start — which turns results week into a calm autumn of preparation instead of a scramble.

## DOOR ONE · AUTUMN

## September – October

The standard start at almost every university in Europe.

## DOOR TWO · SPRING

## Mid-February

Pleven's calm route — a considered autumn first, then begin.

### How the calendar actually falls

**LATE AUGUST**

Leaving Cert results and CAO Round 1. If medicine doesn't come, both doors — an autumn start abroad, or February — are open.

**JUNE – 1 OCTOBER**

Pleven's application window for the February intake — **opens 1 June, closes 1 October**. Entrance exam sittings run online through this period.

**OCTOBER – DECEMBER**

Offer, enrolment paperwork, accommodation, flights — done properly, without panic.

**MID-FEBRUARY**

Academic year begins (runs to December). **You're a medical student five months after results day.**

### *The real benefit is time, not deadlines.*

If you're ready, chase an autumn seat. If you'd rather breathe — sit the exam properly, compare schools, get the documents right — February is the release valve. Either way, the year isn't lost.

## ✓ THE GATE

# Entrance exams: extremely easy compared to the Leaving Cert.

For most schools, the gate is a **multiple-choice test in Biology and Chemistry** — usually sat online from home, with several dates through the window. Coming off the Leaving Cert, it is **extremely easy by comparison**. (The exceptions worth knowing: Hungary adds an oral interview, and Italy's IMAT is the one genuinely competitive outlier.)

## ✱ I never did Chemistry for the Leaving Cert — and I still passed it here.

That's not a sales line; it's my own application. I walked in without a single Leaving Cert chemistry class and passed the chemistry paper comfortably. If that's possible from a standing start, a student with Higher Level Biology and Chemistry behind them is starting far ahead of it.

## 📖 And if one goes wrong? More than one door.

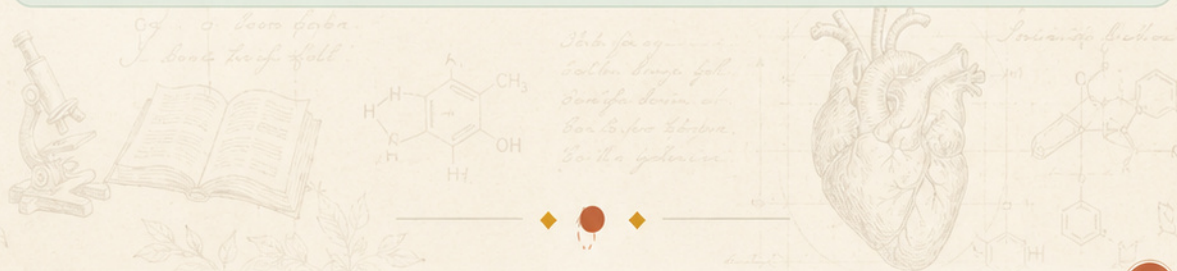
Every school runs its own exam, with multiple sittings through the window — an off day just means booking another date, or another university's paper. One bad morning cannot close this road.

## 📖 The prep is handled

Families I work with get the exact preparation materials and question styles to expect — the kind of thing that's genuinely hard to track down on your own — so nobody walks into that exam room blind.

*If you did Higher Level Biology and Chemistry, you're already most of the way through this gate.*

A few days of familiar revision — **if that**. Plenty walk in on their Leaving Cert sciences alone, and even one science can be enough.



## THE ADMIN

# The paperwork, without the panic.

Applications to European medical schools are won and lost on documents. Nothing here is difficult — a few items just have lead times, so the file should be started before you feel ready.

## The typical document set

- ☐ **Leaving Certificate** — certified copy, officially translated and notarised or apostilled (**allow 1-2 weeks**).
- ☐ **Academic transcript** showing Biology and Chemistry, and their levels.
- ☐ **Medical certificate** of general health, issued within the last 1-3 months.
- ☐ **Passport copy + photos** — check it doesn't expire mid-course.
- ☐ **Application form + fee** (≈ €30–€100 depending on the school).
- ☐ **English certificate** — usually waived for Irish applicants; confirm per university.

## How the season runs



## The whole file fits in one folder.

Print each university's own checklist, tick items off as they arrive, and start the translations first — everything else moves quickly once those are back.

Every university publishes its own exact list — download it on day one and work from that, not from a generic checklist.



## THE DECISION

# Repeat, or go? An honest test.

## A repeat year is the better call if...

- ◆ The miss was narrow and explainable (one subject underperformed, illness, a bad HPAT day)
- ◆ They'd thrive in a structured grinds-school year
- ◆ Leaving home at 18 feels wrong for this particular student
- ◆ The family budget can't carry ~€15k/year for six years

## Europe is the better call if...

- ◆ The points gap is large, or the HPAT is the recurring wall
- ◆ They'd rather spend next year in a lecture hall than repeating sixth year
- ◆ They're independent, resilient, and certain about medicine
- ◆ The total cost works — especially against a repeat year plus a later start

**Whichever way you lean, decide with the calendar in front of you:** application windows close through the summer and autumn, and “we'll think about it” has a real price.

### A NOTE FROM WADITHA

W

I sat the Leaving Cert wanting one thing: to study medicine. The points didn't fall my way and the CAO door closed. Instead of repeating — or letting go of medicine — I took this route, and today I'm a second-year medical student at Medical University of Pleven. I've sat the entrance exam, filed the applications, found the apartment and survived the first winter. When I guide a family through this, it comes from lived experience — not a brochure. **I'm not an agency and I take no commissions from any university. The only person paying me is you — so the only person I answer to is you.**

— Waditha

## The next step is free.

Book a free 15-minute call at [wadimedicine.com](https://wadimedicine.com) — “Can my child still do medicine?” An honest fit-check of your situation, including if the answer is that this route isn't the right one.

[wadimedicine.com](https://wadimedicine.com)

[ahtidawahtidaw@gmail.com](mailto:ahtidawahtidaw@gmail.com)

WhatsApp +353 89 237 2041



SCAN TO BOOK

This guide is general information, not individual advice, and admission is never guaranteed by anyone — be wary of those who claim otherwise. Tuition figures and deadlines are indicative for 2026/27 and change; always confirm with the university directly. © 2026 Waditha Loku Pathirage · WadiMedicine — independent guidance, not a university agent.