Medical School Application Process

Preparing for Your Future

Wheaton Guidelines for Juniors, Seniors, and Alumnae/i Applying to Medical School

Health Professions Advisory Committee
c/o Dean Alex Trayford
Kollett Hall
26 East Main Street
Norton, Massachusetts 02766
Phone: 508.286.8215

E-mail: healthprofessions@wheatoncollege.edu
To Current Juniors, Seniors, and Alumnae/i Planning on Applying to Medical Schools:

This guide serves as an introduction and reference to the application process for medical school, which included both allopathic (M.D.) and osteopathic (D.O.) programs. It contains important guidelines, deadline dates, and an explanation of the process of applying to medical schools.

The decision to apply to medical school, for many of you, is the culmination of years of preparation, anticipation, planning, commitment, and hard work. The members of the Health Professions Advisor Committee (HPAC) are here to assist you in the process of decision-making and applying.

As you read this guide, you will notice that we have established strict procedures that must be followed if you are to receive the endorsement of the committee. This includes important deadlines for materials to be submitted to the committee—forms, letters of recommendation, drafts of personal statements, and other documents that are outlined in this publication. Follow these guidelines carefully as they are put in place purposefully to insure that you are moving forward in the application process in a timely manner.

Be aware that the members of the committee will always have your best interests in mind. That may mean encouraging you to apply because they are confident you are ready, or not to apply because of a major deficiency in some area(s) of your application. We understand that the later may call for a difficult conversation. Keep in mind that, as our committee’s name states, we are an advisory group above all.

The committee looks forward to discussing your plans and aiding you as you move into the “application season” that best suits you.

Yours truly, from the members of the Health Professions Advisory Committee,

Ben Chalot  Robert Morris  
Associate Director of Career Services  Professor of Biology

Meg Kirkpatrick  Laura Muller  
Associate Professor of Psychology  Associate Professor of Chemistry

Lisa Lebduska  J. Alex Trayford, Chair  
Professor of English  Senior Associate Dean of Studies

Director of College Writing  Dean, Junior and Senior Classes
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

AN IMPORTANT NOTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS  
4

BASIC MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATION INFORMATION  
Application Timing  
4
Undergraduate GPA  
5

THE MEDICAL SCHOOL ADMISSION TEST (MCAT)  
The Test  
6
Test Registration  
6
What’s on the Test?  
6
MCAT2015 Scoring  
7
Test Preparation  
7

WHEATON’S “HEALTH PROFESSIONS APPLICTION PACKET”  
Notification of Intent to Apply  
8
Application Materials  
8
Letters of Recommendation  
11
The HPAC Interview  
12
The HPAC Letter of Evaluation  
13
HPAC Important Deadlines  
13

YOUR MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATION  
How to Apply  
14
Application Dates  
14
What’s on the AMCAS/AACOMAS?  
15
How Many Applications to Submit and Application Fees  
17
Medical School Selection  
17
The Personal Statement  
18
The Medical School Interview  
19
Responsibilities of the Applicant  
19

COMMON REASONS FOR NON-ACCEPTANCE TO MEDICAL SCHOOL  
Post-baccalaureate Programs  
20
21
AN IMPORTANT NOTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

If you are not a US citizen or permanent resident, please read before going further.

It is extremely difficult for international students to be admitted to allopathic (M.D.) medical schools in the US. Only between 1% and 2% of international students matriculate in any given year, and some years the percentage is even lower. Some medical schools, the vast majority of which are private schools, state they accept foreign students, but qualify that to mean only Canadians. Even considering that, those schools only take 1 or 2 students over a stretch of years. Many of international students apply for the MD/PhD combined degrees. There are only 21 osteopathic (D.O.) medical schools that accept application from international students. These schools have specific requirements and policies.

Public medical schools in the US rarely admit out-of-state U.S. applicants, and virtually no international ones, due to funding constraints. International students are not eligible for federal financial aid or loans. Most often, international students need to provide their own funding for the entire duration of their studies - and sometimes they even need to prove that they have enough money set aside for their entire four years of medical education (between $200,000 and $300,000) This needs to be set aside in an account at the time of admission.

Given this information, the HPAC strongly suggest that you be clear in your decision-making about applying to a US medical school and consider the very low odds of getting into a program. You might want to consider other option like non-US schools or osteopathic schools that accept international students.

BASIC MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATION INFORMATION

Application Timing

It used to be common for students to apply to health professional schools the summer prior to their senior year of college. This allowed students to matriculate directly to the health professions school immediately following their graduation from Wheaton. Today, according to the AAMC, this no longer is the trend, with the majority of matriculants currently in their mid-twenties.

As you think about which model below is best for you, you need to keep a variety of factors in mind.

MODEL I — Applying during the summer prior to the senior year

Students complete all pre-requisite coursework by the end of the junior year and take the relevant admissions test in the spring or early summer during or after the junior year. Under this model, the successful applicant will matriculate to medical school the autumn following graduation from Wheaton.

The HPAC assumes that the prospective applicant will have the appropriate grades (science and overall), acceptable Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) grades, a variety of experiential opportunities that reflect an understanding of patient care, and are mature enough to begin medical school.
MODEL II — Applying after graduation

Students complete all pre-requisite coursework **prior to graduation** and take their relevant admissions test during or after their senior year.

Alternatively, students who come to the idea of medical school late, or who want to improve their grades (in particular, science courses) after graduating from Wheaton, can enroll in a post-baccalaureate program and taking the admissions test sometime after their senior year.

Besides course grades, students may not enough of the important experiential activities that make for a successful applicant. Time off can allow for that also.

Under this model, the successful applicant will matriculate to a health professions school a year or more after graduating from Wheaton.

**Which model is best for you?**

For some, taking all the required pre-requisite courses in a relatively concentrated timeframe is appropriate. For others, spreading them out over a longer period of time works best, even if it means taking some of those courses over the summer or after graduation.

In the long run, it is important to select the pathway and timeline that best fits your interests, achievements, and abilities.

**It must be emphasized that there is no single “best way” to prepare for a career in the health professions.** Follow a model that works best for you. It is not how quickly you prepare yourself, but how well prepared you are that will make you a strong candidate.

**Undergraduate GPA**

Your undergraduate GPA (in the sciences and overall) and scores on the MCAT, whether you like it or not, are **critical determinants** for entrance into medical school. Not all medical schools play the “numbers game”, but most do. This is particularly the case when the numbers of applicants is high for both allopathic and osteopathic schools.

**Allopathic:** The American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) found that of the reported 43,919 applicants to allopathic medical schools, 20,176 were offered an acceptance to at least one allopathic medical school, for a 46% success rate. Keep in mind, however, that recent successful candidates (matriculants) had a **median** overall grade point average of 3.67 (A-) with often-higher grades in their combined biology, chemistry, math, and physics (BCMP) grades; But for the majority of medical schools, average isn’t enough!

**Osteopathic:** The American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine reported that for incoming class that started in the fall of 2013, there were 16,454 applicants for 6135 seats. That translates to only 37% of applicants were accepted to osteopathic medical colleges. Successful candidates (matriculants) had a **median** overall grade point average of 3.50. Their combined biology, chemistry, math, and physics (BCMP) grades were a mean GPA of 3.40.
It is important to remember that these medical school averages are neither school specific nor case specific. A great deal will depend upon you, your preparation (including extra- and co-curricular activities), when you submit your application, and your letters of recommendation. Even students with near perfect GPAs and high test scores will have a difficult time getting accepted if their personality, activities/experiences, and supporting documents do not indicate that they will be compassionate and careful healthcare providers. Likewise, there are cases where students with a bit weaker GPAs and/or test scores are accepted because everything else about them suggests that they will be the kind of doctor medical schools wish to train.

**THE MEDICAL SCHOOL ADMISSIONS TEST (MCAT)**

**The Test**

The AAMC has provided excellent MCAT information for students: [https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/mcat2015/](https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/mcat2015/)

This link will give you a solid, basic overview of the new MCAT2015. The test is made up of four components:

- Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems
- Chemical and Physical Foundations of Living Systems
- Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Living Systems
- Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills

The content for the first three sections is covered by the Wheaton pre-requisite courses. The content of the last section, commonly called the “verbal” section, is something you will gain throughout your time at Wheaton and its liberal arts education.

**Test Registration**

Beginning in 2015, the MCATs are given over a dozen times throughout the year from April to September. As these tests are now administered electronically, we suggest that you visit the MCAT website for the most up-to-date information including test site locations. You may register for the MCAT at [www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm](http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm). Plan ahead! Seats for the tests in the summer and early autumn tend to fill up quick.

**What’s on the Test?**

Two of the four sections of the exam will test academic competencies in the natural sciences, with one section testing the Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems and the other testing the Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems. Test takers must bring together what they know about biology, general and organic chemistry, physics, and biochemistry to solve problems about biological and other living systems. These sections will test the extent to which applicants think like scientists by reasoning about research designs and results, interpreting data and drawing conclusions, and considering ethical issues in research.
A third test section, Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills, will test reasoning and analysis skills using passages from population health, studies of diverse cultures, ethics and philosophy, and other humanities and social sciences disciplines. The most current science on cognitive processing will be used to test applicants’ ability to comprehend and analyze what they read, draw inferences from text, and apply arguments and ideas to new situations. Reading broadly in preparation for medical school will help test takers familiarize themselves with the issues and arguments these disciplines raise.

The fourth section, Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior, will be formatted like the two natural sciences sections and test the ways that psychological, sociocultural, and biological factors influence people’s perceptions and reactions to the world, behavior and behavior change, individuals’ opinions of themselves and others, cultural and social differences that influence overall health, and the relationships between social stratification, access to resources, and well-being.

Applicants will take the four new test sections in the following order:
- Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems
- Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills
- Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems
- Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior

The above was adapted from information supplied by the AAMC.

**MCAT2015 Scoring – as per the AAMC**

You will receive five results from your MCAT exam: one for each of the four sections and one combined total score.

**Section Scores:** Each of the four sections—Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems; Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems; Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior; and Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills—is scored from a low of 118 to a high of 132, with a midpoint of 125. Test takers will receive scores for each of the four sections.

**Total Score:** Scores for the four sections are combined to create a total score. The total score ranges from 472 to 528. The midpoint is 500.

For example, if an examinee scored 128 on the Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems section; 125 on the Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems section; 129 on the Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior section; and 127 on the Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills section, the total score would be 509.

**Test Preparation**

Preparation begins with the first class you take at Wheaton, regardless of discipline! There are many ways to prepare for the admissions tests and no system is ideal. Whether you take a commercial test preparation course (Kaplan, Princeton Review, etc.) or prepare on your own using the many available test preparation manuals is not important. What is important is that you are prepared for the test! Take the test when you have completed all your pre-requisite science requirements, never before. And remember, test scores are often valid for a few years. Note that all test scores, no matter how many
times you take it, are reported to medical schools to which you apply. **Do not** take the MCAT as a practice!

Some things to consider about MCAT preparation:

- Start by checking out the AAMC’s site for preparing for the exam:
  - [https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/mcat2015/preparing/](https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/mcat2015/preparing/)
  - It contains interactive tools and upcoming sample test information.
- How you perform is **highly critical** for the success of your application.
- Take the test **when you are prepared** and not before.
- Target your preparation so that you can ideally take the test during the late spring or early summer of your application year.
- You cannot prepare properly for the MCAT at the “last minute”! This can lead to disaster. **Prepare slowly** rather than cramming intensively within a few months of the test itself.
- Do not take your test preparation lightly, even if you do use a commercial prep course.
- Take simulated tests often and under time constraints and in uncomfortable room settings in order to prepare for the stress of the actual test situation.

**WHEATON’S “HEALTH PROFESSIONS APPLICATION PACKET”**

Each year, a meeting is scheduled in the fall semester for students interested in applying to a health professional school for attendance in the fall of the following year. At that meeting, you will be given instructions regarding the application process and directed to the application materials required for the HPAC interview and subsequent Committee Letter of Evaluation.

You will be required to fill out a variety of forms as a part of the application packet. All forms required for the Health Professions Application Packet can be found online at: [http://wheatoncollege.edu/grad/health-professions/forms/](http://wheatoncollege.edu/grad/health-professions/forms/). The forms may be filled out electronically.

**Notification of Intent to Apply** – First-time and repeat applicants **MUST** notify Dean Trayford by submitting the Intent to Apply Form no later than **MARCH 15th** of their plan to apply to health professions schools during that year’s application cycle.

**Application Materials** – All must be received by Dean Trayford as a packet in the order listed below no later than the deadline date of **APRIL 1st**.

The application materials include the following, the forms of which can be found at the above link:

- A copy of your Intent to Apply Form
- Waiver/FERPA Form (see below for information) – witness signature required
- Release of Information Form (see below for information) – witness signature required
- Applicant Information Form
- Reflection Questions Form
- Recommenders List Form
• HPAC Application Essay (see instructions below)
• A copy – unofficial is fine – of your transcript (see below for additional information)

Repeat applicants should update any of the appropriate forms/information before submitting them.

Only when your file is complete will the required Health Professions Advisory Committee (HPAC) interview be scheduled. All interviews will take place in April unless there is an extenuating circumstance that is assessed and approved by HPAC.

Intent to Apply Form

This form informs the HPAC that you intend to submit an application for medical, dental, veterinary, or optometry school in the coming application cycle. This form must be submitted no later than March 15th of the application year.

Waiver/FERPA and Release of Information Forms

There are two opportunities for you to authorize release of information or to waive right of access to recommendations and to the Committee Letter. The first is an authorization to send a Committee Letter on your behalf to your designated list of health professional schools. You must sign that or we cannot send a letter for you. This is a legal requirement. The second invites you to waive your access to the contents of your HPAC Committee Letter of evaluation and individual letters of recommendation. Whether you waive access or not is up to you, but it will be stated in the Committee Letter that you have or have not done so. Almost all health professions schools prefer (expect?) letters to which your access has been waived.

This confidentiality gives health professional schools added assurance that those who have written your evaluations and recommendations have been frank and open in their estimates of your potential for success in health professional school. Although this is not a condition for having us write a letter for you, it is in your own best interests to do so.

These forms must have a witness signature before being valid. Anyone can witness you signing the forms.

Applicant Information Form

The Applicant Information Form provides the Health Professions Advisory Committee with relevant biographical and application information. The information the applicant supplies will be used by the HPAC to gain a better understanding of the individual behind the application

Reflection Questions Form

This form gives the committee a more personal perspective on your interest in the health professions. The committee asks that you fill out this form in which you discuss the reasons you are interested in entering into a career in the health professions.
Recommenders List

Students must fill out the Recommenders List stating all those who have agreed to write full recommendations on behalf of student’s application.

The HPAC Application Essay

In addition to the above materials, you will provide the HPAC with an essay or personal statement describing your motivations and suitability for the study and practice of the medical sciences in general and your designated choice of a health professions career in particular.

The statement should convey your passions, commitments, and rationale for a life dedicated to healthcare and service to others and the greater good. **This statement is for the HPAC’s use only;** it is considerably longer than the official application essay you will submit to your health professions schools.

Because this is your statement, the HPAC members will not provide you with feedback on what you have written. We are interested in how you write and express yourself, and in what you find important to share with us. During your HPAC interview, you may request feedback on this statement and advice for how you might modify it for your actual health professions school application essay. **Keep in mind that medical school admission committees stress that they want to see how you write, not how we write.**

HPAC Application Essay Instructions:

As noted, your HPAC essay should be informative and thorough. Essays that are one to two pages long do not provide us with sufficient insight into your motivations or preparation for a health professions career. Think of this longish essay as your “paper interview.” The Committee will refer back to this essay when writing their Committee Letter of Evaluation.

A suggested length for the essay is 4 – 6 pages double-spaced, with 1 inch margins. You are expected to be reflective, and to provide perspective on how significant aspects of your life have shaped your values and your motivations.

We anticipate that you will discuss those experiences that influenced your decision to pursue a healthcare career. (For example, describe and explain how experiences working or living with, and/or serving, “those with medical needs” have influenced your desire to pursue a health professional career.) You can also assess the strengths and weaknesses of your personal and academic preparation for a career in the health professions. This personal statement is intended to provide you with an opportunity to review and reflect upon those unique or unusual abilities, experiences or characteristics that you will bring to the health professions.

This statement will provide the HPAC with a better understanding of you, your experiences and background, and your goals, motivations, and passions, as well as greatly assist the HPAC’s endeavor to write a detailed, personalized letter on your behalf.

As you prepare your personal statement, consider working with the college’s Writing Faculty, who post their office and availability on their website (http://wheatoncollege.edu/writing/writing-people/), and Peer Writing Tutors (http://wheatoncollege.edu/tutoring/writing-tutors/). If you plan to work with the
Writing Faculty, you must do so during the spring semester. Writing Faculty are not available to work with you over the summer.

**College Transcripts**

You are required to submit copies of your college transcripts from all institutions attended. The committee is fine with unofficial copies.

Please be aware that for our purposes we will accept grades from study away programs that have been noted on your Wheaton transcript; however, when you apply to your health professions schools, you will be required to submit official copies of all transcripts, even those from summer courses and study away programs, or from courses taken before you matriculated at Wheaton. Forgetting to submit these transcripts will seriously delay your official application to health professions programs. HPAC and Wheaton College are not responsible for submitting any transcripts, including your Wheaton transcript. This is your responsibility and yours alone!

**Letters of Recommendation**

The purpose of letters of recommendation is, in part, to provide information that is not included elsewhere in your application, such as descriptions of your character, professional behavior, and maturity.

You must fill out and submit the below Waiver/Release of Information Form before soliciting evaluators and recommenders for letters.

The HPAC application requires a minimum of four letters of recommendation, all of which must have the appropriate Faculty/Non-faculty Recommendation Form, which can be found on Wheaton’s Health Professions webpage (http://wheatoncollege.edu/grad/health-professions/forms/). This form must accompany every recommendation so that the committee knows whether you have waived or not waived your right to see the letters. The make-up of the recommendations is as follows:

- **Letters from faculty, at least two minimum of which must come from science faculty:**
  - These recommenders should be from those who have taught and/or worked with you on research. We prefer that at least two of these letters be written by Wheaton faculty because their letters will place you within the context of our student body and applicant class. If you have questions about whom to ask for a recommendation, please discuss your options with a member of the HPAC.

- **Minimum two other letters, from individuals who can address your suitability for a health professions career:**
  - These letters may, but need not, come from healthcare professionals with whom you have worked and/or others whom have otherwise engaged in significant leadership, teamwork, community service, externships or internships.
  - Recommendations from coaches, deans, and others are acceptable when they address aspects of your character unlikely to be evident to a professor or (healthcare) professional with whom you have worked.
  - DO NOT include letters from family friends/relatives. Letters that state they know you as a family friend/relative are ineffective.
Faculty and non-faculty recommendations are a significant element of the Health Professions Advisory Committee Letter of Evaluation (see below). As such, you should request recommendations from people who know you and your work well. Additionally, their letters must be substantive. You do not want your letters all saying the same thing – repeating your resume and a brief, superficial statement of their relationship and interactions with you. Such non-informative letters are essentially meaningless and do little for your application in the eyes of admissions committees. What should be covered in the letters is included on the second page of the online Recommendation Forms.

You should make every effort to request letters of recommendation well in advance of the April 1st HPAC application deadline to ensure that those writing on your behalf will have adequate time to write thoughtful, detailed letters. We suggest that you request your letters of recommendation as soon as possible, and certainly no later than March 15th of the year in which you will apply so that the letter is received by the April 1st deadline. Whatever letters of recommendations that have been received will also be printed off by the committee and added to your packet. Because of this, all letters must be received by Dean Trayford no later than April 1st.

It is not unusual for those who write such letters to take a month or more to do so, particularly while a semester is in session. Don’t be rude and expect a recommender to produce a letter in a week because you have a deadline that you have known about for some time! Not the best way to get an outstanding letter.

When received, letters of recommendation are placed in your application file in Kollett Hall. Oftentimes, verbatim copies are sent to each school to which you apply as part of the HPAC Committee Letter of Evaluation. The original copy of each letter of recommendation is kept in your file. It is your responsibility to ensure that your letters have arrived in a timely manner. You may check with Dean Trayford regarding letters received/not received. Please allow at least four weeks from the time you request a letter for it to be written and sent before checking with the dean. If it has not been received, you will need to politely remind the individual that his/her letter has not been received. In some cases, the letter may have been sent but not received and will have to be resent.

The HPAC Interview

The HPAC interview is a crucial factor for admission to a health professions school. This is your opportunity to make a good impression upon the committee and explain any areas of potential concern (e.g., course grades, lack of medical-related experiences, etc.) or otherwise defend your candidacy. Without the interview, the HPAC Letter of Evaluation will be minimal as we will be missing an important aspect of our evaluation process. In some cases, we will only submit your individual letters of recommendation to your designated schools.

The HPAC interview will be scheduled upon completion of your HPAC Application Packet. To ensure that your application to respective health professional schools is completed in a timely manner, your interview must take place before the end of the spring semester. This is important. The HPAC cannot conduct interviews over the summer due to non-availability of committee members. Therefore, do not operate under the assumption that there will be HPAC interviews scheduled over the summer! Remember, the interview is necessary for the HPAC to write an adequate letter on your behalf. If you are a recent graduate or are studying abroad, it may be possible to arrange a committee interview early in the summer (June), but this cannot be guaranteed.
In the absence of the committee interview, we will only send out a cover letter PLUS copies of your individual faculty and non-faculty letters of recommendation.

**To reiterate:** HPAC interviews will NOT be scheduled over the summer and, under the majority of circumstances, will NOT be scheduled during the fall semester.

### The HPAC Letter of Evaluation

Your letters of recommendation from professors and professionals with whom you have worked are submitted to the Health Professions Advisory Committee and are incorporated verbatim at the end of the Committee’s composite letter of evaluation. The HPAC letter of evaluation is sent to your designated health professional schools as part of your application.

The composite letter is written after your interview with the Health Professions Advisory Committee. What is written is based upon your achievements during your college years (derived from your Applicant Information and Reflection Question Forms, and personal statement), your letters of recommendation, and your interview.

The Committee letter concludes with an overall Committee evaluation rank as follows: *enthusiastically recommend, highly recommend, recommend, recommend with reservation, and presented for consideration.*

The composite letter evaluates your personal preparation and evaluates the strength and maturity of your decision to pursue a career in medicine at the time of application. The letter is two to three pages long and is written to present a balanced evaluation of you to medical schools. All medical schools regard the committee letter as an important element in your application.

Remember, the HPAC Letter of Evaluation can only be sent at your written request through the Waiver/FERPA Form, which must be included in your Health Professions Application Packet. Moreover, the letter can only be sent to medical (allopathic, osteopathic) schools, or occasionally to post-baccalaureate programs (if you decide after the interview and receipt of your admissions test scores to delay application for medical school in order to better prepare through the services of post-baccalaureate programs). The letter will not be sent to prospective employers or other non-health-related professional schools or programs.

### HPAC Important Deadlines

- For application files **completed by April 1st**
  - The HPAC interview will take place before the end of the spring semester AND the HPAC Composite Letter of Evaluation will be written and sent off by the beginning of August for early decision deadlines.
  - **DO NOT contact the members of the HPAC** regarding the submission of your Committee Letter. You are not the only applicant for which the committee is writing. Letters will be received by the professional schools by, and likely earlier than, August 1st.
For applications completed after April 1st, but before May 1st
  o HPAC interviews cannot be guaranteed during the spring semester or over the summer. We will try to prioritize interviews for: (1) students who are studying abroad for the spring semester; and (2) candidates who, due to extraordinary circumstances approved by the HPAC, are unable to schedule an interview during the spring semester.
  o As such, we cannot guarantee that the HPAC Letter will be completed and submitted by early decision deadlines in August.

For application files completed after May 1st
  o The HPAC will send a Letter Packet to your designated schools with a brief cover sheet and statement to the effect that you have requested that your individual letters of recommendation be sent by August, your GPA and class ranking, and a statement regarding your Dean’s Certification. That is, your HPAC letter will **ONLY** consist of this statement, and verbatim copies of your individual letters.
  o *If you are an alumnus/a,* this application deadline may be relaxed at the discretion of the HPAC. You should plan ahead and try very hard to complete your application before April 1st.

**YOUR MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATION**

**How to Apply**

Once you have decided to dedicate your life to the practice of medicine and have taken the relevant health professions school entrance exam, you are ready to begin the actual, official medical school application process.

You will apply to **allopathic (M.D.) schools** through the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) ([www.aamc.org/amcas](http://www.aamc.org/amcas)). **For osteopathic schools (D.O.),** you will use the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine’s Application Service (AACOMAS) ([www.aacom.org](http://www.aacom.org)).

The major exception to these is the application service required for seven of the public allopathic medical schools and one osteopathic school in Texas. These schools require the use of the Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDSAS) ([www.tmdsas.com](http://www.tmdsas.com)). Keep in mind that Texas residency is highly prioritized for admission to the Texas public medical schools.

**Application Dates:**

Beginning of May, usually the 1st – AMCAS and ACOMAS open.

First week of June – AMCAS and ACOMAS application opens for submission.

End of June – 1st transmission of submitted applications to medical schools from AMCAS and ACOMAS. Materials are accessible by medical schools three weeks later.
**Fee Waiver:**

First week of January - AMCAS Fee Assistant Program Application opens for applicants with demonstrated financial need: [https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/](https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/)

You must begin your 2015 AACOMAS application to apply for a fee waiver. Do NOT submit your application to AACOMAS until you have received a determination on your fee waiver request. Follow the directions: [http://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor/applying/aacom/fee-waiver](http://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor/applying/aacom/fee-waiver)

**Early Decision:**

August 1 – AMCAS Early Decision applications and transcripts due.

Early Decision for osteopathic schools – please contact the college(s) directly if you plan to apply under the Early Decision option. Please note that the college’s Early Decision deadline dates are those by which the college expects to receive your information. You should apply to AACOMAS at least six weeks prior to that date.

**What’s on the AMCAS/AACOMAS?**

Both of these application services are essentially the same in the types of information required.

**Background Information** – Who you are, where you went to school, where you live, and how you can be contacted.

**Course Work** – Detailed information regarding every course in which you enrolled at any post-secondary institution. This section takes the longest to fill out. For courses taken abroad through a US-sponsored program or foreign credit, see the AMCAS or AACOMAS Instruction Manual and tutorial on how to enter them into this section.

**Work and Activities** – Work experience or extracurricular activities, awards, honors, or publications that you would like to bring to the attention of the medical schools to which you are applying. AMCAS has a maximum of 15 experiences that may be entered, some of which you will designate as your “most meaningful” experiences. AACOMAS has a separate section for honors.

**Letters of Evaluation** – For AMCAS, enter information regarding each letter of evaluation being sent to AMCAS. Up to ten (10) letter entries may be created. Letter entries may continuously be added throughout the application process; however, after submission of your application, letter entries cannot be edited or deleted. You must choose the type of letter that will be submitted and designate the person who will be submitting it.

- **Committee Letter:** A Committee Letter is a letter authored by a pre-health committee or pre-health advisor and intended to represent your institution’s evaluation of you. A Committee Letter may or may not include additional letters written in support of your application. If you have been notified by HPAC that they will be compiling a Committee Letter, you must designate Dean Trayford as the Primary Author/Contact. When filling out the “Add a Letter of Evaluation” form, use the following information:
  - Prefix – Dean
  - First Name – Alex
For AMCAS, you must also submit a Letter Request Form to Dean Trayford so that your letter can be submitted electronically. AACOMAS does not yet have an electronic letter submission process. Letters to osteopathic schools are sent out only if you receive a secondary application invitation from an individual DO school. You must supply Dean Trayford with the addresses for each school you get secondary application from in order for your letter to be forwarded to them.

- **Letter Packet:** A Letter Packet is a packet or set of letters assembled and distributed by HPAC in lieu of a Committee Letter. If you do not meet the deadlines outlined above and/or do not have an HPAC interview, the committee may not be able to produce a Committee Letter, and will therefore submit a Letter Packet on your behalf. A Letter Packet will include a cover sheet from HPAC and all the letters that are currently on file for you from recommenders. To reiterate, a Letter Packet does not include an HPAC evaluative letter.

- **Individual Letter:** An Individual Letter refers to a letter authored by, and representing, a single letter writer. **If an Individual Letter is being sent within either a Committee Letter or a Letter Packet, you should not add a separate entry for the Individual Letter.** You can also send “targeted” letters to specific schools.

**Medical Schools** – Here you will select the schools to which you will apply. You can also use this section to designate the schools you wish to receive specific letters of evaluation. All medical schools have their own stated deadlines you must apply by. If you submit your application after a designated school’s deadline, it will not be sent.

**Essay** – Here you will enter your personal comments explaining why you wish to attend medical school and addressing any pertinent information not included elsewhere in the application. Make sure to thoroughly **proofread your essay**, this section does not have spellcheck. For AMCAS, you are allowed 5300 characters **with spaces** for your essay. AACOMAS allows 4500 characters **with spaces**.

**Standardized Tests** – Here you will enter or edit future MCAT test dates, review previous MCAT scores, and enter any additional test information, such as GRE scores if applying to an MD/PhD program (AMCAS only). Keep in mind that when submitting your application, medical schools will see all the scores from **every** MCAT you have ever taken. **IMPORTANT:** If you are planning on taking an MCAT after you submit your AMCAS, you must designate the future test date. If you do not do this, the medical schools will only consider previous test scores, not the upcoming one.

**Transcripts** – All transcripts from all colleges or universities you received credit from must be sent and received in order for your application to be processed. Check with AMCAS and/or AACOMAS about the appropriate way to submit your transcripts. Transcripts must all be **official** and sent directly from the college or university the courses were taken at.
How Many Applications to Submit AND Application Fees:

Unless you are very confident, you should apply to a range of schools. Based upon the national average, we suggest you apply to between ten and twelve schools divided across a range of schools: 1/3 “reach,” 1/3 “good match” and 1/3 “safety.” More than twelve may be advisable if you are a marginal candidate, but more than twenty is probably unnecessary (and expensive). You must estimate your own chances and act accordingly. Moreover, remember that if you are sticking only to New England and the Eastern Corridor with respect to your schools, you are severely limiting your chances—there are only so many seats available at each school. Schools are looking for diversity in their incoming class, and that includes geographic distribution as well as other factors.

How many applications should you file? There is no single, correct number. For example, for applicants planning to matriculate into the class of 2013 allopathic medical schools, the national average was 13.6 applications per applicant. Keep in mind that the cost of applying is contingent upon the number of schools to which you are submitting an application.

AMCAS processing fee is $160 and includes one medical school designation. Additional school designations are $36 each.

AACOMAS fees are $195 for the first school and $35 for each additional school.

That’s just for the application. Factor in the fees for secondary applications, which typically range from $50 to $100. We encourage you to think very, very seriously if you decide to apply to more than 15 schools!

Medical School Selection:

Health professions schools will differ in their educational philosophies, faculties, curricula, and the types of students they attract. Consequently, selecting the “best” school for you can be very challenging. Specific information relevant to each of the health professions is available through the following link: http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/home.

One major component to consider when selecting allopathic schools to apply to is your state of residency. Of course, not all states have an allopathic medical school – six to be exact (Alaska, Delaware, Idaho, Montana, Maine, Wyoming) – though some of the states that do have medical schools only have private one that do not consider residency. Students should look for medical schools that state they reserve a few seats for students specifically from states with no medical schools. For example, Montana and Wyoming residence get preference at a variety of Western medical school. As a rule, private medical schools do not use state residency in the selection process, which means that they do not consider it a factor in admission. State-sponsored, public medical schools are just the opposite. The vast majority of these public medical schools favor state residents for admission anywhere from 70% to 100%. This must be taken into account when selecting medical schools in which to apply. For example, if you are not from Massachusetts, do not apply to the University of Massachusetts. The medical schools in the University of California system are another good example. Of all students accepted to these schools, only approximately 10% in the past few years of all applicants admitted were non-California residents. It cannot be stressed enough – be conscious of the schools you are choosing. You don’t want to spend a lot of money paying to apply to medicals schools you will have slim to no chance of which to get admitted. The Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR) is the
publication that gives admission statistics, including matriculation data for all medical schools -
https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/msar/. Consult with Dean Trayford also.

Medical students from across the country have compiled a list of “35 Questions I Wish I had Asked“:
https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/370872/35questions.html to assist you in evaluating each of
the medical schools you may wish to attend. The information on each school’s financial assistance
offerings and programs as well as a list of where each school’s recent graduates did their residency is
available on the AAMC web site at: www.aamc.org/students/start.htm. Similar information is available
for the other health professions on their applicant websites.

The Personal Statement

One of the most time-consuming and important portions of your medical school application is your
personal statement. The best personal statement typically involves a lengthy editing process. This
includes your own editing, as well as input from others. It is very important that you do the writing.

Your personal statement is your chance to inform admissions committees about your personality,
individuality, passions, dedication and leadership abilities as well as what you bring to the mix of
students and future professionals. It should not be a narrative rendition of your résumé—that
information is provided elsewhere in your application. DEMONSTRATE to your readers your wonderful
traits, accomplishments, and strong communication skills. Let your letter writers TELL admissions
committees about you and your organizational, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving, and other
characteristics.

Follow directions carefully! Use words sparingly and avoid cliché, formulaic motifs and quotations. Aim
instead for substantive, informative, insightful prose that provides admissions committees with a
relevant, convincing rationale for giving your application serious consideration. Remember, competition
is fierce, so shun the cookie-cutter personal “I want to help people” statement.

Typically, this personal statement should be no more than a page in length; and it should be derived
from the longer statement you supplied as part of your HPAC application (as described above). Specific
information is available from each of the application services. In addition to the assistance provided by
Career Services and your faculty adviser/s and mentors, members of the Health Professions Advisory
Committee may be available to provide guidance and feedback on your personal statement. However,
keep in mind that admissions committees want to know how you write and think, not how we
write/think.

You may find that this is one of the most difficult essays you will ever write. Remember, this statement
is your opportunity to describe the special strengths and qualities you feel you will bring to the
profession. The most important thing that you must get across to medical school admission committees
is that, in some way, you know what it’s like to be a doctor...and you still must be one.

Cover a few topics in some depth. Avoid generalizations and trite claims such as “I have always wanted
to practice medicine”, “I knew I wanted to be a doctor since I was five”. Decide what is really important
to you and discuss it. These topics do not need to be directly related to your chosen profession, but
should have some relevance to your professional potential. A well-written, meaningful anecdote or
example may often be more effective than dry declarative prose. By selecting what you have to say
carefully, you should be able to “show” rather than “tell” your reader about your beliefs, qualities, and motivations to become a doctor. AMCAS, and some of the other application services may provide suggested topics to consider when drafting your essay, including, for example, why you have selected the field of medicine, your motivations for doing so, and factors that may have influenced this decision and/or played an influential role in your choice of undergraduate coursework.

The Medical School Interview

As with the College’s Health Professions Advisory Committee interview (see above), the actual health professional school interview is a critical factor in your ultimate admission to a health professional program. Professionalism and politeness are not to be taken lightly.

You need to research each school to which you apply thoroughly. It is important to be ready with some pertinent questions about the school and its program as well as reasons for why you wish to be a student at that particular school. That is, you must demonstrate your interest in the program as well as provide convincing reasons for why you should be admitted to the program.

To prepare for interviews, you should visit each school’s web site as well as be prepared to comment upon current issues in medicine and healthcare (e.g., stem cell research, therapeutic cloning or the crisis in health/malpractice insurance, etc.). Student Doctor (www.studentdoctor.net) provides sample interview questions and answers including questions about why you wish to be a healthcare provider, ethical and current events questions, questions designed to find out how much knowledge you have regarding your chosen profession, and questions designed to assess your personality, interpersonal and problem solving skills.

Please note: Some health professions schools are using what are known as Multiple Mini Interviews. The format consists of different scenarios and is designed to gauge your ability to handle situations that may arise as a healthcare provider. The Student Doctor Network provides more information about the nature and rationale behind these multiple mini interviews at: http://studentdoctor.net/2011/01/the-multiple-mini-interview-for-medical-school-admissions/.

AAMC’s Organization of Student Representatives provides a list of pertinent questions you might consider asking when visiting health professional schools (“35 questions I wish I had asked”). These include questions about the curriculum, student support, facilities, financial aid, school policies and practices to protect students from exposure to infectious diseases or medical mishaps, and residency programs where students have been accepted. The list is useful regardless of your health professions school and career (medical, dental, veterinary, and optometry).

Responsibilities of the Applicant

In order for any health professions school admission committee to fully consider your application, you must assume certain responsibilities in the process. Observance of these responsibilities will ensure both applicants and admission committees of an orderly and timely student selection process.

• You are expected to become familiar with and observe the application procedures at each school to which you apply. All application documents, including primary and secondary
application forms, transcript(s), letters of recommendation, fees, etc., must be submitted in a timely manner.

- You must promptly notify your professional school application service and those health professions schools not participating in that application service of any change of address.
- You must respond promptly to all invitations for an interview at a professional school. In those instances when you cannot appear for a previously scheduled interview, you are responsible for promptly notifying the school of the cancellation and rescheduling the appointment. The cancellation/rescheduling should be undertaken by telephone, followed by a letter. Keep in mind that some schools do not offer the opportunity to reschedule. You must also make arrangements with your instructors and/or employers about your upcoming interviews.

**If you are in need of financial aid**, you must initiate the steps necessary to determine your eligibility as early as possible. This includes filing the appropriate “Need Analysis Forms” in January or February and encouraging your parents or guardians (if required) to file their income tax forms early. The need analysis document Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is written by the US Department of Education. This form is required for virtually all students seeking financial aid including the unsubsidized Stafford loan.

If you remain under consideration for admission, you should keep the health professional schools informed of the address and telephone number where you can be reached. If you are unavailable (e.g., due to overseas travel), you should instruct and grant authority to a parent or other individual to act on your behalf.

If you have made a final decision on the school you plan to attend, you are obligated to promptly withdraw your application from all other schools.

**Common Reasons for Non-acceptance to Medical School**

As the number of applicants for medical school continues to rise, so too is the possibility that one’s application will be met with increased critical scrutiny resulting in non-acceptance.

The most common reason for non-acceptance into a health professions program is:

- The competition from other highly qualified candidates;
- Weak academic record due to non-competitive GPA, nature of one’s course selection (e.g., too many easy or lower division courses, science with lab courses taken during the summer, lighter course load in junior and senior years), and/or non-competitive MCAT;
- Insufficient clinical exposure;
- Paltry demonstration of a sustained interest in and a passion for a medical career, including extra- and co-curricular activities;
- Non-compelling personal statement;
- Generic or weak letters of recommendation from professors and others; and
- Incomplete, sloppy, or late applications.
The question thus becomes, what can you do now or in the future to overcome these and other potential causes for application rejection.

Keep in mind that even stellar academic records and strong admissions test scores can be compromised by an apparent lack of clinical and other healthcare exposure. Health professions schools expect applicants to demonstrate their commitment to the profession through a variety of experiences including the shadowing of healthcare professionals, reading articles and books about healthcare, participating in volunteer and community service activities, working in clinical settings and conducting research. As such, prior to reapplying, candidates should engage in significant healthcare-related activities including employment and/or service in some aspect of the healthcare industry, clinical research, volunteer/community service, etc.

**Post-baccalaureate Programs**

If the problem is one of academic preparation (GPA, admissions test scores, course selection), you should seriously consider enrolling in some type of post-baccalaureate program. These include: traditional post-baccalaureate programs, science enhancement programs, special master’s programs, and special programs for non-traditional, minority and/or disadvantaged students.

- **Traditional Post-baccalaureate Programs**: Programs designed to provide applicants with medical, dental, veterinary, optometry school prerequisite coursework with additional opportunities for clinical activities, research, and/or community service. Many of these programs also offer preparation programs for admissions tests and other workshops and programs for improving one’s application.

- **Science Enhancement Programs**: These post-baccalaureate programs are designed to improve your previous poor performance in the sciences. These programs are not designed to fill in missing science prerequisites but to “retake” or build upon those science courses that have already been taken.

- **Special Master’s Programs**: These are post-baccalaureate programs typically offered through medical or other health professions schools; students often enroll in the same courses as successfully matriculated health professions school students.

- **Special Programs for Non-Traditional, Disadvantaged or Underrepresented Minority Students**: These programs may vary in length from summer to yearlong and are designed to provide intensive experiences designed to meet the needs of the non-traditional student.

For more information concerning post-baccalaureate programs consult the AAMC website (these programs are also useful for the other health professions) at [http://services.aamc.org/postbac/](http://services.aamc.org/postbac/) as well as Syracuse University’s Health Professions Advisory Program. The Syracuse listing: [http://thecollege.syr.edu/students/undergraduate/advising_academic_support/pre_health/_supporting_pages/resource_pb.html](http://thecollege.syr.edu/students/undergraduate/advising_academic_support/pre_health/_supporting_pages/resource_pb.html)