



CENTER FOR CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Applying to Medical School

Applying to medical school start with several years of planning to acquire the requisite academic knowledge and out-of-class experiences (see "Planning for Medical School" handout). In consultation with SU's faculty pre-med advisor, your academic advisor, other faculty, and the Center for Career & Professional Development (CCPD), you can leverage 21st century career-readiness skills to construct a well-managed professional life as a physician, beginning with applying to medical school.

First Steps

Various websites help centralize the medical school admission process. They also require fees to use. Explore each thoroughly before beginning the actual applications.

MEDICAL SCHOOL ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS (MSAR)

MSAR is a suite of guides produced by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) in collaboration with medical schools. The guides contain school-specific admission requirements, applicant and acceptee statistics, medical education process information, and tips on how to choose the right school for you. Purchase the annually-updated guide from <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/medical-school-admission-requirements/>.

THE AMERICAN MEDICAL COLLEGE APPLICATION SERVICE® (AMCAS®)

AMCAS (www.aamc.org/students/applying/amcas/) is a non-profit, centralized application processing service available to first-year-entering applicants to participating U.S. medical schools. Most U.S. medical schools use AMCAS as the primary application method. No matter how many medical schools you want to apply to, you submit just one online application to AMCAS. AMCAS does not render any admission decisions and does not advise applicants where to apply.

TEXAS MEDICAL AND DENTAL SCHOOLS APPLICATION SERVICE (TMDSAS)

TMDSAS (<https://www.tmdsas.com/>) is the centralized application processing service for applicants to the first-year entering classes at all public medical, dental, and veterinary schools in Texas. TMDSAS serves only as an information clearinghouse and does not influence schools' review and selection of candidates. In addition to the centralized application, schools may also require supplementary materials that must be submitted directly to the institution.

FEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (FAP)

The AAMC Fee Assistance Program (FAP) (<https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/>) assists MCAT examinees and AMCAS applicants who, without financial assistance, would be unable to take the MCAT or apply to medical schools that use the AMCAS application.

Components of the Application

Medical school applications collect data about your identifying information, schools attended, criminal history, coursework, work experience, leadership and other activities, clinical and research experience, and more. The main components include:

ACADEMIC RECORD

Do your grades reflect academic excellence, rigorous coursework, upward trends, and overcoming obstacles? Schools will look at coursework loads (ideally ≥ 15 credits per semester), how many upper-division courses you took, whether you pursued an honors thesis, as well as a year-to-year GPA trend (rising is better than falling). All of these factors are considered in your own academic context, including size of your home community and high school, your high school class rank, your parents' educational background, and non-academic activities that required extended time commitments, such as employment, athletics, band, leadership in an organization, etc.

STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is a computer-based, standardized examination designed to assess problem solving and critical thinking skills as well as the examinee's knowledge of science concepts and principles prerequisite to the study of medicine. The test takes about seven and a half hours to complete and comprises four multiple-choice sections, each scored on a scale ranging from 118 to 132:

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

The MCAT is offered approximately 30 times a year at hundreds of test sites. Popular test dates fill up quickly, so sign up for your slot as soon as registration opens (about 12 weeks in advance).

Never take the actual MCAT for practice. For details, see <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/>.

Not only will schools consider your MCAT and MCAT subtest scores, they will also review your SAT/ACT scores. A rising trend in standardized test scores is helpful.

NON-ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES

Schools seek well-rounded candidates with participation outside the classroom in activities both related to medicine and more broadly. Examples include clinical (e.g. volunteering in a doctor's office, hospital, or abroad), volunteer (e.g. elder care, suicide hotline, Habitat for Humanity), and leadership (e.g. student government, academic organizations, athletics) experiences. Schools will evaluate not only breadth but also depth—it's more important to dig deep into a few experiences than to be in every student organization. In addition to exposure to healthcare environments, research experience can be valuable. Your clinical experiences serve to test and confirm your decision to enter medicine and show medical schools that you know what you're getting into. Keeping good records of your experiences helps you write your application essays and interview.

PERSONAL STATEMENT AND "OPTIONAL" ESSAYS

The personal statement (and other narrative parts of your application) should be well-written using good English grammar without typos. Do *not* count on spell-check alone. Have someone (ideally your professors, the Writing Center, or CCPD) review any and all narrative responses before submission. Though your statement should be authentic and personalized, we suggest you *not* include religious, political, or Greek Life references (unless you have/had a leadership role). By law, your religious and political views are protected, but if you choose to share them, you run the risk that a reader may hold biases against you for your views. You may decide it's worth it to you to mention those topics, but do so with your eyes open. Things you would only tell your therapist should not appear in medical school applications. Some essays are labeled "optional," but in medical school, "optional" and "extra credit" are required! Use "optional" essays as opportunities to share more about yourself. Typical prompts often discuss barriers you have overcome and contributions you could make to medicine based on your background.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Supportive letters of recommendation (usually three, at least one from a professor) from someone who knows you well are extremely valuable. Professors with whom you've had significant contact (e.g. several courses, collaborative research, academic advising, etc.) are good options. Letters rarely come from physicians. Ideally, you will have been working to cultivate relationships with faculty throughout your undergraduate career, but you can also strengthen your relationship with prospective recommenders by requesting to speak with them in office hours about your medical school interests.

OTHER

All encounters (in person or virtual) with evaluators from your target schools can affect their impression of you, including your online "brand." Med schools may research you online, so do a trial run and search for yourself. Don't be fooled by privacy settings. If people really want to find you, they can. Check social media accounts for negative information and take it down. Be discrete when posting photos, and keep your opinions offline. Employ the grandmother rule (i.e. don't post what you wouldn't show your grandmother). Remember: you can't take it back.

Having a positive online brand is not only about limiting negative information. It's also about creating a positive public record. Personal blogs, LinkedIn profiles, and other websites where you can document your academic, extracurricular, research, volunteer, and employment success stories can be helpful.

The Interview

Interviews are offered on a rolling basis and take place annually between August and December. You will receive an email inviting you to interview on a specific date (which is generally non-negotiable). Your interview will likely consist of several meetings with different evaluators, as well as tours and lunch. Be assured that you are being evaluated at each step along the way, and remain professional throughout. For more details on preparing for an interview, see our "Interviewing for Medical School" handout.

Application Timeline

As many as **75% of all med school interviews result from applications received between May 1 and June 1** each year. Though you can apply later in the cycle, your chances are best when you **apply early**.

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER:

- Meet with CCPD and the faculty Pre-Med Advisor to plan your strategy.
- Start soliciting letters of recommendation.

JANUARY-APRIL:

- Study for MCAT.

FEBRUARY/MARCH:

- Register for MCAT.
- Follow up on letters of recommendation.

APRIL/MAY:

- Take MCAT.

JUNE/JULY:

- Apply to medical schools by June 15.
- Send recommendation letters.

AUGUST-DECEMBER:

- Interviews

JANUARY-APRIL:

- Receive offers beginning in late January.
- Complete financial aid forms ASAP.

AUGUST

- Enter medical school!

Pre-Medical Resources

CCPD provides pre-health advising; reviews resumes, essays, and applications; offers practice medical school interviews; brings healthcare professionals to campus; and facilitates off-campus job shadowing so that you can explore career options. Faculty pre-med advisor Dr. Maria Cuevas chairs the campus Pre-Med Committee, which writes letters of recommendation for students.