

WCSU Pre-Health Programs

Pre-Med Pathway



Background on medical school

There are 160 schools and colleges in the United States that offer medical degrees and (a list of schools in the United States is included at: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school-amcas/amcas-program-participating-medical-schools-and-deadlines>). These medical schools are accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education. If you are applying to a medical school in Texas, many use the Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDSAS) (<https://www.tmdsas.com/index.html>). There are 17 accredited medical schools in Canada, which use different application services (e.g., the Ontario Medical School Application Service (OMSAS)).

Medical programs take four years to complete (there are some accelerated programs offered that take three years to complete) and award a Doctor of Medicine (MD). Medical schools provide a foundational education in medical sciences that is used to diagnose patients and devise treatment plans. After this, you complete a medical residency that can take three to seven years to complete. This will depend on your specialty. You may then have to undergo additional fellowship training based on the specialty that you want to practice.

Pre-Requisite Coursework

Each medical school has their own pre-requisite course requirements, so make sure that you consult each school's website in advance so that you can organize your coursework as appropriate. The table below provides a summary of required courses that you can use as a general framework. In addition, it is important to note that many medical schools are moving away from required coursework and instead are using a competency-based model as specific scientific knowledge can be learned in many courses, not just one.

Courses	Medical School Pre-requisites
MAT 181 (Calculus I) *MAT 133 or appropriate placement is a pre-req	Some medical schools
MAT 115/120 (Statistics)	Some medical schools
CHE 110/111 (General Chemistry I and II)	Virtually all medical schools
CHE 210/211 (Organic Chemistry I and II)	Many medical schools
CHE 421 (Biochemistry)	Some medical schools
PHY 120/121 (General Physics I and II – non-calc) or PHY 110/111 (calc-based)	Virtually all medical schools
BIO 103/104 (General Biology I and II)	Virtually all medical schools
Science Electives (e.g., Genetics, Anatomy and Physiology, and Cell Biology)	Depends on the medical school – check with individual institutions
Humanities/Social Sciences Electives (e.g., Psychology and Sociology)	Depends on the medical school – check with individual institutions
English (1 year of college English or equivalent writing intensive courses)	Many medical schools

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Note: If a student has AP credits or has taken online coursework, they should consult with the individual institution to determine if such credits will be accepted. Some schools will accept coursework completed at a community college, but this will vary depending on the specific school.

If you have not completed all the coursework that you need, you might consider applying to a postbaccalaureate (postbacc) program and the AAMC has curated a list of institutions that offer this: <https://mec.aamc.org/postbac/#/index>. Some institutions offer formal one- or two-year degree programs while others are certificate programs. Some postbacc programs are contained within or affiliated with a medical school, which can afford you the opportunity to become familiar with the medical school faculty and the admissions process. In addition, some postbacc programs have volunteer work structured into the curriculum, which allows for networking opportunities in addition to offering MCAT preparation courses.

Entrance Exams

MCAT testing is available in January and then March through September. The registration fee for the MCAT is \$345 (for 2024) which covers both the actual test and the cost of having your scores distributed. The MCAT has four sections: 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. All four sections are comprised of multiple-choice questions and for the 2024 testing year, the first three sections each had 59 questions, and the last section had 53. Make sure that you check the MCAT guide for the specific year so that you have an accurate understanding as to how the test is structured. On the first three sections you will be asked to draw upon your knowledge of scientific concepts and principles, demonstrate scientific reasoning and problem-solving, dissect the design and execution of research, and provide data-based and statistical reasoning. The fourth section is like verbal reasoning examinations you have encountered on other standardized testing. You will read selected passages and answer questions.

More specifically, the first section is designed to test your understanding of introductory level biology, inorganic and organic chemistry, and physics concepts in addition to biochemistry, cell biology, molecular biology, and statistics. The psychological and social section examines your integration of biology, psychology, and sociology. You can access a free content outline as to what is on the MCAT exam for preparation: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/prepare-mcat-exam/aamc-mcat-official-prep-updates>.

The AAMC recommends the following steps to prepare for the MCAT: find out everything you can about the exam, figure out how much you know, gather free and low-cost resources to help you prepare, create a study plan, study, and practice, and prepare for the test day. There are provided worksheets that you can use in your preparatory steps that can be found at: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/prepare-mcat-exam/how-create-study-plan-mcat-exam>. To gather information about the MCAT, the AAMC suggests that you review the MCAT Essentials for your specific testing year and review the AAMC's Applying to Medical School with AMCAS website to gather details about deadlines for specific schools. Next, check the AAMC's MCAT testing calendar and the release dates for scores so that you can plan accordingly.

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Discuss your plan for taking the MCAT exam with your pre-health advisor and determine if you qualify for the AAMC Fee Assistance program. Then you need to narrow down the content of the exam by understanding how the MCAT is scored (<https://students-residents.aamc.org/mcat-scores/how-mcat-exam-scored>) and determining what's on the exam (<https://students-residents.aamc.org/prepare-mcat-exam/whats-mcat-exam#bb>).

To assess how much you know, you should take a full-length practice exam through the AAMC MCAT Official Prep Free Sample Test and the AAMC MCAT Official Prep Free Practice Exam that are available in the MCAT Official Prep Hub (<https://students-residents.aamc.org/prepare-mcat-exam/prepare-mcat-exam>). There are also exams that you can purchase. Review your score report to determine how you performed on the exam. You should then outline how you did on each of the sections and list any concerns and challenges that you encountered. Next, gather all the resources that you have available and devise active-learning strategies that you can implement. The AAMC provides various worksheets that you can use to organize your resource information. There are many free AAMC study resources that you can access (<https://students-residents.aamc.org/prepare-mcat-exam/free-planning-and-study-resources>). You must then devise a specific study schedule that considers your academic, professional, and personal obligations. To best prepare, you must also determine which areas need the most study time/attention. This must be planned around when you will be taking the exam. Strategies include making vocabulary lists, flashcards, creating study groups, and integrating concepts across topics and content. It is also advised that you take another full-length test to determine how well your study plan has worked. This will also shape how you continue to study.

The test content itself takes 6 hours and 15 minutes, but the total seated time is 7 hours and 30 minutes, the latter of which includes optional break time, tutorial time, and the end-of-day survey. To register for the exam, you need an AAMC ID and an associated username and password. Pay close attention to ensure that your forms of ID meet the MCAT requirements. If you require accommodations when taking the MCAT, you can apply and submit appropriate documentation to ensure that the testing conditions are modified properly.

After you complete the MCAT, you will receive five scores: one score for each section and then a total score. There is no curve, but the scores are equated, which allows for small differences that might occur in the testing formats. Each of the four sections is graded on a scale from 118 (low) to 132 (high) with a midpoint of 125. This means that the total score will be between 472 (low) to 528 (high) with a midpoint value of 500.

If you choose to retake the MCAT, you cannot control which scores are reported to institutions, instead they are all seen, unless on the day of the exam, you void your score. You can take the exam up to three times in a testing year, up to four times in two testing years, and up to seven times in your lifetime. Your MCAT scores will automatically be released to the AMCAS so if the schools that you are applying to participate in the AMCAS, then there is nothing else that you must do. If there are schools you are applying to that do not participate in AMCAS, then you must submit your scores electronically. It can take 30 to 35 days for your MCAT scores to be released. It is important to plan your MCAT date carefully because each medical school has deadlines for the latest MCAT administration date that they will consider and the oldest MCAT administration date that they will consider. The AAMC has published that

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information online for each year so that you can ensure your MCAT score will still be considered.

Some schools require situational judgement tests (e.g., AAMC PREview test) that assess whether applicants meet competency standards by examining how they would act/respond to certain situations. These tests were developed by the AAMC and differ from the Computer-Based Assessment for Sampling Personal Characteristics (CASPer) test in that the latter test was developed by an external body and thus, does not directly assess the specific core competencies developed by the AAMC. It is possible that the schools to which you are applying will require their own situational judgement tests. The AAMC PREview exam costs \$100 in totality while the CASPer test costs \$85 for the 2024–2025 cycle.

The AAMC PREview exam runs 75 minutes with the total seated times between 95 and 115 minutes. If you need accommodations for this exam, you must apply and those are separate from accommodations for the MCAT. This test assesses a prospective student's professional behavior in the context of nine core competencies: cultural awareness, cultural humility, empathy and compassion, ethical responsibility to self and others, interpersonal skills, reliability and dependability, resilience and adaptability, teamwork and collaboration, commitment to learning and growth. There are 186 questions on the test, and you will be presented with various scenarios and associated actions. You must then rate the effectiveness of each action. In 2024, the PREview exam was offered March to September, for specific dates, check:

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/aamc-preview/aamc-preview-professional-readiness-exam-eligibility-and-registration>. Within that timeframe you can take the exam between 8 am and 1 am in a location of your choice, unless a testing center is needed for your individual approved accommodations. You can attempt the AAMC PREview exam twice per testing year with a lifetime limit of 4 attempts. The third-party company, Meazure Learning, delivers the exam and collects scoring information. Make sure that you have an appropriate workspace for taking your exam. You are required to download the Guardian Secure Browser, which proctors your exam. In addition, this ensures that you have assistance if you were to experience a technical problem, but also ensures that you are adhering to the Examinee agreement. You will receive one total score on your exam with 1 being the lowest and 9 being the highest. These scores represent how closely your ratings match with those of medical educators. Thus, higher scores indicate more alignment with the scores assigned by medical educators.

Duet is required by some medical schools in which it is determined how well you “fit” with the medical school and it is administered by the company Acuity Insights, which also offers the CASPer test (see: <https://acuityinsights.app/>). The CASPer test takes between 90 and 110 minutes to complete and you will provide responses to 14 different scenarios and assesses collaboration, communication, empathy, equity, ethics, motivation, problem solving, professionalism, resilience, and self-awareness. Each section of the CASPer test is rated by a different individual and the raters use a scale from 1 (poor) to 9 (excellent) to score each test taker. You will not receive a specific score, but rather your quartile ranking. The Duet test is a value-alignment examination that compares your individual preferences and values with that of medical school programs. This test takes 15 minutes to complete and there are 3 categories with 7 options or choices within each category.

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Experiential Preparation

Medical school admissions committees will evaluate the experiences that you engage in by looking at different criteria including the length of time that you participated in the experience, the depth to which you were involved in the experience, and what you learned or gleaned from the experience. Each school has its own requirements for how many hours of shadowing experience and clinical hours that you need. Typically, at least 100–150 hours of clinical experience would be competitive for admission with the average shadowing hours being 80 hours. Most applicants will have more than the recommended hours.

To find a doctor to shadow, you should ask your personal doctor, professors, advisors, and contact local hospitals. Make sure that you are professional in all communications and that you emphasize why you are so interested in shadowing them.

Within the application, there is a section entitled “Other Impactful Experiences” in which you can discuss your background or any events that you have experiences that cannot be explained elsewhere in your portfolio. This information can help the admissions committee better understand who you are and understand your journey to medical school. Such experiences can include serving as the primary caregiver for a sick family member, financially providing for your family, working during school, engaging in research, leading community, or volunteer events. Other ways to gain clinical experience include hospice volunteering (<https://hospicefoundation.org/>), certified nursing assistant (CNA), emergency medical technician (EMT) (for a first-hand account of what it is like to be an EMT, read: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/aspiring-docs-fact-sheets-get-experience/what-it-s-be-emergency-medical-technician-emt>), and hospital scribe (for more information on what a scribe does, see: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/getting-experience/what-its-be-medical-scribe>).

Academic enrichment can augment your application, and these are programs that are sponsored by colleges and universities through which one can explore interests in medicine and other pre-health disciplines (e.g., Summer Health Professions Education Program (<https://www.shpep.org/>)). The SHPEP program spans six weeks and is open to individuals in underrepresented racial and ethnic groups and those from rural areas, regions that are economically disadvantaged, or populations that have received substandard medical care. This program does offer a small stipend and exposes students to areas within the basic sciences as well as quantitative concepts. Accepted students receive exposure to the clinical realm and participate in career development sessions.

Letters of Recommendation

The AMCAS application allows you to have up to 10 letters of recommendation associated with your application. All medical schools in the United States accept individual letters of recommendation and many accept letter packets or committee letters. Individual letters are submitted by those that wrote your letters of recommendation while a letter packet is a compilation of letters that is organized by an institution’s career center or other body within the school. A committee letter is prepared by the pre-health committee and synthesizes and discusses the content of your individual letters of recommendation. Some medical schools prefer a letter packet or a committee letter, so in preparing your application portfolio pay close attention to what the schools prefer, require, or do not accept. The Pre-Health Committee is

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currently comprised of Dr. Kristin Giamanco (Biology), Dr. Helena Prieto (Chemistry), Dr. Russ Selzer (Chemistry), Dr. Joshua Cordeira (Biology), and Dr. Emily Stevens (Health Promotion and Exercise). If you are interested in having a committee letter as part of your application, you must discuss this with Dr. Giamanco as there are internal forms that are used by the committee to assess each applicant. It is important to note that the AMCAS does not divide, add, or remove any letters once they have been received, so if you wish for a specific letter to be sent to a medical school, it is advised that you submit those letters as individual letters.

In the AMCAS platform, you will select “Committee Letter”, “Letter Packet”, or “Individual Letter” and you will provide a letter request form to the author of the letter. Within the letter request your AAMC ID and AMCAS Letter ID will be included. This information ensures that the letters are matched to your application. Those writing your letters of recommendation can submit their documents using the AMCAS Letter Writer Application or Interfolio. You may find it helpful to provide those that are writing your letters of recommendation with a copy of the AAMC’s evaluation guidelines.

Pre-Med Competencies

There are 17 pre-med competencies for students entering medical school that organize the standards that are expected of medical students. These competencies were devised by admission representatives, student and diversity affairs, faculty, students, and pre-health advisors. Professional competencies include commitment to learning and growth, cultural awareness, cultural humility, empathy and compassion, ethical responsibility to self and others, interpersonal skills, oral communication, reliability and dependability, resilience and adaptability, service orientation, teamwork, and collaboration. Thinking and reasoning competencies encompass critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, scientific inquiry, and written communication. Lastly, science competencies include human behavior and living systems.

Application Process

The centralized application service for medical schools in the United States is called the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) and most schools use this platform for submissions, but there are some that do not and instead have their own application (for a list of schools in the United States that do not use AMCAS, consult: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school-amcas/amcas-program-participating-medical-schools-and-deadlines>). For the 2025 AMCAS application cycle, the initial processing fee was \$175, and this encompasses the application for one medical school. After that, each medical school costs \$46. For the schools that do not use the AMCAS application platform, you may encounter different fees. It is also possible that individual schools will charge fees for the secondary application. Before you begin your application, you will have to register so that receive an AAMC ID number. Please note that you can submit your application before or after your transcripts and letters of recommendation are received. In the 2023 application cycle, on average, applicants applied to 18 medical schools. The AAMC publishes a guide each year that walks you through the application process, so be sure to have that available when you are filling out aspects of the application.

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Some medical schools accept transfer students, but many do not, so keep that in mind when preparing your applications. Most medical schools accept out-of-state applicants, but some do not. Some medical schools participate in the Early Decision Program with deadlines typically in mid-to-late September into October. You should consult websites for the specific schools you are interested in applying to well in advance to determine if this opportunity is available. Many schools have rolling admissions, which means that they will make admissions decisions as soon as applications are received. However, schools cannot make any official offers until mid-October.

The AMCAS application has nine sections. The first encompasses identifying information which includes your name, birth information, and gender identity. Next, you will input the schools that you attended, and you can generate a transcript request so that your grades are available for assessment. In the biographic information section, you will provide your details like your citizenship status and legal residence. Then, you will add the courses that you have taken and the grades you earned. If you took classes abroad, make sure that you consult the AMCAS applicant guide for instructions how to properly input that information. For the work/experiences section, you will enter work that you performed and add extracurricular activities that you engaged in. This can also include honors, awards, and publications. In addition, this can also include expected experiences that you will be a part of. While you can list 15 experiences, you need to choose the three that were the most meaningful to you and explain why and how these experiences shaped your growth as a student. In the following section you will include information about the individuals writing your letters of recommendation. In the seventh section, you will pinpoint the medical schools that you want your applications to go through for evaluation. Next, your personal statement will be incorporated into your application. Lastly, your MCAT and/or PREview scores are included.

In addition to including your coursework and grades as detailed above, you need to officially request that your transcripts from any postsecondary institution to be forwarded to AMCAS. If you have taken courses at other schools (e.g., a community college), those transcripts are required as well. This also encompasses any college-level coursework that you completed in high school. Once your grades are entered and transcripts received, the AMCAS program calculates its own AMCAS GPA, which serves to standardize grades for assessment and evaluation purposes. The AMCAS counts plus and minus designations into your GPA and counts grades for all attempts of a course that you repeated. If you failed a course, it is still included in your AMCAS GPA.

Each applicant must submit a personal statement that is up to 5,300 characters in length. In that document, you can discuss what drove you to pursue a career in medicine, which factors push you to want to learn more about medicine, and any other details that you feel the admissions committee should know about you. If you choose to apply to MD-PhD applicants, you will have to write additional statements, one of which asks why you chose to pursue a dual degree and in the other you will detail your research experience (<https://students-residents.aamc.org/md-phd-dual-degree-training/md-phd-dual-degree-training>).

Some schools might require a secondary application which could entail the inputting of additional information, inclusion of an additional essay/statement, or CASPer testing (see above). Acuity Insights, the company that owns CASPer, also offers additional modules that

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could be required by specific programs When preparing your application materials, make sure that you check if the schools that you are applying to require a secondary application.

Admissions officers may also perform an internet and social media search on you to gather information about your opinions, social behaviors, and judgments, all of which can either be positive or negative. It is critical that you are aware of your social media presence as that can be considered as part of your application.

The AAMC also provides information about the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status for each school that you should consult if needed as you start your application process.

Application Timeline

The first timeline below outlines what you should do each year before you apply to and start medical school:

Four or more years before you plan to attend medical school

- Connect with your pre-health advisor to introduce yourself and map out a plan to complete your courses
- Learn about and attend pre-health meetings and functions
- Subscribe to the pre-health email list to learn about future events
- Cultivate relationships with faculty, advisors, and other mentors on campus
- Learn about health care-related internships or employment opportunities
- Seek out volunteer opportunities in addition to shadowing experiences
- If you so choose, explore research opportunities
- Document all the activities/experiences that you engage in for your medical school application
- Consider participating in summer enrichment or research programs (<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/medical-pathways-enrichment-opportunities>)
- Subscribe to the AAMC's Premed Navigator newsletter (<https://students-residents.aamc.org/premed-navigator/premed-navigator>)

Three years before you plan to attend medical school

- Continue to meet with your pre-health advisor and attend events
- Continue to nurture relationships with faculty, advisors, and mentors on campus
- Continue to engage in meaningful experiences (volunteer work, paid work, shadowing, assuming leadership positions, and/or research)
- Collect information about the medical school application process, the MCAT, and fee assistance program

Two years before you plan to attend medical school

- In conjunction with your pre-health advisor, devise a timeline for your application and decide if you will take a gap year
- If you do decide to take a gap year, consider what you will do during that time

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- Make sure that you are taking all the required courses
- Strategize when the best time is for you to take the MCAT
- Approach individuals that you want to write your letters of recommendation and discuss a committee letter with your pre-health committee
- Assemble a preliminary list of medical schools you are interested in applying to
- Seek out pre-health leadership opportunities
- If you are ready, register for the MCAT and take the exam
- Learn about medical school curriculum and dual, joint, or combined degree programs
- Sign up for and attend campus visits at medical schools that you are interested in
- Familiarize yourself with the medical school application platforms, e.g., AMCAS and TMDAS

One year before you plan to attend medical school

- Meet with your pre-health advisor to discuss your letters of recommendation, committee letter, and your overall application plans
- Ask specific individuals to write your letters of recommendation
- Seek meaningful opportunities to round out your application
- Complete the AMCAS application and any secondary applications
- Gather information on application and acceptance protocols for the schools to which you are applying
- Prepare for interviews

Gap year(s)

- Engage in meaningful employment and/or educational experiences
- Research financial options to fund medical school
- Maintain contact with your pre-health advisor

After you are accepted to medical school

- Assess and evaluate your acceptances
- Make your final decision about where you will attend medical school
- Give notice to the medical schools that you will not be attending
- Fill out all financial aid forms
- Purchase textbooks, equipment, and prepare your living arrangements
- Attend your orientation program and start medical school

Below is an example timeline for a student that would start medical school in Fall 2025. It is advised that you pay close attention to deadlines for the individual schools and consider the timeline for both primary and secondary applications.

January – April 2024

- Consult with your pre-health advisor about obtaining a committee letter
- Request and obtain individual letters of recommendation that can be forwarded to the

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pre-health committee

- Take your final MCAT exam
- Register for and take the AAMC PREview exam or CASPer test, if required
- Examine the MSAR site to learn about each medical school's specific requirements
- Outline and draft your personal statement
- Curate a list of work and activities for your application

May 2024

- Complete the demographic and academics section of the AMCAS application
- Release MCAT scores to the specific application systems
- Follow-up with the individuals writing your letters of recommendation
- Finalize your personal statement and work and activities
- Request official transcripts from every institution that you have attended
- Register for and take the AAMC PREview exam or CASPer test, if required
- Pre-write secondary application essays
- Finalize the list of schools that are going to apply to

June 2024

- Submit AMCAS
- Check that your letters of recommendations and transcripts have been received
- Continue to work on secondary application essays

July 2024

- Submit secondary applications
- Prepare for admissions interviews

September 2024 – March or April 2025

- Continue preparing for interviews and complete the interviews
- Share any updates with the admissions committees that have happened since you submitted your secondary applications
- Send letters of interest or intent after the interview process if you were placed on the waiting list or accepted (A letter of interest discusses how you well you fit with a school and your interest in attending the institution while a letter of intent indicates that you intend to attend the school, if admitted)

October 2024 – May 2025

- Review your admission and financial aid offers
- Attend second look day events and admit weekend activities
- Determine which program you will attend and look forward to starting medical school

Admissions Process

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Interviews can take different forms including virtual, in-person, hybrid, or asynchronous meetings that are conducted between you and an individual(s) that represent a medical school. Some medical schools opt to conduct multiple mini-interviews. The interview is an opportunity for you to learn more about the school and for the school to assess your qualities, competencies, and interests. You are encouraged to check with AAMC for information as to how the schools that you are applying to conduct their interviews in conjunction with the school's dedicated website.

In a one-on-one interview, you will meet with a member of the admissions team. You may also meet with faculty member while in a group interview where multiple applicants participate in an interview at the same time. During a group interview session, it is possible that you will engage in a problem-solving task with your fellow applicants. In a panel style interview, you will meet with several people at once. Multiple mini-interviews (MMIs) involve around 6 to 10 stations that you will visit to answer a question or examine a scenario in a prescribed amount of time. MMIs allow admissions representatives to assess your oral communication, verbal, nonverbal, and teamwork skills. It is believed that this interview format lessens interview bias and allows for the assessments of an applicant by more than one individual. Typically, MMIs take about two hours with a two-minute preparation period before each interview that takes five to eight minutes. Many medical schools opt to conduct MMIs virtually, so keep that in mind as you prepare for your interview. You may encounter stations that include traditional one-on-one interviews, an ethical assessment station, an essay-writing station, a teamwork station, a patient care station, and a rest station.

Typically, invitations for medical schools are sent out in late summer or early fall, but it is possible to receive an invitation in the winter or even the following spring. For more information about the timeline for individual schools consult: <https://mec.aamc.org/msar-ui/#/landing> and <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school-amcas/amcas-choose-your-medical-school-tool>. Once you accept an interview, keep in mind that if you need to cancel or reschedule a meeting, you should give the medical school ample notice, communicate with the necessary parties in a clear, articulate manner, and offer an explanation as to why you cannot attend the interview.

If you are given the choice as to which format to conduct your interview in, it is recommended that you consider the following factors: cost, convenience, comfort level, whether you will be able to adequately assess the fit of the school, and whether you can see and assess physical spaces. To prepare for the interview, you should gather information from the contact person about the structure of the interview, the number of people you are going to interact with, the length of the interview, and the competencies and skills that will be assessed. You should be well-prepared, punctual, and conduct yourself in a professional manner. On the interview, you may encounter general questions, behavioral questions, or even situational questions. Mock interviews are a useful tool in preparing for your real medical school interview. You can view mock interviews with admissions officers at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8hmFkHARrQ>. You should ask questions during the interview to get a complete picture about the medical school and these questions can be centered around the curriculum, evaluations, student support, facilities, financial aid, student involvement, policies, and residency (for example questions, review:

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<https://students-residents.aamc.org/medical-school-interviews/publication-chapters/evaluating-schools-and-making-decision>, <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/selecting-medical-school-35-questions-i-wish-i-had-asked>, and <https://students-residents.aamc.org/premed-navigator/8-medical-student-wellness-questions-ask-during-your-interview>).

If you are being interviewed virtually, you must make sure that you have a stable internet connection, a webcam so that you can be seen, and you silence any calls, alarms, or notifications. In addition, you should make sure that you have a dedicated space that is quiet and well-lit where you can conduct the interview. Common interview topics include questions about you, about your future career goals, your interest in the specific medical school, particulars about your application/academic record, specifics about your experiences, and how you would handle a hypothetical situation.

When you are faced with interview questions, it is important that you avoid speaking in generalities and instead provide specific details. For behavioral questions, it is recommended that you follow the Situation, Task, Action, Result (STAR) format in which you describe the circumstances surrounding a specific situation, detail the task/job that was completed, the steps you undertook to execute this plan, and the outcomes or results of the situation. For situational questions, you should discuss specific actions you would undertake and what the expected results are. It is critical that you do not share any patient information or share any private information about a colleague. If you encounter a question that you feel uncomfortable answering, you have the right to decline to answer. If the situation warrants, you can report the incident to an admissions officer.

It is possible that you will be waitlisted, and it is important to familiarize yourself with the procedures that each school follows in such a situation. Each year the AAMC organizes information about the typical number of applicants that can be placed on the waiting list, the number of acceptances from that list, and then any waitlist protocols that are followed.

The AMCAS created the "Choose Your Medical School" tool that enables schools to manage enrollment and for applicants to clearly communicate their intentions in terms of which schools they plan to attend. Starting February 19th, if you have received one or more acceptance offers you can select "Plan to enroll" within the AMCAS application platform at any school that you have received an acceptance letter from. On April 15th, you will narrow their acceptance offers down to three options. Until April 30th, you can modify their choices and continue to be considered by other schools. However, you can only select "Plan to enroll" at one school. Then starting on April 30th, you have two options: "Plan to enroll" or "Commit to enroll", the latter of which demonstrates that you have withdrawn your applications to all other schools. This action requires you to communicate that information to the other schools to which you have applied. It is imperative that you check any policies set forth by individual institutions.

Admissions Statistics

For details about admissions statistics, it is advised that you review the following:

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<https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/students-residents/data/2023-facts-applicants-and-matriculants-data>. In summary, in the 2023–2024 cycle, the mean total MCAT score was 506.3. The mean science GPA was 3.54, the mean non-science GPA was 3.78, with the mean total GPA being 3.64. It is important to note that the mean GPA for the aforementioned categories has increased from the 2018–2019 to the most recent cycle, underscoring that entrance to medical school is becoming more competitive. The resource linked above details information about accepted applicants based on their undergraduate institutions, state of legal residence, race and ethnicity in addition to the MCAT scores and GPA.

Medical Career Paths

After you earn a medical degree, you have many options in terms of what you can do (<https://careersinmedicine.aamc.org/>). You can pursue a career in research, even if you don't receive a dual MD/PhD degree. Such researchers can work in laboratory science, clinical research, and health services. This can be conducted at an academic medical center, in the pharmaceutical industry, or in a government job. You can also use your medical degree to teach other medical professionals. In addition, you could choose to be a practicing physician and pick a specific specialty. Business leadership is another attractive option in which you can manage hospitals, medical schools, and insurance companies. Individuals on this track can benefit from having a degree in health administration (MHA) or business administration (MBA). Others choose to work in public health, politics, journalism, or medical informatics, which uses compute science to improve healthcare and outcomes for patients. For information on joint degrees, see: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/considering-combined-degree-md-phd-md-mba-md-mph-md-jd>.

The AAMC has reported that by 2036 there will be a shortage of physicians, of 13,500 to 86,000. This shortage is likely since the American population aged 65 or older is increasing as is the ages of physicians. There is a growing shortage of primary care physicians, and these overall shortages are expected to affect underserved areas the most.

Funding medical school

When considering which medical schools to apply to, you should assess the in-state and out-of-state tuition and fees in addition to health insurance. This will allow you to have a realistic and accurate understanding as to how you will fund your medical school journey. The Financial Information, Resources, Services, and Tools (FIRST) program provides information on financial planning and managing money (<https://students-residents.aamc.org/financial-aid-resources/financial-aid-resources>).

There are several ways in which you can fund medical school, one of which is through loans. Federal loans include direct unsubsidized loans and direct PLUS loans. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) offers low-interest federal loans on a need-based basis which include loans for disadvantaged students and primary care loans. You should check with individual schools to see if they participate in specific loan programs. You can also consider applying for private loans that are offered by a financial institution or organization as opposed to the government. You can additionally apply for grants or scholarships, which normally do not need to be paid back. Lastly, some medical schools offer campus-based aid either through

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loans, grants, or scholarships. Applying for such funds requires that you check with the individual institution.

If you wish to apply for federal aid, you must fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>). As stated above, you should also contact individual programs to get a comprehensive understanding of all sources of funding. Make sure that you organize your questions about funding your education (for ideas see: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/financial-aid-resources/top-10-questions-premeds-should-ask-medical-school-financial-aid-officers>). If you do take out loans to fund your medical school training, then you should consider which repayment options would best suit you (<https://students-residents.aamc.org/financial-aid-resources/repayment-plans-federal-student-loans>).

The AAMC Fee Assistance Program is a resource that can help cover some of your application fees and is designed to help applicants that would not be able to take the MCAT or apply to medical schools using the AMCAS platform. To be eligible for this, you must have an address in the United States (which needs appropriate documentation for demonstration), each household that is listed as part of your application must have a reported total family income that is equal to or less than 400% of the total poverty level for your family size. These values can change from year to year, so make sure that you consult up-to-date numbers (for 2024, see: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/fee-assistance-program/who-eligible-participate-fee-assistance-program>). In addition, you must be applying to medical school and not be currently enrolled in medical school, have graduated from medical school, or applying for residency. If you are under 26 when applying, then you must provide parental financial information. You can use the fees associated with this assistance program for up to 2 years. Applicants can receive benefits for the MCATs, gain complementary access to the MSAR website for two years, have AMCAS fees waived for one application submission and up to 20 medical school submissions, and a waiver for the PREview test. You can receive this benefit up to five times during your lifetime.

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has published information on the percentage of students that receive aid and the average graduate indebtedness that can be accessed by applicants. Additionally, AAMC makes the in-state and out-of-state deposits that are required for each medical school, whether a deposit is required, if it is refundable, and if it can be applied to your tuition.

Most medical schools have allowed accepted students to defer their entry into medical school without losing their spot. These delays are typically one year but can vary depending on the institution in question.

Helpful websites

<https://mec.aamc.org/msar-ui/#/landing> – The Medical School Admission Requirements landing page contains curated information about specific requirements for each medical school including tuition fees, application deadlines, and median GPAs and MCAT scores (the latter two categories do require a subscription)

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<https://aspiringdocsdiaries.org/> – This resource is a collection of inspiring stories for those that aspire to be physicians

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/choosing-medical-career/ask-med-student-video-series> – This video series will allow you to hear what medical school is like from previous students

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/financial-aid/first-fact-sheets> – This central page covers important financial information about funding your medical school journey

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/financial-aid-resources/medloans-organizer-and-calculator-mloc> – The MedLoans Organizer and Calculator provides information about how to organize your finances and manage debt

<https://aamcfinancialwellness.com/index.cfm> – The Association of American Medical Colleges contains resources that can assess your financial health, examine the cost of borrowing money to fund your education, and create a spending plan

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/how-i-prepared-mcat-exam/how-i-prepared-mcat-exam> – In this helpful resource medical students share how they prepared for the MCAT exam

<https://store.aamc.org/mcat-prep/full-length-exams.html> – Within the AAMC store you can purchase full-length MCAT exams to help you prepare for the test

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/premed-navigator/premed-navigator> – The Premed navigator contains resources, tips, and critical deadlines that can help you in the application process

<https://www.aamc.org/career-development/affinity-groups/gea/first-generation-students> – If you are a first-generation medical student, there are avenues of support that you can explore in terms of academic support, professional development, and mentorship

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/premed-calendar> – The premed calendar organizes key events and deadlines for the application process

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/medical-careers/medical-career-fairs> – Medical school career fairs are an excellent way to gather information about the application process and learn about what medical school is like

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/dealing-application-anxiety> – While applying medical school can be daunting, there are resources that you can consult to help you navigate the process

<https://acuityinsights.app/> – Acuity Insights details what the CASPer test is and there is

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information on how to register for that testing option

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/medical-pathways-enrichment-opportunities> – In this resource you can explore opportunities and programs in healthcare that are available for students of all ages.