

Checklist for Medical School Applications

Last update: March 2018

See also AMCAS Website

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/applying-medical-school-amcas/>

AMCAS does offer a fee assistance program, but you must be accepted before you start. There are no refunds if you pay for something...fee assistance only covers future expenses.

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/fee-assistance-program/>

MCAT

You should already have done a lot of this by late Spring. Maybe even already taken the exam. However, if you haven't or are just thinking about next year, here are some basics.

Register

Do this as soon as possible!!! Why?

Early and late dates are the most popular and fill up quickly

If you plan on early admission you will need any early date (usually before June 15)

You have more flexibility and lower fees if you change dates and the possibility of a partial refund if you cancel

Prepare

Know the rules

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/taking-mcat-exam/about-mcat-exam/>

Carefully read the rules for how it works and taking the exam

don't get caught by surprise

practice in circumstances as close to the real exam as possible

Study/Review

Make a study plan and stick to it. (Reasonable suggestions and ideas on the net)

Obtain and use resources. (See MCAT section of premed website and AMCAS for ideas)

Don't fall into the trap of working on things you already know; stretch!

Practice

There are a wide variety of practice materials of various quality...use resources wisely

Prep classes are expensive, but might be worth it for the discipline and hints

Consider your personality, resources and your financial situation carefully

AMCAS offers a limited number of official practice exams (3 in 2018, adding one per year)

Use these wisely. Maybe as an initial diagnostic and final check

Take at least one under the same conditions as the exam

So the mental fatigue does not catch you by surprise

So you know what is appropriate for food, breaks, drinks → bathroom breaks

Take diagnostic test before studying and *concentrate studying where you have low scores!*

Take diagnostic tests during studying *to see if what you are doing is working!*

Don't take a test the week before the exam so that you don't burn out or make yourself crazy.

Just before the exam

Get a good night's sleep (I know this sounds crazy, but it's important!)

Eat a little something

The brain needs fuel

Protein is long-lasting

Something that is easy on the stomach, nerves will upset it enough

Just enough caffeine and water

Dehydration will disrupt mental process

But too much is too many bathroom breaks

Caffeine sharpens mental processes

But too much gives the jitters, lack of concentration and more bathroom breaks

After the exam

Try not to make yourself crazy while you await your scores.

Let your premed advisor know your score and any tips for future students.

If you want to take it again, sign up as soon as possible.

Application

Start Early

AMCAS has its version of the details at

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/applying-medical-school-amcas/how-apply-med-school-amcas/>

Texas Schools and DO schools do not use AMCAS. Each have their own system. Most of the AMCAS guideline still apply, so gather the same information, but allot just as much time to work on those application systems as the AMCAS system. The DO application system is at

<https://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor/applying/aacom-as-application-instructions>

If you don't know what DO school is, talk to your premed advisor. It's a different, but equal path to becoming a doctor that has some real differences and possible advantages.

It's a lot, so you will need to start early.

IT WILL TAKE LONGER THAN YOU THINK!!!!

Applications open May 2, 2018

But you can't actually submit until May 31, 2018

Think about that—even AMCAS thinks it will take a month

You can submit while still waiting on MCAT scores and references

You can update your application when something changes

Only complete applications will be sent on to medical schools (starting late June)

Earlier applications are better

Consider what your submission date says about your character.

Schools with "rolling admissions" will consider you in a smaller candidate pool and more often

Others are submitting to your application too (references, transcripts)

Don't put them on a tight deadline, you need them to like you

Get Transcripts

You need official transcripts from EVERY school you have attended since high school (but not high school)
Send directly to AMCAS from school (not from you) and include AMCAS Transcript Request Form
Army schools have been known to take a long time to process requests and they count

Get transcript copies for yourself, **you will have to manually enter every single class**

You must include every class ever taken **INCLUDING** repeated classes, failures and withdrawals!

Repeated classes must then be entered twice.

Yes, both will count when AMCAS calculates your GPA

Yes, the schools will notice if you have a pattern of withdrawals.

(one is not a big deal; patterns are what matters)

Even if the course was removed from your transcript it should be included

Even non-credit courses

Yes, EVERYTHING!!

Get Letters

Most places like 3 letters; some accept more, some less—check the policy of the school you are applying to.
(AMCAS accepts up to 10, so that you can direct different letters to different schools.)

It is the decision of the MEDICAL SCHOOL as to how many letters they accept.

If you are also applying to DO schools or Texas schools, let your references know so that they can make multiple versions for each application system.

Each letter writer will need your AMCAS # and letter number.

AMCAS supplies pdf forms with this and other directions that you can email/give to your references.

Be sure to indicate that you **waive your rights to access your letters!**

1) this makes it more meaningful to those reading the letters

2) many people will not be willing to write a letter that is not confidential

Most AU profs (and all premed advisors) fall into this category

Find out when your reference intends to submit and *politely* remind them around that date

After that date some nagging is appropriate, but it still must be very polite.

You will be notified by AMCAS when the letter is posted. Switch from nagging to thank you mode.

You may submit your application before letters are submitted.

The typical 3 letters are:

1) Academic References

a) AU does a committee letter. Normally this consists of three professors, one of whom is your premed advisor. You choose the other two. Check with your choices about their willingness and availability. If they agree email the names and AMCAS letter form to your premed advisor who will take it from there.

b) CHECK AVAILABILITY. Most letters are written in the summer, many professors are gone for at least part of the summer. Getting the group together can significantly affect timing. Make sure your timing and your reference's timing work together.

2) Medical reference

a) you need a letter from a doctor who knows you well

b) if you are applying to DO school it will be an advantage if this physician is a DO

c) like all references, supply them with the AMCAS form

d) these are busy people and may need lots of reminding

3) Wild card

a) another perspective on your suitability as a doctor

b) choose someone who knows you well, preferably in a different context than the other two and is not a relative or "personal" reference

c) Suggestions: research advisor, volunteer coordinator, work supervisor, another doctor, etc.

Considering Early Admission?

Most places have an early admission program

This can be an advantage if you are set on a particular school

If you choose early admission, you may only apply to that one school and are obligated to accept them if they offer you a position. However, if they do not, you automatically go in to their regular pool of candidates and may then send your application to other schools. (Unfortunately, this means your application arrives quite late at the other schools.)

Early admission at MCG is very restrictive. You must be over the averages (3.7 GPA; 510 MCAT) to be considered OR be seeking admission to their Rural Community Health Program (agreeing to all the obligations this entails).

Each school has its own rules; find out what they are.

For early admission, **all** admission materials must arrive at AMCAS on or before August 1. There is also likely to be a quick turn around on supplemental admission materials (those that come directly from the school).

Advantages:

You will know sooner if you have been accepted.

You are considered with a smaller pool of candidates.

This *may* allow for a more careful and holistic review of your application.

You automatically become part of regular admission for that school.

Disadvantages:

If you are accepted you must attend that school.

You may only apply early admission to one school.

If not accepted, your application materials arrive late (though probably not too late) at other schools.

THINGS TO CONSIDER/PREPARE FOR THE FILLING OUT THE ACTUAL APPLICATION

Many of these you can work on now and will want to have ready to go when it's time to start actually filling out the application.

Personal Information

Think about your email address

Most of your communication (with AMCAS and med schools) will be by email, therefore:

Your address should be PROFESSIONAL

Your address should strongly connect to you

Don't make strangers try to figure out something obscure

It must be one you check regularly (at least daily)!!

Think about your photo

What does it say about you? It should say "professional" and "future physician."

Think about your phone (sometimes they call)

Is your voicemail professional? Up-to-date?

Check regularly!

Work and Activities

This is where you put in your extracurriculars. You should have done more than go to school. You get 15 items. More is NOT better. Doing a few things well and extensively is more impressive than trying everything. Hopefully you already have a list. If it is longer than 15 items, you need to consider which are most important. What do you want the medical school to know about you?

Things that can be included:

Your experience in the medical field (a MUST)

How you know what doctors do and if you want to do it as well

Think about medicine broadly, this field is MUCH wider than just shadowing

Your leadership experiences

Could be clubs but does not have to be

Your contributions to the community

The community of the city or school

Nonstandard learning experiences

Research

Study Aboard/Away

Service learning

Work Experience

Yes, actual jobs count

It's quite likely something will fall into more than one of the above categories. It's still one item and winner.

You get to mark 3 as "most meaningful" and write a short reflection on those 3 experiences. That is something to think about early.

Personal Statement

This is your chance to convince admissions that you are a serious candidate that will be a valuable addition to the medical school and the medical profession. Let your personality shine here, but be sure it checks the required boxes too.

Content: Make sure your statement addresses the following questions.

Why do YOU want to become a doctor?

If they are not convince you really want this, they will assume you do not.

This should be very personal and unique to you

Are you a real candidate?

Can you be successful?

Most of this is in your application. However, address any potential issues.

Possible issues: Ws on transcript; criminal record, bad start/bad term

Will you be successful?

Show your commitment to this path

That you will complete the degree and actually practice afterward

Will you be a value to the profession?

Are you the kind of person we want as a doctor?

Compassionate, culturally aware, curious, realistic, a leader, resilient, communicator

Will you lend diversity?

There are many kinds: ethnic, academic, social class, life experience, etc.

Are you the kind of person we want to work with?

Annoying people are not welcome

Interesting people are

Helpful, compassionate, competent people make good colleagues

Style:

Are you convincing????

Past performance predicts future results. Do not just make statements about you or your personality without backing it up with evidence (examples).

Are you memorable?

Committees read hundreds of these!

You want to be remembered in a good way.

People are more likely to remember stories.

People remember things that are unusual. (Make sure it is “good different.”)

People remember mistakes.

This is a bad way to be remembered.

PROOFREAD!!! PROOFREAD!! PROOFREAD!

You cannot proofread your own work. Get help! Make sure it is someone good.

Are you leaving the right impression?

The readers don’t know you, they can’t interpret between the lines.

Ask others for insight into what the essays says about you.

Try asking: “Based on this, what are 3 adjectives that describe me?”

Ask people who know you well to review it. (“Does this sound like me?”)

Ask people who don’t know you well to review it. (“Do you like/respect the person described?”)

Non-application materials (Before, during or after your application.)

You might want to make a 1-page resume designed for medical school

The process will help you focus on (and simplify) important and relevant experiences

Some secondary applications ask for it

It’s a nice tool to give information about yourself to

practice interviewers, real interviewers and networking contacts

You need professional attire for your interview

This means a good **suit** (find a place that tailors)

Good shoes (that you can walk in...a lot)

Simple but quality accessories (belt, watch, jewelry)

Your appearance should say “professional.”

Research the schools you apply to

Two common questions on supplemental applications:

Why do you want to attend *this* medical school?

Why should *this* medical school want you as a student?

These should be medical school specific; a different answer for each place you apply

Be sure to look at:

Mission statement

Teaching style

General atmosphere (size, location, friendliness, etc.)

Quality (residency placements, STEP scores)

Special programs (do you want to be part of one?)

AFTER YOU HIT "SUBMIT"

Make sure materials you have asked others to submit get there.

Transcripts, letters of reference

Make sure transcripts are accepted

Fill out any secondary applications you get quickly but very well

Update application as necessary (like when the term ends)

Do some Mock Interviews!

Offered by AU Career Center

These book up fast,

Don't assume you can get a next day appointment. First available might be weeks away.

Finish Strong

If you still have classes to complete, don't let your GPA slip

If you are taking a "gap year" or even just the summer, use the time wisely

What can you do to improve your application if you have to try again?

What can you do now that you can't once you start medical school?

Are the experiences or money that you need to stockpile when both are less available?

Before you start Medical School

Take a vacation.

Who knows when you will next have an opportunity?

You need to start fresh and ready to go.