

University of Dayton

Health Professional School Application Guide

Premedical Programs Office
10/2/2013

Guidelines for Applying to Medical, Dental or other Health Professional School

Applying to medical, dental or other health professional school can be a daunting process. The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines to help you navigate successfully through this process. It should be used in conjunction with materials and information presented at the Premedical Programs Application Workshop. The basic steps of the process are outlined below.

- 1. Attend the Premedical Programs Office Application Workshop – Jan. 28 or Jan. 29 at 5:00 p.m.**
- 2. Follow directions for obtaining a composite letter packet (if applying to medical or dental school).**

Many Health Care Professional Schools accept either *individual letters of recommendation, a committee letter* or a *composite evaluation*. University of Dayton provides composite evaluations for our students who are applying to medical or dental schools. This evaluation consists of a single letter written by your Premed Advisor with the input from letters of evaluation chosen by each applicant. Follow the procedures detailed in the document entitled “**PROCEDURE FOR ACQUIRING A COMPOSITE RECOMMENDATION LETTER**”.

3. Apply to take the Standardized Test for your Health Professional School

Standardized tests are an important part of your application to one of the professional schools. Strong scores can greatly enhance the success of your application, so the sooner you begin to prepare, and the more familiar you are with the material and the test format, the better your chances are of reaching your full potential.

Visit the links below for details about individual standardized tests. You'll find background information, fees, schedules, on-line test registration, sample questions, forms, and performance data. If you are interested in taking a standardized test preparatory course, look into what [Kaplan, Exam Crackers](#) and [The Princeton Review](#) have to offer.

Health Professional School Admission Tests

MCAT	Allopathic, Osteopathic and Podiatric Medicine https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/
DAT	Dental http://www.ada.org/dat.aspx
OAT	Optometry https://www.ada.org/OAT/
PCAT	Pharmacy http://www.aacp.org/resources/student/pharmacyforyou/admissions/Pages/PCAT.aspx
GRE	DPT, PA, OT, DVM http://www.ets.org/gre/

4. Apply to the Centralized Service for the Health Professional School of your choice.

Centralized Application Services: Allow you to submit one application and apply to many professional schools.

Many professional schools have established centralized application services (CAS) to simplify the application process. Instead of filling out multiple forms and sending them directly to each school, the applicant submits one online standardized application to the CAS. The CAS charges an application fee.

The CAS then reviews each application to ensure that it is complete, verifies transcript information and sends a copy of the application to each school listed by the applicant. If the school requires more information, they contact the applicant directly. Schools may assess fees in addition to the CAS fee.

Before you apply, become familiar with the centralized application service to which you are submitting your application. Download the directions provided and refer to them diligently throughout the application process.

Here are web locations for several centralized application services:

Professional School	Centralized Service	Website
Allopathic Medicine	AMCAS	https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/amcas/
Dentistry	AADSAS	https://portal.aadsasweb.org/
Osteopathic Medicine	AACOMAS	http://www.aacom.org
Podiatric Medicine	AACPMAS	http://www.aacpm.org
Pharmacy	PHARMCAS	http://www.pharmacas.org/
Public Health	SOPHAS	http://www.sophas.org/
Veterinary Medicine	VMCAS	http://www.aavmc.org/vmcas/vmcas.htm
Optometry	OptomCAS	http://www.optomcas.org/
Physician Assistant	CASPA	https://portal.caspaonline.org/

The application process varies for each centralized service, but in general the application involves you submitting an online form, identifying the schools to which you are applying, paying fees, and submitting your transcripts.

How do I decide to which schools I should apply?

One consideration is your state of residence. Many schools, particularly state-supported schools provide more of their seats for in-state versus out-of-state residents. Your chances of admission to a state-supported school in states other than your home state are smaller. Statistics on in-state and out-of-state acceptances are published for each allopathic medical school in the *MSAR* (Medical School Admission Requirements) which is available in the PPO and in the Roesch Library Reference Section. It's a good idea to divide your applications into schools that have a mean GPA slightly above your undergraduate GPA, about equal to your GPA and below your GPA. Your test score (MCAT, DAT, PCAT, etc) will also be an important predictor. Research the mean test scores of the present first year class at your schools of interest and use that data to help determine "best fit" schools. Also consider the tuition for both state residents and non-residents.

Finally, get to know the individual schools and consider curricular, philosophical and geographical features. Do you want to live in a city? Do you want to be affiliated with a teaching hospital tied to the medical school? Do you prefer a community based program such as

Wright State University Boonshoft School which is not affiliated with one particular hospital? Curricula differ a great deal also. Some schools will give you exposure to patients very early; others will wait until the third year. Some have mostly lecture-based courses in the first years while others use case studies and problem-based learning. Some have an extensive required curriculum, while others offer room for many electives. Consult their websites and the *MSAR* for this information. An additional resource is the AAMC's searchable online *Curriculum Directory*, <http://services.aamc.org/currdir/>, which profiles the curriculum at each medical.

When should I apply?

Apply early! Application dates vary from school to school and from one application service to the next, but most begin accepting applications in early summer and stop accepting applications in November or December. Most schools admit students on a rolling basis so early applicants have a better chance of admission than late applicants. It is therefore to your advantage to begin the application process as early as possible in the summer. This means filling out and submitting any centralized service applications as soon as available in May or June. Even though they utilize the centralized application services, many schools still require supplemental applications to be filled out and charge their own additional application fees. If you get all of your initial applications in early in the summer, you will receive many of the supplemental application forms from the schools starting later in the summer. You should complete and submit these supplemental materials as soon as possible.

How many applications should you file?

There is no correct number. The national average is about 13 per person. Estimate your chances. Even if you are confident about your admission, it is advisable to apply to 6-12 schools, perhaps more if you are a marginal candidate. It is ill-advised to apply to schools that publish average GPA and MCAT scores far above yours.

How do I submit my transcripts?

It is your responsibility to arrange with the Registrar's Office for the sending of all official transcripts requested by the schools you apply to and by any of the centralized application services. If you have attended any other college besides University of Dayton, you will also have to have official transcripts from these colleges sent. Directions for ordering UD transcripts can be found at <https://registrar.udayton.edu>. Be sure to follow the directions for submitting your transcripts as described by the centralized application service or individual school to which you are applying. For example, the AMCAS application contains a transcript request form that you must print out and submit to the registrar.

Application dates and requirements vary by professional school. Below are the requirements for several of the centralized services.

Centralized Service	Application Launch Date	Personal Statement Length	Experiential Descriptions	Application Overview
AMCAS	Early May (submit in early June)	5300 Characters	1325 Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary application contains application and fee, personal statement, transcripts and MCAT scores. • Secondary applications are by invitation and contain additional application info, fee and letters of recommendation. • If using the PPO process, letters of recommendation are submitted electronically as a packet from the PPO.
AADSAS	Early June	4500 Characters	175 Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary application contains application and fee, personal statement, transcripts and DAT scores. • Several schools request supplemental information to be submitted immediately following primary application. • Letters of recommendation are submitted as a packet from the PPO.
AACOMAS	Early May (submit in early June)	4500 Characters	1325 Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary application contains application and fee, personal statement, transcripts and MCAT scores. • Secondary applications are by invitation and contain additional application info, fee and letters of recommendation. • Letters of recommendation are submitted as a packet from the PPO.
PHARMCAS	Early June	4500 Characters		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary application contains application and fee, personal statement, transcripts and PCAT scores. • Composite letters CAN BE submitted as a packet from the PPO. (New in 2011) or individual letters can be submitted by the student. Check your schools to see if they accept or require a composite letter.
OptomCAS	Mid-July	4500 Characters		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary application contains application and fee, personal statement, transcripts and OAT scores. • Composite letters CAN BE submitted electronically as a packet from the PPO. (New in 2011) or individual letters can be submitted by the student. Check your schools to see if they accept or require a composite letter.
CASPA	Mid-April	5000 Characters		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application contains fee, personal statement, transcripts, GRE score and letters of recommendation. • Applicant submits individual letters electronically to CASPA. Clinical letters are important.

Your Personal Statement

Your application will include some version of a personal statement. Your personal statement provides the admissions committee with their first opportunity to build a picture of you. **All that you write will be read, evaluated, and construed as a reflection of your personality and motivation.** The secondary applications may allow you to tailor some of your narrative comments to fit each particular school to which you are applying. Be sure to utilize all of the space that is provided for narrative comment on the primary and secondary applications. Empty space is likely to be interpreted as a lack of interest and/or imagination by the applicant. There is no single best thing to say or one best story to tell. Try to explain your motivation and your certainty that you will be a competent and caring health professional. Emphasize your strengths, be relevant, and if possible, interesting. Whatever you write, be grammatically correct.

UD Graduate Kyle McCallin **developed a brochure entitled Preparing Your Personal Statement in which he provides the following insights and recommendations:**

Applying to medical school is more than simply filling in the blanks on endless forms. Most medical schools ask for the applicant to submit a personal statement as well, which is your opportunity to give the reviewer a person to associate with the application. The personal statement may be what distinguishes your application from hundreds of others.

Is There a Suggested Process?

There is no particular format in which you should write your personal statement. After all, it should be personalized. However, this does not mean anything is considered acceptable. Your personal statement should be pristine. Grammatical and spelling errors are inexcusable. As with any English paper, it is recommended to follow “**The Writer’s Path**”.

- ♦ **Generate Ideas in Writing** - Recall what your motivation is for becoming a doctor: events, people, service, shadowing, aspirations, etc.
- ♦ **Identify Audience and Purpose**- Who will read your personal statement? Consider type of medical school applying to: allopathic or osteopathic
- ♦ **Draft and Revise** - You may have several drafts and revisions. Make sure it is exactly how you want it to look in the reviewers hands
- ♦ **Craft (Find a reader)** - Ask several people to read and critique your personal statement.
- ♦ **Editing** - Select corrections from your readers’ critiques. Make changes and fine tune your statement. If you need to, go back to draft/revise phase and continue again through the cycle

Criteria to Meet

When an admission board examines a personal statement, they look for certain criteria and qualities. Although the criteria vary among medical schools, certain qualities about an applicant that are shown in the statement speak most about their potential as a physician and a humanitarian. Paul Carlson, Associate Dean of Admissions at Wright State, describes five specific criteria he wishes to see in a personal statement:

- 1. Motivation in Medicine** - Describe the influence of others, why interested in medicine, your drive, to what extent you have experienced medicine.
- 2. Interest in Helping Others** - Give evidence of your desire to help others.
- 3. Maturity** - Evidence that decisions you have made reflect levels of maturity. This could be coping with difficult circumstances in your life. This should be apparent in both your essay and interview.
- 4. Explanation for a Major Illness or Personal Crisis** - If a personal crisis affected your academic performance, the review committee would be interested in an explanation.
- 5. Interests in Area of Care** - This could include reason for applying to an osteopathic or allopathic school.

* Keep in mind that all five criteria may not apply to every applicant. Focus your essay around a few of the criteria.

Advice from Admissions

Although the personal statement is an expression of yourself, it is important to maintain focus and concentrate on what is relevant to your reason for choosing medicine. According to John Schriener, Director of Admissions at OU College of Osteopathic Medicine, a personal statement is limited to “350 words for osteopathic schools . . . so focus on major thoughts.” Paul Carlson at Wright State echoed the importance of focus, and he added, “Write about yourself rather than what a physician should be.”

Other Do's and Don'ts:

- ◆ Proofread for grammar and spelling
- ◆ Be yourself and let your personality show
- ◆ Make sure to meet the word requirement
- ◆ Don't write entire essay about one major event in your life. Complement it with instances.
- ◆ Don't be philosophical
- ◆ Don't use unnecessary creativity (poems, short stories, etc.)
- ◆ Don't become defensive or blame faculty for a bad grade or a tough semester.
- ◆ Don't restate information that could be found in the application (name, major, school, etc.)

Further Readings

- ♦ *Essays That Will Get You into Medical School* by Daniel Kaufman
- ♦ *How to Write a Winning Personal Statement for Graduate and Professional School* by Richard Stelzar
- ♦ *Mastering the Personal Statement* by John Richardson
- ♦ www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/resources/health/medperstmt.htm Harvard University Faculty of Arts and Sciences Office of Career Services
- ♦ www.studentdoctor.net/essays/ (Student Doctor Network)

Secondary Applications

Most schools send out secondary applications if you pass their initial screen. Secondary applications are unique to each school and often consist of more personal information and several essay questions. Secondary applications take a lot of time to fill out, so budget time for this.

Some medical schools contact all applicants automatically inviting them to submit secondary applications, while others do an initial review before selecting only their top candidates to invite to submit secondary applications. Some medical schools may contact you by email and have you fill out an online secondary application, whereas others will send you secondary forms by postal mail. If you have questions you should check the school's website for additional instructions on their procedures, or call and/or e-mail the admissions office at the school.

You should be aware that many schools will not review your file until all secondary application materials, including letters of recommendation, have been received. In essence what this means is that you have not submitted a completed application until you have completed your secondary application, even if you selected the school months earlier on your primary application.

You should endeavor to complete the secondary applications as quickly as possible so that your application can be moved into the next stage of evaluation. Many schools will give you a deadline to return the secondary applications, but do not wait until the deadlines to submit materials. The sooner you return your secondary application the sooner you will move into the next stage of evaluation. Completing and returning the secondary application quickly signals your sincere interest in the school to the admissions committee. Remember that schools do not wait on late applications to fill their classes.

Many great applicants do not do as well in the admissions process because they fail to follow-up in a timely manner. Applicants who submit their primary applications early in the summer often gain an advantage in the admissions process, but if you subsequently submit your secondary applications and letters of recommendation late, you have lost all the advantage you had in the

beginning as an early applicant, as your application will now be reviewed after students who submitted their secondary applications and recommendation letters before you. It can really be to your advantage to follow-up in a timely manner and stay determined throughout the entire application process.

The Interview

After your application is complete, the individual schools will decide whether or not to grant you an interview. An invitation to interview is a positive step in your application process. At this point you have been deemed competitive for acceptance. The interview is your opportunity to reinforce this favorable interpretation of your credentials. Try to present a positive, confident image. Be direct, open and honest. Your communication skills - the ability to listen, understand, and provide coherent responses - will be assessed. Your professional effectiveness as a deliverer of health care will depend on your abilities to communicate with patients and health care team members. Maintain eye contact with the interviewers and minimize excessive body movements. If you are nervous, sick or otherwise not up to par, say so. Your dress and grooming will reflect your personal style. Answer questions directly and with conviction. Say "I do not know" when appropriate. You may be asked questions that deal with legal (e.g. national health insurance, malpractice) or moral (abortion) matters germane to the profession. The interviewers' concern is not so much with the direction of your answer per se (for or against) but rather with the evidence that you are aware of the problem and have formulated a response. Stress your strong points. Know something about the school you are interviewing with and ask your own questions (i.e. curriculum innovations, clinical facilities, residency placements, etc.).

Basic Preparation for the Interview

- Familiarize yourself with the school, its programs and facilities. Use websites, catalogs, curricula directories, interview reports and tapes to research the school. Visit the campus if possible.
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- Do practice interviews with other applicants, advisors, professors or practicing health professionals.
- Be familiar with current issues in your field of interest.
- Be prepared to discuss your positive qualities.
- Think of questions you want to ask of the interviewer. A set of good questions will reflect positively on you.

Basics of Interviewing

- Be certain of the date, time and place of the interview. Confirm in writing with the school, especially if out-of-state travel is concerned.

- Arrive early for the interview.
- Carry a pen and notepad to make note of any references given during your visit.
- Listen carefully for the interviewer's name and, on occasion, address the interviewer.
- Wait for the interviewer to offer to shake hands.
- Wait for the interviewer(s) to invite you to be seated or to seat himself/herself before you are seated.

Compiled from *Interview Skills Lab* by Betty Preciado.

What is the School Assessing in the Interview?

The interviewer is looking for the following:

1. Communication skills: How well do you express yourself? Can you express a point of view convincingly? Are you a good listener? Can you engage in conversational give and take?
2. Personality, evidence of maturity and the ability to relate to others.
3. Motivation toward medicine, concern or compassion for others: If you can discuss lab research experience or an internship with a doctor or volunteer work in an emergency room, do so. Do not generalize. Be specific about observations about patients or accounts of your work. If you have had a family experience with illness or disability and it was an important part of your motivation, describe how it was so.
4. Depth and breadth of knowledge and interests in and out of medicine.
5. Meaningful experiences in and out of the classroom and in life.
6. Evidence of creativity, organizational skills and leadership: If you have been in many activities, stress those activities that you have enjoyed the most, and where you have made your greatest contribution.
7. Ability to cope with stress: What obstacles have you overcome and how? What would you do differently if you had the chance? What was your hardest decision? Here you may have the opportunity to explain flaws or weaknesses in your record or expand on your credentials. For weaknesses, take the blame yourself. Do not blame the school, the professor, the weather, etc. If possible, it is good to include what you've done to work to overcome a weakness. For strengths, don't be pompous! However, don't be afraid to highlight your accomplishments.

8. Match for a particular school. Be prepared to enthusiastically say why you would want to attend that particular school, and why you are a good match for it.

Questions That Have Been Asked

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to be a doctor?
- Why did you major in _____?
- What do you think of managed care, stem cell research, the problem of the uninsured?
- How would you solve the high cost of medical care?
- Why did you attend University of Dayton?
- Why do you want to go to this medical school?
- What criteria will you use to select a medical school?
- Have you been accepted or are you interviewing elsewhere? (Be honest.)
- What will you do if not admitted to medical school?
- What books have you read recently and what do you think of them?
- What were your extracurricular activities? (They may not have read your essay or your Committee letter.)
- How do you intend to finance your medical education?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What do you do for fun?
- Why should we choose YOU?

What sorts of questions should I ask in the interview?

Medical schools, like individuals, are very different – in their philosophies, faculties, curricula, and the type of students they attract. Consequently, selecting the "best" medical school for you can be very challenging. The following set of questions was compiled by medical students from across the country to assist you in evaluating the schools you will visit. This list is by no means complete; it was designed to serve as a base for your own questions. Keep in mind that the interview represents a wonderful time for you to learn, so don't be shy about asking anyone your questions.

1. Are there any special programs for which this medical school is noted?

Curriculum

2. Describe this school's curriculum in the pre-clinical and clinical years. Are there any innovations, like Problem-Based Learning?
3. Are there opportunities for students to design, conduct, and publish their own research?

4. Is there a note-taking service? If so, is it University-run or student-run?
5. Is there flexibility in the coursework (the number of electives) and the timing of the courses (accelerating, decelerating, and time off) during the pre-clinical and clinical years?
6. Has this medical school, or any of its clinical departments, been on probation or had its accreditation revoked?
7. How do students from this medical school perform on the National Board Examinations? How does the school assist students who do not pass?

Evaluations

8. How are students evaluated academically? How are clinical evaluations performed?
9. Is there a formal mechanism in place for students to evaluate their professors and attending physicians? What changes have been made recently as a result of this feedback?

Counseling/Student Support

10. What kind of academic, personal, financial, and career counseling is available to students? Are these services also offered to their spouses and dependents/children?
11. Is there a mentor/advisor system? Who are the advisors – faculty members, other students, or both?
12. How diverse is the student body? Are there support services or organizations for ethnic minorities and women?

Facilities

13. Tell me about the library and extra-curricular facilities (i.e., housing and athletic/recreational facilities).
14. Are there computer facilities available to students? Are they integrated into the curriculum/learning?

15. What type of clinical sites – ambulatory, private preceptors, private hospitals, rural settings – are available or required for clerkships? Does this school allow for students to do rotations at other institutions or internationally?
16. Is a car necessary for clinical rotations? Is parking a problem?

Financial Aid

17. What is the current tuition and fees? Is this expected to increase yearly? If so, at what rate?
18. Are there stable levels of federal financial aid and substantial amounts of university/medical school endowment aid available to students?
19. Are there students who have an "unmet need" factor in their budget? If so, where do these students come up with the extra funds.
20. Are spouses and dependents/children covered in a student's budget?
21. Is someone available to assist students with budgeting and financial planning?
22. Does this school provide guidance to its students, and to its graduates/alumni, on debt management?

Student Involvement

23. What medical school committees (e.g., curriculum committee) have student representation?
24. Are students involved in (required or voluntary) community service?
25. How active is the Student Council/Government? Are there other student organizations?

Policies

26. Is there an established protocol for dealing with student exposure to infectious diseases? Is disability insurance provided to cover this exposure?
27. Does this school provide, or does the student pay for, vaccinations against Hepatitis B or prophylactic AZT treatment in case of a needle-stick or accident?

28. Is there a school Honor Code? Is there a grievance process/procedure? Are the students involved?

Residency

29. May I see a list of residency programs to which this school's recent graduates were accepted?

Questions to Ask Yourself

30. Does this school have strengths in the type of medicine (primary versus specialized care, urban versus rural practice environment, academic medicine versus private practice) that I will want to practice?
31. Would I be happy at this school (for at least the next four years)?

University of Dayton
Checklist for Applicants to Health Professional Schools

Note: Be sure to keep a copy of all items for your records.

- **February or Before**
- Register with the Premedical Programs Office (<http://premed.udayton.edu>)
- Attend Jan 28 or Jan 29 Application Workshop
- Identify and talk to potential evaluators and complete evaluation form letters.
- Register for appropriate pre-professional exam (MCAT, OAT, DAT, etc)
- **March**
- Complete online and hard copy forms included in Request for Evaluation Packet. Complete packet due to PPO March 14.
- **April**
- PPO begins to process Evaluation Packets for delivery to faculty evaluators.
- **June**
- Order transcripts from all colleges attended
- Centralized Application Service websites open – Applications become available.
- **Spring/Summer**
- Take the appropriate pre-professional exam (MCAT, OAT, DAT, etc)
- Complete and submit primary applications as early as possible.
- Submit to PPO (online) final list of schools along with application service ID number.
- Watch for secondary notices! Complete and submit secondaries within one week!
- Check in with application service and/or schools to be sure they have received all application materials.
- Notify PPO when you receive a secondary notice.
- **August**
- Aug 1 – Last date PPO will accept outside letters of support to include in Composite packet. After this date, outside letters must be delivered directly to your school(s).
- **Fall**
- Notify PPO when you receive interview invitations and acceptances.
- Prepare and practice for your interviews!