

Medical School FAQs

Q: What should I major in?

A: There is no required or preferred major for pre-medical students nor is there a pre-medical major offered at Texas A&M. Medical schools encourage pre-medical students to major in whichever subject they find most interesting and educationally enriching. Some majors are more common among pre-medical students because the pre-requisites, found [here](#), are included in the degree plans. Your GPA in the prerequisite and science courses is particularly important as that is what schools will use to compare between applicants of all majors.

*Note a non-science major does not put you at a competitive disadvantage, and you will work with your academic advisor to incorporate some of the prerequisite classes into your schedule.

Q: What is some of the basic information I should know before applying to medical school?

A: Before beginning the path of applying to medical school, you should:

- Confirm medicine is the right path for you by doing shadowing and having clinical experience
- Demonstrate academic excellence particularly in prerequisite courses
- Attain a competitive MCAT score
- Apply early in the cycle
- Write a great personal statement and essay

Q: What do I need to be doing as a U1 to get ready for medical school?

A: Begin the chemistry sequence your first semester of college (and every following semester) and focus on attaining and maintaining a high GPA. Additionally, it is recommended that pre-medical students start building connections for Letters of Recommendation and connect with Professional School Advising through workshops and advising sessions. More info at <https://tx.ag/WDINTBWO>

Q: Should I accept AP or IB credit?

A: Accepting college credit can be beneficial, **BUT** you should not accept any credit for prerequisite courses. Talk to your academic advisor before accepting any credit for any course. You want to make sure that the credit you are accepting counts towards your degree.

*Note once you accept credit for a course, you cannot un-accept it so make sure you meet with your academic advisor and fully discuss this.

Q: I want to take a pre-requisite course at a community college or junior college. Is that okay?

A: It is recommended that you **ONLY** take non-science courses (History, Political Science, English, etc.) at a community college. Note the grade earned at community college does not count on your TAMU transcript, the grade will be calculated into your GPA when you apply to medical school. Use this to your advantage and get A's in any courses you take at community college to help raise your overall GPA.

*Before enrolling in a community college course, check [here](#) to make sure the course has a transfer course equivalency at Texas A&M

Q: Which ENGL (English) course do I need to take?

A: To fulfill the 6-hour English prerequisite for medical school, you can take any course labeled "ENGL". Double check your specific degree plan requirements to ensure you are meeting graduation requirements.

Q: What are early assurance programs?

A: Early Assurance programs allow students to be granted guaranteed admission to medical school before they even finish their undergraduate degree. The [Texas A&M College of Medicine](#) offers the following early assurance programs based on different qualifications that students can apply to before they begin their freshman year or during their second year, depending on the program:

- Agriculture and Life Sciences to Medicine (Ag2M)
- Cadet to Medicine (C2M)
- Engineering to Medicine (E2M)
- Military to Medicine (M2M)
- Pre-Med Fellows
- Partnership for Primary Care (PPC)
- Science to Medicine (S2M)

[JAMP](#)-not exclusive to Texas A&M COM

Q: What is the MCAT?

A: The Medical College Admission Test, otherwise known as the MCAT is a computer-based standardized examination for prospective medical students. The exam is 7.5 hours and test knowledge in the following 4 sections:

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

Q: Which classes should I take at A&M before I take the MCAT?

A: With the new 2015 MCAT in place, the *recommended* classes at TAMU are:

- BIOL 111 & 112
- CHEM 119, 120, 227/237, 228/238
- PHYS 201 & PHYS 202
- PSYC 107 or SOCI 205
- BICH 410

Q: When should I take the MCAT?

A: For your application to be considered complete, you need to have released your MCAT scores. MCAT scores are released 30-35 days after an exam date. Applications open in early May, and Professional School Advising recommends submitting by early June. So, it is recommended to take the MCAT no later than May of the year you are applying. You **never** want to take the MCAT 'just for practice' because medical schools can see each exam attempt and score.

It is most common for applicants to take the MCAT the semester after completing the first semester of biochemistry.

Q: What is a competitive MCAT score?

A: A competitive MCAT score is in the range of 508-512 depending on your GPA.

Q: Do all pre-requisites have to be completed before applying to med school?

A: No, but the science pre-reqs (along with PSYC and SOCI) are on the MCAT.

Q: What factors do medical school application committees consider other than my GPA?

A: The main factors of holistic review are GPA and MCAT score. The other aspects of the application may be reviewed [HERE](#). Additionally, solid, positive evaluations from the professors and doctors you choose can speak volumes to your strength as an applicant. Letters of recommendation are incredibly important, so take the time to build relationships with your professors so you are comfortable asking them for a letter.

Q: How do I get shadowing hours?

A: One of the best ways to get shadowing hours is in your hometown. Many students shadow their personal physicians or connections they have such as a friend's parent, etc. You can do this over winter break, summer break, or spring break – any time you are at home. To get shadowing hours – you must start asking people! Use [Find An Aggie](#) to reach out to expand your network and make new professional connections.

*The opportunities in Bryan/College Station are severely limited due to the large number of students looking for shadowing. Consider reviewing the local hospital websites for volunteering opportunities.

Q: What is qualified as shadowing experience?

Experiences where there is direct contact with patients and observation of a physician can be qualified as shadowing. Some examples of jobs qualified shadowing positions are scribing and the clinical training for EMT certification.

Q: What is considered medical experience?

A: Shadowing, volunteering in a healthcare setting, and medical employment (i.e. EMT, CNA, scribe) are all considered medical experience. These experiences must have the student in direct contact with the patient. This means that if the experience involved no direct contact and was assisting with non-medical tasks such as paperwork, stocking, and transportation, it will not count for medical experience.

Q: Is virtual shadowing acceptable?

A: Yes, virtual shadowing will be accepted, just make sure to keep track of your hours. As COVID protocols ease, and in person opportunities become more available, this stance may change. Virtual shadowing cannot be the only medical experience listed on an application.

Q: Should I be doing research?

A: While research experience is not required for medical school admissions, research may be an asset to a competitive application. For applicants interested in MD/Ph.D. or DO/Ph.D. programs this will be an essential component of your application. Start looking early at the faculty in the areas you are interested as gaining a research position may take some time. You can find this information by clicking [here](#).

Q: Does leadership in a job count?

A: Yes, leadership in a job does count, so highlight the responsibilities you held in your position in your application.

Q: Do U.S. medical schools ever accept international students?

A: Yes, but it's not easy. Some U.S. medical schools accept and matriculate a small number of international applicants into their programs. The [Medical School Admission Requirements](#) indicates which schools will accept applications from international applicants. You can research an individual medical school's admissions policies on its website or within the "Application Deadlines and Requirements" section in the Medical School Admission Requirements.

Q: Do I have to send an official transcript to the OPISA portal?

A: No! The OPISA Portal is just a resource to familiarize students with the application process-a rough draft of sorts, so official transcripts are not required. You will need an official transcript when you submit your official application(s).

*Send your transcripts to TMDSAS only when requested by the application service directly.

Q: What is meant by rolling admissions?

A: Rolling admissions means that a school fills their spots as they interview and receive applications. If the school you are applying to has rolling admissions, it is recommended that you apply early rather than later in the cycle since there will be fewer spots available the longer you wait to apply.

Q: What is a personal statement?

A: In a personal statement, you need to **explain why you want to be a doctor**. Tell the story of what made you initially want to become a doctor and focus on this development AFTER high school graduation. Also, tell stories about moments in your pre-med path that reinforce this decision. Be authentic about what drives you and share stories that are unique to your life.

Q: When is the best time to submit my application?

A: Typically, the best time to submit your application is over the summer between your junior and senior year. Work with a professional school advisor to create the best fit timeline for your personal journey.

Q: What is CASPer and when should I take it?

A: CASPer is an online test which assesses for non-cognitive skills and interpersonal characteristics. The test is comprised of 12 sections of video and written scenarios. Following each scenario, you will be required to answer a set of probing questions under a time contract. The test typically takes between 75-90 minutes to complete.

Consider completing CASPer by May or June for an "early" application. The Texas medical schools requiring CASPer are:

- Baylor College of Medicine
- Long School of Medicine
- Sam Houston State School of Osteopathic Medicine
- Texas A&M College of Medicine
- Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine
- Paul Foster School of Medicine (TTUHSC)
- University of Texas Medical Branch - Galveston
- UT Southwestern Medical School
- McGovern Medical School

Q: What are the different applications services for medical school?

A: There are 3 different application services :

- **TMDSAS (Texas Medical & Dental Schools Application Services)**
- **AMCAS (American Medical College Application Service)**
- **AACOMAS (American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service)**

Q: What are secondary applications and which Texas schools require them?

A: Secondary applications are sent directly from the schools after the submission of your primary application and are more focused on the interest of that school. These should be returned to the schools The Texas medical schools requiring a secondary application are:

- Baylor College of Medicine
- UT Southwestern Medical Center
- Dell Medical School
- University of Houston Medical School
- University of Texas Medical Branch - Galveston
- University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
- McGovern Medical School
- Sam Houston State School of Osteopathic Medicine
- Texas A&M College of Medicine
- Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine
- Paul Foster School of Medicine (TTUHSC)
- University of North Texas HSC (TCOM)

Q: Can I use the same essay for different schools?

A: Since the prompt can be the same for two different programs, it can be very tempting to just copy and paste one's response for both schools. Tailor each response more towards the different programs where possible and double check program name usage

Q: How do medical schools view students who are part-time?

A: The view a medical school has on a part-time student is very dependent on the reason why you are having to enroll part time. Some examples of valid reasons a student is not full time would be because they had to work to pay for school, they had to be a caregiver for a family member, or simply because it was their last semester and had no more hours to fill to name a few. If a student is part time however for an unnecessary reason like wanting to study for the MCAT, medical schools will view this differently and in return will expect a higher MCAT score.

Q: Can doing a master's program before medical school be a good thing?

A: If an applicant's largest growth area is academics, then completion of a master's program comprised of rigorous science curriculum and attaining a strong GPA (3.75+) may a good fit. Speak with a PSA advisor for more details and to determine if this is the best fit for you.

Q: What is the difference between a MD and DO?

A: The difference between a MD and DO is that MDs learn allopathic medicine, which is more focused on treating conditions with medications, while DOs learn osteopathic medicine, which is a more holistic hands-on approach.

Q: If you get a MD or DO degree, can you practice outside Texas?

A: Yes, you may practice outside of Texas.

Q: How many hours per semester should I volunteer?

A: For volunteering, it's not about the number per semester, rather how many total hours before you apply. It is recommended that you have at least 150 hours of community service before you apply.

Q: Do medical schools look at applicants' social media platforms?

A: Yes, so be sure you control what you're being tagged in and posting online.

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