Medical School FAQs

Q: What should I major in?
A: Honestly, it doesn’t matter. You should major in whatever subject interests you. There is no general, pre-medical major offered at Texas A&M. Science majors (like Biology, Biochemistry, and Biomedical Science) are the most common for applicants because the prerequisite courses are included in your degree plan. A non-science major does not put you at a disadvantage. You will have to work with your academic advisor to incorporate some of the prerequisite classes into your schedule.

Q: What classes should I take at A&M before I take the MCAT?
A: With the new 2015 MCAT in place, several TAMU classes can benefit you on the MCAT. It is highly recommended that you take:

- BIOL 111 & 112
- CHEM 101/111 & CHEM 102/112
- CHEM 227
- CHEM 228
- 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 one month after you take the exam. Applications come out May 1 and we recommend that you submit by early June. For this reason, our office recommends that you take your MCAT no later than May of your junior year. You never want to take the MCAT ‘just for practice’ because medical schools can see every MCAT you’ve ever taken (unlike the SATs or ACTs).

The 2 most common timelines for students to take the MCAT are to study the summer after sophomore year and take the MCAT in August or September of your junior year. The other common option is to study over the course of the fall semester of your junior year and take the MCAT in either January or March of your junior year. Taking the MCAT during any of these times also allows you to get your score back and potentially retake the exam, if needed, before applying.

Q: Should I accept AP credit?
A: It depends. Talk to your academic advisor before accepting any AP credit. It is not recommended that you accept AP credit for any prerequisite course, because you will not be given a grade for the course. Non-science classes like history or English are generally ok to accept as they do not affect your science GPA. Note that once you accept AP credit, you cannot un-accept it.

Q: I want to take a prerequisite course at a community college or junior college. Is that okay?
A: It is not recommended that you take a prerequisite course at community college. Any non-science course is okay (history, political science, English, etc). Use caution when taking any science course at community college. Remember that while the grade earned at a community college does not count on your TAMU transcript, the grade earned will be calculated into your GPA when you apply to medical school. So any course you take at community college will count towards that GPA.

Students commonly want to take PHYS 201 & PHYS 202 at community college. If this is the only prerequisite course you take away from TAMU and your science GPA is strong, this should be okay. It is beneficial to check in with our advisors before you finalize this decision.
Q: What factors do medical school application committees consider other than my GPA?
A: The 2 biggest things are GPA and MCAT Test score. The other aspects of the application are:

- **Medical experience**
  - Volunteering at a local hospital (St. Joseph’s, the Med, Scott & White) or a clinic (Health for All, Brazos Prenatal Clinic)
  - OPSA has a list of volunteer opportunities for all professions we advise for

- **Shadowing**
  - Following around a doctor/observing surgeries
  - This is a good way to build a relationship with a doctor that can possibly lead to a letter of recommendation.
  - Try to get several different experiences in shadowing: a hospital is different from a private practice; a cardiologist is different from a pediatrician. A wide range of experience shows that you are open to all aspects of medicine.

- **Community service** (not medically related)
  - Quality over quantity. Volunteering with one organization (ex: Boys& Girls club, soup kitchen, carpool for a period of several semesters looks better than a long list of one-day or one-time service projects. Try volunteering once a month with a local charity over the course of several semesters. A long-standing relationship looks good and the time commitment is not oppressive.

- **Leadership**
  - Look to hold an officer position in one of your organizations by the end of your junior year
  - You don’t need to be president of the pre-med society. You can be secretary of the Ballroom Dancing club. Any position where you are in charge of and responsible for other people.

- **Letters of recommendation**
  - Solid, positive evaluations from the professors and doctors you choose to write your letters can speak volumes to your strength as an applicant. Letters of rec are incredibly important, so be sure to take the time to build relationships with your professors so that you feel 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 student’s shadow their friend’s parents or their old pediatricians, etc. You can do this over winter break, summer break, or spring break – any time you are at home. In order to get shadowing hours – you have to start asking people!

Shadowing opportunities are limited in the B/CS area due to the large amount of pre-health students. PSA does offer a shadow program through ECHO. Applications open at the beginning of each semester and are available to anyone who is a member of one of the organizations under ECHO.

Q: Do all prereqs have to be completed before applying to med school?
A: No, but the science prereqs (along with PSYC and SOCI) are on the MCAT.
Q: Do U.S. medical schools ever accept international students?

A: The short answer is yes, but it's not easy. Some U.S. medical schools accept and matriculate a small number of international applicants into their programs. In 2014, 62 schools indicated in the Medical School Admission Requirements that they would 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.

In 2014, 1,901 foreign applicants applied to M.D.-granting programs in the United States and 409 of those applicants were accepted. Of those accepted, 300 matriculated into medical school. Click here for more information.

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