

Applying to Medical School

Self-Assessment & Application Timeline

Assessing the strength of your application: Is this the best application cycle for you?

You should consider applying when you feel your application is at its strongest. Take into account all factors in this handout and apply in the cycle that is best for you. You are in control of this decision; Health Professions Advising will be supportive of your choice.

Academic Factors

Science GPA

- Calculate your science GPA for MD and DO programs using the GPA calculator tool on our website.
 - MD = all biology, chemistry, physics, and math courses (including statistics)
 - DO = all biology, chemistry, and physics courses
- Is your science GPA within most of the 10%-90% science GPA ranges provided in the [AAMC Medical School Admissions Requirements \(MSAR\) online](#) database?
 - For the Fall 2023 cycle, the average science GPA for accepted Northwestern students was 3.68.
 - Acceptance rate Fall 2023 by science GPA for first-time Northwestern applicants (non-HPME):
 - 3.0 - 3.19: 67% 3.2 - 3.39: 54% 3.4 - 3.59: 71% 3.6 - 3.79: 84% 3.8 - 4.0: 80%
 - Less than 3.0 science GPA*: 50%

*100% of the 3.0 and below accepted applicant pool had post-baccalaureate coursework

MCAT

- Have you determined when you will take the MCAT?
- Do you plan to devote 3-4 months of study for the MCAT, and have you determined your study schedule?
- Review the [AAMC MCAT preparation information](#)
- Does your MCAT score fall within most of the 10%-90% MCAT ranges provided in the MSAR?
- For the Fall 2023 cycle, the average MCAT score for accepted Northwestern students was 516.

Coursework Requirements

- Know the required courses for all of your medical schools; review the MSAR and schools' websites.
- Basic science prerequisites should be completed before applying.
- If you have used AP/IB credit for any science prerequisites, check schools' AP/IB credit policies.
- Additional course requirements can be completed after your application has been submitted.

Non-Academic Factors

Clinical Experience & Exposure to Medicine

- While in college, have you sufficiently tested the decision to become a physician?
- Have you volunteered consistently for at least a year or more in a healthcare setting?
- Have you checked medical schools' websites for any specific requirements related to service/medical exposure?
- Have you shadowed physicians?
- Have you reflected on both kinds of experiences to understand what it means to be a physician?
- What did you learn about the realities of medicine?

Research

- Have you engaged in research experience or any scholarly activity outside of the classroom?
- Do you recognize the value and purpose of research?
- Did you engage in research that was interesting to you? Medical schools value research in both lab and non-lab settings.
- If you plan on applying MD/PhD, have you had multiple years of research experience?
- For some schools, summer experiences may be sufficient for research activity, while other schools may not require any research experience (check MSAR – Admissions, Premedical Experience).

Recommendation Letters

- Have you developed good relationships with at least two science faculty and one non-science faculty who have taught you in a class? Research PIs may count for science faculty for some schools.
- Have you developed good relationships with club/organization advisors, supervisors, and/or volunteer coordinators who know you through your non-academic experiences?
- Will you begin planning for recommendation letters in winter quarter of the year you plan to apply?
 - Review MSAR and medical schools' websites for letter requirements and guidelines.
 - Identify and reach out to recommenders to discuss a potential letter of recommendation. This process can begin in winter and continue into spring, with the goal of giving recommenders as much notice as possible (6-8 weeks is ideal). We recommend letters be submitted in early July.
 - Add individual recommenders in application(s) after you have talked with them about a letter.
 - As a guideline, aim for two science faculty, one non-science faculty and 1-2 recommenders from prominent activities. DO programs may require a DO/MD shadowing letter.

Interests, Activities, & Organizations

- Have you engaged in community service and service-oriented activities?
- What are your interests? What are you passionate about?
- Have you worked with others in a team/organization? Have you been a leader?

Timing

- Do you plan to submit your primary application in **June**?
- Do you plan on returning your secondary applications in **July/early August**?
- Taking a mid- or late-summer MCAT will delay the review of your application.

Non-Academic Factors (continued)

Reflections, Personal Statement, Secondary Application Questions, & Interviews

- Have you thought critically about why you want to be a physician?
- Have you written your personal statement, work/activities descriptions, and most meaningful essays by the spring of the year you apply?
 - Attend an HPA **Application Writing session** in winter or spring quarter.
 - HPA **Application Materials** feedback appointments available
- Have you put as much time and thought into the school-specific secondary application questions as you did the personal statement?
- Do you feel comfortable talking about this decision and your qualities/experiences in interviews?
 - Attend an HPA Interview Preparation workshop or discuss preparation in an appointment.
 - Practice with an HPA mock interview.
- Review the AAMC Anatomy of an Applicant Self-Assessment Guide for in-depth information about competencies. How are the core competencies reflected in your application?

AAMC Professional Competencies

- 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

Financial Aid Information Resources

- AAMC Fee Assistance Program: <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/>
- AAMC Paying for Medical School site: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/preparing-med-school/paying-medical-school/>
- AACOMAS Application Fee Waivers: <http://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor/financial-aid>

Medical School Selection

- Make a spreadsheet using your information and MSAR information for your selected schools
 - Online: <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/msar/>
 - 10% - 90% range for science GPA and MCAT scores (MSAR - Acceptance Data)
 - In-state and out-of-state matriculated information (MSAR - Acceptance Data)
 - Review mission statement / curriculum.
 - Review past secondary application questions (HPA will share Excel file).
 - Review HPA Selecting Medical Schools handout

Medical School Application - Recommended Timeline

Fall/Winter

- Assess the strength of your application: science GPA / MCAT / clinical experience / research / organizations / interests / timing. Your HPA advisor can help you do this.
- Access and start working on the AAMC Anatomy of an Applicant Self-Assessment Guide.
- Apply for AAMC Fee Assistance Program (FAP) if you qualify.
 - Reduced MCAT + resources / free MSAR access / free application to 20 MD programs
- Access MSAR online database to research schools.
- Begin planning for letter of recommendation requests and collection.
- Register for a March, April, or early May MCAT date.
- Design MCAT study schedule.
- Write first drafts for personal statement, work/activities descriptions and your three most meaningful essays; allow plenty of time for multiple drafts/revisions.

Spring

- Take MCAT (April/May); talk with HPA if you take an MCAT in June or later.
- In May, access 2025 primary applications: AMCAS (MD); AACOMAS (DO); TMDSAS (TX)
- Send transcripts from the Registrar's Office of every U.S. post-secondary school you attended (current Northwestern students can submit requests through CAESAR).
 - AMCAS: Send transcripts in May if you are not including spring quarter grades.
- OR
- AMCAS: Send transcripts in mid-June if you are including spring quarter grades.
 - AACOMAS: Send transcripts in mid-June; must include spring quarter grades.
 - TMDSAS: Send transcripts only when requested by TMDSAS
- Sign up for a May, June, or July CASPer or AAMC PREview test if any of your programs requires them.

Summer

- Complete secondary applications within 1-2 weeks of receiving them.
 - No MD applicant will receive secondary applications until the last Friday of June.
- Monitor letters of recommendation. We recommend having these submitted in early July.
- VERY IMPORTANT:** Your application is not considered to be **"Ready to be Reviewed"** by a medical school until **ALL** of the following components have been received:
 - Verified primary application
 - Completed secondary application
 - Letters of recommendation
 - Latest MCAT score
 - AAMC PREview and/or CASPer score (if required by specific medical school)

Fall/Winter/Spring

- Interview with medical schools.
- April 30th - if holding multiple acceptances, an applicant must choose one school.
- If on a waitlist, most schools start moving through list in May through the summer.