



OCS

APPLYING TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

Undergraduate Resource Series

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CAREERS IN MEDICINE

The career options in medicine are diverse: clinical practice, public and global health, community health, medical administration, health policy, teaching, research, and more. While the majority of Harvard students and alumni pursuing careers in the health field focus on human medicine (allopathic or osteopathic medicine), a number of others will pursue careers in other health fields such as public and global health, dental medicine, veterinary medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, optometry, and pharmacy.

Being a doctor means you have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others, whether it is diagnosing and successfully treating a child with diabetes or conducting research on platelet activation or providing care to a terminally ill patient. The field of medicine changes rapidly, so physicians have to be lifelong learners and enjoy the intellectual challenge of science. The rewards of caring for others, contributing to research, and having flexible career options make this a very popular career choice for Harvard students. However, the path to becoming a doctor is long and rigorous, involving specific and demanding premedical course requirements, a long medical school application process, four years of basic science and clinical experiences in medical school, three to seven years of clinical training in residency (and often additional years as a fellow for certain subspecialties), and several licensing exams. Accordingly, the decision to become a physician should be made with a great deal of care and consideration. Clinical training in medical school and residency has also become increasingly interprofessional and team-based in recent years, and it is not uncommon for pre-health students to simultaneously explore several health professions along with non-clinical interests in healthcare.

In response to a projected shortage of physicians in the U.S., several new medical schools typically open every year. Access to physicians in rural and certain urban areas is particularly limited, and the number of medical students selecting primary care does not meet patient demand. While the total number of medical graduates will increase, the application process to medical school and to medical residency training programs remains extremely competitive.

Medical schools seek applicants who have:

- proven their competency in basic science and other areas of study;
- tested their interest in medicine through medically related experiences;
- shown an ability to communicate effectively with patients and colleagues;
- demonstrated personal qualities such as compassion, integrity, and sensitivity.

Therefore, while a strong academic performance in premedical courses and on the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) is important, personal qualities, experiences, and motivation are also critical factors in determining whether an applicant will be admitted to medical school.

EXPLORING THE FIELD

The decision to become a doctor cannot be made in the classroom. You can begin to test your interest in medicine in a variety of ways, by shadowing physicians and by volunteering several hours a week in a health care setting such as a pediatric hospital, a hospice program, or an AIDS-prevention program. Experience serving people in need is the best way to test your interest in clinical medicine and its interpersonal demands. Here are other suggestions:

- Visit the OCS Health and Medicine webpage for ideas on ways to gain volunteer and shadowing experience at a hospital or another clinical setting where you are able to interact with people directly.
- Consult with an OCS Premedical/Pre-Health Adviser or another OCS Career Adviser regarding your career interests.
- Edit your preferences for the “This Week at OCS” newsletter by going to the link at the bottom of the newsletter and selecting “Premed/Pre-Health” as an interest area to receive emails about medical and health-related programs and opportunities.
- If you are a current applicant or an alum, sign up for the Harvard OCS Medical School Applicant listserv at <https://lists.fas.harvard.edu/mailman/listinfo/harvardocs-medschool-applicants-list> using a Harvard email address (if you are a graduate of the College without a Harvard email, please contact premed@fas.harvard.edu).
- Become involved with student organizations on campus such as the Harvard Premedical Society (HPS), Harvard Black Premedical Society, Latinos in Health Careers (LiHC), Harvard Society of Black Scientists and Engineers (HSBSE), the Harvard Undergraduate Global Health Forum (HUGHF), the Harvard Minority Association of Premedical Students (MAPS), the Medical Humanities Forum, or the Rural Health Association. Get to know other students who are also interested in medicine.
- For sophomores and beyond, get to know your House or Dudley Community Premed Tutors.
- Shadow people who have medical training and are working in the field. Contact people you know or use the Harvard Alumni Association website and the Harvard Alumni in Healthcare shared interest group (SIG) to contact physicians in the area or in your hometown. Shadowing opportunities are also available through student organizations, such as the HPS Physician Mentoring Program (PMP), the MAPS physician shadowing program, the HPS BIOME (Biomedical Interdisciplinary Occupations and Medical Exposure) program, and the Athlete Medical Mentorship Program (AMMP).

PREPARING FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL

Academic Coursework

Medical schools require students to take courses covering specific areas in the sciences and other areas of study. It is strongly recommended that applicants complete the following science coursework before taking the MCAT and before applying to medical school:

- General chemistry with lab (one year)
- Biology with lab (one year)
- Organic chemistry with lab (one year)
- General physics with lab (one year)
- English (one year)

Currently, around 60 medical schools require mathematics, including almost 20 that require statistics. More than 60 medical schools require biochemistry. A few schools require additional biology. Medical schools require that courses satisfying requirements are taken for a grade; pass/fail is not accepted. In addition, courses that are not listed as a Harvard departmental or a Life or Physical Sciences course cannot be used to meet medical school requirements. These include freshman seminars and general education courses (with the exception of general education courses that meet the English requirement). Resources are available on the OCS website to help students understand which Harvard courses meet these requirements at most medical schools. Additionally, sample course schedules are provided in the online resource “Premedical Information for Harvard

Students: Timelines, Courses, and Resources 2021-2022,” available on the OCS Premedical and Health Careers Advising website.

Studying abroad requires careful advance planning because of course sequencing. In order to accommodate study abroad or other significant commitments during the academic year, a number of students enroll in premedical courses during the summer. Medical schools prefer that applicants take the majority of their premedical requirements during the academic year since the ability to handle demanding science and math courses while a full-time student provides a better indication of readiness for the rigor and intensity of the medical school curriculum. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that you do not take more than the equivalent of two semesters of your premedical course requirements during the summer. Students who elected to take premedical science courses during Summer 2020 due to the impact of Covid on other summer plans, and who took or will take one or two additional premedical courses in another summer, can disregard the recommendation against taking more than two required premedical courses during the summer as we expect the medical schools will not view this negatively.

Each medical school sets its own requirements and rules regarding courses they will accept. Therefore, if in doubt about whether a course may be substituted for the basic premedical requirements, you are encouraged to check with the admission offices of the medical schools to which you may apply.

Many Harvard applicants complete their science premedical coursework while enrolled at the College while others take some or even all of their premedical requirements after they graduate. In fact, around 75-80% of applicants to medical school in recent years have waited until their senior year and beyond, rather than their junior year, to apply to medical school. This allows students four years to fulfill the premedical requirements and also provides them an opportunity to pursue other interests before medical school.

Academic Performance

The first one to two years of medical school are typically called the “pre-clinical years” during which students take a rigorous course load that is often organ-based and includes histology, physiology, anatomy, pathology and other courses in the biomedical sciences. Therefore, applicants to medical school must demonstrate an ability to handle a science-intensive curriculum.

The first few semesters at Harvard involve getting used to a new setting, a new social and extracurricular life, and new ways of learning and studying. To accommodate this period of transition, it is highly recommended that entering students do not overload their schedules with science courses, particularly if they have not had strong science preparation in high school.

While it is true that your science GPA (biology, chemistry, physics, math/statistics) is important, you should not feel discouraged from pursuing medicine if your first-year and sophomore grades do not meet your expectations. Medical school admissions committees understand this and look favorably on an upward trend in your academic record. They also take into consideration factors such as high school science preparation.

In recent years, Harvard students were admitted to medical school with equal or lower GPAs than national applicants. In a typical year, the admissions rate for Harvard applicants is in the range of 85 to 90%, and approximately 92-95% of applicants with GPAs above 3.5 are admitted.

Choosing a Concentration

There is no “premedical program” at Harvard. Medical schools do not require that you major in a science, however applicants must demonstrate competency in science courses. The area of study that interests you the most and that you wish to explore extensively is the one you can and should choose for your concentration. While it is important to know and fulfill the necessary requirements for admission to medical school, it is neither necessary nor preferable to commit yourself at this time to a tightly focused curriculum directed at pursuing this particular profession. Medical schools seek students who have pursued an academic area of interest in depth.

Extracurricular Activities

Medical school admissions committees look to see that applicants have taken advantage of opportunities outside of the classroom that demonstrate leadership, teamwork, and other qualities essential for many of the roles that a physician must play. Many successfully admitted Harvard students have pursued a wide variety of activities, including athletics, public service, social and cultural groups, and the arts.

There is no formula for the activities students should be involved with to be competitive; deep involvement in a couple of areas is preferred over light participation in many. Each medical school develops its own criteria and priorities for admission, reflecting the goals of the respective school. For some medical schools, community service is very important; for other medical schools, a priority may be leadership qualities.

Clinical or Medical Experience

Medical schools look for students who have tested their interest in medicine through community service or health-related activities. It is better to volunteer consistently over an extended period of time rather than seeking out only short-term service projects or activities. Although premedical students are not able to administer medical care, there are many other opportunities to volunteer in settings involved in caring directly for people such as a homeless shelter, a community health clinic, or a pediatric oncology unit.

Research Experience

Contrary to popular belief, basic science research is not a requirement for medical school. In fact, many Harvard students continue on to medical school without working in a lab. Successful medical school applicants have usually demonstrated the ability to pursue an area of study in depth, whether it is basic science research, clinical research, or a thesis in English literature. The experience of critically reviewing data does not necessarily have to take place in a lab. Rather, medical schools look favorably on students with a general orientation towards research regardless of the particular discipline. That said, Harvard offers wonderful opportunities for students to work in labs involved in cutting edge research at the College as well as Harvard Medical School and affiliated hospitals and research institutes. Students considering an MD-PhD pathway will be expected to have extensive research experience by the time they apply to medical school. For some students this can be achieved by taking advantage of research opportunities and resources early in their Harvard careers, allowing them to build a competitive MD-PhD application with one or no gap year. For others, who may discover an interest in the physician-scientist pathway later on during their college years, taking one or more gap years to build substantial research experience may be required in order to be a competitive MD-PhD applicant.

SELECTING A MEDICAL SCHOOL

There are now over 150 accredited U.S. allopathic medical schools. Given the major differences in the structure of medical education and licensing policies across countries, it is recommended that you pursue medical school in the country in which you hope to practice.

Factors to Consider

Students select the schools to which they wish to apply based on a school's mission, location, method of instruction, clinical and research opportunities, elective options, special programs and tracks such as those with a focus on primary care or rural medicine, faculty, cost, selectivity, and diversity of the patient population. Students will typically not visit a medical school until they have been invited for an interview. Considerable information is available on individual medical school websites and in the *Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR)* online resource available at aamc.org.

Selectivity

Unlike the experiences of many Harvard students during the college admissions process, there are no "safety schools" among medical schools. Medical school admissions deans and committees make a great effort to create a class comprised of students from diverse backgrounds and who bring a variety of experiences and perspectives. Predicting the chances of admission to a single or group of schools is impossible. Therefore, you should plan to apply to a range of schools including less as well as more selective ones. The Office of Career Services publishes the Medical School Admissions Data report that provides statistics on how Harvard applicants have fared in the admissions process. This report can be viewed at OCS and a copy can be obtained from OCS in the year you are applying to medical school.

Public vs. Private

Medical programs exist at both public and private institutions. The mission of many public or state medical schools is to educate and train physicians who will remain and practice in the state. For this reason and because of public funding that these schools receive, many state schools restrict the enrollment of students who are not state residents. Enrollment policies vary from school to school; some schools accept virtually no non-resident applicants in their medical class while others enroll a large number of non-resident students. Students are advised to refer to the AAMC *Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR)* for information about individual medical school application policies and numbers of in-state versus out-of-state applicants. A spreadsheet on the OCS website summarizes the information regarding in-state and out-of-state applicants to U.S. medical schools. It is common for many Harvard students to enroll at their state medical school.

Rankings

It is highly recommended that students research schools for information beyond where the schools fall within popular ranking lists. The surveys upon which rankings are based often measure factors not relevant to the quality of education and student experience. Most medical schools have similar educational quality because of accreditation requirements. The reputation of a school on such a list does not determine a student's prospects for residency. For the most competitive residency programs, a student will need to have excelled during medical school regardless of the particular medical school attended.

APPLYING TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

Premedical Tutors in the Houses and the Dudley Community

At Harvard, in addition to services offered by OCS, advising also takes place within the residential Houses and in the Dudley Community. Harvard's House-based premedical advising system is unlike that at any other college. Each House and the Dudley Community have a committee of premedical tutors, who are generally Harvard Medical School students or alumni, and/or medical residents/fellows/attending physicians in one of the HMS-affiliated hospitals. Students should become familiar with their committee, especially as they get closer to applying. As medical practitioners, the premedical tutors are invaluable resources for learning about your potential career.

The Premedical Committee is responsible for writing the Harvard College committee letter sent to the medical schools when you apply. Therefore, Premedical Committees request a number of materials from students in the winter/spring before the application cycle begins.

The Application

All U.S. medical schools, except for Texas schools, participate in the *American Medical College Application Service* (AMCAS), commonly referred to as the primary application. AMCAS is a centralized application service for applicants to the first-year entering classes at participating allopathic U.S. medical schools. AMCAS is only a service and is not involved in the admissions decision-making process; once verified by AMCAS, the completed application is sent to each individual medical school to which the student has applied. Students getting ready to apply are strongly encouraged to attend the annual OCS workshop series for medical school applicants, which includes the workshop "Completing the AMCAS application," and to review all resources related to the application process on the OCS website.

The *Texas Medical and Dental School Application Service* (TMDSAS) is a centralized application service for applicants to all of the medical, dental, and veterinary schools in the state of Texas. Most students who will be applying to Texas medical schools will also be applying to other medical schools as well and will complete both the AMCAS and TMDSAS applications.

The *American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service* (AACOMAS) processes applications to all of the osteopathic (DO) medical schools in the U.S. Applicants who will be applying to both MD (allopathic) and DO (osteopathic) programs will need to complete both the AMCAS and AACOMAS applications.

Most medical schools send an applicant a secondary application that is specific to that individual school. Some schools will screen the primary application before sending a secondary; most will send a secondary automatically. Secondary applications typically request additional essays and fees from applicants.

Personal Statement

Applicants to the MD program will be asked to provide a 5,300 character personal statement in the AMCAS application that addresses their motivations for pursuing medical school and a career in medicine. MD-PhD applicants will be asked for two additional essays, one that addresses their reasons for pursuing the combined degree program and another that describes in depth their previous significant research experiences.

The personal statement is a crucial piece of the application. It gives life to the numbers and scores in the rest of the application and is an opportunity for admissions committees to learn about an applicant's unique story—the story only the applicant can tell. In general, the personal statement requires many iterations and drafts before reaching its final form. As such, applicants are encouraged to start early, working on drafts in March or April before submitting AMCAS in late May to mid June.

A first step might be to consider experiences that were formative in the evolution of your interest in medicine. What's particularly interesting about you or your perspective? This may not involve special life circumstances but unique insights you have on "ordinary" events. It is better to be specific and personal rather than vague and philosophical, and to reflect on experiences rather than list them.

Activities

The AMCAS application provides applicants the opportunity to list and describe up to 15 different experiences. These experiences include paid or volunteer work, student group participation, research experiences and/or publications, community service, leadership activities, clinical experiences, shadowing, and awards and honors. Applicants are given space to briefly describe each experience. Applicants are asked to designate three activities as "most meaningful" and are given additional space to discuss those.

Transcripts and Grades

Applicants are required to submit transcripts to AMCAS from every U.S. post-secondary institution at which they have enrolled in courses. AMCAS then verifies that the transcripts correctly reflect the courses that an applicant has listed in their application. AMCAS then calculates an overall and a "science" GPA. The AMCAS science GPA is called the "BCPM" GPA and is based on courses in the areas of biology, chemistry, physics, and math/statistics only.

The MCAT

The Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) has four sections: Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems; Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems; Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior; and Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills. For more information about the MCAT, we recommend that you read the MCAT Student Manual available at aamc.org, which describes the content in each section in detail.

- To prepare for the MCAT, some students may choose to take an introductory psychology or sociology course in addition to the science requirements. Many students, however, have successfully completed the MCAT without specific course preparation in those areas. There are also considerable resources on the aamc.org website. The AAMC writes, "The AAMC is committed to providing free and low-cost test preparation resources to help students understand, study, and practice for the MCAT exam. One resource we would like to highlight is the [Khan Academy MCAT Collection](#), which was created through a collaboration between the Khan Academy, AAMC, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Following the blueprints of the new MCAT exam, the collection includes over 1,100 video-based tutorials and 3,000 questions to help students study for the exam content." In addition, Harvard students and alumni have institutional access to the complete set of JOVE's MCAT prep resources and videos.

Letters of Recommendation

As with the personal statement, medical schools request letters of recommendation to gain further insight into applicants' preparation for medical studies and vocation for medicine. The purpose of these letters is to highlight qualities that distinguish the student from other applicants, e.g., intellectual curiosity, depth of commitment, personal qualities, and other evidence of important academic and personal competencies.

Applicants should request three to five recommendation letters (or four to seven for MD-PhD applicants, with these additional letters coming from research mentors). These letters may come from professors and teaching fellows, research advisers, student organization advisers, work supervisors, internship directors, etc. Preferably, two should be from science faculty or instructors and one should be from a non-science faculty or instructor. It is best to select recommenders who know you well rather than recommenders who are simply well known.

In addition to individual letters, applicants who apply within five years of graduation will typically receive a Committee letter from their Premedical Committee. This letter—prepared by House (or Dudley Community) Premedical Tutors, the Allston Burr Resident Dean, and the Faculty Dean/s—accompanies the individual letters and is composed based on personal interactions with the applicant, submitted materials, and the other recommendation letters. Applicants should consult their Premedical Committee and follow the deadlines for submitting letters. Current students as well as alumni are able to store letters in their Resident Dean's Office. Applicants are advised to select their recommenders carefully. Cumulatively, these letters should address the different facets of an applicant's preparation, competency, qualities, and experience, so it is recommended that applicants ask for letters from people who know them in different contexts. Personal details and stories are much more effective than retelling of grades or generic praise so it is important that an applicant gauges the extent to which they think a potential recommender can speak highly and personally about them.

Once the Committee letter is prepared, it is sent to medical schools along with the other individual recommendation letters that an applicant selects. The Academic Coordinator in the Resident Deans' Office handles the transmission of letters to AMCAS, TMDSAS, osteopathic schools and some of the other health professions schools in the U.S. and abroad. To ensure that letters are transmitted by August 15, the date by which medical schools expect Harvard Premedical Committee and individual recommendation letters to arrive, applicants need to follow the instructions and meet House/Dudley Community deadlines related to this process. Despite medical schools often specifying by whom these letters should be written, the same set of letters (Committee letter and individual letters) is sent to all medical schools; this is customary among Harvard's peer institutions and most other undergraduate colleges.

The Interview

Because of the sensitive, interpersonal nature of clinical interactions in medicine, each medical school will interview applicants before admitting them. The majority of applicants are not offered interviews. Therefore, an invitation to interview means that a school is seriously interested in you. While they may already know that you are bright and likely to succeed academically, the interview is a chance for them to picture you as a doctor and to assess whether you have the maturity, personality, and professionalism to succeed in medicine.

Almost all interviews are on campus meaning that an applicant is required to travel to the medical school. (Note: In 2020, due to Covid-19, medical schools began to conduct all interviews virtually and plan to continue to do so also in 2021-22.) Interviews occur over a long period of time during the application year. Most schools begin interviewing in September, with a few schools starting to interview in late August, and every year some schools conclude their interview season as late as April. Interviews are arranged by each individual medical school. The interview format varies from school to school (some examples are 30-minute one-on-one interviews and a group interview conducted by an admissions panel). Over the past several years, a number of U.S. medical schools have adopted the Multiple Mini Interview (MMI) format. In addition, some schools are now using CASPer (computer-based assessment for sampling personal characteristics) or the AAMC SJT (situational judgment test) as a pre-interview screening tool. The *Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR)*, available from the aamc.org, lists the type of interview format at each of the medical schools. Interviewers may include admissions staff, professors, physicians, current medical students, and even members of the community. Many Canadian medical schools use the MMI format and operate on a different, somewhat later, interview schedule.

Contrary to popular belief, most medical school interviews are enjoyable experiences. While some interviewers may ask difficult questions (e.g., about ethical scenarios), they are not seeking to trick or trap applicants. Most applicants report that interviews are of a positive and conversational nature.

In reviewing your performance in an interview, the admissions committee member may wonder: Are your reasons for pursuing a career in medicine compelling? Do you listen carefully? Would you bring diversity in terms of experience and interests? Would you be able to work effectively with diverse populations of students and patients? Do you have a realistic expectation of life as a physician? Applicants preparing for an upcoming interview should plan to practice answering basic questions about their interests in medicine and getting comfortable with the interview format. OCS offers a workshop about how to prepare for and succeed at the medical school interview process. This workshop is held annually in the early fall term and is repeated numerous times. The House and Dudley Community Premedical Committees offer individualized interview preparation and mock interviews in person or via Zoom/Skype/Facetime.

FINANCIAL AID

Applications for Aid

To apply for financial aid, it is important to complete your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is required for all federal student loan programs. Your FAFSA can usually be submitted in the fall, or as soon as possible after January 1. Check each medical school's website to learn about financial aid deadlines.

Types of Aid

To determine eligibility for federal loans, applicants are not considered as independent of family finances. For institutional funds, applicants' family information is usually taken into account, a policy that differs from the financial aid policies in place at many other graduate programs. Whether an applicant is viewed as a dependent or not varies from school to school, but parent information is typically requested even for older applicants.

There are two types of aid: need-based and merit. Merit aid comes from a medical school's institutional funds. Merit aid is given at the discretion of the medical school and varies considerably from school to school. Such awards are not based on need, i.e., income, assets, etc. Some schools offer only need-based aid and no merit aid. Whereas college loans are usually capped at a much lower amount, it is common for three-fourths of a medical school financial award package to consist of loan-based aid. There are also non-medical school sources of financial aid, including military and National Health Service Corps scholarships.

PUBLICATIONS AND ONLINE RESOURCES

OCS Health and Medical Careers website: Find information on health-related internship opportunities, relevant articles, workshop/webinar schedules, past workshop slides and handouts, year-by-year timelines, links to relevant and annotated health-related websites, and much more at www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/medical-health.

OCS Premedical Information for Harvard Students: Timelines, Courses, and Resources 2021-2022: A guide for premedical students covering topics such as medical school requirements, Harvard course offerings and selection, concentration choice, study abroad, summer coursework, post-baccalaureate programs, sample course schedules, career exploration and opportunities, and advising resources at Harvard. This is available online at the OCS website.

Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR): The official guide to medical schools published by the AAMC, providing information on requirements, in-state vs. out-of-state applicant and acceptance figures, financial aid, and other individual medical school policies. *MSAR* is an online resource; access can be purchased from the AAMC for \$28. We strongly recommend that all applicants purchase this resource. Students who qualify for and are approved for the AAMC's Fee Assistance Program (FAP) receive free access to *MSAR*.

Medical School Admissions Data for Harvard Students: Data on Harvard students applying to medical schools, including cumulative statistics and acceptance rates for current students and alumni by GPA, MCAT scores, and other factors. Overall and science GPAs of accepted Harvard students are also listed by individual medical school. These numbers are, in some cases, substantially different from the national averages, so this report can be especially helpful for school selection. The report can be viewed at OCS and can be obtained from OCS in the year you are applying.

Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC): The website provides comprehensive information on medical careers, the MCAT, AMCAS, and the medical school admissions process. This is a useful site for information on requirements, financial aid for medical school, post-baccalaureate programs, and links to connect to the admissions offices of all U.S. medical schools: www.aamc.org.

This Week at OCS: Edit your choices on the "This Week at OCS" newsletter to select "Premed/Pre-Health" to receive announcements about medical school visits, deadlines, and programs of interest to premed and pre-health students at Harvard.

OCS Medical School Applicant Listserv: For current senior and alumni applicants and for alumni who plan to apply in future cycles, please subscribe to this listserv by going to the OCS website. We will post detailed information about the medical school application process throughout the year. <https://lists.fas.harvard.edu/mailman/listinfo/harvardocs-medschool-applicants-list>

MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATION TIMELINE

Many Houses require applicants to submit personal information forms and other materials in the winter and spring prior to the year of application to medical school. Applicants should consult their individual Houses (or Dudley Community) for details on their process and deadlines. The official application process opens in late May a full 14 months prior to matriculation (the application becomes available to applicants in early May). The summer months are generally spent completing secondary applications. Interviews are held from late August to April of the fall and spring prior to matriculation. Please see the timeline below for details.

First-Year and Sophomore Year

- Attend a Pre-Health 101 orientation/workshop.
- Attend the Gaining Traction in Pre-Health Series.
- Attend a Navigating Premed & Pre-Health advising appointment and complete the accompanying form.
- Read *Premedical Information for Harvard Students: Timelines, Courses, and Resources*, available on the OCS website.
- Edit your preferences in the “This Week at OCS” newsletter and select “Premed/Pre-Health as an interest area.
- Get involved in health-related volunteer opportunities and shadowing of physicians as time allows.
- Get to know your faculty—attend office hours, invite them to dinner, etc.
- Seek out help and advice from faculty, students, and OCS advisers.
- Connect with the Pre-Health Peer Liaison PAFs (PPL PAFs) and attend Pre-Health Question Centers.
- Attend medical and other health-related programs at OCS and in your House.
- Attend the OCS Summer Opportunities Fair in December.
- Start requesting letters of recommendation from faculty who know you well.
- Attend some medical school admissions information sessions on campus.
- Attend Premed/Pre-Health Drop-ins.

Junior Year (or Senior Year if applying after graduation)

Fall term

- Make an appointment with one of the OCS premedical advisers to discuss your timeline, grades, and activities to ensure that this is the correct cycle for you to apply.
- Begin Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) preparation.
- Apply for the [AAMC Fee Assistance Program](#) (FAP) prior to the MCAT (if eligible).
- Meet with one of the Resident Premedical Tutors in your House/Dudley Community.
- Attend a pre-applicant meeting or other programs for applicants in the upcoming application cycle arranged by your Premed Committee. Review House/Dudley Community deadlines.
- [Register for the MCAT](#). Plan to take the MCAT by early-mid May of the application year.
- Attend the OCS webinar on The Medical School Application Process .

Spring term

- If you have not already applied for the [AAMC Fee Assistance Program](#) (FAP), be sure to apply now (if eligible). Note that the benefits are not retroactive and need to be approved prior to registering for the MCAT or submitting the AMCAS to receive full benefits.
- [Register for the MCAT](#).
- Take the MCAT by early-mid May.
- Plan to have secured three to five letters of recommendation by your House's/Dudley Community's deadline for current applicants.
- Brainstorm and begin a draft of the personal statement for the AMCAS application.
- Attend the remainder of the OCS applicant webinar series:
 - Financing Your Medical Education
 - Selecting Medical Schools
 - Writing Your Personal Statement
 - Completing the AMCAS Application
- Generate a list of medical schools to which you would like to apply. Harvard applicants apply to an average of 25 to 30 schools. It can be risky to apply to fewer than 20 schools.
- Confirm all letters of recommendation have been sent to the Premedical Committee.
- Send spring grades and GPA recalculation to your Premedical Committee (May-June).
- Request official transcripts to be sent to AMCAS from all colleges attended, including for individual courses taken at other institutions during the summer or before matriculation at Harvard College.

Summer

- Complete and submit AMCAS application by mid-June.
- Complete secondary applications for individual medical schools within two weeks of receiving the application (July/August).
- Premedical Committee letters will be sent to all medical schools by August 15 provided you have adhered to deadlines.

Senior Year (or postgrad year if applying after graduation)

Fall term

- Confirm with medical schools that your application is complete (September).
- Prepare for medical school interviews:
 - Attend an OCS Medical School Interview webinar.
 - Keep up with current issues in medicine.
 - Schedule a mock interview with your House Premedical Committee or assigned non-resident or resident tutor.
 - Practice interview questions with friends/family.
- Receive invitations to interview (late August through April).
- Complete interviews (late August through April).
- If you have received 0-2 interviews by mid-late October, please contact OCS and your House Premedical Committee to discuss your application and strategies to gain interview invitations.

Spring term

- Stay in touch with your assigned Premedical Tutor and Premedical Committee regarding the status of application.
- Apply for financial aid. (Note that some medical schools allow submission of financial aid application, including FAFSA, starting in the fall.)
- Note that the last date to hold more than three acceptance offers is April 15 and the last day to hold more than one acceptance offer is April 30.
- If you are on a wait list(s), keep in touch with medical schools; provide relevant updated information.

Summer

- Register for your first day of medical school!