

## 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;
- Write a great personal statement and essay; and
- Apply early in the cycle;

### **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 focus on attaining then maintaining a competitive GPA (~3.7+) 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 automatically accept any credit for prerequisite courses. Talk to your academic and professional school advisors before accepting any credit by examination.

\*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, but 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: Which classes should I take at A&M before I take the MCAT?**

A: The *recommended* classes at TAMU are:

- BIOL 111 & 112
- CHEM 119, 120, 227/237, 228/238
- BICH 409, 410, or 440
- PHYS 201 & PHYS 202
- PSYC 107 or SOCI 205

### **What prerequisite courses are required for medical school?**

A. See Medical School Handout [here](#)!

### **What TAMU classes are approved by TMSAS?**

A. See TMSAS [here](#)!

**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 School of Medicine](#) offers the following early assurance programs:

- Aggie to Medicine (A2M)
- Cadet to Medicine (C2M)
- Engineering to EnMed (E2EnMed)
- Pre-Med Fellows
- Partnership for Primary Care (PPC)

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

**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: When should I take the MCAT?**

A: For your application to be considered complete, you need to have released your MCAT scores to the appropriate application service(s). MCAT scores are released 30-35 days after an exam date. Applications open in early May, and it is recommended to submit by early June. Consider taking an 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. If the role is 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 have eased and more in person opportunities have become more widely available, virtual shadowing cannot be an applicant's sole source of shadowing/medical experience 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](#). Note- research does not have to be medical or life science in nature.

**Q: Does leadership in a job count?**

A: Yes, so highlight the responsibilities you held in your position in your application, and what they have done to inform your leadership philosophy.

**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.

**Q: What is meant by rolling admissions?**

A: Rolling admissions means a school fills class seats as they interview and receive applications. If the school you are applying to has rolling admissions, it is recommended 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 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 in May or June for an "early" application.

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

A: There are 3 different application services:

- **TMDAS (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?**

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. Emphasize why you are a good mission fit for that specific school.

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

A: Since the prompt can be the same/very similar for two different programs, it can be very tempting to just copy and paste one's response for both schools. Tailor each response 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 for part time enrollment. Some examples of valid reasons include: had to work to pay for school, had to be a caregiver for a family member, or simply because it was their last semester and had no more hours to fill.

**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 be a good fit. Speak with PSA advisor for more details.

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

A: The difference between an MD (allopathic) and DO (osteopathic) is diagnostic approach, osteopathic medicine can be more hands-on and holistic rather than symptoms/systems based. DOs will also have 200-300 additional hours of Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine (OMM) built into their medical school training as an additional set of skills for treating patients.

**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 and the consistency of where you are investing your service hours. It is recommended that you have at least 150 hours of community service before applying.

**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.

**Professional School Advising**  
209 John J. Koldus Building  
1233 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-1233

Tel. 979.847.8938  
opsa@tam.u.edu  
opsa.tamu.edu

Revised: 03/22/24 RC & SV