



## The OPSA Portal for Medical and Dental Applicants Fall 2025 Admission

In this workshop, you will learn to develop your timeline for applying to medical or dental school for Fall 2025 admission and how to manage the letters of evaluation.

Being the MOST competitive applicant for medical or dental school requires:

1. Strong letters of evaluation, collected in the OPSA portal.
2. Solid academic record.
3. Strong scores on the MCAT or DAT.
4. Activities that illustrate you are a well-rounded and active student who has a passion for medicine or dentistry, who also cares about your community and who is a leader.
5. A solid and **early** application.

### Your OPSA Portal File

Medical and dental admissions offices **prefer Aggies send their letters through the OPSA Portal; this indicates you are utilizing University resources responsibly**. Your evaluation letters are reviewed for formatting errors and compiled into a letter packet, ***which is preferred by the professional schools***. The OPSA Portal is a FREE letter collection service along with a rough draft of the TMDSAS application questions, so you may get a jumpstart

on your application months in advance! Applicants who meet the designated portal deadline will receive a comprehensive file review by OPSA staff to edit, refine, and polish their file, **which as you recall is comprised of the TMDSAS application questions!**

*To qualify for the individual Portal file review,  
your file in the OPSA Portal must be complete*

**By Friday, April 12, 2024, @ 5:00 p.m. CST**

### Re-Applicants

Before re-applying to professional school, assess your profile and determine the weak points in your prior application. Improve yourself in these areas BEFORE you apply a second time. In some cases, you may need to skip an application year in order to be a better applicant the second time.

1. You must acquire new letters; you may not use previous letters. You may have a previous evaluator write a NEW letter. Remember, the schools assume that you continued to improve your application during the past year. They anticipate that you have strengthened or developed relationships with people who can evaluate you for admission.
2. Grades you have earned since your first application should be excellent. Make the spring and summer grades your best grades ever.
3. Consider retaking your admissions test. Pull out all the stops and make it your goal to post a higher test score. This shows you have mastered basic level information.
4. If you were lacking in shadowing hours, correct that. If you don't have steady, consistent service to others, start now to make that a reality.
5. Finally, rework all of your application essays and have the application complete by June 2022.

*All students at Texas A&M University, and those who recently graduated from TAMU, are eligible to collect evaluation letters in the OPSA Portal. If it has been 2+ years since graduation, you will need to request “Former Student Access” through the Howdy to ensure you can login to the Portal (and Howdy for transcripts!) using a netID & password. You may also contact the IT Helpdesk by phone: 979-845-8300 or e-mail [helpdesk@tamu.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamu.edu)*

## The OPSA Portal

The OPSA Portal is an online service run by our staff. Approximately one week after attending the workshop, you will be able to access the Portal to begin your file. You may access the Portal directly at [tx.ag/meddentportal](http://tx.ag/meddentportal). After logging in, you will see four sections:

- My Information
- Application Picture
- Questionnaire
- Evaluation Letters

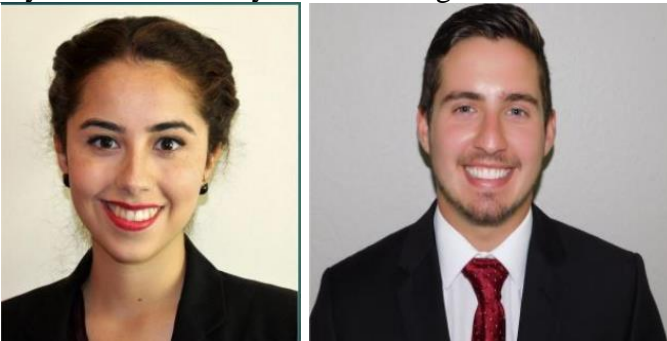
### My Information

This portion of your file is easy! When you login to the Portal, you will begin on the **Home** page. This is where the status of your file is posted and there is a box for notes from our staff.

- Go to the **My Information** page next. Some of the information on this page has been completed from official Texas A&M records.
- Confirm and/or add your *NAME and E-MAIL* in this section, otherwise, you will miss important notifications and your letters of evaluation will not be processed correctly.
- Please complete the remaining questions and hit ‘save.’

### Picture for Application

A picture is worth a thousand words-choose wisely! The following are examples of ACCEPTABLE application photos. **YOU WILL BE JUDGED** by your photo, so strive to look like the professional physician or dentist you are striving to become.



## Questionnaire

The questionnaire is comprehensive and designed to help you organize your information in preparation for the application. You should begin working on the questions ASAP so you have plenty of time for adding additional information.

- To answer a question, click ‘**view**’ and insert your answer. You may save your work and come back to it. When you save answers, that question’s ‘**complete**’ box will be checked, but you can still make changes. If you click ‘view’ again from the **Questionnaire** page, you can edit the information.
- Once you have completed all the questions, including the essays, you will be able to click ‘**Complete**’ at the top of the page.

**\*\*Provide thorough information so the individual file review will be maximized, and your application will ultimately be the most accurate and refined version. \*\***

**\*\*\* For descriptions, there needs to be a balance of what is/has been accomplished and what you gained personally/professionally from the experience.\*\*\***

### [TMDSAS Myth Busting Activities from Dr. Kellaway Long SOM](#)—great tips for activity crafting!

#### **Activity: Secretary for TAAHP**

Example of weak activity description: I took comprehensive notes for [Texas Association of Advisors for the Health Professions for the 2023-2024 academic year](#).

\*\*Everything highlighted in blue is “filler,” i.e. it does not tell the reader anything they could not glean from the entry already. Additionally, the character space is not maximized to share why this leadership opportunity has value for personal and/or professional development.

#### **Activity: Secretary for TAAHP**

Example of strong activity description: My primary growth area is supporting those in key positions, rather than calling the shots. Leveraging my attention to detail and robust communication skills, I prioritize transparent communication throughout the organization while building a comprehensive repository of accurate minutes. I embrace guidance from others, expanding my understanding of situational leadership, bolstering my ability to empathize and maintain curiosity with my direct reports, enhancing our working relationships.

\*\*This description shares professional development that is tied to WHAT is being done in the role of Secretary. There is not any filler that could be gleaned from another part of the entry, like organization name, time frame, etc.

## Evaluation Letters

Evaluations can be written by science professors, non-science professors, research supervisors, working professionals, and employers. Avoid letters from individuals who have not directly observed you in an educational, organizational, or professional situation. In addition, request evaluations from individuals who know you well enough to describe your personal characteristics and unique traits (including information about responsibility, dedication, maturity, leadership, interpersonal skills, and motivation).

- **Three letters are required. It is strongly recommended/required by many the professional schools two of the letters are written by professors who have taught you, one of whom should be a science/STEM professor. The second letter may be another science/STEM professor or a professor from another discipline.**
  - **Students applying to dental school must have a dentist write their third letter.**

\*\*\*The PSA staff are not responsible for ensuring you choose the correct evaluators.

- **PLEASE NOTE:** With the exception of MD/PhD applicants, if additional letters are submitted to your file, **ONLY the first 3 letters uploaded in the OPSA Portal** will be sent to the schools. **DO NOT** ask for additional letters. If you are a MD/PhD applicant, you are allowed to submit up to 5 letters of evaluation for the purpose of applying to the PhD programs. Please consult a member of the OPSA staff for

additional information if you are an MD/PhD candidate.

### Requesting Letters:

- To request a letter of evaluation, you should speak directly with the potential evaluator.
- Once they agree, applicants must enter the evaluators' names and email addresses into the Portal and fill out the waiver form on-line.
  - Medical and dental schools prefer letters you have waived your right of access. Applicants who retain this right will NOT be able to view the letters in Professional School Advising.
- Immediately after you submit the information, an email is sent to that evaluator requesting the letter be completed and uploaded. An upload link is included in this email, as is your waiver form. Evaluation letters should be SIGNED by the evaluator, on letterhead and uploaded directly to OPSA Portal. Your evaluator does NOT return the waiver form to our office.
- You will be able to see if the letter has been uploaded by logging into your OPSA Portal.

### Tips for requesting your letters:

1. *Request letters of evaluation by February 2024.* Professors have several responsibilities and appreciate advance notice.
2. Evaluators should **NOT** mention a specific program/medical or dental school when writing letters because these letters are sent to application services then to individual schools.
3. Assist your evaluators by providing them with a resume describing your achievements, activities, personal qualities, and goals. Many will also want to know why you are applying to medical or dental school.
4. Assist your evaluators by providing them with a cover letter that thanks them for their time, and gives them the deadline you desire, etc. This will help expedite delivery of the letter.
5. Instruct your evaluators that they must upload a signed letter, printed on letterhead.
6. Thank your evaluators for their assistance, either by email or in a hand-written note.
7. Keep evaluators apprised of your status, such as when you receive interviews and when you gain admission.

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## Completing the OPSA Portal File

Within a few days of completing your OPSA Portal File, you must log in and see your file has been marked Complete on your **Home** Page. If all of your items have been submitted and it has been more than a week, but your file is not marked complete, please contact **opsa-portal@tamu.edu** to have a staff member check your file. Please understand that in late March and early April, hundreds of students are completing their files, so response times will be slower.

**ALL questions about the  
OPSA Portal should be sent to  
opsa-portal@tamu.edu**

## Sending your Evaluation Letter Packet to Application Services

After you have submitted and paid for your applications, you will need to notify OPSA where to send your evaluation packet. In early May, the “**Request To Send**” form hyperlink will be activated at the top of your Portal **Home** Page for TMDSAS and AMCAS. In the AACOMAS and AADSAS applications, you will insert an email address for PSA and they will contact us. We will provide this email address in April.

### Important Notes for the OPSA Portal:

**\*\*\*FORMER STUDENTS THAT GRADUATED 5+ YEARS AGO ARE NOT ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE A COMPREHENSIVE FILE REVIEW FROM PSA STAFF\*\*\***

- Former students for Portal purposes are August 2022 grads and before.
- Do not click “Complete” on the Questionnaire until you are satisfied with your answers because you cannot ‘unclick’ the ‘Complete’ status.
- Your Portal file must be complete before OPSA will send your letters to the application services. We will not send partial packets.
- You must have **submitted and paid** for your TMDSAS application before we will send letters.
- You must have begun your AACOMAS, AADSAS or AMCAS application before we will send the letters.
- **Letters of evaluation can only be used for one year past the date on the letter.**
- Application Workshops will be scheduled in April and May 2024. Make plans to attend.
- Interview workshops begin in late June.

## How to make yourself a more competitive applicant this year

It is important to look at yourself on paper to reveal any weaknesses now. If some are found, work on them in the next year or semester to create a well-rounded, solid application. Evaluate yourself in the following categories:

- Academics/Grades and MCAT/DAT scores
- Medical and dental experiences
- Non-health care community service
- Extracurricular activities
- Leadership
- Honors, awards, scholarships, recognitions
- Work experience
- Research

These are the categories that are listed on the application and that the schools place a value on. There is not a magical number of hours or types of involvement that guarantee admission, but you do not want to have blanks in your application in most of these areas. You may have nothing to write in a few of them, but make sure you are spending your time in this last year developing the areas which will make you a stronger applicant.

## Admissions Tests

### **Dental Admissions Test (DAT)** <https://www.ada.org/dat.aspx>

The DAT is given in Prometric Testing Centers, including the testing center in the General Services Complex at Texas A&M. Prometric Testing Centers located throughout the country, <http://www.prometric.com>. The test is administered Monday through Friday, and you should register 60 to 90 days in advance as your preferred date as locations fill quickly. The exam will cost ~ \$530. You must indicate which dental schools should receive your scores when you register. After you complete the exam, you will receive your unofficial scores before you leave; dental schools will receive the scores two to three weeks later. The soonest you may retake is 90 days after the first attempt.

### **Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)** <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/>

The MCAT is computerized and there are 30 dates on which examinations will be offered throughout 2024. The exam covers applications of biology, physics, inorganic and organic chemistry, biochemistry, psychology, sociology and critical analysis and reasoning. In 2023, the MCAT fee was ~\$330; the cost goes up the closer to the test date. Medical schools consider each score, so prepare early and thoroughly the first time. **NEVER** take the actual MCAT for practice. You can schedule to retake the MCAT 48 hours after the exam you just completed, pending space availability. Please remember this is also when the fee to schedule another time to retake the MCAT can increase.

## **Registration for the MCAT opens mid-October**

Again, there are 30 dates in 2024 for MCAT testing. (Please release your scores to the health professions advisor when you register for the test.) The test is offered at Pearson sites across the country. You may take the MCAT only three times per year, four times in consecutive years, and seven times in a lifetime.

**Regardless of when you take the MCAT, ideally submit your PRIMARY applications beginning in mid-MAY and BEFORE the end of the first week of JUNE.**

## **TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOLS**

<b>Texas Medical Schools</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Application</b>
Baylor College of Medicine	Houston	TMDSAS
Dell Medical School	Austin	TMDSAS
Long School of Medicine (UT)	San Antonio	TMDSAS
McGovern Medical School (UT)	Houston	TMDSAS
Paul Foster School of Medicine (TTUHSC)	El Paso	TMDSAS
Sam Houston State University	Conroe	TMDSAS
Texas A&M HSC	Multiple	TMDSAS
TTUHSC-School of Medicine	Lubbock	TMDSAS
Texas Christian University School of Medicine	Ft. Worth	AMCAS
University of Houston Medical School	Houston	TMDSAS
University of North Texas HSC- TCOM	Ft. Worth	TMDSAS
University of the Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic Medicine	San Antonio	AACOMAS
UT Medical Branch	Galveston	TMDSAS
UT Rio Grande Valley	Edinburg	TMDSAS
UT Southwestern Medical Center	Dallas	TMDSAS
UT Tyler	Tyler	TMDSAS

## **TEXAS DENTAL SCHOOLS**

Texas A&M College of Dentistry ~ Dallas

UT Health/School of Dentistry ~ Houston

UT Health/School of Dentistry ~ San Antonio

New! Texas Tech HSC ~ El Paso

## **APPLICATION SERVICES**

AACOMAS- Schools of Osteopathic Medicine

[www.aacomas.org](http://www.aacomas.org)

AADSAS- Schools of Dentistry

[www.adea.org/aadsas](http://www.adea.org/aadsas)

AMCAS- Schools of Allopathic Medicine

[www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org)

TMDSAS

[www.tmdsas.com](http://www.tmdsas.com)

**ALL questions about the  
OPSA Portal should be sent to**

**[opsa-portal@tamu.edu](mailto:opsa-portal@tamu.edu)**

### **Office of Professional School Advising**

Professional School Advising webpage with link to OPSA Portal

General questions, email: [opsa@tamu.edu](mailto:opsa@tamu.edu)

OPSA Portal specific questions, email: [opsa-portal@tamu.edu](mailto:opsa-portal@tamu.edu)

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## TIMELINE

For those Former Students and re-applicants applying for fall 2025 admission to professional school, the following timeline can help you plan for the upcoming months:



Oct-Dec 2023	Jan-Mar 2024	April-May 2024	June -July 2024	Aug-Dec 2024	Jan-Apr 2025	July-Aug 2025
<p>Attend OPSA Portal Workshop.</p> <p>Start OPSA file. Portal Late Oct/early Nov.</p> <p>Study and prepare for DAT/MCAT.</p> <p>Make excellent grades.</p> <p>Continue to shadow and volunteer.</p> <p>Work on getting to know the professors and people you want to ask to write your letters of evaluation.</p> <p><b>Dec-Reapplicants &amp; Former Students can request access to the Portal.</b></p>	<p>Work on OPSA file!</p> <p><b>Complete OPSA file by: Current Students: late-March</b></p> <p>Follow up on evaluation letters and file status through your online file.</p> <p>Study and prepare for DAT/MCAT.</p> <p>Make excellent grades.</p> <p>Continue to shadow and volunteer</p>	<p><b>Complete OPSA file by: Fmr Students: mid-/April</b></p> <p>Once OPSA file complete, await comprehensive file review from OPSA Staff.</p> <p><u>Attend OPSA Application Workshop</u></p> <p>TMDAS available online EARLY May. Study and prepare for DAT/MCAT.</p> <p>Order <i>official</i> transcripts to be sent directly to application AMCAS, AADSAS, &amp; AACOMAS.</p> <p>Complete the online request through the OPSA Portal to send evaluations to TMDAS after application is submitted.</p> <p>Complete Secondary applications for Texas Schools.</p>	<p>Study and prepare for DAT.</p> <p>For MCAT it is recommended to take June test and no later for this admission cycle.</p> <p><b>Submit TMDAS if you have not already done so!</b></p> <p>Submit AMCAS, AACOMAS or AADSAS applications.</p> <p>Complete secondary applications for out-of-state schools.</p> <p>Request OPSA to send evaluations.</p> <p><u>Attend OPSA Interview Workshop!</u></p>	<p>Continue to make excellent grades.</p> <p>Interviews begin in the July &amp; continue into January/Feb.</p> <p>Complete Free Application for Federal Student Financial Aid (FAFSA) Oct.1.</p> <p>Texas dental schools acceptance letters begin <b>December 1</b></p> <p>Rolling Admissions begin for TMDAS &amp; AMCAS medical schools – <b>Oct 15 - Dec 31</b></p>	<p>Medical Match Preference Submission Deadline <b>(February)</b></p> <p>TMDAS Match Results Announced <b>(March)</b></p> <p>Dental Acceptance Continues</p> <p>Complete financial aid forms if not already done.</p>	<p>Enter Professional Programs!!</p>