
What Should I Know BEFORE I APPLY?

A guide for pre-health students as they consider graduate health programs for becoming a: Physician, Physician Assistant, Physical Therapist, Dentist, Pharmacist, etc.

1. **It's all about you!** Realize the application process is a way for graduate health admission committees to get to know who you are as a person. While numbers (admission scores and GPAs) do matter, many non-number factors are important too. Committees look beyond the science for applicants who possess a variety of other traits and qualities desirable in a health care provider. Committees spend a great deal of time reviewing applications and realize they are choosing not only individuals for their incoming class, but future alum and health care colleagues. They are also looking for ethical individuals they would trust in the future with a family member's care. So, it is important for your application to accurately and positively represent who you are.
2. **The numbers.** Yes, your overall and science GPAs do matter. Use all available resources to increase your chances of academic success. These numbers aren't just used to compare the strength of applicants, but they are also used as an indicator of future graduate health program success. While minimum and average GPAs can vary, it is not unusual for competitive pre-health GPAs to be 3.4 and higher. Keep in mind though that upward trends are viewed positively and there are academic enhancement options to consider if your GPAs are not as high as they need to be. Please consult with your academic advisor(s) as needed.

Your admission examination scores (MCAT, DAT, PCAT, OAT or GRE) are also important. You should investigate which admission exam is required for your specific programs as well as what are considered competitive scores. It is important to note that the MCAT has been significantly redesigned for 2015 . . . <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/>.

3. **Beyond the numbers.** Admission committees look beyond the numbers for applicants who possess or have demonstrated traits and characteristics valued in future health care providers – often referred to as personal competencies. Committees review your written essays (including your personal statement), letters of recommendation/evaluation and the results of your interviews to assess your levels of competency in key areas. More information about personal competencies and why they are valued can be found at this link . . . <https://www.aamc.org/initiatives/admissionsinitiative/competencies/>. Although this resource is written from a medical school perspective, the traits and characteristics listed would be valued by any graduate health program.
4. **Evaluate your progress (and what you could still strengthen).** Take the time to understand and periodically assess your progress in the areas listed below. Speak with your academic advisor, attend events/workshops and use reputable resources (see Resources) as you consider areas you can continue to strengthen:
 - Determine your long-term goals (clinician, researcher, instructor, interest in working with underserved populations, etc.?)
 - Complete coursework (number of prerequisites completed, overall GPA, science GPA, trends)
 - Explore (shadow, volunteer, conduct research, experience cultural differences, participate in community service unrelated to medicine, etc.)
 - Connect with others (faculty, mentors, potential letter writers)

- Choose and investigate your target graduate health programs/schools
 - Learn about timing options (for admission exams and application cycles)
 - Follow a timeline that is likely to lead to success and fits your needs
 - Prepare for your admission exam (MCAT, DAT, PCAT, OAT, GRE)
 - Know when you should submit your application (Do your programs use rolling admissions?)
 - Learn what interview resources are available
 - Plan for the day when you will celebrate your acceptances!
5. **Take your admission exam when you are most prepared.** Unlike college admission exams (ACT and SAT), it does matter how many times you attempt admission exams for graduate health programs. You should assume all exam attempts can be viewed by admission committees so there is risk in repeating an admission exam. It can be viewed negatively if your exam scores decrease or even stay relatively the same on a second or additional attempt. So rather than “taking a trial run”, you should plan on taking your admission exam once when you are most prepared. However, if you find you need to retake an exam, ask yourself what you can do differently the next time? Then develop a plan and devote enough time to increase your chances for success.
6. **Apply when you are the most competitive applicant you can be.** It is becoming increasingly more difficult to be accepted to graduate health programs. So, explore and investigate your options thoroughly. Continue to evaluate your progress and choose the timing that leads to you applying when you are the most competitive applicant you can be. For some students this may be after their junior year in college, for others it may be after their senior year or even later. Continue to use reputable resources to help you successfully reach your goals!

RESOURCES:

- [Review information on the Overview, Academic Requirements and Resource tabs for individual careers . . . http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/home](http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/home)
- Accredited Schools and Academic Programs . . . <http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/careers/schools>
- Questions to consider as you choose any programs/schools . . . <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/370872/35questions.html>
- Letter Writer Guidelines . . . <https://www.aamc.org/download/349990/data/lettersguidelinesbrochure.pdf>

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY RESOURCES:

- Your academic advisor(s) . . . <http://wwwp.oakland.edu/advising/findmyadviser/>
- Don't miss valuable information, sign-up for **OU Pre-Health Info Announcements** (late summer start)

3 EASY STEPS:

1. Go to . . . <https://espace.oakland.edu/course/view.php?id=749>
 2. Login using your NetID and Password (must have Oakland University ID)
 3. Click on Enroll
- Attend Fall Term **OU Pre-Health Workshops** – announced through OU Pre-Health Info
 - Pre-Professional Advising/Pre-Health . . . <http://wwwp.oakland.edu/advising/pre-professional>
 - The Tutoring Center . . . <http://wwwp.oakland.edu/tutoring/>
 - The Writing Center . . . <http://wwwp.oakland.edu/ouwc/>
 - Career Services . . . <http://wwwp.oakland.edu/careerservices/>
 - Volunteer Opportunities . . . <http://wwwp.oakland.edu/csa/volunteer/>
 - Student Organizations . . . <https://orgsync.com/home>