

PRE-MEDICAL RESOURCES

When reviewing medical school options, there are 2 potential paths that students can choose to pursue: a **Doctor of Medicine, MD** or an **Osteopathic Doctor, DO**. Both degrees produce licensed practitioners, but there are several differences in their approaches and theoretical background. MyHeart.net has a comprehensive overview of the differences and similarities between MDs and DOs [here](#). Below are considerations for pre-med students:

- Most schools have a minimum requirement of a **3.5 GPA**, although the average GPA for successful applicants is usually around a 3.7. Science GPA is extremely important.
- At least **200 hours of clinical based** volunteering. Quality over quantity when choosing experiences, and direct patient contact is most beneficial.
- **Shadowing** in a clinical setting. Shadowing hours can be lower than volunteering, but for both types of experiences hands on opportunities are preferred. Learn more about shadowing with either an MD ([AAMC - Shadowing a Doctor](#)) or a DO ([AACOM - Shadowing a DO](#))
- The median MCAT score is 500. See the **Princeton Review website** for information on MCAT scores in relation to medical school admittance.
- Have taken **challenging medical related courses** in addition to the required prerequisites. Rigorous elective course content will be taken into account when looking at GPA.
- Seek out **research opportunities with faculty** as early as freshman year. Laboratory research strengthens your resume tremendously when applying to medical school.
- AAMC offers an informational service called **Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR)** intended for MD applicants. For \$28, students can access the specific requirements, average GPA, MCAT scores, etc. for every MD program available. See the benefits [here](#).

You can view more pre-med student resources and see if you qualify for the [Pre-Med Mentoring Program](#) with Dr. Ashok Hegde.

PREREQUISITE COURSES

Most common prerequisite courses:

English Composition I & II – ENGL 1101 & 1102

Principles of Biology I & II – BIOL 1107/L & 1108/L

Principles of Chemistry I & II – CHEM 1211/L & 1212/L

Organic Chemistry I & II – CHEM 3361/L & 3362/L

Introductory Physics I & II – PHYS 1111/L & 1112/L

Pre-Calculus – MATH 1113

Biochemistry – CHEM 3510

Probability and Statistics – MATH 2600 OR Calculus – MATH 1261

Other highly suggested courses are:

Genetics – BIOL 2100 AND Cellular and Molecular Physiology – BIOL 3200

Human Anatomy and Physiology – BIOL 2160 & 2170 OR Comparative Animal Physiology – BIOL 4440 & Comparative Vertebrate Anatomy – BIOL 4450 (BOTH SETS ARE NOT NECESSARY)

Medical Microbiology – BIOL 4185

Medical Physiology – BIOL 4950

Medical Neuroscience – BIOL 4950

Histology – BIOL 4140

Biology of Cancer – BIOL 4155

Intro to General Psychology – PSYC 1101

View a full list of courses offered at Georgia College & State University and other valuable resources that will help students prepare for medical school [here](#).

****Talk with your academic advisor before choosing courses!**

MCAT PREPARATION

To be properly prepared for the MCAT, students should plan on spending about **300 hours** (around 3 months) on intense studying. It is suggested that students start taking practice tests in sections to familiarize themselves with the test content and eventually lead up to taking **6-10 full length practice tests** prior to taking the real test. Visit the AAMC website for information on testing preparation ([AAMC - Taking the MCAT Exam](#)).

PERSONAL STATEMENT & SECONDARY ESSAY WRITING

Personal Statements used to apply to medical school should be general and not program specific. When applying through a common application service, they will forward your information to the schools you select including your general personal statement. Pay attention to the character count allotted for the essay, and remember that this could take spaces into account! Follow the instructions listed carefully to ensure that you follow all of the parameters set. You should start writing your personal statement early so that you can get adequate feedback prior to submitting your application.

Secondary Essays

Each school will send out a required secondary application including **5-8 prompts** that require short answers, **400-800 words** each. Some schools will send the secondary application upon receiving your primary application from with AMCAS or AACOMAS, while others filter through the primary applications before sending out secondary requirements. It is important that you answer each question fully. Unlike personal statements, you are usually only given 1-2 weeks to complete these prompts, yet your writing should continue to be on a professional level. You can search online in medical student blogs, help centers, or other forums to find past secondary prompts from different schools.

OBTAINING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Developing **meaningful relationships with faculty is vital** when seeking letters of recommendation. Begin thinking about faculty who you have or will have taken several classes with, have similar research interests with, or that you feel a connection to, so that you can begin building those relationships from day 1. Remember that a person's title is not near as important as how well they know you as a student and as a person. When requesting letters of recommendation, quality highly outweighs quantity. Having 3 strong letters will look better than having 5 letters with little context or detail. **It is ideal to get at least 1 letter from a physician whom you have shadowed or worked closely with, and at least 1 from a science faculty member.**

When asking for letters, remember to be gracious and *ask* for the letter. "Would you be willing to," is usually a good way to start the conversation rather than demanding that they write you a letter. Faculty expect you to ask, and they will most likely agree as long as they feel comfortable speaking on your behalf. Be sure to give the faculty member, physician, or whomever you plan to ask plenty of notice, generally a month is suggested. Providing a resume, CV, personal statement, or some other document will show that you are serious about obtaining a letter and give the faculty member some reference as to what you want them to talk about. **ALWAYS REMEMBER TO THANK YOUR REFERENCES!**

INTERVIEWING PREPARATION

When preparing for professional school interviews, a lot of the same rules apply as with most job interviews. Remember to dress accordingly to interview etiquette and conduct yourself in a professional manner. Click here to view the Career Center's [Dress for Success Handout](#). In addition, you want to be sure that you practice ahead of time. "Why do you want to be a doctor?" or "Why our program?" are common types of questions that you want to be sure and prepare for. There are different types of interviews for medical school such as traditional interviews, video interviews, multiple mini interviews (MMI), among others. MMIs are becoming increasingly popular and stray from the traditional interview set-up. Learn more about MMIs and how to prepare for them [here](#). To become more familiar with interview types and preparation, make an appointment with a pre-professional advisor.

Also, you will want to prepare your own questions to ask. Much like job interviews, you are interviewing the school and program just like they are interviewing you. Finding a good fit is important for you to thrive in a program. Once the interview is over, it is always a good idea to write thank you notes. These can be via email or hand written. Making it to the interview stage is a huge feat, so you want to make sure that you make the best impression!

MAJORING IN SOMETHING OTHER THAN SCIENCE?

You do not need to have a degree in a science discipline to go to medical school! This is a misconception that many have about the majority of health professions. Professional programs are seeking out students that will bring a different perspective to their program, and a major other than a STEM field could help you stand out. However, you must consider the required prerequisites that will need to be worked into the curriculum of your chosen major. Also, consider seeking out additional challenging science or medical related courses as electives to make yourself a well-rounded candidate. But be sure to consult with your academic advisor before choosing courses!

DUAL DEGREE PROGRAMS

Some schools offer dual degree programs where you can earn an MD and a PhD through integrated training. MD-PhD programs are intended for students who are wanting to pursue primarily research throughout their career. If obtaining both an MD and a PhD fits your long-term career goals, a dual degree program would take less time than pursuing each one separately. However, these programs still take around **7-8 years** to complete. The AAMC offers extensive information on seeking out these programs, [here](#).

TIMELINE

Year 1	Meet with a pre-professional advisor to start building your timeline and to explore options and opportunities available to you.	Use the Learning Center for Supplemental Instruction to maintain a strong GPA from day 1 especially in science courses!	Register for the Pre-Med Club to stay up to date on events and information. Check the requirements for the Pre-Med Mentoring Program to see if you qualify!	Explore professional healthcare careers using Focus2 and Occupational Outlook Handbook, as well as attending the Graduate & Professional School Fair.
Summer 1	*Work with the Career Center to start building your resume or CV to prepare your applications for summer experiences* Volunteer at local hospitals or health centers and keep a journal about your experiences. Other summer experiences could include: research with a faculty member, summer enrichment programs, participate on campus with community science education programs for youth			
Year 2	Assess academic standing and plans for completing prerequisite courses with Academic Advisor.	Identify and connect with faculty for mentorship, research opportunities, and professional advice.	Seek out campus leadership opportunities in addition to participation in Pre-Med Club	Continue gaining experience in your field as mentioned above. Attend the Graduate & Professional School Fair to continue growing your network and knowledge of programs available.
Summer 2	*Work with a pre-professional advisor to begin looking at schools/programs of interest and choose several* Start familiarizing yourself with the MCAT (AAMC - Taking the MCAT Exam) and the medical school application process (MD: AAMC - Understanding the Process or DO: AACOMAS - Applicant Help Center). Continue to gain meaningful shadowing and volunteer hours, preferably with direct patient care. Create a budget that will include MCAT, test preparation, and application fees for each program of interest including secondary application fees.			
Year 3	Begin preparing for the MCAT by registering for a course with companies such as Princeton Review, Kaplan, etc. and choose test date by the start of second semester.	Consider what faculty, advisors, and mentors could potentially write your letters of recommendation and consult with them so that you can include their names on your AMCAS or AACOMAS application.	Keep regular contact with your pre-professional advisor to fine tune your application strategy, schools of interest, personal statement, and create your AMCAS Account or AACOMAS Account	Discuss alternatives with your pre-professional advisor in case of needed gap year or change in career plans. Attend the Graduate & Professional School Fair to explore your options.
Summer 3	By the end of summer 3, you should have your final MCAT score and be ready to start applying if you are not taking a gap year. Complete and submit your AMCAS or AACOMAS application and any secondary application requirements. Continue involvement, research, and/or meaningful volunteering and shadowing that can be added to your experiences when applying			
Year 4	Prepare with the Career Center for different types of interviews with medical schools.	Complete secondary applications/essays as requested.	Evaluate acceptance offers and talk with your pre-professional advisor for guidance.	Consider if a gap year would be in your best interest to acquire the needed shadowing or volunteer hours, practical experiences, or prerequisites. If you decide on a gap year, begin preparing to sign up for the MCAT in the upcoming summer.