
This guide is directed at students applying to medical school for the 2016 entering class. Students customarily apply in the summer, one year prior to entry. Students typically begin medical school only after completing an undergraduate degree (the University of Iowa College of Medicine requires an undergraduate degree as part of its admissions requirements). Students applying to most allopathic medical schools apply through the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS).*

Application to medical school consists of several steps:

1. Take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)
2. If you are applying to allopathic medical schools (M.D. programs), file a primary application through AMCAS: [www.aamc.org/students/amcas](http://www.aamc.org/students/amcas). This centralized, online application service transmits your application to all of the allopathic medical schools to which you are applying. A powerpoint overview of the AMCAS application process, as well as several helpful tutorials, can be accessed at this website.
3. If you are applying to osteopathic medical schools (D.O. programs), file the AACOMAS application found at [www.aacom.org](http://www.aacom.org)
4. Speak to your recommenders and work out a mutually agreeable timeline. Recommendation letters are typically submitted in summer or early fall. We advise that you do not hold your AMCAS application for letter information; AMCAS will review your application without it, and letter information can be added later.
5. If invited by the individual medical school, submit a secondary application.
6. If invited by the individual medical school, interview at the medical school.
7. If you receive an offer of admission by the medical school of your choice, accept the offer (or a place on the waitlist if that is offered). If denied, consider reapplying after remediing deficiencies, or move to an alternate plan.

Academic Guidelines
Competition for places in medical school is keen, and admissions committees are able to choose from among many talented students. The academic profile for the 2014 entering class at the University of Iowa’s College of Medicine is as follows:

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<td>152 students admitted:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean cumulative GPA:</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>Mean MCAT Physical Science: 10.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean science GPA:</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>Mean MCAT Writing:</td>
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<td>Mean MCAT Verbal</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>Mean MCAT Biological Science: 11.2</td>
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*A few schools do not use AMCAS. The Texas medical schools (except for Baylor) use the Texas Medical and Dental Application Service (TMDAS): [https://www.tmdas.com/](https://www.tmdas.com/). Whether AMCAS is the primary application is listed under the school’s entry in the Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR) online guide.
Many medical schools have a threshold grade point average for admission. In 2013, The University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine instituted a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA as a requirement of admission. Students who do not have that minimum can meet the requirement with at least 20 credit hours of postbaccalaureate and/or graduate work with a GPA of 3.0 or greater. Students who have questions are encouraged to see their pre-medical advisors.

Profiles for allopathic medical schools may be found using Medical School Admissions Requirements for U.S. and Canadian Medical Schools (MSAR) Online, a resource produced by the AAMC. We recommend that students subscribe to this service at www.aamc.org under “Students, Applicants and Residents.” The service allows you to search school-specific admissions requirements, applicant statistics, and many other features of the allopathic medical schools. The cost is $25.00. Another resource, The Official Guide to Medical School Admissions, is also available. While this does not have school-specific information, it includes factors to consider when selecting a medical school, advice on MCAT preparation, tips for interviewing, information on specialties, etc. The Guide may also be ordered at the AAMC website. The cost is $15.00.

Osteopathic medical school national GPA averages for admitted students were 3.51 cumulative and 3.38 science, with MCAT averages in the 8 to 9 range. Osteopathic medical school information may be found at www.aacom.org. The 2015 Osteopathic Medical College Information Book may also be ordered from that site for $15.00.

Non-Academic Guidelines
Important non-academic factors include good moral character, excellent interpersonal skills, a deep commitment to healthcare, evidence of teamwork and leadership potential, and service to others. Successful applicants will likely have job shadowed one or more physicians (required in order to be competitive at the UI College of Medicine), volunteered or worked in a healthcare setting with patient contact, been involved in organizations that serve others, held positions of responsibility and leadership, and learned how to work independently and conduct research.

The AMCAS application allows up to 15 entries for an applicant to list his or her volunteering, work experience, leadership, research, honors and other related activities. You will have the opportunity to identify three of these activities as the “most meaningful” and to write additional information about them. From the AMCAS Instruction Manual: “When writing your response, you might consider the transformative nature of the experience, the impact you made while engaging in the activity, and the personal growth you experienced as a result of your participation.”

Regular Admission
Most applicants to medical school select this plan, which allows them to apply to several medical schools using the online applications (AMCAS or AACOMAS). The AMCAS application is expected to open on May 5, 2015. The earliest an applicant can submit the AMCAS application is June 2nd. For best results, applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their AMCAS application in the summer. Each medical school has a deadline for the final receipt of the online application. For the UI College of Medicine, the AMCAS deadline is November 3rd.
Early Decision
The Early Decision Program (EDP) is no longer offered at the University of Iowa College of Medicine. Only about half of all medical schools offer EDP programs, and these programs typically require extremely high achievement for selection. More information may be found at https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/edp/.

Students interested in EDP programs should also check the MSAR under the individual school entries to determine if the school offers EDP. Deadlines are earlier for EDP than for Regular Admission. Under this plan, an applicant may apply to only one medical school. If the applicant is accepted, the applicant agrees to attend that medical school and no other.

Joint Degree Programs
Many medical schools offer opportunities to pursue dual degrees in a variety of disciplines. MD/PhD programs may include the basic sciences, business, law, public health, etc. Federally funded Medical Scientist Training Programs (MSTP) provide training in medicine and scientific research and prepare candidates for careers as physician-scientists. The UI College of Medicine has an MSTP program, as well as MD/MPH, MD/MBA and MD/JD programs.

MSTP candidates are expected to have significant laboratory research experience that demonstrates their skill in, and potential for, biomedical research. In addition to the AMCAS application, a brief MSTP application (which comes with secondary application materials) is required for students applying to the UI MSTP program. Other requirements include a research mentor letter (one of three required letters) and a separate interview, which is coordinated with the regular medical school interview. More information is available at http://www.healthcare.uiowa.edu/mstp/. Students should consult the individual medical school listings in the MSAR for links to other joint degree programs.

Diversity in Medicine
Many medical schools, including the UI College of Medicine, seek to recruit a diverse class of students, including students from groups underrepresented in medicine. The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) particularly encourages African-American, Latino/a, and Native American students to apply, as these groups make up nearly 30 percent of the population but only 13.5 percent of the physician workforce. Students may find information and support at www.aspiringdocs.org and www.aamc.org/students/minorities/. Students may also contact their pre-medical advisors and individual medical schools for more information.

MCAT
The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is required for admission to both allopathic (M.D.) and osteopathic (D.O.) programs. The MCAT is a day-long, standardized, computer-based exam. This is the first year of the new MCAT exam, called MCAT 2015. There are four exam sections:

- Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems
- Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems
- Psychological, Social and Biological Foundations of Behavior
- Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills
The MCAT covers topics from biology, chemistry, biochemistry, physics, psychology and sociology, as well as testing a candidate’s critical thinking and reasoning skills. UI courses have been identified that cover the material on MCAT—students should check with their pre-medical advisors if they have questions. The MCAT is typically taken only after these courses have been completed.

The MCAT is a very important part of the application to medical school, and applicants should prepare thoroughly for the exam. Preparation for the MCAT consists of completing the pre-medical courses and then self-study or participation in MCAT preparation classes. The AAMC offers online review, practice exams and a self-assessment package. Applicants may go to: https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/prepare/ for more information. MCAT-The Official Guide to the MCAT Exam is also available and may be ordered from the following site: http://www.aamc.org under “Publications” on the menu bar. Other MCAT books are available through the major bookstores. MCAT scores are typically received 30 days following testing. Results of the initial administrations of the new exam (April and May) are expected to take up to 45 days. The MCAT is a full disclosure exam, and scores for all MCAT administrations will be revealed to the medical schools. Hence, it is not a good idea to take the actual MCAT for “practice.” Students who wish to practice should do so using the available study options mentioned above, which include MCAT practice tests.

The MCAT is currently offered in January, April, May, June, July, August and September. Most students will take the MCAT between April and August. For the UI College of Medicine, students must take the MCAT no later than September; however, taking the exam much earlier (in spring or early summer) is highly recommended. Students may wish to consult with their pre-medical advisors for an individualized discussion of the best time to take the MCAT.

Scores on the previous MCAT ranged from a low of 1 to a high of 15. For MCAT 2015, a new scoring scale is in effect, with scores ranging from 118 to 132 on each test. Total scores range from 472 to 528 with a midpoint of 500. Medical schools are expected to use percentile ranks as one initial indicator of MCAT success as they develop more familiarity with the new scoring data. Students are encouraged to consult with their pre-medical advisors regarding their MCAT performance, especially if retaking the exam is a consideration.

Medical schools will vary on how long they accept the previous MCAT exam, the final administration of which was in January 2015. Some medical schools, such as the University of Iowa’s, will accept the previous MCAT for up to 2 to 3 years; others may not. Students who only have scores from the previous MCAT should check with the medical schools to which they are applying for acceptability.

A student may retake the MCAT if his/her scores are not competitive; however, it is important to do so only after adequate and sustained study.

Secondary Applications
Secondary application materials differ among the medical schools. These materials may include an additional school-specific application, additional essays, instructions on how to handle letters
of evaluation/recommendation and a separate fee. Students are customarily given a deadline by which the secondary materials need to arrive at the medical school. Students should check the MSAR for deadline dates for the schools to which they are applying.

**Letters of Evaluation/Recommendation**

Each medical school will have different requirements for the number and mix of letters. Applicants typically request letters from science faculty members, faculty members from the applicant’s major department, pre-medical advisors, research supervisors, volunteer coordinators, etc.

The UI College of Medicine requires two academic references, and one additional letter of the applicant’s choice. (A fourth optional letter may also be sent from a person associated with a significant extracurricular experience). From the UI College of Medicine website: “These letters should come from individuals who can assess your personal (as well as academic) qualities, such as work ethic, reliability, communication skills, leadership, altruism, compassion, and motivation for medicine.” For the UI academic references, at least one letter from a science faculty member is important, as well as one letter from the student’s major department. Some schools require two letters from science faculty. Students applying to osteopathic medical schools should plan to have one letter from a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.)

UI does not have a pre-medical committee; instead, students request **individual letters** from their recommenders. Consequently, on the AMCAS application, you must select “Individual Letter” (for individual letters) rather than the “Committee Letter” or “Letter Packet” option. Students should speak to their proposed letter writers **before** the summer of junior year so that when the time comes to submit letters (in summer and early fall), the writers will have already been alerted and ready to write on the student’s behalf.

The University of Iowa College of Medicine, along with nearly all other U.S. allopathic medical schools, participates in AMCAS Letters of Evaluation/Recommendation. Under this program, letter writers submit their letters to AMCAS, which then uploads the letters to the designated medical schools. (See the appendix for further information on handling letters.)

**Interviews**

Medical schools usually require personal, on-campus interviews for those applicants believed to be possible candidates for admission. Interviews are a very important part of the selection process, and candidates should prepare well for the interview, becoming familiar with medical issues of the day and practicing responses to anticipated questions. Applicants may set up a practice, or “mock”, interview and get feedback through the UI Career Center. See the link at [http://careers.uiowa.edu/students/mock-interviewsinterviewstream](http://careers.uiowa.edu/students/mock-interviewsinterviewstream) for more information. The mock interview should be completed well in advance of a candidate’s actual interview.

Students may also request the “Interviewing for Health Professions Schools” guide from their Academic Advising Center pre-medical advisors. Sample interview questions for the various medical schools may be found at [www.studentdoctor.net](http://www.studentdoctor.net) (see “interview feedback” under “Articles and Interviews” on the menu bar). At this site students can get a sense of what the interview day is like, and the kinds of questions they may be asked.
Candidates should dress professionally for their interviews and arrive on time. The interview day starts the moment a candidate sets foot on campus, and candidates should assume they are being evaluated from that point forward. Interviews may be conducted by a single admissions committee member or a group of committee members, including medical school staff, faculty, students, and/or practicing physicians from the community. Interviews may be open file (where the committee has access to the applicant’s entire file), closed file (where the committee only has access to limited information such as the applicant’s name and school), or a variation of these. The UI College of Medicine conducts a closed file interview.

The UI College of Medicine interviews from September through January. The interview is a 25-minute interview with two faculty members from the medical school. The UI interview is somewhat atypical in that after a few minutes of greeting, the interview moves to a structured format (13-15 minutes) in which the candidate is asked a series of three questions and is asked to respond. During this structured portion, there is no give-and-take or other extraneous conversation. Following this portion of the interview, the candidate may converse with the interviewers and ask questions for the final 8-10 minutes or so of the interview.

In addition to the interview, the UI College of Medicine conducts a one-hour “Case-Based Learning Group Activity” during the interview day. During this activity, students will meet with other candidates in a small group to discuss a particular medical case. The discussion will be facilitated by a fourth-year medical student. This activity is not a test of a candidate’s medical knowledge, but rather an evaluation of a candidate’s teamwork and communication skills. Comments will be provided to the UI Admissions Committee as part of the overall evaluation.

Criminal Background Checks
The AMCAS application asks applicants whether they have a record of misdemeanors and/or felonies. Students should make careful decisions during their undergraduate years, since charges for drug and/or alcohol use or possession, as well as other charges, can have negative consequences for a medical school application. Students with charges and/or convictions should consult with their pre-medical advisors about how to convey this information on the application. The UI College of Medicine, along with most other medical schools, conducts a Criminal Background Check on all admitted students. Students found to have been dishonest on their applications are not permitted to enroll.

Rolling Admission
Many medical schools have rolling admissions, whereby the admissions committee evaluates candidates monthly, takes a vote, and decides: accept, reject, or defer judgment. Admission and rejection letters are sent out, and deferred candidates are reviewed again later, in comparison to the changing set of applicants. The strongest candidates are admitted until the class is filled. At UI, the rolling phase goes from October through January, and each month decisions are made regarding places in the class. The final pool reading is in February, and includes all those who have been deferred, or whose applications have come in since the earlier readings. Final decisions for this group go out between March 15-30.
Waitlists
Students who are just below the threshold for acceptance at a medical school may be placed on the waitlist (or alternate list). The UI College of Medicine keeps separate waitlists for both resident and non-resident candidates, and candidates move up when someone on the accepted list accepts an offer at a different institution and declines the acceptance at Iowa. Each year, several students move to accepted status from the waitlists. It is important for students on a waitlist to keep the medical school informed as to their whereabouts, and to check mail and e-mail regularly. If you will not be available for a few days, it may be important to designate a trustworthy person who will contact you, as decisions may need to be made quickly.

Financing a Medical Education
Medical school is expensive, and budgeting skills are important. Median tuition and fees for 2014-2015 were $34,540 at public institutions and $53,714 at private institutions. Graduating medical school students had a median debt of $170,000 at public institutions and $200,000 at private institutions. Budgeting skills should be developed early. Undergraduate students can help themselves by minimizing credit card debt and establishing a good credit rating. The AAMC has a number of financial planning resources available, which may be found at: https://www.aamc.org/students/aspiring/paying/

For the Unsuccessful Applicant
Not all applicants will be successful. If a student does not receive an offer of admission, it may be time to reassess the goal. Unsuccessful candidates who wish to reapply should contact the medical school(s) to find out what may have been weak in the profile. Sometimes weaknesses can be remedied, and a student can be successful on a reapplication. For others, an alternate goal will be the best option. Students may contact their pre-medical advisors to discuss these issues further and to develop a strategy that best meets their individual needs.

For the Successful Applicant
Congratulations! Admission to medical school is a milestone resulting from a great deal of dreaming, planning, and hard work, and is a critical step toward your ultimate goal of becoming a physician. Take time to savor the moment with family and friends, and convey the good news to your faculty mentor, volunteer supervisor, pre-medical advisor, and others who may have helped you along the way. They are interested in your success and will rejoice with you!

Regular Admission Timeline*

Take MCAT: January, April, May, June, July, August, September (latest)
Begin Work on AMCAS: May 5 (earliest)
Submit AMCAS: June 2 (earliest);
see MSAR for final deadlines; UI deadline is Nov. 3
Submit Secondaries: Check MSAR for final deadlines; UI deadline is Dec. 15
Interview: Check with schools; UI interviews from October through January
Financial Aid  
(Submit FAFSA/ prepare tax forms) January

Final Dates for Med. School to notify of acceptance March 15-30

Early Decision Timeline (No longer offered at UI College of Medicine; check the MSAR for participating schools)*

Take MCAT: January, April, May, June (latest)

Begin Work on AMCAS: May 5 (earliest)

Submit AMCAS: June 2 to August 1 (final deadline)

Submit Secondaries: Check with schools for final deadlines

Interview: Check with schools for interview dates

Financial Aid  
(Submit FAFSA/ prepare tax forms) January

Final Date for Med. School to notify of acceptance October 1

*Timelines refer to students applying to allopathic (M.D.) programs. Students applying to osteopathic (D.O.) programs should consult the AACOM website for more information: www.aacom.org

Addendum A

Handling Letters of Recommendation/Evaluation

A. For Schools Participating in the AMCAS Letters Program (most U.S. Medical School—see exceptions in B below).

1. Ask recommenders to write on your behalf.
2. Apply to your medical schools via AMCAS. In order to submit your application in a timely manner, we recommend you don’t hold up your AMCAS application for letters of recommendation information—letter information is not necessary for AMCAS to review your application, and it can be added later in the summer or early fall.
3. When you are ready to enter letter information, go back into AMCAS and identify your letter writers and pair with the appropriate medical schools.

4. You may want to provide your letter writers with some, or all, of the following items to help them write your letter:
   a. Your resume or a copy of your AMCAS activities list
   b. An unofficial copy of your transcript (grade report)
   c. A copy of your AMCAS personal statement
   d. Your AMCAS ID number and the AMCAS Letter Request form number (if your letter writer will be uploading your letter to AMCAS). Your letter writers can easily upload the letter via the AMCAS Letter Writer application found here: https://services.aamc.org/letterwriter/. This is an efficient way for your letter writers to electronically transmit your letters to AMCAS or if your letter writer needs to mail the letter to AMCAS: Provide the AMCAS Letter Request form* to accompany the letter and a pre-addressed envelope addressed to: AMCAS, attn: AMCAS Letters AAMC Medical School Application Services P.O. Box 18958 Washington, DC 20036

*To keep things simple, it is recommended that the letter not contain an inside address identifying a particular school. You can then go into your AMCAS application and designate the letter for any school on the list of schools to which you are applying. **Letters from your recommenders should be on official letterhead and all letters should be signed by the letter writer.**

B. For Medical Schools Not Participating in the AMCAS Letters Program:

Only a few schools do not participate in the AMCAS Letters Program. Applicants can go to the following link to identify schools not participating in the program: https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/amcas/amcasresources/63226/faq_amcasletters.html

For schools not participating in AMCAS Letters, the letters must be mailed by your recommenders directly to the schools, or transmitted to the schools through a letter service such as Interfolio.

Also, as noted earlier, the Texas medical schools (except for Baylor) do not participate in AMCAS. The exception is for MD/PhD candidates, for which some of the Texas schools participate—see the participating list for more details. Applications and letters for regular MD programs for these schools are handled through the Texas Medical and Dental Application Service (TMDAS): https://www.tmdsas.com/medical/homepage.html instead of AMCAS.
Additional Information About Letters:
The AAMC has developed Letters of Evaluation Guidelines for letter writers. These are designed to provide 1) tips about how to write a letter and 2) key areas of interest to medical schools. While the Guidelines are optional, you may wish to make your letter writers aware of them. The Guidelines may be found at this link: https://www.aamc.org/students/advisors/amcas-advisors/370390/amcas-letters-advisors.html

Methods of submitting letters:

The AMCAS Letter Writer Application is the electronic submission tool that allows recommenders to submit electronically to AMCAS. It is a free service for letter writers to use. Letter writers can upload letters directly to AMCAS through this method, and AMCAS then transmits the letter to the schools the applicant has designated. This tool streamlines the application process considerably. Most applicants will ask their letter writers to use this system.

AACOMAS: New this year, students applying to osteopathic medical schools will be able to process letters through the AACOMAS evaluator portal. Other options for submitting letters to the osteopathic schools are Interfolio, VirtualEvals, and regular mail (see below).

Interfolio is a fee-based electronic submission system. More information is available at www.interfolio.com/. You may wish to consider Interfolio, particularly if you are applying to both allopathic and osteopathic medical schools (the latter of which do not participate in AMCAS). Please note that if you use Interfolio, your letters to the AMCAS participating schools must go from Interfolio to AMCAS and you would need to list the AMCAS Letter ID. You would designate these as individual letters in AMCAS.

VirtualEvals is a fee-based service to which some undergraduate institutions have subscribed; the University of Iowa is not a member of this system.

Regular Mail: Although not preferred due to time and efficiency, for AMCAS participating schools you can have your letter writers submit a paper letter to AMCAS, which will copy the letters and upload them to the medical schools you designate. Regular mail can also be used to submit letters to the osteopathic medical schools.

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