

Columbia College and Columbia Engineering

Premedical Advisory Committee Evaluation Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions

Applications for Entrance in 2020



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You can also send subscribe requests via email: To the subscribe/request address, at lastname-join@lists.columbia.edu, with Subscribe in the message body.

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Timeline for Students Applying to Schools of the Health Professions

The timing of your application is extremely important and therefore something to which you need to pay close attention. There are several parts of an application and your goal must be to complete **all** application materials no later than mid-September of the year preceding your desired matriculation in the health professional school of your choice. In order for you to do this, your primary application must be submitted in the first part of this coming summer. The timetable below is designed to help you achieve this goal.

Course Work

All course work required for the admission test (MCAT/DAT) should be completed by the end of the year in which you wish to submit your application. Other courses not needed for the exam but for matriculation (i.e. Bio lab) can be completed after you submit your application.

Application Process

- **Fall** preceding the year that you plan to apply to a health professional school:
 1. Attend the **mandatory** Premedical Advisory Committee (PAC) Application Workshop in December.
 2. Begin planning to request letters of recommendation.
 3. Register for MCAT or DAT exam.
 4. Begin thinking about where you want to apply, double check prerequisites at core schools.
- **Winter Break:**
 1. Work on your PAC Application for Committee Evaluation.
 2. Begin studying for MCAT or DAT.
- **Spring and summer** of the year you are submitting your application to professional school is the most important time in the application process. Below are the steps that should be completed during this time period:
 1. In January begin to prepare in earnest for the MCAT or other entrance exam. You may want to take a commercial preparation course or study on your own.

2. Complete your application for a Committee Evaluation by the Premedical Advisory Committee. **All parts of the APPLICATION MUST BE SUBMITTED BY FEBRUARY 15th, 2019 at 5pm. The PAC application is located at: <https://www.cc-seas.columbia.edu/advising/preprofessional/pacapp>.** You will attach a photo and Part II of your application at the end of Part I and submit everything **NO LATER THAN 5:00 p.m.** on February 15th, 2019. The completed application packet includes **Part I** (web form), **Part II** (submitted online), **Photo** (submitted online) and **outside transcripts** (if applicable, emailed to preprofessional@columbia.edu).

3. Schedule and complete an interview with the Premedical Advisory Committee. This is a required portion of the Premedical Advisory Committee Evaluation. These interviews will be arranged by the Center for Student Advising after the PAC Application has been submitted (instructions for signing up for interview will be sent a week or two after the February 15th deadline).
4. Meet with a Preprofessional Advisor to discuss your preliminary list of schools and other issues or concerns.
6. If appropriate, obtain and complete a centralized application (AMCAS, AACOMAS, AADSAS, VMCAS, etc.) and submit it early. Most standardized applications may be submitted beginning on or around **June 1**. Apply in the month of June – it really makes a difference! You *must* submit your application no later than **August 10th, 2019**, in order for us to write you a committee evaluation.
7. June/July: Submit a copy in .pdf form of your submitted AMCAS application (or other centralized applications) to Preprofessional Advising at preprofessional@columbia.edu. **This is also a required portion of the Premedical Advisory Committee Application.**

Frequently Asked Questions

Questions related to Premedical Advisory Committee Process:

1. What is the Premedical Advisory Committee (PAC) Evaluation?

The Premedical Advisory Committee Evaluation is an evaluation of an applicant's candidacy for admission to health professional school. It is written for current students and alumni applying to programs in medicine who complete the PAC process. This evaluation is written on a student's request and only after the student completes all PAC application requirements by the February 15th deadline. The committee application process includes submission of letters of recommendation (letters are due June 1st), PAC application materials, as well as an interview with the Premedical Advisory Committee. See PAC application for more information.

2. Who is on the Premedical Advisory Committee?

The Premedical Advisory Committee is made up of Advising Deans from the Center for Student Advising in addition to the premedical Advising Deans.

3. Who is my Premedical Committee Member?

All applicants will be assigned a Premedical Committee member after submission of the PAC Application on February 15th. You will be notified of this person's name and contact information shortly after you submit your application. This person will be a part of your Committee Interview and will have a hand in drafting your Committee Evaluation.

4. How important is the Committee Evaluation?

Most professional school admissions committees, including all medical schools, place a fair amount of emphasis on these evaluations. The Admissions Committees are very interested in learning more about you as a person and this evaluation can help frame some of your experiences. It is designed to be a comprehensive narrative discussing your candidacy. The letter is an important part of your applicant file. The Committee Evaluation may hold more or less weight depending on the type of professional school to which you apply.

5. How do I apply for a Committee Evaluation?

In order to apply for a Committee Evaluation you must complete the PAC Application by February 15th. A committee interview is also required.

6. If I decide to take time off, when should I apply for the Committee Evaluation?

You should apply for the Committee Evaluation in the spring semester (February) of the year you plan to submit your application. It is important that this letter be current and reflects all of your achievements and experiences. Alumni are always encouraged to come back and access the services of the Office of Preprofessional Advising.

7. If I am an alumnus, do I still have to submit a Committee Evaluation?

Yes. Most schools will still expect that you use this service.

8. Why does the Premedical Advisory Committee need to interview me?

First, the interview is designed to get to know you better. It will help us to clarify things that you have written about and give us and you an opportunity to discuss some of your interests and experiences. Second, the committee interview will also give you a first taste of what a medical school interview may be like. It will be a good practice run. The interview will be conducted by your premedical committee member and your assigned premedical advisor.

9. How should I ask for letters of recommendation? Who are the best types of people to ask?

- Choose your referees carefully. A person who knows you well can write a more substantial and helpful letter than someone who hardly knows you. In choosing between a person who taught you in a small class versus someone with a famous name or title but who cannot write a personal letter, choose the former. It is **REQUIRED** to have at least one recommendation from someone who has taught you in the sciences, and it is also **RECOMMENDED** to have one from a faculty member in the humanities or social sciences. Others who may write useful letters include research advisors, administrators, faculty advisors, athletic coaches, supervisors of campus or summer jobs, and those who have known you in volunteer positions. Letters from graduate student instructors are acceptable. It is common to have science letters from faculty and instructors who know you only in the context of a large class. You should be careful to have the rest of your letters come from someone who knows you well.
- When asking for the letter, make an appointment to meet in person if at all possible. Bring your resume and transcript and, ideally, any papers which you have written for the instructor (preferably the copies which contain their comments) with you and be prepared to talk about your future goals and past achievements. If an individual agrees to write on your behalf, present him/her with the Prehealth Letter of Recommendation Waiver Form and the Guidelines for Letter Writers. Letters may be submitted to us via email if the writer can scan their letter or has their letterhead and an image of their signature available digitally. If they want to send us a hard copy, it is also helpful to provide the writer with a stamped envelope addressed to the Preprofessional Advising at the Center for Student Advising. We recommend US mail over campus mail! Please impress upon your referees that medical schools will not accept letters that are not on some type of letterhead and/or do not have a visible (not electronic) signature.
- Make sure that you allow the person the option of saying NO. You want to have strong letters and if a person is somewhat uncomfortable writing for you or doesn't have enough time, it is likely that the result will be short and weak. It is much better to have someone be honest with you at the start, so that you can find another referee who will be more enthusiastic. You can determine this by asking the person if s/he feels comfortable writing a strong letter on your behalf.
- Give your referees plenty of advance notice and time to write a good letter of recommendation (a month at the very minimum, ideally closer to two). Make sure that your referees know that we need to have your letters sometime in the spring or early summer, and that there is a **JUNE 1st deadline. If your letters are not received by JUNE 1st, it may delay your Committee Evaluation.**
- Be sure to give your referees friendly reminders about your letter, but do not pester them. Remember they will be writing a letter reflecting on many aspects of you—which includes behavior and interpersonal interactions!
- At the end of the application cycle, inform your writers when you have decided where you will be attending school and thank them again for their assistance and support.

10. What is the Recommendation Waiver Form?

The Waiver Form is a document provided by the Office of Preprofessional Advising that will allow you to waive your right to inspect the contents of letters of recommendation written on your behalf. **You must complete this form and provide it to each of your recommenders.** Waiving your 'right to access' means that your letters will remain confidential, and you will not be privy to their contents. Admissions officials may give more credence to the content of a letter that is confidential. If you choose NOT to waive your right, you will have access to the contents of the recommendation.

Please note: You must be consistent on all of your waivers. If you waive your right on one letter you must waive your right on all letters including the Committee Evaluation. Because each of your letters becomes a piece of the overall Committee Evaluation, it would be impossible to grant you access to one portion that didn't jeopardize the confidentiality of the whole package.

Questions related to Application to Health Professional Schools

11. When should I apply to health professional school?

You should plan to apply to professional school when you are ready to present the strongest application. When considering the options, it is important to choose the best time *for you*. If you elect to apply after college graduation you are NOT at any disadvantage. In fact, since time away from academia allows you to mature and strengthen your experiences, it may actually place you at an advantage to apply after graduating. If you apply before you are ready you will be sending a message to the professional school that you make poor decisions. It is better to take the time to build a stronger application than to apply before you are ready. Remember, a rejection will always remain on your record. Another reason to make a careful well-informed decision about your application timing is that the application process requires a great deal of investment, in terms of time, money, and hard work. If you are unsure about this decision, please consult with a member of the preprofessional advising staff. When you have decided that you are ready to apply, timing is very important. All medical schools have a rolling interview invite process where they read and invite, read and invite, so it is to your distinct advantage to be considered early in their process. As it gets later in the season, the odds of getting an interview drop exponentially. Do not wait for the schools' posted deadlines!

12. How do health professional schools view taking time off between undergraduate and professional school?

Taking time off can be a very positive step on your way to becoming a health professional. In fact, the median age for first year medical students is now almost 25! Of course, what you do with that time should be meaningful and perhaps science, health, or service related; working in a research lab or a hospital; teaching; completing a fellowship or service program, or perhaps even traveling and exposing yourself to medical care in the places you visit. The added experience can enhance your qualifications and show your commitment to a career in the health professions. For many students, it may be an advantage to wait until after graduation to apply. It gives you extra time to raise your GPA, study for entrance exams, refresh, and gain additional related experiences. Taking time off is definitely something to consider.

13. How do I decide which schools I should apply to?

- Begin by reading the reference books (see chart below) and individual school web pages. For web links to individual medical schools see: www.aamc.org & www.aacom.org; for dental schools: www.ada.org; and for veterinary medical schools: www.aavmc.org.
- Be aware of in-state/out-of-state ratios at various schools and definitely apply to your home state school(s). Note that state schools often give preference to in-state applicants and/or hold out-of-state applicants to more rigorous standards than they do their in-state applicants.
- Apply to a range of schools; admissions statistics and rankings will provide some indication of how competitive a school is likely to be.
- Apply to multiple schools, but do not go overboard. We recommend applying to around 15 schools. Remember that the admissions process is very expensive, as well as extremely time- and labor- intensive. You won't be able to do a good job on your applications—you might not even be able to complete them—if you apply to too many schools.
- Remember to consider location, curriculum, size, and atmosphere in making your decisions.

Reference Guides (online or print)

Medical: **Medical School Admission Requirements of the US and Canada** Accessible online at American Association of Medical Schools (AAMC) \$28.00
aka: **MSAR**
To subscribe: <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/msar/>

- Dental: **2011 ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools** Published by American Dental Education Assoc
 Price: \$40.00 Online version: \$25.00
 To obtain: <http://www.adea.org/publications/Pages/OfficialGuide.aspx>
- Veterinary: **Veterinary Medical School Admission Requirements in the US and Canada** Edited by: Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) \$35.00
 To obtain: <http://www.aavmc.org/publications/vmsar.aspx>
 The most recent edition can be found here:
<http://www.thepress.purdue.edu/titles/format/9781557538604>

14. What are the Centralized Application Services and how do they work?

AMCAS stands for American Medical College Application Service. It is a non-profit centralized application processing service for applicants to US Medical Schools. Applicants may complete their AMCAS application online at www.aamc.org.

The AMCAS application consists of a section of biographical information, a section of course work information, a section for work/activities, and a personal statement. (The PAC application is in some respects like the AMCAS. The material you pull together for us will come in handy when you fill out the AMCAS (or other centralized application).) The first date that you may begin submitting the AMCAS application is around June 1st. You may however begin to work on the application when it becomes available online (usually May 1st). Again, it is very important for your application to be submitted to AMCAS in the early part of the summer (sometime in June). Note: Most medical schools require completion of supplementary applications and additional fees AFTER the initial processing by AMCAS.

TMDSAS stands for Texas Medical and Dental School Application Service is a non-profit centralized application processing service for applicants to some medical and dental schools in Texas. Applicants may complete the application online at: <https://www.tmdsas.com/medical/homepage.html>.

AADSAS stands for American Association of Dental Schools Application Service. It is a non-profit centralized application processing service for applicants to US Dental Schools. Currently, all 66 US Dental Schools subscribe to this service. You can complete an application online at: <https://aadsas.liasoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>.

Note: Most Dental Schools require completion of supplementary applications and additional fees AFTER the initial processing by AADSAS.

AACOMAS stands for the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service. It is a non-profit centralized application service which most of the Osteopathic Schools utilize. You can complete this application online at <http://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor/applying>.

VMCAS stands for Veterinary Medical Colleges Application Service. It is a centralized application service, which provides for the collection, processing, verification, and distribution of applicant data to the participating colleges for their use in the applicant selection process. The majority of Veterinary Schools in the US subscribe to this service. Applicants may complete the application online at: <http://www.aavmc.org/vmcas/vmcas.htm>.

15. Do all schools accept the centralized application?

All of the accredited US and Puerto Rican medical schools accept AMCAS, with the exception of the Texas state schools. To apply to schools in Texas, you will need to fill out the TMDSAS.

Schools Not Participating in AMCAS for Application to their M.D. Program:

- Texas A&M University System Health Science Center College of Medicine
- Texas Tech University Health Science Center School of Medicine
- Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, El Paso, Paul L. Foster School of Medicine
- University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas Southwestern Medical School
- University of Texas Medical School at Galveston
- University of Texas School of Medicine at Houston

- University of Texas School of Medicine at San Antonio

These schools use AMCAS only for MD/PhD applications:

- Texas A&M University System Health Science Center College of Medicine
- Texas Tech University Health Science Center School of Medicine
- University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas Southwestern Medical School
- University of Texas Medical School at Galveston
- University of Texas School of Medicine at Houston
- University of Texas School of Medicine at San Antonio

Texas System (TMSAS) Schools:

- Texas A&M University System Health Science Center, College of Medicine
- Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine
- Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Paul L. Foster School of Medicine at El Paso
- University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas
- University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston
- University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Medical School
- University of Texas School of Medicine at San Antonio
- University of North Texas Health Science Center - Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine

Non-VMCAS participating schools (subject to change):

- Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences

16. What is a secondary application?

Once professional schools receive information about you from the centralized application service, they will respond to you. Some schools will automatically send all of their applicants a secondary application and others will complete an initial review of their applicants and only send secondary applications to a select group. The secondary or supplemental application may include additional essays and will require an additional fee. The secondary application will also request that you send your "Committee Evaluation" at this time. Please write Columbia Premedical Advisory Committee Evaluation in your secondary/supplemental applications instead of the names of your individual recommenders. The PAC Evaluation and your letters of recommendation are provided to schools as one file. It is essential that you do not delay completing and returning secondary applications. They should be returned within a two to three week period.

17. How does my state of residence factor into my application to a Health Professional School?

Public, state-supported medical/dental/veterinary schools generally show preference, often strong preference, for admitting applicants who are legal residents of that state. You should understand that this practice is based on both economic and philosophical reasoning. First, education at those schools is funded primarily by the taxpayers of the state. Those taxpayers and their sons and daughters, in turn, expect some priority in access to medical training. In addition, the state legislators feel an obligation to educate health professionals to serve the people of their state; experience as well as data show that individuals who attend medical school in their home state are more likely to practice in that state.

As a full-time student, you are a resident of the state in which your parents are domiciled and pay taxes. If your parents reside in different states, your residency will be the one where you went to high school or the one you claimed as your primary residence during high school. You may claim residency in only ONE state, which means that, as a potential applicant, your likelihood of acceptance may be influenced greatly by your state of residence. If you are an alumnus/a, you will no longer be considered a state resident of the place where your parents reside. Your residency will correspond to where you are living, working, and paying taxes. However some states will consider you an "in-state" applicant if you went to high school or have other "significant ties" to the state. Basically, residency rules vary greatly from state to state (and even from school to school within each state), and this is something that you should research carefully. Detailed information on acceptance rates of in-state vs. out-of-state applicants for professional schools can be found in the reference books listed on page 6-7. Note: residency status tends to follow things like where you are domiciled and where you pay taxes and NOT where you hold a Driver's License or are registered to vote. The time required

to establish residency in a state varies greatly, from 1 day to 6 months to five years. Contact schools for further information about how each determines the residency status of their applicants.

18. How are international students viewed in the admissions process?

International or foreign students are defined as those students who were not born in the United States and who do not have status as permanent residents (green card holders). Permanent residents are treated the same as U.S. citizens. As discussed earlier most medical, veterinary, and dental schools give some preference to residents of their state which automatically makes application more difficult for an international student without a green card. In addition, many schools that will consider students from outside of their state will not consider international students.

International students not holding a green card will have a more challenging time in the admissions process to medical/veterinary school, because only a limited number of schools can consider them. To illustrate this point, of the approximately 21,000 matriculants to medical schools in the US each year about 350 of them are not US citizens OR permanent residents. Of all of the health professions, dental schools seem to be the friendliest to international students. In addition, schools that do admit international students may require evidence of the student's capacity to pay tuition above and beyond the INS requirements for an I20. In fact, some schools may require the student to pre-pay tuition for the entire four years or create an escrow account for these funds. Some institutions may accept loans cosigned by a US citizen. International students do not qualify for financial aid, with the exception of merit scholarships at a few institutions. For more information about applying as an international student please consult your premedical advisor.

19. What is the WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program?

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) operates a professional student exchange program enabling students in 13 western states to enroll in selected out of state professional programs, usually because those programs are not available in their home states. Exchange students must be certified by their home states. Exchange students will receive preference in admission and usually reduced tuition. WICHE has exchange programs for the following professional fields, Allopathic Medicine, Osteopathic Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, Physician Assistant, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Public Health, Pharmacy, and Optometry. For more information, visit their website at: <http://www.wiche.edu/psep>.

20. What is WWAMI?

The University of Washington School of Medicine serves as the public medical school for Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho (WWAMI). Students from these states will all be considered instate students for purposes of admission and tuition. Through this program, students from these states complete their first year of medical school at participating universities in their home state.

21. What is the Maine Access Medical Education Program?

The Finance Authority of Maine's Medical Education Programs are designed to help students access and pay for medical education. Maine students may receive help gaining admission to medical schools and veterinary schools participating in the **Maine Access to Medical Education Program**. Loans are also available to Maine students pursuing a degree in **dentistry, optometry, and veterinary science**.

The Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) has entered into contracts with three medical schools (Dartmouth, Vermont, & UNECOM) to provide PREFERRED ACCESS seats at each school for a total of twenty incoming, certified Maine residents each year. Essentially this program removes you from the national pool of applicants and allows you to compete for medical school acceptance in a pool consisting of Maine residents. The probability of being invited to interview at any one of the schools participating in the Access Program is greatly increased if you apply under the auspices of the Maine Access Program.

22. What does it mean to be an underrepresented student in medicine?

There are several groups that are underrepresented in the field of medicine. Increasing the number of physicians from underrepresented groups has been a priority of medical schools for many years. Medical

schools are committed to creating a diverse physician workforce that better mirrors our patient population. As a result, medical schools have instituted programs and resources specifically designed to assist in the recruitment and enrollment of underrepresented students. Many medical schools employ a diversity affairs officer who can assist and support underrepresented students throughout the application process. Currently, underrepresented groups include Blacks/African Americans (ancestry from Sub-Saharan Africa), Native Americans (American Indians, Native Alaskans and Native Hawaiians), Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latino groups.

23. What do schools want to see in the essay?

Do not try to fit yourself into a model. Answer questions clearly and honestly and do not try to second guess admission committees. Committees ask essay questions to learn more about you, so take this as an opportunity to discuss your thoughts, motivations, and experiences.

Do not simply discuss a variety of activities that the admissions committee can learn about you from the information provided elsewhere in your application.

Take some time to really think about why it is that you want to become a health professional. Are there experiences, events, or people who influenced your decision? The personal statement must in some way provide insight into your commitment and motivation for the field that you have chosen.

Do not lecture about what you feel is wrong with the health care system, but rather remain positive and focus on your own activities, aspirations, and past experiences.

Attend a Personal Statement Writing Workshop led by a Prehealth Advisor and Writing Center Staff.

24. What is Early Decision and should I apply?

Most medical schools have an Early Decision Program although many do not use it very actively to seat their class. Students applying early decision must apply by the early decision deadline – usually August 1st and will be notified of a decision by October 1st. However, the decision to apply Early Decision must be made carefully for the criteria for acceptance varies among schools but usually is reserved for the most outstanding applicants. Early Decision applicants may NOT apply to other schools until they have been rejected in October. This can cause a significant delay and affect your chances for admission at other institutions. As a rule, you should not apply Early Decision unless you have been in contact with the Dean of Admission at your intended school. If interested in applying Early Decision, please consult a preprofessional advisor.

25. I'm interested in a combined degree program--MD/PhD or MD/MPH etc. How do I find out which schools offer this?

You can search the MSAR by program type to find schools that offer combined degrees.

26. What is the AAMC Fee Assistance Program?

The Fee Assistance program is designed to provide applicants who have extreme financial limitations with assistance in paying the MCAT registration fee and the AMCAS fees. In order to apply for Fee Assistance you must submit an electronic application at <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/start.htm>.

If approved you will get the following fee reductions (these are last year's benefits, new ones will be released later this month):

MCAT fee reduced from \$315 to \$125

AMCAS – no fee for first 16 schools

MSAR – Access to website until the end of the calendar year

Up to \$800 to use for an updated psycho-educational or medical evaluation if needed for accommodations

Deadline: You should refer to the AAMC website for information regarding FAP application deadlines.

<http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/start.htm>

Questions related to Admission Tests MCAT/DAT/GRE

26. When should I take the MCAT/DAT/GRE and how do I register?

MCAT

It is recommended that you take the MCAT when you are most ready, but it is helpful to have a score in hand before submitting your application. We recommend that you plan for an MCAT ideally no later than April, May, or June of the year you plan to begin the application. Remember, earlier applications are strongly encouraged. If you take a July or August exam, your scores won't be released until mid to late August or September, putting you behind applicants whose MCAT scores were available at the beginning of the application process. Completion of the Premedical curriculum is essential to your preparation for the MCAT, and, therefore, this test should NOT be taken before you have the requisite lecture classes completed (or mostly completed for those taking final courses in the Spring).

DAT/GRE

Candidates may be scheduled for the DAT or GRE on almost any date. Applicants should plan to take these exams in the spring or summer prior to submission of an application to Dental or Veterinary School.

DAT

Once a DAT application is received, the Department of Testing Services will send a notice to the candidate that he or she can schedule an appointment. The application fee is \$415. To obtain an application, please register online at <http://www.ada.org/dat.aspx>. If a student wishes to retake the DAT, he or she must wait 90 days between test administrations. An examinee will need special permission to take the exam more than three times.

GRE

To information on registration for the GRE go here: https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/register/. The exam fee is \$205.

27. What is a good MCAT score?

There is not a simple answer to this question. People are admitted with a range of scores. If your composite score is in the 85% range or better, you probably have a viable score. However a high score does not insure admission and, conversely, you could be admitted with a slightly lower score.

28. Should I take a review class for the MCAT/DAT/GRE?

The decision to take a review class is an individual one. It may help you stay focused on your preparation, and it will also provide you with practice tests that can help you to be prepared for the actual exam. Regardless of how you choose to prepare, your entrance exams should be taken seriously and you should prepare accordingly. DO NOT TAKE THE EXAM JUST FOR PRACTICE WITHOUT STUDYING.

29. Does applying late or taking the MCAT in the late summer or fall potentially hurt my chances for admission?

Yes, absolutely!! Many admissions processes are rolling, and decisions are made through the fall and early winter. All admissions processes involve a rolling system for inviting candidates for interviews. If they don't see your application until later in the season, you will be competing for far fewer available interview spots. Late applications will affect your chances for receiving interviews. Taking the MCAT past June means that you must apply blindly (which means choosing which schools to apply to without the benefit of knowing your MCAT score). If you take a late exam and apply late, you won't get secondary applications until many earlier applicants have already gone on interviews! Please take our advice and ignore the deadlines published by medical schools!

Premedical Advisory Committee Application

Applicant Checklist

(not for submission)

- PAC Application Part I (online webform)
- Transcript (if coursework completed outside of Columbia)
- Personal Resume (separate document)
- Photo
- Activities Grid
- Activities Graph
- Autobiography
- Two Expanded Statements
- Supplemental Information Form (Questions 1 – 16)
- Schedule Committee Interview with Preprofessional Advising
- Access Decision Form for Committee Evaluation
- Disciplinary release for Judicial Affairs
- Letters of Recommendation (Deadline: June 1st, 2019)
- Submit PDF copy of submitted AMCAS/AACOMAS/AADSAS/VMCAS

Guidelines for Recommendation Letters for Prehealth Students

To Letter Writers:

We thank you for agreeing to write a letter of recommendation for an aspiring health professional. We realize that you are taking valuable time from your busy schedules to contribute. We wanted to give you some guidelines to help you make this task more manageable. If you have any questions please feel free to contact the one of the Preprofessional Advisors in the Center for Student Advising, 212-854-6378.

Role of the Premedical Advisory Committee (PAC):

The role of the Premedical Advisory Committee is to evaluate Columbia undergraduates and alumni who are applying to health professional school, most often, medical, dental, or veterinary medical school. The outcome of the committee evaluation process is a comprehensive letter that is sent to all of the schools to which the student has applied.

PAC letter of evaluation

This letter is written on a student's request and only after the student completes a pre-applicant process. The pre-applicant process includes submission of letters of recommendation, resume, autobiography, supplemental information form, as well as an interview with the PAC.

The final committee evaluation includes a comprehensive letter of evaluation written by the Premedical Advisory Committee followed by the letters of evaluation that the student submits as a part of the committee application process.

A letter written for a prehealth student will not only be viewed by the Premedical Advisory Committee but will also be sent along to the health professional schools to which the student has applied. Please be sure that your letters are written professionally and are on letterhead. Medical schools will not accept letters that are not signed and on letterhead of some type.

What are we looking for?

The PAC relies heavily on information provided by the student's letters of recommendation. We are looking for specific evaluations of the applicant's abilities in the area in which you supervised his/her work. When you comment on these abilities, please be specific. For example, citing the topic of a student's seminar paper or the subjects on which s/he was most vocal in class discussion helps to make a recommendation more convincing. We have found that the most useful letters include the following:

- 1) **Explanation of relationship between applicant and referee**
- 2) **Information on applicant's personal characteristics** (i.e., integrity, reliability, determination, motivation, honesty, professionalism, leadership, character, maturity, etc.)
- 3) **Information regarding applicant's social skills** (i.e., interpersonal skills, ability to interact with others in groups, ability to establish peer relationships)
- 4) **Comparative information:** How does this student compare to others whom you have taught or with whom you have worked?
- 5) **Assessment of applicant's academic potential:** (if applicable to relationship) – Is this student ready for the rigors of their intended program of study? Do they have good critical thinking and problem solving skills?

Where should I send this letter?

Letter writers may email recommendations to preprofessional@columbia.edu, provided the document (PDF preferred) appears on letterhead with a scanned handwritten signature.

All letters should be addressed generally (i.e. Dear Admissions Committee) and should be sent to the following address:

**Columbia University
Preprofessional Advising
Center for Student Advising
2920 Broadway Ave
403 Lerner Hall, MC1201
NY, NY 10027**

Timeline:

To meet student's needs for the application process, we ask that you submit your letters no later than **June 1st**. This timing is extremely important in order for the PAC to complete the Committee Evaluation in a timely fashion. If for any reason you are unable to meet this deadline, please contact Preprofessional Advising at (212) 854-6378. Thank you for supporting one of our prehealth students.

Preprofessional Advising Recommendation Waiver

This form must accompany your recommendation.

Applicant's Name: _____ UNI: _____

Date of Graduation: _____ Email: _____

Applying for entrance: Fall _____ Name of Reference Writer: _____

Title of course and semester/year taken (if applicable): _____

Please check all that apply:

Law MD MDPHD Osteopathic Veterinary Dental MPH Postbacc Other

TO THE APPLICANT:

Please fill in the spaces above and sign either (a) or (b) below before giving this form to the person writing the recommendation.

I authorize the writer to provide any information necessary to provide an honest evaluation from his or her knowledge of my qualifications, including but not limited to, my grades, GPA, class rank, scholarships, honors, awards, activities and comments from other instructors and assistants.

Under the terms of the FERPA act of 1974 students may, if they choose, have access to material such as this recommendation. Some students choose to waive their right. You should discuss this matter in detail with your advisor, and consult those writing recommendations on your behalf.

Check and sign either (a) or (b) below:

(a) I **DO NOT WAIVE** my right of access to this recommendation. () _____

(b) I **DO WAIVE** my right of access to this recommendation and I () _____ understand that I will not be able to see it under any circumstances.

TO THE PERSON WRITING THE RECOMMENDATION:

Pay careful attention to the decision the applicant indicated above concerning access to this recommendation. If neither (a) nor (b) is signed, this form should be returned to the student **before** you write the recommendation. If the student signed (a) s/he is entitled access to your letter.

Students are NOT permitted to deliver letters to the Office of Preprofessional Advising.

Please **TYPE** your letter on letterhead and be sure to sign it. We also suggest that you retain a copy for your own files, since letters do get lost in transit. You may **email** your letter, provided it is in **PDF format, is on letterhead and has an electronic version of your handwritten signature**. Please email recommendations to preprofessional@columbia.edu.

You may also mail or fax to:

Columbia University
Preprofessional Advising
Center for Student Advising
2920 Broadway Ave
403 Lerner Hall, MC1201
NY, NY 10027
T 212-854-6378, F 212-854-2458

Resources

Medical

Web Address	Organization	Content
www.AAMC.org	American Association of Medical Colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AMCAS info • MCAT info • Links to Allopathic Med Schools
www.aacom.org	American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Info on Osteopathic Medicine • Links to D.O. schools • Publications • AACOMAS info
www.ama-assn.org	American Medical Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health policy & Advocacy info • Ethics, education & accreditation • Journals and medical news • Doctor finder
www.snma.org	Student National Medical Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community service projects • Educational programs • journal
www.amsa.org	American Medical Student Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health advocacy • Community & public health • Health policy • Career development • Workshops & events
www.studentdoctor.com/interview	N/A	This is a site that collects information from pre-med students regarding their interviewing experiences at different medical schools.

Dental

Web Address	Organization	Content
www.adea.org	American Dental Education Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To obtain AADSAS application • Links to dental schools • Information on careers in dentistry • AADSAS application
www.ada.org	American Dental Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publications • Research & Clinical Issues • Dental Societies • News/Education

Admission Testing Services

Web Address	Organization
www.ada.org/dat.aspx	DAT
www.gre.org	GRE
www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm	MCAT

Veterinary Medicine

Web Address	Content
www.avma.org American Veterinary Medical Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal • News • Related organizations • Issues in Wash, DC • Links to vet schools (through SAVMA)
www.aavmc.org American Association of Veterinary Colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career information • Publications • Admissions statistics • Related veterinary info links
www.vmcas.org Veterinary Medical College Application Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized Application & instructions