

Frequently Asked Questions: Application Info

Q. What are the prerequisite courses required?

A. The prerequisite courses required for health professions graduate programs vary by program, but many require the introductory biology sequence with labs, introductory chemistry sequence with labs, introductory physics sequence with labs, and the organic chemistry sequence with labs (the O. Chem. exceptions are Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Athletic Training). For more detailed information on prerequisite courses, please visit the Pre-Health Tracks page.

Q. How should I plan out my courses?

A. Each pre-health track has a sample schedule for years 1 and 2; however, it is common for individual students' schedules to vary. Since most students will need to take the introductory biology sequence, all will need to begin their freshman year with the introductory chemistry sequence as it is a prerequisite for the introductory biology sequence. Freshman and first-year students should plan to meet with a staff or peer advisor to discuss their options.

Q. What is the best way to satisfy my English and Math requirements?

A. The best way for students to satisfy the English/Writing requirement is to ensure that they take at least two courses from the Writing, English, or Comparative Literature department, as well as two courses in math or stats while an undergrad at UCSB.

Q. Must I complete all prerequisite coursework before I apply?

A. This depends on when you plan to apply. Typically, professional schools require all prerequisite course work be completed before or by the end of the fall quarter of their senior year (for students applying during the summer between their junior and senior year) or by the time they graduate (for students taking a gap year and are applying at some point--usually during the 1st or 2nd summer after graduating). See your pre-health advisor to help decide which scenario best fits your individual circumstances.

Q. Can prerequisite courses be taken at a community college or online?

A. With the exception of Anatomy and Physiology courses with labs (typically required by physical therapy, athletic training, and occupational therapy schools), students should take all prerequisite science courses at UCSB or at another 4 year institution. See a pre-health advisor for more information.

Q. Can I study abroad? Can I take prerequisites internationally?

A. There are many benefits to studying abroad. Students should be cautioned that professional schools vary on whether they will accept prerequisite courses taken abroad. See a pre-health advisor for more information.

Q. Is it bad to P/NP courses?

A. All prerequisite courses should be taken for a letter grade.

Q. What should I do if I am going to get a bad grade in a class?

A. Students have a number of options if they end up earning a poor grade in a class, particularly if the course is a prerequisite course or other math or science course. UCSB students have the option to complete a late drop petition for up to 3 courses. Late Drop petitions that are approved will result in the course being dropped completely from the students schedule with no impact on their GPA. Students who wish to withdraw from a course after the late drop deadline or who have used their 3 late drops allowed or who fail a course should meet with a pre-health advisors as soon as possible to discuss their options.

Q. Which standardized exam do I have to take?

A. Medical school = MCAT, Dental school = DAT, Optometry school = OAT, Pharmacy school (some) = PCAT, and Physician Assistant, Physical Therapy, and Veterinary Medicine = GRE. See individual pre-health tracks for additional information.

Q. Should I study on my own or through a test prep company?

A. That is entirely up to you and depends on your preferred learning style(s) and how much you are willing and able to spend on test prep services. Please schedule an appointment with a pre-health advisor or stop in during drop-in advising to discuss further.

Q. Are there any recommended test prep companies?

A. We do not endorse any particular test prep companies over others; however, each exam administrator provides its own test prep materials, which can be viewed on their websites (See pre-health tracks.). There are many other third party companies that provide test prep materials, so it is up to the student to determine which might work best for them based on types of materials or resources each company offers as well associated costs.

Q. How much should I plan to study?

A. The amount of studying necessary is unique for each learner. We encourage students to take advantage of the CLAS' Academic Skills workshops and consultations to gain a better understanding of their individual learning styles as also to gain additional studying strategies.

Q. Is there required coursework prior to taking the exam?

A. The MCAT, DAT, OAT, and PCAT exams focus heavily on concepts in science and math as well as critical thinking and reasoning skills. The GRE is, of all the exams, more closely aligned to standardized exams like the SAT and ACT. The full year, introductory course sequences in biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics, as well as one to two courses in biochemistry (and psychology and/or sociology for the MCAT) are typically adequate to help students begin to prepare for the MCAT, DAT, OAT, and PCAT exams. See the pre-health tracks for links to the websites for each of these exams to review the suggested foundational knowledge the test administrators feel are necessary to adequately prepare for their exams.

Q. When do applications open?

A. Applications become available in mid-to-late spring and can typically be submitted in early June. Please see the Application Info section of the site for detailed information.

Q. Should I take a gap year? 2 gap years?

A. This is dependent on many factors and is best discussed with a pre-health advisor. Please also see the Summer/Gap Year section under Current Students.

Q. When should I ask for letters of recommendation?

A. This will depend on when you plan to apply, but you should begin considering who to approach to request letters of recommendation around the fall quarter and make the requests in early winter. If you are taking a gap year, you absolutely need to request these letters prior to leaving UCSB. Please see the Application Info section of the website.

Q. How should I prepare for interviews?

A. Journaling about your extracurricular experiences, starting your first year, is an excellent first step for preparing for interviews. Additionally, discussing your competitiveness with a pre-health advisor is highly recommended. Please see the Application Info section for more details.

Q. What types of interviews should I expect?

A. Professional school interviews take many forms, from traditional committee-style interviews to the newer MMI or multiple mini interview format. You will need to be prepared for either and any interview format, and to do that you need to practice interviewing skills, know your “Why”, and know how all of your experiences--personal, academic, and extracurricular--have helped you to become a well-rounded applicant. You can also visit the Career Center on campus for mock interviews and feedback. Please see the Application Info page for details.