

## Frequently Asked Questions: Pre-Medical Track

### **Q. How long is medical school?**

A. In general, doctors will spend 4 years in medical school and, depending on the licensing state, then graduates must complete a minimum of 1 year in an internship or residency training before becoming eligible for medical licensing.

### **Q. What is the difference between an M.D. and D.O.**

A. M.D. will attend allopathic medical school and D.O. will attend osteopathic medical school. Both M.D. and D.O. physicians are licensed in all 50 states. Each has similar education and certification, but there are differences in training and care philosophy.

### **Q. What do I need to know if I am considering an MD/PhD?**

A. There is a great deal to know about what it takes to get into an MD/PhD program as well as what is required once accepted into one. Much of this will need to be researched by the student as certain aspects of these programs may vary from program to program. In short, students considering these programs must meet all the same requirements as students who are applying to traditional MD programs and in addition to having a significant amount of undergraduate research experience, to include having conducted their own research projects. Additionally, programs often require both a personal statement and a research statement as part of the primary application. For a list of MD/PhD programs, students can refer to the AAMC's MSAR.

### **Q. When do I need to decide my specialty?**

A. While you may already be thinking about a specialty, most medical school admissions urge students to primarily view themselves as general practitioners as many students who think they know what specialty they would like to pursue more often than not end up changing their minds once they get into medical school and learning more about what it takes to pursue those specialties. If you do have a particular area of interest, however, then consider seeking an opportunity to shadow a professional in that area as well as other areas to round out your base knowledge of the profession.

### **Q. Do medical schools accept AP credit or classes taken Pass/No Pass?**

A. Policies regarding AP credit and Pass/No Pass credit may vary from program to program. We encourage students to review the policies at each school they plan on applying to in order to determine whether AP credits may be used to meet prerequisite course requirements. Note: At UCSB, AP credits earned that have been applied to certain degree requirements *will not appear* on the official UCSB Transcript, which is required by many schools that do accept AP credit. In order to cover all bases, we encourage students to take all prerequisite courses at UCSB or another 4-year institution for *graded credit*. We do not suggest students take prerequisite courses Pass/No Pass.

### **Q. If I believe I am going to get a C- in a class, should I intentionally get a D or F so I can retake the class and get a better grade? What do I do if I am going to get a low grade in a class?**

A. UCSB has a number of campus resources designed to help students who are struggling. We strongly encourage students to seek assistance as soon as possible to try to avoid these situations. We do not encourage students to purposefully fail courses, for any reason. If you believe that you may earn a grade that you feel is unsatisfactory, then please stop in to see a pre-health advisor during drop-in advising to discuss other options.

### **Q. Can courses I take abroad count as medical school prerequisites?**

A. Courses taken abroad that have direct UCSB equivalents may be taken in order to meet professional school requirements; however, we caution students on taking a large number of science prerequisite courses abroad.

### **Q. Will participating in more experiences make up for a low GPA?**

A. No.

**Q. Does all prerequisite coursework have to be completed prior to applying?**

A. No, but most programs do require that all prerequisite coursework be completed prior to matriculation.

**Q. When should I take the MCAT?**

A. The AAMC suggests that, in order to be able to adequately prepare for the MCAT, students should have completed full-year sequences in general biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry, and physics, as well as a quarter/semester introductory course in biochemistry, psychology/sociology.

**Q. When should I start studying for the MCAT?**

A. That is up to you; however, we suggest studying during a time when you have very few distractions and can ensure that you are able to dedicate, at least, 8 weeks of studying, during which you also complete several full-length practice tests under simulated test-taking conditions.

**Q. Do I need a test prep course?**

A. Test prep needs vary from student to student. Some aspects to consider when determining which types of test prep materials you will need include the costs associated with purchasing materials/courses as well as your own preferred learning style(s).

**Q. When should I apply?**

A. When you are ready and feel that you are at your most competitive as an applicant. This will be different for each student, so we encourage you to schedule an appointment to discuss with a pre-health advisor.

**Q. Should I take a gap year?**

A. Reasons for taking a gap year vary for each student, and choosing to take a gap year or not requires weighing a number of factors, such as current/anticipated GPAs (AO and BCPM), MCAT score, and experiences, to name a few. Please schedule an appointment with a pre-health advisor to discuss your individual needs further.

**Q. Will taking a gap year hurt my application?**

A. No.

**Q. When should I begin writing my personal statement?**

A. Students should begin considering—and possibly writing a response to—the question, “Why do I want to be a physician?” as soon as they begin considering the pre-medical track. In some cases, this becomes the precursor to a personal statement. Beyond that, students should begin drafting their personal statement as early as during the fall prior to their application season (following summer) because most personal statements will go through several edits and revisions.

**Q. What is the average cost of medical school?**

**Prep: (Exam prep, applications, interviews)** MCAT exam \$315, AMCAS \$160 (1 school; + \$39 for each additional school)

**Attendance (Tuition, Room/Board, Other Expenses):** \$32,495 (Public Avg.) and \$52,515 (Private Avg.)

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A. According to the website Student Debt Relief (<https://www.studentdebtrelief.us/news/average-cost-of-medical-school/>), it may cost as much as \$300,000 (or more) to become a physician, which includes the cost of an undergraduate degree.

**Q. Is an undergraduate degree required?**

A. Typically, yes.