

Pre-Med at the University of South Carolina?

Frequently Asked Questions for Pre-Medical Students

What are medical schools looking for?

Medical schools are interested in applicants with excellent academic abilities (as shown in grades and MCAT scores), strong interpersonal skills, clear motivation for medicine, and demonstrated compassion and concern for others.

What are the course requirements?

Most medical schools require a year each of general biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry and physics, all with labs. Some med schools have other requirements, and they occasionally change. Your best bet is to subscribe to the Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR) on the www.aamc.org website.

Can I use AP credit to fulfill my premed requirements?

You can use AP credits at most med schools, but always refer to the MSAR to find specific med school procedures. Usually, if you use AP credit to place out of an introductory science course, then you must replace it with an upper level course with laboratory in that discipline.

Can I take another reading and writing course in place of English?

While some medical schools may accept literature in translation or other reading and writing courses, it is best to simply take two English courses, as some schools are sticklers about that. Any two courses in our English department are fine.

Do I have to major in a science?

No, major in whatever interests you. That is fine with medical schools, as long as you do well in the required premed science courses.

Can I take courses pass/fail?

Yes, but do not take any of the med school prerequisites pass/fail. Medical schools want to see that you have challenged yourself academically, so don't overuse the pass/fail option.

Can I take required premed courses in summer school?

Yes, as long as it is at an accredited U.S. college or university, and it is a course with lab normally taken by that school's premed students. Most medical schools would prefer you take summer courses at a four-year institution, but many also accept courses from two-year colleges. If you hope to transfer credit to USC, consult first with the corresponding USC department, but you do not need to transfer credit for it to count for medical school application purposes. You should not overuse the summer school option, but it is fine to take one two-course sequence, like physics I and II or organic chemistry I and II in summer school.

Can I study abroad?

Yes, it's a wonderful experience that shouldn't be missed, if it interests you. Medical schools like to see that students have had broad, interesting college experiences, and studying abroad demonstrates that you can get along in a culture different from your own.

Can I take premed requirements abroad?

No, do not take any of the required premed courses abroad.

What kind of extracurricular experiences should I seek?

You should pursue anything that interests you. Medical schools are interested in students who have been active contributors on campus, and who have a range of interests. You should choose a few things to do meaningfully and well, rather than dabble in a long list of activities. Community service is an important way to demonstrate your concern and compassion for others.

Do I need to have medically-related experiences?

Yes, it is critically important that you involve yourself meaningfully in a medical setting, to show medical schools that you have observed medical practice first-hand. Students do this through volunteer work in hospitals and clinics, serving as EMTs or hospice volunteers, summer jobs, internships, formal premed summer programs, or shadowing physicians at work, either during the school year or during school vacations.

Are there opportunities to volunteer in a hospital during the school year?

You can find a list on the OPPA website of local hospitals that offer volunteer programs: www.sc.edu/oppa.

Do I need to do research in the summer to get into medical school?

It depends on the medical school or if you think you may be interested in pursuing an MD-PhD. Check the med schools' websites and the MSAR to find out if research is valued at each school. If you plan to pursue an MD/PhD, then you absolutely need to do research and a lot of it. Research is a valuable experience that many medical schools view as a plus.

What is the MCAT?

The MCAT is the standardized test required by all medical schools. It is a seven hour, computer-based exam, given about 25 times a year, which has sections on verbal reasoning, biological sciences, physical sciences and behavioral sciences. You may take the MCAT when you have completed the general and organic chemistry, biology and physics premed requirements and biochemistry. Psychology and sociology are also tested.

Who will write my letters of recommendation?

When you apply to medical school, you will need to have about three to six letters of recommendation from faculty and others who know your work, such as supervisors, advisors, and coaches. Med schools typically require two letters from science professors. These letters are submitted directly to the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) when you apply.

Is there a GPA cut-off for getting into medical school?

No, there is typically no GPA cut-off for getting into most med schools.

What is the timetable for applying to medical school?

You should apply to medical school in June of the year BEFORE you intend to matriculate in medical school. In other words, you would apply in June 2023 to begin medical school in August 2024. You should take the MCAT by July of your application year.

What kinds of grades will I need to be accepted?

Currently, with a strong 3.7 average, both overall and in the sciences, you can apply to medical school with reasonable confidence in being accepted, assuming you have good MCATs and impressive non-academic experiences. The very top schools are generally only interested in applicants with 3.8 averages and above. However, there are many individual factors that come into play in the admissions process, so students should consult with their pre-med advisor about their individual situations.

What can I do if I'm determined to be a doctor, but my grades aren't good enough?

Many applicants take a few years after graduation to strengthen their academic records. They may choose to take additional science courses at a local university, or to enroll in a formal post-baccalaureate program for students interested in medical school who need to improve their credentials. If you find that you are doing poorly in your science courses, first seek help academically. If you continue to struggle it may be a wise strategy to put your premed plans on hold, concentrate on subjects you like and do well in, and then do the sciences later if you are still interested in going to medical school. Be sure to consult with your pre-med advisor about your individual situation.

Is it okay to take time between college and medical school?

Yes, a growing number of applicants opt to take at least a year between college and medical school, to allow them to take a breather between two intense academic experiences, spread out the premed requirements, acquire some work experience, or strengthen their applications. Medical schools often like older applicants because of the maturity and life experience they bring to their applications.

When should I meet with a pre-med advisor?

Whenever you have a question or concern, contact Pre-Professional Advising at 803-777-5580, or submit a question on our website: www.sc.edu/oppa. Most pre-professional students check in once a semester.

When is the OPPA open?

The OPPA offers virtual appointments during the day and some evenings. To schedule an appointment you can call the number above or email the health professions advisor at eileenk@email.sc.edu.

Office of Pre-Professional Advising 208 Sumwalt College 803-777-5580

eileenk@email.sc.edu www.sc.edu/oppa

University of South Carolina

Taken from Swarthmore College Health Sciences Office's website, Swarthmore, PA

<https://www.swarthmore.edu/health-sciences-office/frequently-asked-questions-premedical-students>

Tailored to University of SC