Preface

The guidelines presented in this document provide important details for Johns Hopkins undergraduates or recent graduates as they relate to the intention of applying to allopathic (MD), osteopathic (DO), and dental (DDS, DMD) school, all of which utilize the Committee Letter process offered at Johns Hopkins University. Details of the support provided for applicants to other health professions schools, including veterinary medicine, nursing, optometry, pharmacy, etc., are covered in individual guides available on the Pre-Professional website: http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/health.Health.professions.guides.

Reference in this Guide to “medical school” refers to applicant to allopathic (MD), osteopathic (DO), and dental (DDS, DMD) school.

Focus of Guide Four

“Guide 4: The Ongoing Application Process” focuses on the questions and challenges commonly faced by applicants following submission of the AMCAS or AACOMAS or AADSAS application. In Guide 4, we have chosen to present information in a Q&A format, under specific categories. The ongoing medical school application process is complicated and requires endurance, considerable attention, organization, and professionalism. We hope this guide answers many of your questions.

Professionalism

It is critical that you are professional throughout this process, particularly in how you approach, provide information to, and express appreciation for the efforts of those members of Johns Hopkins University and medical school communities involved with the admissions process. Be mindful of your verbal and non-verbal communication, including eye contact, handshake, interview attire, and courtesy. Remember that you are representing yourself as well as Johns Hopkins University, and that professionalism is a key ingredient of a successful applicant and successful career!

Blackboard

The Office of Pre-Professional Programs and Advising utilizes the Blackboard management system for sending information to and receiving information from students eligible to use the Health Professions Committee Process.

Applicants using the Health Professions Committee Process through Johns Hopkins will be required to utilize Blackboard to complete and submit information that is part of the Committee process. When you apply, the Blackboard site will provide quick and easy access to critical and timely information and resources regarding your application to medical or dental school, including forms, PowerPoint presentations, and important links. Resources within our Blackboard site will help to keep you organized and up-to-date as you continue through the application process. You will be able to track and account for all of your steps via an applicant checklist and monitor your submissions.
Ongoing Questions about the Committee Letter and Letters of Rec

Q. When will my Committee Packet be submitted?
A. First, please know that the Committee Letter is not in any way associated with submission of your AMCAS/AACOMAS/AADSAS or the verification process. Your materials (Committee Letter + individual letters of rec) are submitted through a completely different process and must adhere to a totally different timeline than your submission of the AMCAS, AACOMAS, or AADSAS application. The vast majority of Committee materials are sent starting mid-July and extending into August.

Q. How will I know when my Committee Packet has been uploaded?
A. We cannot submit your Committee Packet until you have: (1) submitted your unverified application(s), Master List of Schools, and AMCAS Letter Request Form (electronic copies to Bb); (2) CREATED, NAMED (include the application year), and LOCKED your quiver, (3) notified Mrs. Krause or Mrs. Sanders via the Locked Quiver form. You will know when your Committee Packet has been uploaded when you receive an email confirmation from a system called Virtual Evals.

Q. If I am applying to both MD and MD/PhD programs, do I create different quivers?
A. In the case of medical schools that participate in AMCAS, the answer is no. If you apply to a combination of MD and MD/PhD programs, you will create only one quiver, therefore only one set of letters will be available for uploading to the medical schools.

Q. In what circumstances will I create more than one quiver?
A. If you apply to both osteopathic (DO) and allopathic (MD) schools, you will create two quivers since osteopathic medical schools work through a different application service (AACOMAS) than allopathic schools (AMCAS). This allows applicants the option of including a letter in their quiver from an osteopathic physician that can then be made available to osteopathic medical schools.

Q. Is there anything special I need to do if I am applying to osteopathic medical school?
Yes. If you are applying to both MD and DO schools, you will check off BOTH of those options on the Master List of Schools. You will also need to create two quivers, one for MD schools and the other for DO schools and label them appropriately. Please realize that we cannot send your Committee packet to osteopathic medical schools until you have provided us with an electronic copy of your AACOMAS application. The AACOMAS application insures that we indicate your correct AACOMAS ID number on your Committee Letter.

Q. What should I do if one of my letters of recommendation has not yet been submitted?
A. If this involves a JHU faculty member, it is perfectly fine to let us know. It will likely be a faculty member who has letters outstanding for other applicants. We will do our best to help.
Q. Do I need a separate quiver for the Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDSAS)?
A. No. If you are applying through the Texas application service, you will use the same quiver that you establish for allopathic (MD) schools.

Q. Can I customize the letter of recommendation packets that are sent to medical/dental schools?
A. If you use the Pre-Prof Office Committee Letter process, your Committee Letter and individual letters of recommendation will be sent as one packet of letters to all of the allopathic, osteopathic, and dental schools to which you apply. In other words, you cannot customize sets of letters for individual schools. However, supplementary letters of recommendation are accepted by many schools. In the case of schools participating in AMCAS, the AMCAS Letter Service allows additional letters of recommendation to be made available to all of your schools, a designated group, or a single school. (Those additional letters are not sent via the Pre-Professional Office.)

Q. Some medical and dental schools ask for a certain number of recommendation letters. What do I do?
A. Don’t worry. All of your medical or dental schools will receive and accept the same Committee Letter package from this office.

Q. What do I do if I receive an email from a medical school indicating a deadline for the receipt of my letters of recommendation?
A. This situation does not apply to applicants using the Health Professions Committee Process. Please understand that the majority of applicants to prehealth schools do not have the benefit of a Committee process and therefore the schools send these requests out to ensure timely receipt of materials. The prehealth schools have indicated that they understand and support the Hopkins Committee process and our timeline will not adversely affect your applications. Please do not email Dr. Verrier or another advisor if you receive this email from a school.

Q. How do I respond on a secondary application when asked, “Type of letters of recommendation” used by JHU?
A. The options listed are:
   (1) Committee Letter
   (2) Letter packet
   (3) Individual letter.

The correct answer for JHU is #1, Committee Letter. As defined by the AAMC, “A Committee Letter is a letter authored by a pre-health committee or pre-health advisor and intended to represent your institution's evaluation of you. A Committee Letter may or may not include additional letters written in support of your application.” We typically refer to your Committee Letter and letters of rec as a “Committee Packet.” However, we do not use a “Letter Packet” as defined by AMCAS, so don’t let the jargon confuse you.

Q. Do additional letters of recommendation have any impact on an application?
A. As a general rule, additional letters of recommendation have limited impact on a candidate’s application. It typically makes the most sense to introduce an additional recommendation at a secondary stage in the application process, meaning post-interview, or when placed on a waitlist.
**Designating and Making Changes in My Application Status**

**Q.** If I changed my fall course selections from what I originally indicated on my AMCAS application, do I need to notify the medical schools?

A. No. This is not an issue for admissions offices. Typically, medical schools only look at future coursework if the applicant is missing a premedical requirement.

**Q.** What do I do if I am not taking a course this fall that I indicated on my AMCAS I would be taking?

A. This is not a problem; you do not need to contact the schools about the change in your schedule. Medical and dental schools understand your course loads may change.

**Q.** The completion of my Master’s degree has just been posted to my transcript. How do I notify my schools?

A. The AMCAS instruction manual outlines very specific directions for making an “Academic Change Request.” They also outline the changes they will not make once your application is verified. If your request does not fall within the parameters outlined by AMCAS, you will need to submit the information in an “update” letter later in the application cycle, preferably in early December. Please check the AMCAS instruction manual or contact them for more information.

**Q.** What if my plans during my gap/bridge year were not set when I submitted my AMCAS application? Should I send a special letter?

A. This new information is best brought up during an interview or in an “update” letter to be written later in the application cycle.

**Q.** What if I ultimately decide to delay my application to a subsequent application cycle?

A. Please send an email to preprofessional@jhu.edu to formally notify us of this decision. It is also helpful to send an email to your Pre-Prof advisor.

**Q.** Do I have to do anything special to forward my MCAT scores to the med schools?

A. No, you don’t have to do anything special to get the scores to the schools. MCAT scores are automatically uploaded to your AMCAS application at all of your medical schools.

**How Should I Approach Secondary Application Questions?**

**Q.** How much time should I spend on secondary essays?

A. Considerable. Within reason, the secondary essays should be on par with the quality of your personal statement. You should rely on peers, family, or others you can trust to review your secondary essays. While many of the schools will ask the same questions do not make the mistake of trying to race through the secondary applications using the ‘cut and paste’ method. Tailor your essay questions to that school to show them you are serious about being a member of their incoming class. **Always**
proofread to ensure you do not have obvious spelling and grammar mistakes and that you do not mistakenly name a school in another school’s essay.

Q. Many of the secondaries have optional essays. How should I approach answering these?
A. In general, it makes sense to attempt to answer every essay question. Regarding “why that particular school,” it is obviously important that you research the institution and are able to identify features that are particularly well suited to your interests and you as a person. The “diversity” question requires careful consideration. Although you may not consider yourself “diverse” based on indices of race or ethnicity, it is important that you acknowledge an appreciation for the importance of diversity and what you’ve learned from exposure to diverse cultures, experiences, etc. Finally, you have great latitude in answering open-ended “additional comments.” Beyond all you have shared elsewhere on your application, you must dig deep to share another aspect of your background, interests, life goals, etc., that you are comfortable sharing. It is not so much the actual answer, but rather how you express yourself that is important.

Ongoing Contact With Schools

Q. Do grades matter for this semester?
A. Yes! If you do not get interviews by December or January, you’ll want to submit unofficial mid-year transcripts to the medical schools, to demonstrate your continued academic success. Once accepted, most schools will also want final transcripts before you matriculate.

Q. What do I do if a school asks me to complete a “Dean’s form”?
A. Typically, Dean’s forms are sent to verify academic and/or behavioral standing of an applicant. All Dean’s or Dean’s-related forms should be forwarded to Dr. Verrier. (The most common document forwarded to Dr. Verrier is the Dean’s Form from Washington University in St. Louis.) Any miscellaneous forms from schools should also be forwarded to Dr. Verrier. For Texas residents, the TMDSAS assessment form is NOT required for applicants from institutions who use a Committee Letter like Johns Hopkins.

Q. Can I have a rec letter uploaded at a later point in the process?
A. The Pre-Prof Office uploads your Committee Letter and individual letters of rec (from veCollect) to medical or dental schools once. The office does not upload additional letters of rec that you may want to send later in the application process. If the situation arises where you would like an additional letter uploaded to either all of your schools, a subset, or a single school, you will do so by using the AMCAS Letter Service. The instructions can be found at the AMCAS Letters FAQ site.

Q. How do I use the AMCAS Letter Service to send additional letters?
A. Applicants use the AMCAS Letter Service to send additional letters of recommendation beyond those included with the Committee Packet. Please review the AMCAS Instruction Manual for the details on how that is handled.
Q. What if I decide to apply to additional medical schools?
A. This is not a problem. Follow these instructions:

1) To designate additional schools following the initial submission of your application to AMCAS, go to the “Medical Schools” section of the AMCAS application, select the additional schools, and re-certify and re-submit your application to AMCAS. This does not mean that your AMCAS application will be re-verified. (Follow similar procedures for AACOMAS or AADSAS in necessary).

2) If you are applying to additional allopathic medical schools through AMCAS, there is NO NEED to notify the Pre-Prof. Office. Those schools will be automatically notified by AMCAS. The only exceptions are if you are adding LSU School of Medicine, Universidad Central Del Caribe, or University of Puerto Rico; in those cases, you need to notify the Pre-Prof. Office.

3) If you are applying to additional dental schools through AADSAS, there is NO NEED to notify the Pre-Prof. Office. Those schools will be automatically notified by AADSAS.

4) If you are applying to additional Texas medical schools through TMDSAS, there is NO NEED to notify the Pre-Prof. Office. Those schools will be automatically notified by TMDSAS.

5) If you are adding osteopathic schools or applying to additional osteopathic medical schools through AACOMAS you must send an email to either Mrs. Krause or Mrs. Sanders indicating the osteopathic schools you added.

Q. I interviewed at a school without rolling admissions that does not announce acceptances until March. Is there anything I can do to improve my chances?
A. It is perfectly fine to send an email that indicates your continued interest in the school and why you are a “good fit” for them. However, do not do this if the school clearly requested no communication from applicants.

Q. What if a school told me that I would hear within four weeks and it is now six weeks since I interviewed. What should I do?
A. Be patient. Sometimes schools cannot meet their stated timeline for notifying an applicant. The fact you have not heard does not necessarily mean bad news. It is fairly common that applicants are put in the position of having to wait during this very arduous process.

Q. Is it ever appropriate to notify another medical school in a city you have been invited to interview that you will be in the area interviewing?
A. In general, it only makes sense to make this request if you will be traveling an unusually long distance, like across the country; however, schools will vary in their response. Make it clear that you are grateful for their consideration and the opportunity to interview whenever the opportunity may occur. It cannot hurt your candidacy to make the request. It is best to make the request by email.

Q. What does it mean to be “on hold” prior to being invited for an interview?
A. This typically means that the admissions committee wants to review more candidates before they make their further admissions decisions. By late spring, most “on hold” applicants are either invited for interviews or rejected.
Sending Letters of Interest, Updates, or Intent

Q. When is it appropriate to send a “letter of interest?”
A. A letter of interest is often appropriate if you are waitlisted after an interview or if your application is on hold. This is an excellent opportunity to communicate your strong interest in the medical school, express appreciation for your ongoing consideration, and highlight the unique contribution you would make to the incoming class. The letter should be concise, focused, and no more than a few paragraphs.

Q. When is it appropriate to send an “update letter?”
A. Only if you truly have information to update in regard to your application, i.e., new grades or new job. It is most often sent if you have been waitlisted at a medical school and it’s been a few months since they contacted you. However, if you have not received any medical school interviews by December, a letter of interest might be best combined with an update letter. Please make an appointment with an advisor if you are unsure about an update letter vs. a letter of interest.

Q. When is it appropriate to send a “letter of intent?”
A. Although we don’t recommend sending a letter of intent, there are a few situations when it may be appropriate to articulate your “intent to attend” a school (i.e., when requested by a medical school past the April 30th deadline). This letter is not appropriate for applicants not hearing any communication from medical schools; it is generally only appropriate when specifically requested by a medical school.

NOTE: In general, if a medical school contacts you regarding your status, you should see it as an opportunity to contact them in return.

April 30th!!

Q. What happens on April 30th?
A. AMCAS "traffic rules" state that medical school applicants can hold multiple acceptances until April 30th of the year of matriculation. By April 30th, all applicants must select one school. Students must notify all schools of their decision or they risk having all offers of admission rescinded. Once schools know how many students will be matriculating, they may begin using their waitlists to fill any open spots. Please refer the AAMC TRAFFIC RULES.

Q. Will we know financial aid packages by April 30th?
A. It is the responsibility of medical schools to provide financial aid information to accepted applicants in a timely fashion. Since applicants holding multiple acceptances must narrow down to a single school by April 30th, medical schools typically provide financial information to accepted applicants well in advance of this date.
On The Waitlist?

Q. What does it mean to be on a waitlist following an interview?
A. Being waitlisted simply means the medical school hasn’t yet accepted you, but it also does not want to reject your application. In other words, they didn’t say no to your application but they didn’t say yes, either. Notification of a waitlist status is a good time to send a follow-up letter to express your continued interest in the school. Being on the waitlist means that you have a chance of being accepted and you should not lose hope! You can stay on waitlists well into summer, even if you’re accepted to other schools.

Q. How do schools use their waitlists?
A. Medical schools use waitlists to ensure that their incoming class is full by the beginning of their programs in August. Since they know a certain percentage of students they admit will choose other schools, medical schools accept more students than the number of places available. If a higher number of students decline admission than the medical school anticipated, spots will open up and waitlisted students will be accepted. The number of waitlisted students who are accepted varies greatly from year to year and school to school.

Q. If I am on a waitlist, when might I be admitted?
A. You will only be admitted when a spot opens up. This could happen any time between April and matriculation. Many schools report that they accept the highest number of waitlisted students from May through July, but sometimes spots will become available the week or even the day before the program begins. You cannot accept an offer of admission from another school after you have started orientation at a school.

Q. Are waitlists ranked? Will a school tell me what number I am on their waitlist?
A. Some schools rank their waitlist and others do not. It is most important to remember that if you have been waitlisted, you have been deemed qualified for admission. When accepted applicants withdraw from an incoming class, the medical school will look to admit waitlisted candidates who would best balance the composition of the class.

Q. How should I respond to a waitlist notification?
A. This is an excellent opportunity to express your strong interest in the school. Send a letter to the school that restates your strong interest in their programs, expresses appreciation for your ongoing consideration, and highlights the unique contribution you would make to the incoming class. The letter should be concise, focused, and preferably one page. If you have any questions or would like to discuss your letter, please schedule an appointment with an advisor.

Q. What about sending a “letter of intent” to my waitlisted school of choice?
A. We recommend that you do not reference any letter to a medical school as a “letter of intent.” In general, schools are not weighing their decision on you based on whether you say you will attend that school. A “letter of interest” on the other hand, where you update a school on your recent activities/accomplishments, emphasizes the strength of your application, and explains how/why you are
particularly well matched to the school, is much more appropriate. There are cases, however, when the term “intent” to attend a school that is your top choice is appropriate to be used, particularly if requested by the medical school.

**Getting Accepted**

Q. I just received an acceptance letter. What do I do?
A. Congratulations! Your first step is to celebrate your success! If you receive and hold multiple acceptances, you have until April 30th to narrow it down to one school; after that point, you are in danger of having offers rescinded. Once you have decided on your school, follow their instructions about submitting a deposit and any other steps they require. Also, continue to investigate ways to fund your medical school education.

Q. Are there any advantages to interviewing at schools after I have already been admitted to my top school?
A. No. If you do continue to interview after being admitted to your top school, you are taking up valuable interview slots for candidates who may be interested in and seriously considering that medical school. If you have been admitted to a preferred school, you have an ethical obligation to notify the remaining schools that you have accepted an invitation to attend elsewhere.

Q. I am thinking about deferring admission for a year. Can I do that?
A. Each medical school has its own deferral policy. Some will only allow students to defer if they have received a significant opportunity (Fulbright, Rhodes, etc) whereas others will allow you to defer, no questions asked. Check with the individual medical school regarding their policy. In general, however, it is not advised to apply to medical or dental school if your intention is to defer your admission.

Q. What do I do about schools that require a deposit? Will I get that money back if I choose not to matriculate?
A. Most MD medical schools have deposits of $100 or greater. The deposits are usually refundable before April 30 or will be applied toward your tuition if you ultimately attend the school. For many DO schools, the deposits are between $500 and $1,500 and typically not refundable.

**What If It Appears I Will Not Be Accepted?**

Q. If I am not successful in gaining acceptance, should I make alternative plans for next year and/or consider reapplying?
A. This is a difficult decision that involves weighing how long to remain available for a medical school offer versus making alternative plans for the fall and beyond. Reapplying right away is not always the best strategy. You want to make sure that your application is as strong as possible, which may mean you need to address areas of weakness in your background before applying again. Your second application should feature new and different experiences. These can range from additional coursework to volunteer work to research and more. Developing a new personal statement also helps demonstrate
the additional experience and maturity you have gained since the last time you applied. While waiting before applying again may be frustrating, it often means the difference between being accepted and not. Commit to spending the time to become the most competitive candidate possible.

**Miscellaneous Questions**

**Q. For schools having information sessions at JHU, is it appropriate to introduce myself?**
A. Sure! If the medical school to which you are applying is on campus, you should introduce yourself after the information session, particularly if you have been invited to or attended an interview. It shows an added level of interest in the school and allows you to network with the admissions office.

**Q. Can I apply to medical school if I'll be abroad during the application year?**
A. Yes, but it is very tricky. Hopefully you have applied early as that is the single most important component for successfully managing an application process while abroad. This enables medical schools to notify you of interviews earlier, during a time when they are still flexible in scheduling them. In addition, you should have sent out a separate letter explaining to the schools when you will be in the country and available to interview and, in your secondary applications, any schedule restrictions you are facing. Flexibility is essential. Most schools allow applicants to select the interview date. However, if the options do not match with the applicant’s schedule, you can call the school to explain your situation and location abroad. If it can be avoided, it is best not to be applying to medical school while abroad.

**Q. What if a medical school asks for my first semester grades to be uncovered?**
A. U.S. medical schools accept the Johns Hopkins University covered grade policy. If, by chance, a school makes a specific request for your grades to be uncovered, it is only possible if the school sends an official letter (email is fine) stating that you are precluded from consideration or your candidacy is critically harmed because the first semester grades are covered. Please contact a Pre-Prof advisor in this situation; do not contact the Registrar’s Office about uncovering first semester grades.

**Q. If you know someone at the medical school, and that person contacts admissions on your behalf, is that okay?**
A. It won’t hurt your application, but make sure it’s handled in a professional manner.

**Q. When is the appropriate time to meet with the Pre-Prof staff if we’re not hearing from the medical schools?**
A. Generally speaking, if you have not received interviews by 8December, you should contact a Pre-Prof advisor. Likewise, if you find you are sitting on waitlists or holds in May, you should speak to an advisor. It is important to stay in contact with the office throughout the application process.
Special Status Applicant Resources

Texas Applicants
http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/health/Applicants/tmdsas.html

Canadian Applicants
http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/health/Applicants/canada.html

International Applicants
http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/health/international.students.html

In Closing

Navigating your way through pre-health requirements is a challenge that takes careful planning and great patience. If you are pursuing pre-medical or pre-dental requirements, the planning process requires precision, adaptability, and flexibility. Each student’s academic path is unique and the one you set for yourself should take into account your ability to handle multiple sciences, your emerging strengths as a student, and a timeline that is yours alone. We encourage you to seek input from our advisors to devise a plan that is appropriate for your emerging academic and professional goals.

ADVISORS IN PRE-PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS AND ADVISING

David Verrier, Ph.D., Director, dverrier1@jhu.edu
Ana Droscoski, J.D., Associate Director, adrosco1@jhu.edu
Ellen Snydman, M.S., Assistant Director, esnydma1@jhu.edu
Katie Cruit, M.S., Assistant Director, kcruit@jhu.edu

Support Staff
Angie Decker, Office Manager, decker@jhu.edu
Carolyn Mae Krause, Administrative Coordinator, c krause@jhu.edu (Alpha A-L)
LaTonia Sanders, Administrative Coordinator, ladytee@jhu.edu (Alpha M-Z)