GUIDE THREE

Applying to Health Professions School

Johns Hopkins University

Office of Pre-Professional Programs and Advising
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http://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/preprofadvising/
Guide Three: Applying to Health Professional Schools

This document provides important details for Johns Hopkins University students and alumni who intend to apply to allopathic (MD), osteopathic (DO) and dental (DDS, DMD) school. All of these programs expect to receive the Committee Letter provided by Johns Hopkins.

In general, reference in this guide to “medical school” refers to allopathic (MD), osteopathic (DO) and dental (DDS, DMD) schools. Details of the services we offer to applicants to other health professions schools, including veterinary medicine, nursing, optometry, pharmacy, and others, are explained on the Pre-Professional Office website.

Focus of Guide Three

*Guide Three: Applying to Health Professions School* focuses on the many details students and alumni should consider when applying to medical or dental schools. In this guide, we:

- provide an overview of the application process when applying to medical/dental school through Johns Hopkins University
- provide a Q&A for the most common questions applicants have when completing their professional school primary applications (AMCAS, AACOMAS, TMDSAS, and AADSAS).

Advice for successfully navigating the medical or dental school application process following the submission of your primary application is covered in *Guide Four: The Ongoing Application Process*.

Overview of Applying to Health Professions School

The Office of Pre-Professional Programs and Advising offers advice, support, and feedback throughout the application process. The vast majority of medical and dental school applicants from Johns Hopkins University participate in the Health Professions Committee Process. Our goal as an office is to assist you to the best of our ability throughout the application process. Please remember, however, that we assist more than 400 applicants per year and ask that you do your best to make sure your requests of our staff and Committee are reasonable given the demands on our resources.
Blackboard

The Office of Pre-Professional Programs and Advising utilizes the Blackboard system to disseminate information to and receive information from applicants participating in the Johns Hopkins University Health Professions Committee Process. Each year, a Blackboard site is built specifically for the upcoming application cycle. Blackboard offers quick and easy access to critical and timely information and resources regarding your application to medical or dental school, including forms, PowerPoint presentations, and links to other important material. Resources in the Blackboard site will help keep you organized and up-to-date as you complete the application process. Also in Blackboard, you will be able to track and account for all of your steps via an applicant checklist, as well as monitor the progress of your submissions to the JHU Health Professions Committee.

Applicant Responsibilities

In one word, professionalism is required through every stage of the application process. In order to do our work as professionally as possible, we rely on you to uphold the following responsibilities:

- **Stay organized.** Create electronic and paper files for your application materials.
- **Meet deadlines.** Missing a deadline could mean you have to delay your application for a whole year. Set up your calendar now. Use the tools or devices at your disposal to help you remember the timelines and deadlines related to applying for your target schools.
- **Read and save emails.** You will receive a good number of emails from the Pre-Professional Office during this time. It is important to read them carefully and save them for future reference.
- **Address all involved in the application process in a professional manner.** Pay special attention to how you introduce yourself, acknowledge others, and follow-up on a correspondence or interaction.
- **Establish good verbal and non-verbal communication.** Make sure you establish eye contact, shake hands, verbally express your gratitude, and send thank you notes when appropriate.

What Can I Expect of My Pre-Professional Advisors?

First and foremost, the role of a pre-professional advisor is to advise and support you through the application process. Part of this responsibility, however, requires us to provide a realistic assessment of your readiness as an applicant. Our goal is to help you become the strongest applicant possible and, for some of you, that might mean slowing down the process by delaying your application to a future cycle. It is important that you be flexible about your timeline and we will encourage you to do so. Ultimately, however, the final decision of when you apply is all yours.
We will support you as an applicant by providing up-to-date and relevant information, assisting you with presenting the strongest application possible, and helping you make good decisions throughout the process.

**What are Medical/Dental Schools Looking for in Applicants?**

It is essential that you realistically assess your grades and test scores, the depth and relevance of your experiences, and evidence of the competencies necessary to succeed in the medical profession. You must also be able to articulate specific reasons why you want to be a doctor.

As you review the components of an effective application, it is important that you critically assess your strengths and weaknesses so that you are applying from a position of relative strength. For these reasons, it is vital that you reflect upon what makes you a unique or compelling applicant. As a reminder, schools are considering several factors, including:

- Academic Achievement
- Performance on Standardized Entrance Exams (MCAT or DAT)
- Research and/or Scholarly Inquiry
- Medically-Related Clinical Experience
- Community and Public Service (both clinical and non-clinical)
- Additional Activities
- Letters of Evaluation
- Evidence of Competencies (see below)

### Competencies

Competencies are the skills, knowledge, and abilities medical schools seek in applicants. The competencies outlined by the [Association of American Medical Colleges](https://www.aamc.org) (AAMC) are as follows:

#### Pre-Professional Competencies
- Service Orientation
- Social Skills
- Cultural Competence
- Teamwork
- Oral Communication
- Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others
- Reliability and Dependability
- Resilience and Adaptability
- Capacity for Improvement

#### Thinking and Reasoning Competencies
- Critical Thinking
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Scientific Inquiry
- Written Communication

#### Science Competencies
- Living Systems
- Human Behavior
**For Dental Applicants:** The field of dentistry requires a high degree of dedication and social consciousness. A good way to help you decide whether dentistry is right for you is to spend time visiting different dental offices. This will provide you an opportunity to observe the work of a dentist as well as discuss what a career in dentistry involves. In addition, it is helpful to attend an information session at a dental school or to take the initiative to visit as a prospective student. A dentist must be able to communicate effectively, develop rapport with others, and to demonstrate similar personal competencies as outlined above. Dental school applicants are advised to also be concerned with community issues and demonstrate a record of sustained service to underserved populations.

**Application Timeline**

There are several possible timeframes for applying to medical school and each of them depends on the strength of your candidacy at the time of your application.

- **Applying junior year** means you will enter medical school the fall after graduating from JHU.
- **Applying senior year** includes a bridge year, and you will enter medical school in fall of the following year (e.g., submitting an application in summer 2020 for matriculation to medical school in fall 2021).
- **Applying after several years of work/other experience.**

Regardless of when you apply to medical or dental school, consider these factors:

**In the fall semester before you apply:**
- Create a veCollect account (See [Guide Two](#)) and begin requesting letters of evaluation.
- View the recording of the Applicant Information Session (available in late November/early December; distributed via email to juniors, seniors, and alumni.)

**January through March of the year you apply:**
- Open a Blackboard account to find the HPCA, track your document submissions, and review all announcements from the Pre-Professional Office. (Specific information about opening a Blackboard account will be sent via email to juniors, seniors, and alumni.)
- Prepare the Health Professions Committee Application (HPCA).
- Submit the HPCA by the deadline. We do not accept late submissions!

**April:**
- Draft your personal statement/essay.
- Continue reading all Blackboard announcements.

**Early May:**
- The American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) and the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS) become available online. These are your primary/centralized applications to medical school.
Early June:

- First date that you can submit your applications to AMCAS, AACOMAS, or AADSAS (Associated American Dental Schools Application Service). APPLY EARLY! We suggest submitting applications no later than the first week of June.

Mid-July to late August:

- The Pre-Professional Office begins submitting Committee Letters and individual letters of evaluation to medical schools.
- The uploading of Committee Letters and letters of evaluation continues into late August.

Mid-summer through December:

- You will begin to receive secondary applications in early July. Try to return them within a few weeks. The sooner you submit your secondary applications, the better your chance of securing earlier interviews.

Early September:

- Interviews at most medical and dental schools begin.

Mid-October:

- First acceptance decisions for schools with rolling admissions.
- October 15: The Johns Hopkins University Health Professions Committee Process and application cycle closes. Completed primary applications and all other supporting documents must be uploaded to the Blackboard by this date.

Late February of the following year:

- Interviews end.

April 30th:

- The last day applicants can hold multiple acceptances to medical schools.
What are the Implications of a Gap/Bridge Year?

There are several reasons to delay your application until senior year or beyond. In fact, more than 80% of JHU applicants to medical and dental programs take at least one bridge year. Many Hopkins alumni choose to pursue research or a master’s degree during their bridge year(s), or engage in opportunities such as AmeriCorps, Teach for America, City Year, a Fulbright, etc. Medical schools value the maturity and life experience gained after graduation, and choosing a bridge year may ultimately make you a more successful applicant.

For more information about how to approach a bridge year, visit: http://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/preprofadvising/pre-medhealth/after-graduation/.

When Should You Apply?

You should apply to medical or dental school when your application is strong and competitive, and you have a reasonable chance to be invited to interviews.

All applicants are encouraged to apply only once to medical or other health professions school, so it is important to think carefully about the timing of your application. Here are some good reasons to postpone your application:

- **Your MCAT or DAT scores are not yet competitive.** Consult the Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR) to review MCAT score ranges for your schools of interest. If your overall MCAT score falls below the 10th percentile for a majority of your schools of interest, we strongly encourage you to retake the MCAT and, for most of you, this means delaying your application for at least one year. Pre-dental applicants should consult the ADEA Official Guide to Dental School to reference DAT score ranges for individual dental schools.

- **Your cumulative and/or BCPM GPAs are not yet competitive.** Consult the MSAR to reference the cumulative GPA and BCPM GPA ranges for your schools of interest. If your overall cumulative or BCPM GPA falls below the 10th percentile for a majority of your schools of interest, you should delay applying, taking the time to enhance your academic record. If you are applying as a junior, delaying your application allows your senior year grades to be included in your application. If you are applying as a senior, you may want to consider academic record enhancer post-bac programs to strengthen your academic profile before applying to medical school.

- **Your letters of evaluation (LOEs) are not strong.** It is absolutely critical you secure LOEs that are strong and are going to be an asset to your overall application. This is no easy task at Johns Hopkins; with large lecture classes and team-taught courses, it can be difficult to get to know your professors. If you do not have solid relationships with at least a few faculty members going into your junior year, you should take this as a sign that it might be best for...
you to delay your medical school applications and use the time to build a relationship with some of your professors. Classes during the junior and senior year are often smaller and, if you put your mind to it, you will certainly be able to develop the type of rapport with your professors and others that will result in strong evaluations.

- **You struggle answering the basic question “Why do you want to be a doctor (or dentist)?”** Struggling to articulate an answer to this question often means that you have not had sufficient exposure to the medical profession, meaningful work and volunteer experience, or that you have not challenged yourself to reflect upon those experiences. You will be asked this question repeatedly throughout the application process. Take the time to practice articulating your motivations for pursuing a career in medicine and be prepared to provide *specific* reasons why you have chosen this path.

- **You are attempting to balance competing priorities.** You have to balance essays to write, letters of evaluations to gather, standardized tests to study for, schools to research, as well as the rest of the challenges of real life, and figuring out what to do this summer. If you can’t spend sufficient time on application prep now (and writing secondary essays over the summer), you may want to spend your time getting organized this year, and focus on actually applying next year.

- **You have limited exposure to clinical medicine or patient interaction.** If you haven’t participated in activities that allow you to serve the community and build the interpersonal skills you need to be a physician, it will be hard to convince schools that you have a realistic understanding of what you’re about to undertake. If you are concerned that you lack significant clinical and/or volunteer experiences, it is important that you speak with an advisor in the Pre-Professional Office to develop a plan for obtaining that experience.

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**Are you READY to apply?**

It is important to realistically assess your candidacy. Consider these questions:

- Have you met with a Pre-Professional advisor?
- Are your metrics (undergrad GPA, BCPM GPA, test scores) sufficiently strong?
- Have you engaged in compelling medically-related clinical experiences?
- Will you be able to discuss clinical interactions and express your ability and passion for clinical care?
- Do you have experience relating to others from significantly different backgrounds and life circumstances?
- Are you on track to assemble a sufficient number of quality evaluations by June?

**The bottom line:** Are you applying at your strongest?
Admissions Tests

Medical and dental schools expect applicants to take standardized tests relevant to their professions. We suggest you aim to take the MCAT or DAT once, after you have allowed for ample study time.

The Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT)
Comprehensive MCAT information can be found at the Association of American Medical Colleges website: https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/.

The Dental Admissions Test (DAT)
Comprehensive DAT information can be found at the American Dental Association website: https://www.ada.org/en/education-careers/dental-admission-test

MCAT and DAT information can also be found on the Pre-Professional website.

Fee waivers are available for both the MCAT and DAT and each of the centralized application services. Any applicant who qualifies for the Fee Assistance Program (FAP) automatically qualifies for an HPCA fee waiver through the Pre-Professional office. FAP eligibility decisions are tied directly to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services' poverty level guidelines.

To learn more about FAP, go to: http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/

If you did not apply for a fee waiver and are dealing with circumstances that you believe impact your ability to pay our application processing fee, please email our office at preprofessional@jhu.edu explaining your specific situation and we will do our best to assist you.

When should I take the MCAT or the DAT?
Ideally, you will take the MCAT or DAT prior to completing your HPCA and beginning the application process. If you plan to take a gap/bridge year, optimal timing can be late in the summer between the junior and senior year. Some applicants choose to take the January test senior year, prior to submitting a primary application that summer. Ideally, you should have your entrance exam score prior to applying to medical or dental school. With that in mind, we recommend you sit for the MCAT no later than April of the year you plan to submit your application to medical school. It takes about four weeks to receive your official MCAT score, and an April exam will allow you to have your score before submitting your medical school applications.

What is the best way to prepare for the MCAT?
Both self-study and preparation courses are effective, though each has pros and cons. A test prep course provides you with copious review materials and practice exams, as well as a structured classroom and study schedule. However, the monetary price can be quite high. Self-study is less expensive and many good review books and practice exams are available at bookstores and through online booksellers. Note that the self-study approach requires a tremendous amount of self-discipline. If you opt for self-study, consider forming a study group, making sure your study
partners are self-motivated, reliable, and dedicated. The AAMC has prepared some worthwhile self-study resources.

**How/when are my MCAT or DAT scores sent to schools?**
For the MCAT, scores are automatically released to AMCAS. You may release your scores to non-AMCAS schools via the MCAT Testing History (THx) System. Scores generally are processed and sent within 30 days of your test date. For dental schools, AADSAS will obtain your official DAT scores from the American Dental Association's Testing Services Center and will import them directly into your application. If you take the DAT after your ADEA AADSAS application has been sent to your designated dental schools, an updated application, reflecting your DAT scores will be forwarded to schools as soon as the scores are received. At the time that you register for the DAT, you can opt to have your DAT score forwarded to as many dental schools as you select, at no cost. You will be charged a fee for reports requested and forwarded at a later date -- and once you have received your DAT score.

**When is it appropriate to re-take the MCAT or the DAT?**
Keep in mind that your ultimate goal should be to take the test a single time. These tests are not like the SAT, where it is generally expected that students will sit for the test multiple times. **It is in your best interest to take the MCAT or DAT only once.** However, if your score is below average for medical or dental schools of interest to you, then you should consider re-taking the test. Only re-take the test when you have taken the time for additional preparation and you have proven to yourself in practice tests that you can earn a higher score. Schools vary in how they consider multiple test scores; regardless, you can assume they will see every score from all tests you have taken.

In addition, it is typically not a good idea to retake the MCAT or DAT without truly assessing what you need to improve, how to make the necessary improvements, and to give yourself the time needed to achieve this goal. This means that, in most cases, you do not want to immediately repeat the test and you may be in a position that requires you to postpone your application.

**Should I re-take the MCAT or DAT if I have a solid overall score but a low score in one section?**
A low score in any one section can be a liability. Medical and dental schools like to see consistency and a balanced MCAT or DAT score profile. If one section is significantly lower than the others, speak with a Pre-Professional advisor about whether it makes sense to re-take the exam and strategies to improve in that section.

**If I have a very high MCAT or DAT score but average grades at Hopkins, will the medical or dental schools place less weight on my grades?**
An applicant should never assume that a high MCAT or DAT score will offset average or poor grades. Standardized test scores are only one metric that health professions schools evaluate. Remember that your academic record and MCAT or DAT score are just one of many components necessary for a strong and competitive medical or dental school application.
What if I have not taken the MCAT or DAT prior to submitting my primary application?
If you are taking an MCAT or DAT in June or July, we recommend you submit your primary application before receiving your test scores, so that your application is not delayed. AMCAS and AADSAS will verify and process your application without an MCAT or DAT score.

What if I already have an MCAT or DAT score but am planning to retake the test after I have submitted my AMCAS/AACOMAS or AADSAS application?
If you have taken the MCAT or DAT once and will be re-taking the test again in the summer, you will need to indicate the date of your future MCAT/DAT in your primary application. When the schools review your application, they will see a future test date and will delay the review of your application. Your test score will then automatically be made available to your designated schools. Schools will not review your application until your new test scores, secondary applications, and letters of evaluation are received.

Please note: It is imperative that you keep your projected MCAT/DAT date accurate on your application. If you decide to NOT take the MCAT/DAT again, you must update your AMCAS/AADSAS application, indicating that you are NOT planning to take the MCAT/DAT at the date you designated. Please follow the AMCAS/AADSAS instruction manual in regard to any changes with your MCAT/DAT test dates.
The JHU Committee Process

The Committee Process refers to the procedures required by Johns Hopkins University and the Office of Pre-Professional Programs and Advising in order for applicants to obtain a Committee Letter.

This section of Guide Three will focus on the following topics:

- Overview of the Health Professions Committee Process
- The Health Professions Committee Application (HPCA)
- The Committee Letter
- Letters of Evaluation and veCollect
- How and When Committee Letters are Transmitted to Medical/Dental Schools

Overview of Health Professions Committee Process

The Health Professions Committee Process refers to the steps required for obtaining a Committee Letter from Johns Hopkins University. Applicants to medical or dental school must complete the Health Professions Committee Application (HPCA), providing information that is vital to the writing of the Committee Letter. The individual letters of evaluation collected from faculty, supervisors, research PIs, etc., are attached to the Committee Letter and that entire packet is uploaded to the medical and dental schools of your choosing.

The Health Professions Committee Application (HPCA)

The first step in the Committee Process is the completion of the Health Professions Committee Application (HPCA). The HPCA is the online application to obtain a Johns Hopkins Committee Letter. It collects demographic information, academic record, and co-curricular experiences (research, medically-related clinical experience, community service, employment, etc.). The HPCA mirrors the AMCAS application in that much of the information you are asked to provide is the same (or very similar) to the information you will enter into the AMCAS/AACOMAS/AADSAS applications.

The Committee Letter

The information collected in the HPCA is referenced in the writing of your Johns Hopkins Committee Letter. The Committee Letter introduces you as an applicant, shares what makes you compelling, discusses what has shaped your interest in medicine/dentistry, and highlights your experiences and activities.
Letters of Evaluation and veCollect

Letters of evaluation are a critical element of the health professions application process. Medical and dental schools value the perspectives of people who have observed your work and can speak to your abilities and personality. At Johns Hopkins, you are responsible for monitoring all aspects of requesting and collecting evaluations through our online letter of evaluation system called veCollect. An overview of how to obtain letters of evaluation and a description of the veCollect letter system are covered in Guide Two: Letters of Evaluation and the veCollect Letter System.

How/When Committee Letters Are Transmitted to Medical/Dental Schools

Applicants often wonder when the Committee Packet (Committee Letter + individual letters of evaluation) will be uploaded to medical/dental schools. The Committee Packet is prepared on a totally different timeline than your submission of the AMCAS/AACOMAS/AADSAS application. The Pre-Professional Office begins uploading Committee Packets to medical and dental schools in mid-July, and the process continues into August (and even into the fall for some applicants). In contrast to the importance of early submission of your AMCAS/AACOMAS/AADSAS application, early submission of the Committee Packet by the Pre-Professional Office is not necessary.
The Medical/Dental School Application Process

Two important steps of the medical school admissions process are submission of primary (AMCAS, AACOMAS, AADSAS) and secondary (school-specific) applications.

This section of Guide Three will focus on the following topics:
- Application Services
- FAQs: Where to Apply
- FAQs: Transcripts
- FAQs: AMCAS & AADSAS Coursework
- FAQs: AMCAS & AADSAS Experiences
- AMCAS & AADSAS Letters of Evaluation
- The Personal Statement
- Resources

Application Services

There are four primary centralized application services for medical and dental school:
1) American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) – MD programs
2) American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS) – DO programs
3) Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS) – dental programs
4) Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Services (TMDSAS) – MD and dental programs at Texas public schools

You can—and should—submit your primary applications to these application services even if your Committee Letter, MCAT score, or letters of evaluation are not yet complete.

It’s advantageous to submit your primary applications early, even if other materials are not yet ready.
FAQs: Where to Apply

When deciding where to apply, make sure to review the *Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR)* for detailed information about each medical school or the *ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools* for dental schools. You can only apply to one type of program at each institution (e.g., MD, MD-PhD). If you decide to change the program type after submitting your primary application, notify the school directly. In addition, it is important to note that you can add schools after you’ve submitted your AMCAS, but you cannot delete schools.

**To how many schools should I apply?**
As a general rule, it is good to aim for 18 to 20 schools unless you there are some good reasons for applying to fewer. When an applicant applies to more than 25 schools, it implies that the schools have not been well researched and there was little to no strategy behind school selections.

Dental school applicants should aim for about 10 schools.

**How does my state of residency impact where I should apply?**
Applying to schools as an in-state candidate usually puts you at an advantage in the admissions process. Many state schools accept less than 15% of their class from outside of their state. In-state tuition also tends to be lower. Conversely, some state schools admit over 20-25% of their students from out-of-state. These are schools that may make sense to investigate, particularly if you have some connection. Don't be afraid to look at medical/dental schools in states that, upon first glance, you would not consider!

As previously discussed, TMDSAS is the primary centralized application for medical and dental programs at public schools in Texas. Please note that residents of other states rarely to never apply to Texas state schools because of the heavy preference for in-state residents in the application process.

**How do I determine my state of residence? Can I switch my state of residence?**
Residency rules vary by state. If you have a question about state residency, please contact an official at the medical school in question; usually the admissions office can direct you to the proper person or office.

- You can only be a resident of one state. The state you list as your home state on your application is the state that medical/dental schools will consider as your choice of residence.

- If you are included as a dependent on either parent’s tax return, then you are a resident of their state. If you are considering switching states and you’re still enrolled as a college student, then most likely it is because one or both parents are moving. If this is the case, then make sure you change your driver’s license and voter registration to match a parent’s address.
If you have graduated and are claiming residency in a new state, then you should not only have a permanent address, driver's license, and voter registration card in that state, but you should also plan to work in that state and file state taxes. Some public medical schools require this last item.

Residency rules vary from state to state, and how residents and non-residents are defined by an admissions committee varies from school to school. In fact, public medical schools within the same state sometimes vary in terms of these rules. Your first step when considering a change in residency is to contact a residency official at the schools in question. Reference the MSAR to review acceptance data for "resident" and "non-resident" applicants, interviewees, and matriculants at each institution you are considering.

Are there special interstate agreements?
Yes, some states that either do not have medical schools or have very few have created special interstate agreements so that their residents still have in-state privileges. These include:

- **WICHE.** Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education operates an exchange program for students from 13 western states that gives them preference in admission and reduced tuition in selected out of state medical and other professional schools.
- **WWAMI.** The University of Washington School of Medicine serves as the public school for Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho.
- **FAME.** Finance Authority of Maine’s Access to Medical Education Program, which gives Maine residents preferred access to Dartmouth, Vermont, and UNECOM.
- **DIMER.** Delaware Institute of Medical Education and Research, which has Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia serve as Delaware’s medical school.

What if I am applying to Texas medical schools?
If you are a Texas resident, you must use TMDSAS to apply to Texas public medical and dental schools (except for Baylor, which is an AMCAS school). Applicants who are not residents of Texas rarely if ever apply to Texas public medical and dental schools. For more information on the application and TMDSAS, please visit [http://www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas](http://www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas).
How should my GPA and MCAT score affect where I apply?
Each year, the Association of American Medical Colleges publishes the Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR). The MSAR contains admissions statistics, including each school's median GPA and MCAT for accepted applicants, as well as the GPA and MCAT ranges for accepted applicants. Using this data, you can assess whether or not you will be a competitive candidate at a specific school. For dental school applicants, the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) publishes the ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools annually. It lists the admissions requirements for all U.S. and Canadian dental schools. Follow the same advice above, and select schools with median GPAs and DAT scores close to yours.

How important should rankings be as I decide where to apply?
Be careful about putting too much emphasis on rankings. The U.S. News and World Report ranking uses a methodology that may change year to year and may emphasize qualities that are not as important to you. What is most important is not the ‘prestige’ of the medical school you attend. Rather, it is selecting a school where you can thrive and be a leader.

I have heard medical/dental school admissions deans refer to their mission statement. Aren’t they all about the same?
While you may think that all medical/dental schools have the same basic mission of helping to train compassionate physicians who are able to care for patients, mission statements can vary dramatically between schools. Some schools, like Loma Linda (owned and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church), emphasize Christian principles whereas others, like University of Chicago's Pritzker School of Medicine, emphasize interdisciplinary scholarship and innovation for the betterment of humanity. While you can read each school’s mission statement in the MSAR/ADEA Guide, you should also explore the websites of your schools of interest. They often feature more in-depth information about the school's philosophy. You should identify schools whose mission parallels your professional goals and personal values.

What should I look for as I examine a school’s curriculum?
In looking at curricula, you need to consider your learning style. In college, in which classes did you learn best? Were they lecture-based or more hands-on and interactive? Did you like group work or did you prefer to work on your own? These types of questions can help you establish whether medical schools with a more traditional, lecture format, a problem-based learning approach, or a combination of the two styles would be best for you. If you are interested in knowing which medical schools have combined degree programs (e.g., MD-PhD; MD-MPH), consult the MSAR.

You should also take the grading policy of the school into account. Some schools rely entirely on a Pass/No Pass grading system because they feel it fosters a spirit of cooperation rather than competition between their students. Other schools use a letter grading system (A, B, etc.) beginning in your first year and continuing throughout your time in medical school.

Should cost be a factor in my decision of where to apply?
Medical/dental school tuition varies greatly based on factors including residency, availability of scholarships, and others. While nearly all medical students graduate with some debt, the amount of debt can range from a few thousand dollars to upwards of $200,000. The MSAR/ADEA Guide
includes information on financial aid and you can also check directly with schools to see what their policies are. If you are fortunate enough to qualify for a scholarship to a medical/dental school, you will need to weigh carefully the financial benefits against how well that school matches your needs.

**What other factors should I consider?**

- **Location.** You will be spending four years of your life in medical/dental school so you want to make sure it is in an environment you like. Where have you lived before and what did you like about those places? Are you a city person or do you prefer a more rural setting? What climate do you prefer? What is the cost of living like?

- **Composition of Student Body.** Do you prefer a smaller or a larger class? How diverse is the class? What is the male/female ratio? Think about your preferences in these areas when selecting schools.

- **Personal Factors.** Are you close to your family and want to be at a school near them? Do you have a significant other who needs to stay in a specific location? During medical school, you will probably be too busy to travel great distances to be with loved ones and friends. You should consider whether any of these factors will shape your choice of schools.

**I want to apply to MD-PhD programs. How do I decide where to apply?**

There are a number of factors to consider when choosing MD-PhD programs, including location, funding, strong program/research support, ample faculty support, and access to clinical programs. In addition, in the MSAR you can see the number of MD-PhDs that matriculated to each school.

**What if I choose to apply to additional medical/dental schools after submitting my primary application?**

Please review the AMCAS/AACOMAS/AADSAS applicant guides and instruction manuals for details on applying to additional schools after submitting your initial application.

**I want to apply to osteopathic medical schools. How do I decide where to apply?**

When applying to osteopathic medical schools, you can utilize many of the same strategies as when applying to allopathic schools. You need to ask yourself similar questions about your background, the school’s mission statement and curriculum, cost, location, etc. Your best source of information about osteopathic medical schools is the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine. They publish the Osteopathic Medical College Information Book, which we recommend you purchase.

**Is there anything special I need to do if I plan on applying to dual degree programs?**

In AMCAS, you must indicate the program type for each individual school to which you apply. Therefore, you can apply to some schools as an MD applicant, and to other schools as a dual-degree applicant, whether that’s MD-PhD, MD-MBA, MD-MPH, etc.

For all schools—except DO—you create only one quiver in veCollect. (For directions on how to create quivers for DO schools, please see Guide Two: Letters of Evaluation and the veCollect Letter System, located on the Pre-Professional Advising website.)
FAQs: Transcripts

How should I request a transcript from the Registrar?
When requesting transcripts, please follow the instructions noted in the AMCAS Applicant Guide, the ADEA website, and through the JHU Registrar’s Office.

Key points:
1) AMCAS/AADSAS will generate a transcript request/matching form. Make sure you print the form, sign it, and forward it to the Johns Hopkins University Registrar’s Office.
2) You will have to do this for every college you have attended.
3) We suggest you request a transcript when your spring semester grades have been posted.

Will medical/dental schools see my transcripts?
No. You will be submitting your transcript from Johns Hopkins and any others (e.g., from summer coursework or study abroad) to the centralized application service (AMCAS, AACOMAS, AADSAS). In your primary application, you will manually list all of your college coursework you took at any undergraduate institution, not just courses you completed at Johns Hopkins.

Can I submit my AMCAS application prior to AMCAS receiving my transcript?
Yes, you can submit your AMCAS application before they receive your transcript.

Can I submit my AMCAS application if I have not yet created my quiver in veCollect?
Yes. Your AMCAS application is completely separate from veCollect.

FAQs: AMCAS & AADSAS Coursework

Before entering your coursework, you must secure a current copy of your official transcript as well as access to the AMCAS/AACOMAS/AADSAS applicant guides and instruction manuals. The Q&A’s below relate to aspects of completing your application that are specific to Johns Hopkins University.

Can I have my first semester grades uncovered?
For the majority of situations, the answer is no. However, if you receive correspondence from a medical/dental school asking you to uncover grades, please email our office and we will assist you.

How do I enter my covered grades from first semester of freshman year?
You will enter the grade as "S" or "U" and then check the "Pass/Fail" box on the bottom of the screen. You should do this for any class you took S/U (or P/F or P/NP if taken at another school).

How do I classify “Semester Type” for coursework at Johns Hopkins?
JHU’s semester description is 4-1-4. (4 months in the fall, 1 month during the winter break, and 4 months in the spring.)
Do I list AP coursework from high school on my application?
According to the AMCAS Applicant Guide, “To claim AP credit, the credit hours must be listed on your transcript. AP courses should be entered under the term in which the college credit was initially granted. If no term is designated, include these credits with freshman coursework (FR).”

In addition, if your transcript gives credit for the class but says labs are waived, ie: BIOL Biology (Lab I waived), your AMCAS application should indicated this as “lecture only” because you’re only getting credit for the courses, not the labs. Please review the application guides and instruction manuals for more information.

How do I assign “Class Year” status to my coursework?
If you have been continuously enrolled at JHU since you were a freshman, then assign class year as follows: first year at JHU = Freshman (FR) status; second year at JHU = Sophomore (SO) status; etc. If you were enrolled part-time at JHU, or if you had interrupted enrollment at JHU, you should use the chart in the AMCAS Applicant Guide to determine your Class Year status.

How should I identify course titles on my application?
Enter course titles exactly as they appear on your Johns Hopkins University transcript (or transcript from any other schools you may have taken coursework). If the exact course name does not fit into the designated field, enter a logical abbreviation.

When entering the “Course Number,” should I include AS or EN before the number?
Yes, you can include any letters that appear before the official course number. As per the AMCAS Applicant Guide instructions: “Course numbers should include all letters and numbers associated with the course… If a course number does not fit in the space provided, include the last eight digits rather than the first ones. Decimal points, if part of the course number on your official transcript, should be included when entering the course number.”

What courses count towards my “BCPM” GPA?
Your BCPM GPA is composed of courses that are considered to be Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Mathematics (BCPM). Although you are the one who decides how to classify specific courses, the AMCAS Applicant Guide has a list of suggested courses for each category, which is also consistent with AADSAS policies. Generally speaking, a course should be classified as the discipline from which the majority (60%+) of its subject matter originates. AMCAS/AADSAS typically refrains from changing these classifications if the applicant’s selection appears to be reasonable and consistent. In the event that AMCAS/AADSAS does change the classification, and you believe the change is incorrect, please review the AMCAS Applicant Guide for direction on how to file an “Academic Change Request” to your application.

How does AMCAS/AADSAS calculate GPA? Do they include Graduate GPA with the Undergrad GPA?
The AMCAS/AADSAS application provides a GPA for freshman, sophomore, junior and senior years. AMCAS also subdivides your GPA into three GPAs: (1) BCPM, 2) All Other (non-science/math), and (3) Cumulative. The graduate school GPA, if applicable, is separate.
AADSAS calculates two science GPAs, one with math coursework (BCPM) and one without (BCP).

If I will be taking classes in the fall, should I enter the classes in my application?
Yes. If you are planning to take classes in the coming year, you will list those projected courses and indicate "Current/Future" as the course type. This is particularly important in the case of a pre-med requirement (e.g., one of your designated English courses) or an advanced science course. If you end up not taking one of the courses, it is not necessary for you to contact AMCAS or individual medical schools.

Should I include +/- modifiers (A+, etc.) when I enter my grades?
Yes, you should list your grades exactly as they appear on your JHU transcript. This includes listing + or - modifiers.

What “Course Classification” and “Course Type” do I select for Research for Credit?
For "Course Type," select “Lab Only” in the case of Research for Credit. For “Course Classification,” select the abbreviation of the department that is awarding the credit (e.g., BIOL). Do not designate Research for Credit as “Special Studies.” If the Research for Credit is graded, the course will be calculated into your GPA and if the department awarding the credit and grade is Biology, Chemistry, Physics, or Math, the course will be calculated into your BCPM GPA.

What Course Classification do I use for a Medical Tutorial? Do I list it as "lab only" or "lecture only"?
Medical Tutorials can be classified under “Health Sciences” (HEAL). For lab or lecture, there really isn’t a right or wrong answer. Just be sure to justify whatever you do select, in case you are asked about it.

What if I am a Public Health Studies major and will be (or have taken) classes at JHSPH?
If you will be taking or have taken classes at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (SPH) while you were an undergraduate (as part of your Public Health Studies major), you do not enter Bloomberg as a separate school. List the public health classes just as you would regular semester classes and classify them as Senior Year (SR) and not as graduate classes. It is not necessary for you to request a separate transcript from the SPH.

I received a master’s degree from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Since they use the quarter system, how do the AMCAS quarters match up with the Bloomberg quarters?
Summer quarter = summer
First quarter = fall
Second quarter = winter
Third quarter = spring

I repeated a course while at Johns Hopkins, what do I do?
On your application, you must enter the original grade and the repeated grade. Here are some guidelines:
• Be certain to designate both attempts of the course as “Repeat” (there is a checkbox for repeat at the bottom of the screen).
• You have an ethical obligation to enter the original grade for all repeated courses.

I earned my Bachelor’s degree in 3 years. How do I assign statuses to my coursework?
Assign Freshman (FR), Sophomore (SO), and Senior (SR) status to your courses (skip Junior).

I took a course at another university but did not transfer the course credit to JHU. Do I need to enter that course into my AMCAS/AADSAS application and submit a transcript for that university?
Yes. You must enter every course you have attempted, even if no JHU credits were earned, and you must request a transcript from that college or university.

While in high school, I took courses at a community college. Are these courses considered high school status or college status?
Assign high school status to college-level courses taken while you were in high school.

I have transfer credit from another university on my JHU transcript but the course listing appears differently on each transcript. How should I list these courses on my AMCAS/AADSAS application?
Enter the courses on your AMCAS/AADSAS application as they appear on the transcript from the school where you originally attempted the courses, not as they appear on your JHU transcript. List courses under the school at which you originally took the courses and do not list them twice.

How should I enter classes or lessons taken at Peabody if I am not a Peabody student?
Courses taken at Peabody can be listed as if you took them at Homewood since they are listed that way on your Hopkins transcript.

When entering coursework and choosing an academic term, which “system” should I choose?
For the majority of colleges and universities, you can look at the back of your official transcript to see the particular system by which the institution operates. If you are unsure, you can contact the Registrar’s Office or an AMCAS Applicant Relations Specialist at 202-828-0600. In addition, it will not negatively affect your application if you choose the incorrect system.

FAQs: AMCAS & AADSAS Experiences

What “Experience Type” should I select?
Experience options on the application are similar to those on the HPCA. Choose the experience types that most closely approximate your situation. In cases where more than one option may be chosen, use your best judgment; there isn’t a right or wrong answer for which experience type you choose.
How should I name my experiences?
Give each experience a descriptive, detailed, and logical name. It’s always a good idea to provide more information as opposed to less information.

How should I select and approach writing about my “most meaningful” experiences?
You can choose up to three experiences that have been the most meaningful to you. Admissions committees are going to pay special attention to these experiences. Once you choose an experience as “most meaningful,” you will have space to write 1325 additional characters to summarize why you selected the experience as such.

In what order should I list my experiences?
It doesn’t matter since AMCAS automatically sorts the entries by date initiated.

What if I don’t know who to put for “Contact Name & Title” for one of my experiences?
You must list someone, so use your best judgment for both the HPCA and AMCAS applications.

I was elected to a leadership position that I will hold during the upcoming academic year. Can I include this position on my AMCAS/AACOMAS/AADSAS application, even though I will not technically hold the position until after I have submitted my application?
You may include positions for which you have already been elected if your responsibilities begin before you submit your application.

Should I include upcoming summer experiences if I begin them after I submit my application?
No. Only include current or past experiences, not future experiences that have not yet begun.

I have experiences that are significant to me but that are not “medically/dental related.” Should I include them?
Yes. If the experiences are significant to you and if you invested a notable amount of time in them, you should include them on your AMCAS application. For instance, if you have studied an instrument or played a sport for several years, you may wish to include this in the Work and Activities section, even if you pursue that interest informally.

How much detail should I include in the descriptions?
It is very important that you complete your experience descriptions with the assumption that the reader has no knowledge of the organization or activity in which you participated. The suggested format is to:

- describe the nature of the organization or experience,
- describe what you did or accomplished, and
- describe what you learned.
Do you have any other tips in completing this section?

- Quality is more important than quantity.

- Remember that each experience you list is subject to discussion if you are invited to interview – you might be asked anything about it, and places where you may have embellished beyond your actual participation will become painfully obvious.

- Proofread, and have someone else proofread as well. Review it carefully!

- High school activities should not be included; however, you may choose to highlight a high school experience if it was important/significant and your involvement continued into college.

- Brevity and conciseness are preferred, but you also want to thoroughly explain what you gained from each experience.

- If you list a publication, make sure it's been accepted for publication and cite it properly. If the paper is just being "prepared for submission" or "submitted," include this detail as part of the research description.

- The majority of honors can be listed under one experience description. If you made Dean's List (or any type of honor like that) for more than one semester, use the description area to list the applicable semesters.

- If you received any scholarship, fellowship, or other honor that is not nationally recognizable, describe it briefly.

- You can creatively combine activities if you want to include more and are running out of space – work with your advisor to brainstorm good activities to combine.

- If you won an award, provide the granting organization, the basis on which you were selected for the award, and some measure of the award’s competitiveness. Remember, you want to provide medical/dental school admissions committees with plenty of data on which to evaluate you as a candidate.

**AMCAS & AADSAS Letters of Evaluation**

**IMPORTANT for AMCAS:** If utilizing the Committee Process at Johns Hopkins University with a Committee Letter written by the Pre-Professional Office, list “Ms. Angie Decker” as your only letter of evaluation when you complete the Letters of Evaluation section of the AMCAS application. By entering Ms. Decker’s name, a single AMCAS Letter Request Form will be generated that will provide your AMCAS letter ID. You will submit this form to the Pre-Professional Office and it will be the cover sheet for your Committee Letter packet (your Committee Letter + individual letters of rec) that will then be uploaded to medical schools.
Enter this information into the AMCAS Letters of Evaluation section: (This will make more sense when you are working on the AMCAS application and get to this section.)

Add a letter of evaluation:

- **Letter Title:** JHU Committee Letter
- **Primary Contact’s Prefix:** Ms.
- **Primary Contact’s First Name:** Angie
- **Primary Contact’s Last Name:** Decker
- **Primary Contact’s Title:** Office Manager, Pre-Professional Programs and Advising
- **Primary Contact’s Email:** preprofessional@jhu.edu
- **Primary Contact’s Phone:** 410-516-4140
- **Organization Name:** Johns Hopkins University
- **Address:** 3400 N. Charles Street
- **Country:** United States
- **State:** Maryland
- **City:** Baltimore
- **Postal Code:** 21218

When you submit your AMCAS application, you will receive an AMCAS Letter Status Notification email. **When you receive this email from AMCAS, please DO NOT contact us regarding the “letter receipt status.” We will be doing all we can to process your Committee packet in a timely manner.**

**For Dental Applicants:**

**IMPORTANT:** If you are utilizing the Committee Process and will have a Committee Letter written by the Pre-Professional Office, opt for the electronic Letter of Evaluation (LOE) request when completing the AADSAS application.

When completing the request, use the following contact information:

- Angie Decker
- Office Manager
- Office of Pre-Professional Programs & Advising
- Johns Hopkins University
- Garland Hall Suite 300
- 3400 North Charles Street
- Baltimore, MD 21218
- Tel: 410-516-4140
- Fax: 410-516-4040
- email: preprofessional@jhu.edu

The earliest date that medical schools actually begin receiving AMCAS/AADSAS applications is late June. The earliest date that the Pre-Professional Office begins uploading Committee Packets is mid-July.
What if I ask for a letter to be uploaded at a later point in the process?

Following the initial upload of your Committee packet, the Pre-Professional Office does not continue to upload individual letters of evaluation. 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 other primary applications also have letter services). The instructions for utilizing the AMCAS Letter Service can be found in the AMCAS Applicant Guide. You will need to pay special attention to the “Letters FAQ” and instructions for the “Letter Writer Application.”

For those applying to dental school, your Committee Letter will be uploaded directly to AADSAS. If you apply to one of the few dental schools that do not utilize AADSAS, the Pre-Professional Office will send your Committee Letter directly to the individual dental school, as requested in writing to the Pre-Professional Office (preprofessional@jhu.edu).

What if I am applying to a medical school that does not utilize the AMCAS Letter Service?

This is not a problem. A very small number of medical schools do not participate in AMCAS. The Pre-Professional Office will still take care of transmitting your letter to these non-participating schools. However, in such cases, your Committee Packet is sent directly to the school and not through AMCAS. For questions about this situation, please email us at preprofessional@jhu.edu.

Personal Statement

To assist you with the technical aspects of your essay, we recommend you work with The JHU Writing Center. To schedule an appointment, please visit the Writing Center website and click on the "Schedule an Appointment" link: http://krieger.jhu.edu/writingcenter/.

The Pre-Professional Office can provide general feedback on your personal statement – specifically on the suitability of the theme, tone, and clarity. You may schedule an appointment with any of the pre-professional advisors to discuss your personal statement, but they must receive your essay at least two days before your appointment. Due to the high volume of Committee Letters we are tasked to write, pre-professional advisors are only available to read personal statements until June 1.

Please refer to the Pre-Professional website for additional information and tips for writing an effective personal statement. http://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/preprofadvising/pre-medhealth/applicants/personal-statement/.
Miscellaneous Questions

Does it really matter when I submit my primary application?
Yes. Pre-Professional advisors often talk about the benefits of applying early in the application school cycle. We define “early” as submitting a primary application in early June; this allows you to receive secondary applications by July with the goal of finishing those applications by early or mid-August, which in turn increases your chances for a fall interview.

Each school has its own application deadline, but we hope that you submit your materials well before those dates. The specific application deadlines for each school can be found here: https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/faq/amcas-faq/#

When entering a school ID, can I use my badge ID number or the Hopkins ID (the one that is listed on SIS)?
You should be using the ID # that appears on your transcript. The ID # is to help AMCAS match your transcript with your application. This is especially important for students who are submitting transcripts from more than one school to AMCAS – each with different student ID #s.

How do medical schools know that a student is a re-applicant? Is my reapplicant status indicated in AMCAS?
When making medical school designations in AMCAS, applicants are asked whether they’ve applied to each school or program in a previous application year, which is how medical schools are notified that a person is reapplying to their program. AMCAS considers someone a reapplicant if they have a verified AMCAS application from a previous year that was sent to medical schools. If a student withdraws an application through AMCAS before it is sent to medical schools prior to the completion of the verification process, s/he will not be considered a reapplicant.

Do schools know where a student originally applied?
Medical schools cannot see the names or number of other schools that an applicant applied to during either the current application year or in previous application years.
Resources

- The MSAR is the primary resource for students applying to allopathic medical schools and includes information on application procedures and deadlines, MCAT and GPA data, medical school class profiles, costs and financial aid packages, and MD-PhD and other combined degrees. The MSAR can be purchased online from the Association of American Medical Colleges, https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/requirements/msar/.

- Prospective applicants and students interested in learning about osteopathic medical schools should review the Choose DO Explorer and the Student Guide to Osteopathic Medical Colleges, which are supplied by AACOM.

- Dental applicants are encouraged to buy the ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools. Prospective applicants will learn general information about each school's entrance requirements, application and selection processes, dental curriculum, special programs and services, costs, and financial aid.

In Closing

Navigating your way through academic requirements at Johns Hopkins is in itself a challenge that takes careful planning and great patience. If you are completing pre-medical or pre-dental requirements, the academic 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 science courses, your strengths as a student, and a timeline that is yours alone. Most of all, we encourage you to seek input from your academic and pre-professional advisors to make sense of your situation and to devise a plan that is appropriate for your emerging academic and professional goals.