

Health Professions Planning Guide

2016-2017

Applying to Medical School

This section will cover deciding where to apply, how to complete the application and options for financing your experience.



Where To Study

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Location

2. Environment

3. Cost (tuition, housing, & cost of living)

4. Special Programs

5. Curriculum

How do you select where to apply?

Deciding where to apply is an important first step. Remember, you will be spending 3-4 years of your life there, and you want to be happy. If you visit a school, take advantage of campus tours, information sessions and ask if you can sit in on a class. Consider talking to **UMaine alumni** who may have attended schools of interest through the Maine Mentor Program.

Useful Websites

These sites will provide you with many tools and resources.

- [Association of American Medical Colleges](#)
- [Kaplan Test Prep](#)
- [UMaine - Health Careers Resources](#)

Selection Factors

Although important, the admission process does not depend on undergraduate grades and courses alone. It also considers letters of recommendation from faculty, knowledge of the intended profession, health related community service leadership experience and a personal interview in which maturity, motivation, and character is assessed.

Grades

Grades alone will not get anyone admitted to a health professions school, but they are VERY important. Your grades reflect your ability to learn; to some extent they are a predictor of how well you are likely to do in professional courses. The transcript in general is also an indication of how serious you were about your education.

Even if you graduate with a strong GPA (grade point average), a transcript showing that you repeated courses often, withdrew from others, and frequently had incomplete grades does not reflect well on either your motivation or work habits.

The minimum GPA required for admission to a professional school varies from one profession to another and from one school to another within a profession. However, for admission to medical or veterinary school (generally the most competitive), your goal should be a GPA of 3.5 or better (a A- to a B+ average).

Personal Statement

The personal statement is often where the admissions committee gets a sense of your personal side and it gives you a chance to shine. Also, this tends to be the section of the application that gives students the most difficulty.

These essays are how the professional schools view you. They are opportunities to express your voice, personality, and uniqueness. Often this is where you disclose your motivations, drive, goals, and inspiration.

Suggestions for topics include your choice of major, honors received, research, employment experience, medically related experience (mentoring, job shadowing, volunteering),

extracurricular activities, and why you are interested in this profession.

Everyone can benefit from having others read their writing. Whether you are an excellent writer or one who struggles, use the campus resources that are available to you. Visit the Career Center or the **Writing Center** to have your statement critiqued for proper grammar and content.

Community Involvement

Extracurricular activities are often one way the admissions committee learns how you spend your time. Do you volunteer, work, and/or participate in athletics? All of these factors help the committees form a well-rounded view of you, the applicant. Check with the **Bodwell Center for Service and Volunteerism** for community service activities and **Campus Activities and Student Engagement** for student organization opportunities.

National Test Scores

Nearly all professional schools require you to submit scores on specific national exams as a part of your application. These scores are reviewed carefully and are especially important when other considerations (such as grades) suggest an applicant is “borderline” in competitiveness.

These exams should normally be taken during the spring semester of the junior year if you plan to enter a professional school for the fall semester following graduation. Exams may be taken more than once, however, it is advisable to prepare thoroughly and do well the first time. You should familiarize yourself with the format of these exams early in your career.

Each professional school will have a specific entrance exam requirement. Commercial study guides are available to help you prepare for specific tests. In addition, there are professional test preparation courses. UMaine partners with Kaplan Test Prep to offer reduced course fees to our students. Below are step-by-step instructions to sign up for Kaplan Test Prep:

1. Go to the Kaplan Test Prep website (www.kaptest.com/mcat) and find your class (click on "See My Course Options").
2. Fill out the Google form (<http://goo.gl/forms/Vk7JiEp1Mp>).
3. Complete form 3 weeks ahead of class start date to guarantee enrollment.
4. Registration is processed during the 1st Monday of every month, so plan accordingly.
5. Once enrolled, please be sure to take the self-assessment to make the course most tailored to you to get the best results.

Questions? Contact Christopher Collette (978-302-7089) or Christopher.Collette@Kaplan.com, Kaplan Test Prep.

Entrance exams are offered online and some may be taken when you are ready (OAT, GRE, DAT). Others (MCAT, PCAT) have specific test dates and you must choose the date on which you will take the exam. Registration information on your specific exam may be found through the groups associated with your online application service.

MCAT - Association of American Medical Colleges

DAT - American Dental Education Association

OAT - Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry

PCAT - American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

GRE - Educational Testing Service

Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation should be from people who know you well and can assess your qualifications with objectivity and insight. Ask faculty members to write letters assessing your abilities and potential for a successful career; 2-3 letters should be from science faculty.

Additionally, obtain letters from people who know you in a professional manner; for example, employers, coaches, summer internship coordinators, physicians, and/or researchers with whom you have worked. Your mentor is a particularly important resource. He/she will be able to comment on your personal qualities as well as your aptitude and potential.

Avoid letters from your personal physician, family friends, relatives, and politicians. These letters tend to be seen as highly subjective and biased. Admissions committees may not find such letters useful.

Requesting Letters

When you request a letter of recommendation, you should write a personal letter to your reference. For faculty letters, include a list of courses and/or research projects you have completed with this faculty member. Highlight clubs and activities in which you have participated that demonstrate your leadership potential. Provide an example of how they have observed what sets you apart from others. Be sure to enclose a resume.

After you have sent in your request for a letter of recommendation, it is important to follow-up with your writer. If you have not heard back from your letter writer within 5-7 days of them receiving your request, you may want to send them a follow-up email or call them.

Additional Information

Recommenders and health professional school admissions committees prefer that you waive your right to read these recommendation letters. This action shows that you have confidence in yourself and in the people you have chosen to write

on your behalf. Also, admissions committees tend to regard confidential letters as more candid. However, it is your choice whether or not you waive your right to view the file.

The University of Maine requires that you complete the “**Letter of Recommendation Release Form**” for each faculty member writing a letter for you. This allows that faculty member to release academic information about you.

Original letters remain on file in the Career Center archives even after you have graduated. Please contact the office if you desire to reactivate your file after graduation.

Application Process

APPLICATION STEPS

1. General Application
2. Health Professions Committee Letter
3. Secondary Applications
4. The Interview
5. The Decisions

General Application

The first step is to register and complete your online common applications. These applications include academic work, a list of activities, personal statement, etc. Each year, applications become available in early June. Though deadlines are often not until December it is a MUST to get them in early in order to have time to complete secondary applications.

[American Medical College Application Service \(AMCAS\)](#)

[American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service \(AACOMAS\)](#)

[Associated American Dental Schools Application Service \(AADSAS\)](#)

[Central Application Service for Physician Assistants \(CASPA\)](#)

[PHARM Centralized Application System \(PHARMCAS\)](#)

Health Professions Committee Letter

Most institutions' policies state that if the undergraduate institution has a Health Professions Committee, that the applicant's primary letter of recommendation be a committee letter. At the University of Maine we **DO** have a Health Professions Committee.

You must contact and meet with your committee letter writer by May 1st of the year you are applying. Otherwise, we cannot guarantee a committee letter. You may also choose to request a letter packet. This consists of an evaluative cover letter followed by copies of your original letters.

Secondary Applications

Secondary applications vary by institution. Some schools send them to everyone who applies; others are more selective. Check the schools' website for information on what to expect. A fee for secondary applications is almost always included. Be prepared to write more essays. Keep an eye on deadlines! Do not wait until December.

The Interview

Interviews are by invitation only. The institutions will send you an invitation by mail or email; sometimes institutions extend them by phone. Therefore, you need to keep your contact information up to date.

Consider scheduling a mock interview with the Career Center to practice. Some medical schools are using a multiple mini interview (MMI) format. This is a series of short problem based questions. Our staff will be able to help you prepare for this new format.

Interview topics can include your motivation for a professional career, your personal assessment of your strengths and weaknesses, why you have applied to that particular school, what aspects of your personality suit you to your planned profession, and even how you plan to finance your professional education. Sometimes you will be asked about your backup plan if not accepted so be prepared.

The Decisions

This is the best and worst part. You are done, but you have to wait. Some schools have a quick turn around, while others are slower. Be patient, don't lose hope, and don't be afraid to call the admissions office of an institution to check on the status of your application. Many institutions will post your status online. It is possible that something is missing from your file, which can hurt you. Just be polite to the Admissions Staff, they receive many requests.

Financing Options

In this section you will find information on the many financial opportunities that are available for University of Maine students.

Tufts University - Maine Track Program

Tufts University School of Medicine (TUSM), in partnership with the Maine Medical Center (MMC) in Portland Maine, offers a “Maine Track” for applicants who are interested in a unique, innovative curriculum that will offer clinical training experiences in Maine and expose medical students to the unique aspects for rural practice as well as training in a major tertiary medical center.

Legal residents of the state of Maine will be given preference. Other applicants with strong ties to Maine (such as primary undergraduate institution in Maine) and those with an interest in the practice of rural medicine are encouraged to apply. Graduates of the program will receive a combined diploma from TUSM and MMC with the expectation that a significant number of graduates from the Maine Track will establish medical practice in Maine.

Doctors for Maine’s Future Scholarship

A tuition subsidy of 50% of the cost of attendance annually, up to a maximum of \$25,000 per student annually, for eligible students who enter qualifying Maine-based medical school programs. See www.famemaine.com.

Charles E. Gilbert Loan Program

The program, sponsored by the University of Maine, is available only to University of Maine graduates seeking medical, dental or veterinary careers. This low interest (3-5%), no fees loan is available through our financial aid office on campus. Repayment is deferrable during residency.

Health Professions Loan Program

The state of Maine, through FAME, sponsors a need-based low-interest loan program for Maine residents attending medical school. Students may be eligible to borrow as much as \$25,000 per year; Doctor’s for Maine’s Future recipients may only borrow up to \$10,000.

Maine Medical Loan

This supplemental loan program is available through the [MES Foundation](#). Interests accrues while in school and repayment may be deferred during residency.

Dental Education Assistance Loan

This is one of a few loan programs available to dentists. The program has the option to repay interest only for a two-year deferment period upon completing dental school. There are origination fees associated with the program.

Stafford Loans

This is the same Stafford Loan program that has been available to you during your undergraduate years. The aggregate limit (the sum of undergraduate, graduate and medical of unsubsidized minus subsidized amounts for Stafford Loans) is \$224,000.

Perkins Loan

Federal Perkins loans are low interest student loans awarded by college on the basis of need. College financial aid offices determine whether you qualify for federal Perkins loans and decide the amount of the loan. Colleges that participate in the Perkins loan program have a limited amount of money they can distribute, so they award these loans very selectively.

Maine Medical Association Loan

This loan program is available only to MD students. There are no origination fees and repayment is scaled.

University of Maine Scholarships

There are various scholarships available to UMaine students. Applications are made available in early spring in a variety of amounts.

National Health Service Corps Scholarships

These scholarships pay full tuition and fees, a monthly stipend and books and supplies expenses. Participants must serve one year of duty for each year of scholarship assistance received (exception: one year scholarship requires two year service commitment). For more information contact: [National Health Service Corps Scholarship](#) office at 1-800-221-9393.

Indian Health Services Scholarship

This program is available only to American Indians and Alaska natives. The scholarship pays full tuition, additional costs of medical education, and a monthly stipend. Recipients must serve one year for each year of scholarship assistance they receive. Interested students should contact: [Indian Health Service Scholarship Program](#), 801 Thompson Ave., Suite 120, Rockville, MD, 20852.

Primary Care Loan

This loan is based on need. In addition, the borrower must sign a loan agreement to enter and complete a primary care residency and practice in a primary care field. Applicants must be a U.S. citizen, national or permanent resident.

Armed Forces Health Scholarship Program

In exchange for a later active duty service obligation, this scholarship program will pay full tuition, fees, the cost of required texts and equipment, and a monthly stipend. The financial aid office at each medical school has a listing of the Armed Forces Recruiters who can provide additional information regarding the programs.

Chapter 2

Documents

This chapter includes required documents and various examples of application materials.



Required Documents

DOCUMENTS

1. **Check List**
2. **File Information Form**
3. **Letter of Recommendation Release Form**

Links to documents.

Check List

File Information Form

Letter of Recommendation Release Form

Sample Documents

DOCUMENTS

1. Sample Recommendation Request
2. Sample Interview Questions
3. Resume Resources
4. Personal Statement Resources

Sample Recommendation Request

Sample Interview Questions

Resume Resources

University of Maine

John Hopkins University

Huffington Post

US News

Personal Statement Resources

John Hopkins University

Kaplan Test Prep

Princeton Review

US News