FAQs for Pre-Health Professional Students

Do I need to be a specific major?

No! You can complete any major as long as you complete the pre-requisites for the specific professional school. You should choose a major that interests and motivates you to academically excel. Keep in mind it may be take longer to incorporate the prerequisites with some majors. It is common for students to choose a science related major as most of the required courses are in the degree plan and are the basis of future graduate level curriculum. Common majors include Biology, Chemistry, Psychology, or Kinesiology.

What is the average GPA required to be accepted?

There are several factors the admissions committee uses to determine acceptance and this will vary by school. However, most students matriculating have GPAs from 3.4-3.8 with medical schools being on the higher end. It is also important to keep your Science GPA (BCPM: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Math) high and have a competitive standardized test score (MCAT, DAT, PCAT, etc.) in order to be a competitive applicant. Always check with the specific professional school for additional data and information. ATTN Pre-med students: Find more information about the JAMP Program that offers guaranteed acceptance!

If I maintain a high GPA and score high on my admission test (MCAT, DAT, PCAT, GRE, OAT, etc.) am I pretty much guaranteed acceptance?

No. While a high GPA and test score do strengthen your chances of acceptance, most schools use a holistic approach in evaluating students. They favor well-rounded students that have a strong motivation towards their career goal and are capable of interacting with diverse groups of people. This is why gaining clinical experience, volunteering hours and developing leadership skills are important. Other factors considered are your personal statement/essays, letters of recommendation, non-clinical activities, and interviewing skills.

What courses are recommended in addition to the prerequisites required?

Most professional schools encourage a well-rounded curriculum with upper level sciences. Behavioral and upper level sciences such as Psychology, Sociology, Human Anatomy/Physiology, Genetics, Microbiology, Cell Physiology, Immunology, and Virology are typically highly recommended if not already required. Humanities courses such as economics, ethics, foreign languages, history, philosophy, and public speaking are also valuable. Always check with the specific professional school for the specific requirements and recommended courses.
Can I take courses at Community College? Are the viewed differently than courses taken at the University level?

There are several courses that can be taken at a Community College that can count for some pre-health or major prerequisites. While it is understandable why students take courses at a Community College, it is important to consider how well these courses prepare you for University and Graduate level courses. Students that complete a majority of their lower level courses at a community college can struggle when taking upper-levels at a University. Since maintaining a competitive undergraduate GPA is important for graduate schools, it may more beneficial to take lower level courses at a University.

But don’t I need an Associate’s Degree before I can complete my Bachelor’s?

No. You can complete a Bachelor’s Degree without an Associate’s Degree. Most Universities do not offer an Associate’s Degree. If your career goal requires graduate level schooling, it may actually save time and money to directly complete a Bachelor’s Degree.

How can I gain clinical experience?

Most professional schools highly recommend (if not expect) hands-on patient care experiences. Examples include: emergency medical technician (EMT), paramedic, nurse, scribe, medical assistant, certified nursing assistant (CNA), emergency room technician (ER tech), physical therapist assistant, phlebotomist, pharmacy technician, dental assisting, and clinical research assistant. Most require certification through a program, therefore getting an early start is essential! Shadowing working professionals in the field is also highly recommended.

Where and when do I apply to a Health Profession School?

This will be based on your unique situation. Typically, most students apply near the end of their junior year after taking the required entrance test or the year prior to expected admission. For more details on the application process, click on the underlined link(s) corresponding to your health interest:

- Texas Medical, Dental & Veterinary Schools (except Baylor, TCU & UIW) - TMDSAS
- US Medical Schools (except Public Texas Schools) - AMCAS
- US Dental Schools (excluding Texas) - AADSAS
- US Osteopathic Schools (excluding UNT) - AACOMAS
- Physician Assistant Schools - CASPA
- Pharmacy Schools - PharmCAS
- Optometry School - OptomCAS
- US Veterinary Schools (except Texas A&M) - VMCAS
- Orthotics & Prosthetics - OPCAS
- Public Health Schools - SOPHAS
- Occupational Therapy & Occupational Therapy Assistant Schools - OTCAS & OTACAS
- Physical Therapy Schools - PT CAS
- Podiatric Schools - AACPMAS
**When should I take my MCAT, PCAT, DAT, GRE, OAT, etc.?**

There are several factors that must be considered before choosing a test date. You must take into account the year you plan on entering the professional school, application deadlines, dates the test is offered, and, most important, your level of preparedness. For example, most pre-med and pre-dental students are recommended to take the MCAT/DAT in the spring of the year they are applying to medical/dental school. (1 year prior to entry year) It is also highly recommended to have all courses that are topics on the test completed. Most students start preparation 3-6 months in advance. Contact your health professions advisor if you are unsure when you should schedule your test.

**What is the best way to prepare for my MCAT, PCAT, DAT, GRE, OAT, etc.?**

This will depend on your learning style. However, data shows taking and reviewing 8-10 practice tests is very advantageous. There are test prep courses offered by several companies. Visit [www.uta.edu.science/hp](http://www.uta.edu.science/hp) for a list of resources. Do your research to choose the best one for you. It is always beneficial to start early and spread your preparation over several months if not early in your academic career. Do NOT “CRAM”.

**Am I required to apply to the Health Professions Advisor Committee (HPAC)?**

Depends. Most graduate schools highly recommend if not require students to apply to HPAC if their school provides it. Currently HPAC is available to pre-med and pre-dental students. The HPAC process helps prepare students for their medical or dental school application. If accepted, a letter of recommendation from UTA is provided. Students apply the same year they are applying to the professional school. Applications open in December and close in February. Visit [www.uta.edu/science/hp](http://www.uta.edu/science/hp) for additional information.

**I already have a baccalaureate degree but have not completed the prerequisites. Am I required to obtain another degree to be accepted into a professional school?**

No. The prerequisites can be completed as a non-degree seeking student, sometimes also referred to as a transient/transfer student. You do have the option of obtaining a second degree. The best choice will depend on your unique situation. Students seeking a second degree may be eligible for some forms of financial aid if taking at least a half-time course load (6 credit hours per semester).

- If you are a graduate of UTA and you want to come back to UTA, please follow the directions for a Returning Student on the UTA Returning Student Admissions web site.
- If you are a graduate of another university and you want to come to UTA as a post-bacc seeking a second undergraduate degree, please follow the directions for a Transfer Student on the UTA Transfer Admissions web site.
- If you are a graduate of another university and you want to come to UTA as a post-bacc non-degree seeking student, please apply to UTA at ApplyTexas.org. You will use the Transfer student application.
Am I required to have research experience?

No. Research experience is not required to apply for medical/dental/etc. school. However, having research experience can be an invaluable learning experience and benefit your application. It is important to know the process of research, conducting a project, and presenting scientific data.

Should I join a pre-health student organization?

Yes! It is highly recommended that you join a pre-health student organization on campus. This is a good opportunity to gain access to volunteering opportunities, workshops, and guest speakers. Also, it is a great place to meet students who are on the same path as you! A list of our organizations can be found at www.uta.edu/science/hp.

Should I take a gap year?

It is personally up to you. When applying, you want to be the most prepared and competitive applicant you can be. If you feel that you are ready to be successful graduate student and have a realistic chance of acceptance, apply! If you do not feel ready, a gap year is one of many options that you can consider. Many students will choose to take additional classes, gain work experience, complete a master’s program, or dedicate more time to study for their admission exam.

Do your RESEARCH! Additional Resources:

**Professional Health Organizations: (Note: this is not an inclusive list)**

Dentistry: www.ada.org, www.adea.org  
Medicine, Chiro: www.chirocolleges.org  
Medicine, Osteo: www.aacom.org  
Optometry: www.opted.org  
Pharmacy: www.aacp.org  

Careers in Healthcare: Explore Numerous Healthcare Careers

**Scholarships:**

UTA: www.uta.edu/fao/scholarships  
Next Step: https://www.nextstepu.com