

HPAO Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How often should a student meet with the HPAO?

Students are encouraged to schedule official appointments with the HPAO at a minimum of once each year, and certainly more often if the student prefers. (Walk-in hours are also available for “quick questions”) In addition to receiving valuable advising, these meetings give the HPAO an opportunity to get to know the student better which is beneficial when composing a recommendation letter.

What are the pre-requisites for medical schools?

There are over 150 US allopathic medical (MD) schools, and each may have unique requirements. **It is the responsibility of the student applicants to know the CURRENT requirements for each specific medical school of interest to them.** Requirement information can be found on each school’s website or in the Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR) information through the AAMC. If a student is uncertain as to whether or not a specific medical school will accept a certain course as a pre-requisite, the student should contact that specific medical school.

IN GENERAL, most medical schools require a year of general chemistry, organic chemistry, biology, and physics, all with associated labs. Many will require a year of English, and some will require a semester of calculus. Some medical schools are beginning to require biochemistry, statistics, and behavioral sciences. Other medical schools require additional courses such as (but not limited to) anatomy and genetics.

What do medical schools look for in applicants in addition to academics?

In addition to the GPA and MCAT score, medical schools are looking for well-rounded applicants. Students should gain experience in **service/volunteering, clinical exposure/shadowing, research, and leadership** during college.

What specific courses should I take, and when?

The HPAO website link <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/hpao/professions/medical.php> has some valuable information that may help students in making a decision regarding courses and schedules. Students can click on the links for “Pre-medical Preparation” and “Threading a path through pre-medical expectations.” It is important to note that these are just suggestions, and each student must decide the schedule that best fits his/her learning style and capabilities. Students are also encouraged to schedule an appointment to meet with the HPAO at least once each year, and certainly more often if they would like. Appointments may be booked through the HPAO website.

Do schools accept AP credits to meet the pre-requisites?

Some health professions schools accept AP credits, and some do not. If a school does not accept AP credits, a student may need to take upper division classes to meet the requirements if the student chooses to use AP credit for a course.

Can a student take courses during the summer at another college?

It’s fair to say that some med schools prefer for students to take the pre-reqs at their home institutions, but many students do take summer courses away. Vanderbilt will only allow students to take 2 summer courses away and transfer the credits to VU. Since students will be taking a minimum of 9 pre-med science pre-reqs (gen chem I&II, orgo I&II, bio I&II, phys I&II, and biochem), it is generally fine to take 2 away and 7 here. (The med schools still get a good sense of how you did in your science courses at your home institution.) You must have the away courses pre-approved in advance to transfer to VU (early Spring semester). Contact the Office of Academic Services and/or view this link for more details: <https://as.vanderbilt.edu/academics/summer-sessions.php>

All transcripts from all colleges attended must be sent to the common app when applying to med school, even if away courses have transferred and are shown on the Vanderbilt transcript.

Are online courses acceptable?

Online courses may not be acceptable for meeting all schools' pre-requisite requirements. [Exceptions may be made during the period of COVID-19, and policies are typically noted on a school’s website.]

Can a pre-health student participate in a Study Abroad Program?

Many pre-med students study abroad. If a student is not planning to take a gap year before entering medical school, it is typically done during the first semester of the junior year. It can be done in the second semester of the junior year with proper planning. Things to consider are **1)** Getting the HPAO recommendation letter (See #6), **2)** getting other recommendation letters, **3)** preparing for and taking the MCAT (or appropriate test), **4)** determining when the 2nd semester of a 2 semester sequence of coursework will be offered/taken (ex: Bio, Phys, Orgo). {Keep in mind, many medical schools either require or prefer for pre-requisite courses to be taken in the US.} **5)** There could be a delay in receiving your transcript information from the Study Abroad school which could delay the application verification process unless avoided. (Only a concern if abroad in the Spring before your application cycle.) Going abroad during the senior year could conflict with interviews.

Is there a recommended major?

There are no preferred majors, and students are encouraged to pick a major that aligns with their own interests. Students will need to include in their course of study any pre-requisite courses required by their medical schools of interest.

Which courses count as English pre-requisites?

Most medical schools require a year of English with W (writing) classes meeting the requirement in many cases. The W course can usually be in any area other than a lab or foreign language, however, some schools require at least one to be specifically in the English department. There may also be schools that require more than 2 semesters of English. If a student is uncertain as to whether or not a specific medical school will accept a certain course as a pre-requisite, the student should contact that specific medical school to clarify.

Do medical schools require calculus and/or math?

Many medical schools have a math requirement. Of those, most require 2 semesters of calculus and/or statistics. Most schools accept AP credit for calculus, but not statistics. Students are encouraged to take 1 semester of statistics and either use AP credit for calculus or take a calculus course during college. Students should become familiar with the requirements for the specific medical schools of interest to them. If a student is uncertain as to whether or not a specific medical school will accept a certain course as a pre-requisite, the student should contact that specific medical school to clarify.

Does Vanderbilt offer an Early Acceptance Program?

The Vanderbilt University School of Medicine no longer has an Early Acceptance Program. The decision was based in part on the changes in the medical school curriculum. VUSM feels a longer view of the applicant's undergraduate accomplishments is needed in order to determine the student's potential for success.

What percentage of medical school applicants are accepted?

The **national** average for acceptance of 1st time applicants into US allopathic medical schools has ranged from 41-43% over the past few years. The **Vanderbilt** average for acceptance of 1st time applicants has ranged from 69-76% over the past few years.