

Pre-Medical Preparation

In 2015, a new MCAT (Medical College Admissions Test) will be introduced to reflect the changing nature of medical education. The Writing Sample will be eliminated and the current 3 sections of Verbal Reasoning, Physical Sciences, and Biological Sciences will be changed to 4:

- Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems
- Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems
- Psychological, Social and Biological Foundations of Behavior
- Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills.

In order to be adequately prepared for the new MCAT, students will, in addition to the basic sciences of General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Physics and Biology, need to be knowledgeable in Biochemistry, introductory psychology and sociology concepts, and introductory biology concepts that relate to mental processes and behavior. Although specific knowledge of ethics, philosophy, cross-cultural studies and population health is not required, these areas will be tested through the analysis, evaluation and application of information provided by passages from a wide range of social sciences and humanities disciplines.

It is strongly recommended that students who plan to apply to medical school take one semester of Biochemistry and one semester of Statistics as part of their curriculum. Additionally, through course work or self-directed study, students will need to be knowledgeable in basic concepts of psychology, sociology and bioethics.

Many courses that count toward core requirements (e.g. AXLE) and/or major requirements are also relevant to these new emphases for premedical preparation.

Students who plan to take the MCAT in 2015 or later should consult their faculty advisors and the Health Professions Advisory Office (HPAO, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/hpao/>) about how to incorporate appropriate courses in these areas in their plans.

Gap Year: Under the new MCAT guidelines, some students might consider taking the MCAT later than the junior year. Students who opt for a gap year should bring a clear explanation of how what they do during that year will contribute to their futures as doctors. Lab research, global outreach, pursuit of educational opportunities, or a relevant job are all good explanations. A non-medical gap year can also be appropriate, e.g. work to help pay off student loans, save for medical school, etc.

The Importance of Advising: The information provided here is not a substitute for conversations with your adviser. Consult both your school-based adviser and the Health Professions Advisory Office to develop a plan that suits your own strengths, interests, and background.