

**UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
CAREER SERVICES
MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICANTS' MANUAL FOR 2010 ADMISSION**

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INTRODUCTION TO THE MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS

Applying to medical school is a very manageable process, so long as you are well organized. You will need to plan ahead, and keep track of the procedures you have to follow and deadlines you have to meet.

We are here to guide you. However, you must realize that there is no magic involved in applying to medical school. You must assume responsibility and see that you follow the appropriate steps.

All medical schools require applicants to have a letter of recommendation from their undergraduate school's pre-health committee. At Penn, this committee is called the **Health Professions Advisory Board (HPAB)**, and is composed of administrators and faculty from across the university, together with your pre-health advisors at Career Services. The committee letter at Penn (better known as the **HPAB letter**) is essentially a cover letter, and will be sent to the medical schools as part of a packet that includes other individual letters of recommendation that you will obtain from professors, TAs, research supervisors, and other mentors. As a cover letter, the HPAB letter serves several purposes: it introduces you to the medical school admissions committees, reviews all of your strengths and accomplishments, and advocates for your acceptance.

We, your pre-health advisors, are the ones who actually compose the HPAB letter, and we pride ourselves on being able to offer all Penn students and alumni a thorough, detailed, and individualized recommendation. Because of the large number of students who apply to medical school every year, we have developed a system of procedures that enable us to accommodate everyone who needs an HPAB letter, and meets our deadlines.

Here, in brief, are the steps you will need to take to obtain an HPAB letter:

1. Attend a **mandatory** Applicants' Workshop and open a credentials file in the Career Services office.
2. Schedule a one-hour "Advisor Interview" with a Pre-Health Advisor following your Applicants' Workshop (make sure to specify that you are scheduling an Advisor Interview, not a regular appointment).
3. Meet with your Health Professions Advisory Board member for an "HPAB interview" following your Advisor Interview.
4. Have **at least 3** appropriate letters of recommendation in your Career Services Credentials File by **June 1**.
5. Provide us with a **draft** copy of your AMCAS application (see page 10) for Fall 2010 admission by **June 1**. This is just for our records; you will have to submit your completed application to AMCAS after June 1.
6. Submit to our office your **List of Recommenders form** (list at least 3 and no more than 6), by **June 4**.

OPENING A CREDENTIALS FILE

The Credentials Service, housed in Career Services, serves as a permanent repository for your letters of recommendation. Following your Applicant Workshop, simply come to the reception desk at the front of Career Services, and ask to open a Credentials File. Alumni not on campus can print out the registration form from the Credentials Service web site and fax or mail it in. See also our section on page 7 on letters of recommendation.

THE ADVISOR INTERVIEW

To accommodate everyone, we require each student to contact our office (215-898-1789) within 48 hours of the applicant workshop, to schedule an advisor interview. Please schedule the interview for the earliest feasible date, and certainly before the end of April. If necessary we can meet in May with alumni only. The meeting enables your advisor to get to know you and gather information that will help in writing the HPAB letter.

You must bring 6 items to your advisor interview:

- 1) **TRANSCRIPT:** Unofficial copies of your Penn transcript are available for free through Penn-in-Touch. We also need unofficial copies of transcripts from any other schools where you completed college-level courses.

- 2) **EXPANDED RÉSUMÉ:** Please bring a typed copy of your expanded résumé. A sample can be found on page 22 of this manual. Note that typically an expanded résumé should fill at least 2 pages. It is essential that you write a thorough résumé that outlines all your post-secondary activities and accomplishments in detail so that we have the information we need to write a comprehensive letter. When listing jobs and activities, be sure to indicate the duration (e.g., academic years 2005-07; summers 2006, 2007; or Fall 2007) and intensity (e.g. Camera Club: average commitment of 3 hours per week; Dr. X's Laboratory: Summer 2007 - 40 hours per week, academic year 2006-7-- 10 hours per week).

- This extended résumé will also be helpful to you as you fill out your medical school applications, which follow a very similar format.

- 3) **PHOTO:** A snapshot or candid photo is fine. We don't need an expensive portrait photo. This is just to help us remember you as well as possible.

- 4) **PERSONAL STATEMENT:** Please bring a printed-out draft of your personal statement. For more on the personal statement, see our section on it below.

- 5) **STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE:** The questionnaire is designed to help you begin thinking about your application, and prepare for your advisor and HPAB interviews. We like to see thoughtful answers to these questions to learn more about you, and to help you organize your thoughts about yourself. **Please print out your responses on a separate sheet.**

6) **BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY, PHYSICS, MATH (BCPM) GPA FOR PENN COURSES:** The medical schools will be paying close attention to your BCPM GPA when evaluating your application. Obviously, just about any course taken in the four named academic departments will count toward your BCPM GPA. Statistics courses will count, as will other courses that are primarily Biology, Chemistry, or Physics in terms of content. For instance, BIBB 251 (Cell Neurobiology) is essentially a Biology course, and would be best categorized as Biology. But BIBB 390 (Behavioral Medicine) is more of a Psychology course, and would be most appropriately categorized as Behavioral Science. You need to use your own best judgment, in

good faith, as to whether a course is essentially a BCPM course or not. For more guidance on course classification, see our section on the primary application below, and also see “Course Classification” in the AMCAS Instruction Book, in pdf form online:
www.aamc.org/students/amcas/amcas2009instructionmanual072808.pdf

You can figure out your BCPM GPA by using the GPA calculator on Penn-in-Touch. But please use the worksheet in the supplemental Health Professions Applicants’ Forms Handout to **list the courses** that you have included in your BCPM GPA, as well as the BCPM GPA itself.

THE HPAB INTERVIEW

You will be assigned an HPAB interviewer by e-mail about a week after your advisor interview. Realize that we try to ensure that we do not assign you to someone whom you know. Within one week after receiving the HPAB assignment by e-mail, you must contact your HPAB member directly to schedule an appointment for the interview. It is **your responsibility** to contact your HPAB member to schedule a mutually convenient time. You must have completed your HPAB interview by May 1.

Please bring a copy of your résumé to your HPAB interview, and dress as though you were going to a medical school interview. You will meet with your HPAB member only once. For questions about choosing medical schools and application procedures, contact your Pre-Health Advisor at the Career Services office.

One last note: please remember to thank your HPAB interviewer for generously volunteering their time.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

When, how, and from whom to ask for letters: Medical schools require that you submit letters of recommendation as a part of your application. We require that you send a minimum of 3, but you may send up to 6. This does not include your HPAB letter.

To ensure that you have at least 3 letters on file by June 1, you should ask for more than 3 letters; we suggest, therefore, that you ask for a minimum of 4 recommenders for letters. You should approach your recommenders early in the process, well in advance of the June 1 deadline; try to give your recommenders at least a month's notice. One of your letters be from a member of Penn's standing faculty (assistant professor or higher) who has taught you. Other than that, the HPAB does not regulate your letters. However, you should have at least one from someone who has taught you in the sciences. In fact, it would help to get letters from two people who have taught you in the sciences. You should also try to get at least one letter from someone who has taught you in a non-science course. If you have done an independent study, thesis, or other significant research, getting a recommendation from your advisor/primary investigator is advisable. The aim is to get a variety of letters from people with whom you have worked in different activities relevant to medical school. You might ask a professor from a small discussion course, a TA from a recitation or lab, the supervisor of your independent study project, the head of the camp where you worked, or the advisor of the organization in which you are very active, and so forth. References from famous people are not helpful unless they really have something relevant to say about you. Similarly, character references from friends or family members are not advisable.

You should ask your recommenders to submit their letters directly to your Credentials File in Career Services, along with a Recommendation Form. Recommendation Forms are available at the Career Services reception desk, or you can download them at www.upenn.edu/careerservices/credentials/recform.pdf. You will need to complete the form, including the waiver section. We suggest you waive your right to see the letter.

The target date for at least three letters to be processed and in your file is **May 15**; the final deadline is **June 1**. Meeting the target date enables us to start work on writing HPAB letters earlier, and prevents the Credentials Service from being completely swamped on June 1.

The best way to check whether letters have arrived in your Credentials File is to consult the Credentials Service page on the Career Services web site: www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/credentials. Do not just assume that letters have arrived in your Credentials File. Please check regularly, allowing at least a week for processing.

In the end, a packet of letters (the HPAB packet) will be sent to medical schools on your request (see "Secondary Applications and the HPAB packet"). The packet will consist of the HPAB letter, followed by the letters of recommendation that you ask us to include. No more than six individual letters will be included in the packet. You can have more than six in your Credentials File, but six is the maximum that the medical schools wish to see. By **June 4**, you must designate 3-6 letters that you have on file on your **List of Recommenders Form** for us to

include in your packet. Make sure you keep a record of which letters you have asked us to include in your file.

We are unable to make up different packets for different individual medical schools—you have one packet that will be uploaded to all the medical schools you select. However, we can make different packets if you are applying to MD/PhD programs as well as to some schools for the MD only, or also if you are applying both to MD and DO schools (in these cases, you can complete more than one “List of Recommenders”). Also, if you want additional letters sent to a particular school but not to the others, you can request that they be mailed out under separate cover as a supplement.

If, once you have submitted your List of Recommenders form by June 4, you want to add letters that have arrived after June 1, or if you change your mind about what letters are to be included in your packet and add, substitute or remove letters of recommendation (always leaving between 3-6 letters), you must submit a new List of Recommenders at the time you request your letters be sent out. We won't accept a new list until you submit a request. We cannot guarantee that any letters that you select or that arrive after June 1 will be referred to in our HPAB letter.

THE MCAT

Medical schools require that you take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). To find essential information about the test, including the various dates you can take the MCAT, see the MCAT web site: www.aamc.org/students/mcat. Spaces for the tests are limited—so **register early**.

When to take the MCAT

You should take the test only when you feel well prepared—but it is to your advantage to take the test no later than June of the year in which you apply. The application cycle begins in June, and you should apply by mid-July at the latest. If you take the test after June, then you will either have to apply without knowing your scores, or (worse) you would have to delay your application.

Preparing for the test

Obviously, you should study for the test. It is not an aptitude test but a test of your knowledge. Many students take review courses, although they are very costly. Others make use of software or study guides; some are available in the Career Services library. Whatever route you choose, plan to spend a significant amount of time preparing for the test. We encourage you to speak to your pre-health advisor about retaking the test, should the question arise.

Tests for joint degree programs

Some applicants to joint degree programs will be required to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test. It is a computer adaptive test offered many times each month. For information about the GRE, go to www.gre.org.

How Schools Receive Your MCAT Scores

MCAT scores are automatically released to AMCAS, and will be sent directly to all participating schools. However, you will have to release your MCAT scores to any non-AMCAS schools to which you apply. (For an explanation of “AMCAS” and “Non-AMCAS schools,” see page 10.)

You can release your scores electronically to non-AMCAS schools through the MCAT “THx System” at <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm>.

Fee Reduction and Special Accommodations

If you wish to request an MCAT fee reduction, you must have that request approved before registering—so plan well in advance. You can apply for the Fee Assistance Program by following the instructions here: <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap>. Also, if you plan to request any special accommodations, see the following site, preferably well in advance of registration: <http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/disabilities.htm>.

THE PRIMARY APPLICATION: AMCAS

The central application used by almost all of the allopathic medical schools in the U.S. is known as the American Medical Colleges Application Service (AMCAS). AMCAS consists essentially of 4 parts: you will need to provide demographic information, your academic record, information about your experiences (clinical, work, community service, research, awards etc.), and write a personal statement.

AMCAS is a web-based application. To activate the AMCAS application, you will have to register and create a username and password. The earliest you can begin actually filling out the application will be in May 2009, for admission in Fall 2010. You can actually submit the application starting early June—and you should do so by mid-July at the latest. You can register at: www.aamc.org/students/amcas/start.htm In addition to completing AMCAS, you also need to arrange to have your transcript(s) sent to AMCAS.

Academic Record

You must list all your courses and categorize them according to the standard categories listed in AMCAS. Based on your academic record, AMCAS will calculate 3 GPAs for you: a BCPM (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Math) GPA, an “All Other” GPA, and a Total GPA. You are responsible for determining the category within which your courses fall, much as you did for your Advisor Interview, although AMCAS makes the final decision. For more information, you should refer to the AMCAS Instruction Book, available at: www.aamc.org/students/amcas/amcas2008.htm, or to the AMCAS Help menu.

Some key points:

- All courses must be listed in chronological order, as they appear on your transcript, so be sure to have copies of your transcripts on hand to help you fill out your academic record.
- You must list courses that you plan on taking while applying to medical school—make an educated guess about your schedule.
- Where AMCAS prompts you for the number of “semester hours” for each course, enter the number of course units you received for each course precisely as they appear on your transcript. AMCAS will convert those c.u.s to semester hours for you, based on a conversion scale already sent to them by Penn’s Registrar.
- You must list every college or university you have attended, and the courses you took, even summer classes or a course taken while in high school.
- List courses for which you received AP credit as part of the first semester of your freshman year. For any college courses taken in high school, list those as high school work.
- For study abroad, overseas institutions should be listed as a “school attended.” However, you will not need to provide a transcript for overseas schools—you can indicate that you are exempt from submitting a transcript in AMCAS.

Transcripts

Remember: **Career Services only sends out letters and does not process transcripts.** You must arrange separately to have the Registrar at Penn, and any other college or university you have attended, send your transcript(s) to AMCAS.

When you request the Registrar to send your transcript to AMCAS, you should give them two forms: the Registrar's own form, and the AMCAS transcript request form (the Academic Record section of AMCAS explains how to do this). The reason you use that second AMCAS form is to ensure that AMCAS have no difficulty matching up your transcript with the right application. You should indicate to the Registrar that you would like that AMCAS form included with your transcript. To have the form included, you'll have to make the request that your transcript be sent out in person or by mail—online requests would not work for those purposes. For more information on Penn transcript requests, see: www.upenn.edu/registrar

You can have your transcript sent in before you actually submit your AMCAS, provided you have registered and begun filling it out. You should also wait for your spring grades to be submitted (except for study abroad grades). It's a good idea to check over an unofficial transcript before you have it sent in, to make sure there are no errors.

Post-Secondary Experiences

AMCAS asks you to list and describe up to 15 post-secondary extracurricular and co-curricular activities and awards. "Post-secondary" means "after high school," so you should not list any high school activities or honors. You will want to include those activities which are most important to you. Don't worry if you have fewer than 15; the quality of your experiences, commitments and achievements matter much more than the quantity.

For each activity, you are asked to name a contact person. This is an optional field, but you should list a contact person where appropriate (typically not a student).

Lastly, you will be asked to give a description for each entry. Explain your role: what you accomplished, what your responsibilities and contributions were. For the most significant activities, you should also explain what you learned from them, and why they really mattered to you. The amount you write helps signal which activities were most important to you.

Personal Statement

The personal statement is like a "pre-interview" for medical school—it is your opportunity to present yourself to admissions committees. Although there is no specific question given on the application, you should use the personal statement to point to those things that distinguish you as an applicant.

The personal statement should not be used to summarize all of your college experiences. Instead, use the personal statement to discuss in depth one or two first-hand experiences that illustrate some of your strengths and qualities that make you a strong candidate. Ideally, the personal statement will both have a unifying theme, and also provide detailed and concrete

examples of things you have done. Although you may be tempted to discuss your childhood, it is your experiences and choices as an adult that are relevant to admissions committees.

You are welcome to submit a draft of your personal statement to your pre-health advisor for review—but no more than twice. It is important to get started on the personal statement during the spring semester, for we will not be able to read any drafts after May 15. After that date, we must turn our attention to writing the HPAB letters, in order to have them all completed on time. To submit your personal statement for review, you can bring it to your Advisor Interview and let us know you want us to review it, or, later, e-mail it to your pre-health advisor or drop off a hard copy at Career Services.

Releasing your information

AMCAS will ask you if you want your information released to your pre-health advisor. Please say yes. The information will help us guide future applicants, just as past information helps us guide you. We'll divulge only aggregate information—nothing about you individually.

Non-AMCAS Medical Schools

Although almost all allopathic schools use AMCAS, there are a few exceptions:

- University of Missouri, Kansas City
- University of North Dakota
- Texas Tech, Texas A&M, and the University of Texas system (except for some MD/PhD programs)

The Texas schools listed belong to a separate state application service called TMDSAS (Texas Medical and Dental School Application Service). TMDSAS is available online at: www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas

For the other non-AMCAS allopathic schools, contact the school directly for application instructions.

Osteopathic medical schools use AACOMAS (American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service). This application is very similar to AMCAS, and is available at: <https://aacomas.aacom.org>

Note that AACOMAS and TMDSAS operate differently when it comes to entering the number of semester hours for each of your Penn courses. For these applications, you will need to do a conversion. For instructions, contact your pre-health advisor.

DEVELOPING YOUR LIST OF SCHOOLS

Coming up with a list of schools to which to apply is a process that requires both research and reflection on your part. There are many resources to help guide you. A good place to start is with the *Medical School Admissions Requirements* (MSAR) book, available in the Career Services Library, which includes school profiles and admissions statistics. You should also refer to individual school websites. We also strongly encourage you to discuss your tentative list of schools with your pre-health advisor.

Some things to consider:

- In-state/out-of-state admit ratios. Your state schools automatically give you preference, and generally charge less for tuition. Odds are against you at state-supported medical schools of states in which you do not reside.
- A full range of schools, in terms of their selectivity. Admissions statistics for Penn applicants to all medical schools are kept for your use in binders in Career Services, and along with the national statistics in the MSAR, will give you some indication of how competitive a school is likely to be.
- The number of schools to which you are applying. Apply to several schools but don't go overboard; 10-12 is a reasonable number. You can apply to more schools, but so long as you cover a sensible range of schools, rarely do you increase your chances of acceptance by applying to more than 15 schools. Realize that it can become very costly to apply to a lot of schools, since each AMCAS school charges a secondary application fee in addition to the primary AMCAS fee, not to mention how difficult and time-consuming it can become to complete more than 15 secondary applications. If you are having trouble developing a reasonable list, please ask your pre-health advisor for help.

SECONDARY APPLICATIONS AND HPAB PACKETS

Once AMCAS notifies schools that you have applied to them, you will likely start being invited to complete secondary applications (“secondaries”). These applications ask for material that you have not yet provided through AMCAS. Each school is different, but the secondaries often ask you to write additional essays, and to list the courses you have taken that satisfy requirements. You will also be asked to pay another fee, this time directly to the school. At this time, you will often also be requested to have your letters of recommendation submitted—in your case, your HPAB packet.

Most, but not all, medical schools ask every applicant to submit secondaries. The time it takes after you submit your AMCAS to receive a request to complete a secondary varies from a few days to a few months. You should try to be as diligent and timely as possible in completing and returning secondaries.

Requesting your HPAB packet be uploaded

Your HPAB packet consists of the HPAB letter we write, and also the 3-6 individual letters of recommendation that you have listed on your List of Recommenders Form.

To have your packet uploaded, you must complete and sign the mailing request form—“Credentials Mailing Request Form for Medical, Dental or Veterinary Schools”—found in the lobby of Career Services, or online at the Credentials Service website:

www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/credentials

You may have the option, at that site, to submit your request and payment entirely online. Otherwise, you can bring the request and payment to the Career Services front desk, or send your request in by mail. If sending in your request by mail, you must enclose a check for \$6 for each school you list, made out to the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania.

In completing the form, simply write—unambiguously—the name of each school, and check the box for “HPAB packet.” We will automatically include letters on file you have listed. If there is an additional letter you want sent only to a particular school, but not to all schools, you can list that also in the appropriate space on the form. See also “Letters of Recommendation” on page 7 of this manual.

You should request your packet be uploaded only once you have begun returning secondaries to medical school, and only after August 1. That is the first date by which we can have your HPAB letter ready—and we have chosen it because it is nice and early in the season.

VirtualEvals

We submit HPAB packets electronically to any medical schools that accept them via the online submission system VirtualEvals (VE)—and almost all allopathic and osteopathic medical schools do accept VE.

You don't need to give us special instructions for schools not on VE—we know which they are, and we automatically ask the Credentials Service to mail the packets in those cases. However, if you do need to have letters mailed, you should make sure to provide mailing labels with your request.

Remember that if you want to amend your original List of Recommenders form, you should submit a new form with your "Mailing Request Form." Make sure that you draw our attention to the fact that you have submitted a new LOR form (e.g. by making a note on the top of your Request Form), so we do indeed include the correct letters. See also "Letters of Recommendation" on page 7 of this manual.

AFTER APPLICATIONS ARE COMPLETE: INTERVIEWS AND DECISIONS

Most schools interview applicants beginning in September or October, and through February or March, although some go even later. Acceptances can be offered as early as October, or even as late as the following August (off the “wait list” of interviewed applicants). Each school has its own system and timeline, so there is no standard procedure for the number of weeks it takes them to make a decision, and so forth. Some of these points can be clarified at interview.

We will hold interview workshops at the beginning of the fall semester to help you prepare. Also, if you have a medical school interview scheduled, you can schedule a 30-minute mock interview with a pre-health advisor. Schedule this as you would a regular appointment, by coming in to the office or calling 215-898-1789.

For advice on preparing for interviews, including some sample questions, see our web page at: www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradprof/healthprof/healthinterview.html

Be aware of your responsibilities as an applicant, outlined by the AAMC here: www.aamc.org/students/applying/policies/applicants.htm

Should you be so fortunate as to receive more than one acceptance, try to make your choice as quickly as possible. Schools become aware that you are holding places starting in late February. This is an ethical issue. You should not hold more than one place at a time for very long because this keeps another applicant from receiving an acceptance. In the same spirit, try not to wait until the last minute to decline an offer. If financial aid is an issue, contact the specific financial aid offices to get some sense of what your package might be. You are only permitted to hold one acceptance by May 15. If you withdraw an acceptance you have made by May 15, your deposit is usually refundable. Keep in mind that it is usual to accept the first offer you are made, even if you hope to be offered a place later at another school that you might prefer.

DEADLINES

Important Deadlines, 2009

April 30	Deadline to have Advisor Interview and HPAB interview.
May 15	Target date for submission of letters of recommendation to your Credentials File.
June 1	Final deadline for at least 3 appropriate recommendations to be in your Credentials file.
June 1	Deadline to submit a draft copy of your AMCAS application to Career Services.
June 4	Deadline to submit your List of Recommenders form to Career Services.

If you fulfill all these requirements, we will have your packet ready for you to request on August 1.

If you fail to meet these deadlines, but do have everything in by July 1, you will be in the “late batch”—we will have your packet ready for you to request by September 15.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Even after you have submitted your applications, we continue to serve as your pre-health advisors and are available to answer questions or concerns at any point in the process. Please call 215-898-1789 if you have questions or want to set up an appointment. You can also find our email addresses on the Career Services web site.

On behalf of the Pre-Health Advising Staff, the Health Professions Advisory Board, and the Career Services office, we wish you success in all of your endeavors. Good luck!

CHECKLIST

Spring 2009:

- Open a Career Services Credentials File.
- Attend a Pre-Med Applicant Workshop.
- Meet with your pre-health advisor. Schedule this appointment within two days of your Applicant Workshop. (Bring to this interview your transcript, expanded résumé, personal statement draft, questionnaire, photo, and BCPM GPA calculation. If you don't have these things, however—come anyway).
- Meet with your assigned HPAB interviewer. It is your responsibility to contact them.
- Give letter of recommendation forms to a minimum of 4 potential recommenders. Make sure that they understand that they must return the recommendations by June 1 to the Career Services Credentials Service.
- Take the test (MCAT, possibly GRE) appropriate to your application.
- Check Penn-In-Touch to ensure that your grades are accurate.
- After your spring grades are complete, have each school's registrar send to AMCAS (and other services or schools where appropriate) official transcripts, from all your post-secondary schools.
- Write, call or email any non-AMCAS, non-TMDSAS and non-AACOMAS schools asking for applications (or download them).
- Begin working on AMCAS, TMDSAS, and AACOMAS applications (all available on-line from late spring).
- Check that your minimum of 3 recommendations reached your Credentials File before the semester ends and faculty leave campus—and at the very latest by June 1.
- Sign and submit your List of Recommenders by June 4.
- Submit a copy of your on-line AMCAS application to your Career Services Credentials File (preferably a hard copy, though you can email it, if necessary) by June 1.

Summer 2009:

- Complete primary applications) early—in June or early July, unless you have a truly powerful reason to do it later—even if you plan to take the MCAT later in the summer.
- If you took the MCAT in April, May, or June, wait until the scores return to submit your AMCAS application. The scores should arrive within 30 days of your test date, still reasonably early.
- Keep copies of ALL of your application materials.
- Develop a good record-keeping system, including when you submitted your application and your supporting materials. It is particularly important to record the date that each school's application is complete. Schools differ in their methods of acknowledging receipt of materials.

We can check VirtualEvals to see if a packet was uploaded; otherwise, if there is a problem, contact the medical school directly.

- Submit a Credentials Mailing Request form once you begin completing your secondaries, but not before August 1. Don't wait until deadlines are approaching to send in your supporting materials. Note that you must submit a request on the appropriate form, including the appropriate processing fees. We do not automatically send out your HPAB packets until you request us to do so.
- Refer to this manual first for questions about applications.** For technical questions about the AMCAS application not answered in the Help menu, or on the AMCAS FAQ on our website, call AMCAS: 202-828-0600, or email amcas@aamc.org

Fall 2009:

- Attend an Interview Workshop conducted by the pre-health advisors of Career Services.
- Visit our web site:
www.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradprof/healthprof/healthinterview.html
- Call admissions offices only as appropriate. For example, you might need to inquire about the following: (a) to ensure the completeness of your file; or (b) to try to arrange an interview in a city you will already be visiting.
- If your applications were complete in the summer and you haven't heard anything by December, talk with your pre-health advisor.
- You might want to update schools with your fall semester grades. For these purposes, a Penn-in-Touch printout is fine. Please respect individual schools' preferences, since some schools prefer that applicants send no additional information or recommendations.
- Search for sources of financial aid. Consult the financial aid chapter of the *Medical School Admission Requirements* book; there are also other books on the subject in the Career Services Library. See also www.aamc.org/students/financing/start.htm .

USEFUL LINKS:

Our web site—for additional information on the MCAT, AMCAS, interviews, requirements and more: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradprof/healthprof>
Credentials Service web site—to check on letters and for forms:
www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/credentials
Registrar—for transcript requests: www.upenn.edu/registrar

Electronic AMCAS application: www.aamc.org/students/amcas/start.htm
Electronic AACOMAS application: <https://aacomas.aacom.org>
MCAT Registration: www.aamc.org/students/mcat/registration.htm
Must-read MCAT information: www.aamc.org/students/mcat/mcatessentials.pdf
MCAT Fee Assistance Program: www.aamc.org/students/amcas/fap.htm
To register/find out about the GRE (for some MD/PhD programs) : www.gre.org
National Source of Interview Feedback: www.studentdoctor.net/interview/index.asp
American Association of Medical Colleges: www.aamc.org
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine: www.aacom.org

Important Contact Information:

American Association of College of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS): Email: aacomas@aacom.org or Telephone: 301-968-4190
American Medical Colleges Application Service (AMCAS):
Email: amcas@aamc.org or Telephone: 202-828-0600

SAMPLE EXPANDED RÉSUMÉ

JANE APPLICANT

E-mail: jane.applicant@seas.upenn.edu

Campus Address

3600 Locust Walk
Philadelphia, PA 19104
215-898-0000

Permanent Address

225 Columbus Avenue
New York, NY 10023
212-888-8888

EDUCATION

University of Pennsylvania, School of Engineering and Applied Science
Bachelor of Science of Engineering, May 2008, Cumulative GPA: 3.55
Major: Bioengineering; **Minor:** Chemistry

Philadelphia, PA

HONORS AND AWARDS

Al Giandomenico Award, Department of Bioengineering, University of Pennsylvania, Spring 2008
I was nominated by faculty and selected among 10 finalists by Committee for this award for distinguished undergraduate research in the field of Bioengineering.

Dean's List, Academic Year 2006-2007.

Professional Citation in Rex, E., Molitor, S.C., et al. (2006) Tyramine receptor (SER-2) isoforms are involved in the regulation of pharyngeal pumping and foraging behavior in *Caenorhabditis elegans*.
Journal of Neurochemistry. 91: 1104–1115.

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Pre-Med Volunteer, Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania
October 2007-Present (Unpaid, 5-6 hours/week during semesters)

Philadelphia, PA

I am responsible for keeping patients in a comfortable environment and supporting the nursing staff, transporting and discharging patients on a regular basis. I chose the pre-med volunteer program at HUP because it gives students first-hand experience with how a hospital floor functions, as well as providing one-on-one interaction with patients. I worked on a fast-paced recovery floor, the energy of which I enjoyed, but it was the exposure to the inner-workings of a hospital and the basics of patient care that was most exciting.

Volunteer, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center
June-August 2007 (Unpaid, 20 hours/week)

New York, NY

Volunteering at Memorial Sloan Kettering offered a hands-on experience dealing with cancer patients in the thoracic, head and neck, and colon cancer units. I worked closely with the staff and learned about their diseases, treatments and side effects, and the emotional impact upon the patients and their families. As the summer progressed, I became increasingly aware of individual patient's needs, interests, complaints, feelings and fears, which ultimately allowed me to form more personal relationships with them which I believe proved, at times, to be beneficial to their feelings of comfort and well-being.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant to Kevin Hogarty, MD, Department of Oncology, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
May 2006-Present (Paid, 10-15 hours/ week during semesters; 40 hours/week during summers)

I collaborate with an attending physician in an ongoing study of a chemotherapeutic that induces mitochondrial apoptosis via synthetic BH3 domain peptides for neuroblastoma cells lines. I perform cell culture experiments, determining if Bak and Bax genes have anti-apoptotic isoforms in neuroblastoma cell lines. My responsibilities also include assisting in translational research, ranging from therapeutics to the biology of neuroblastoma (PCR, gel electrophoresis, cell culture, DNA/RNA extractions). I have learned a lot about the research process and the dedication it requires to accurately develop effective treatments. More than anything though, this research experience has uncovered a passion for applied research and a great interest in oncology; it even inspired me to audit a Cancer Cell Biology class last semester. I feel particularly gratified that I am helping to develop possible treatments that may one day help sick children.

Research Assistant to Scott O'Brien, Department of Bioengineering, University of Connecticut (Storrs Campus)
May-August 2005 (paid, 40 hours/week)

As part of a comprehensive research study, I identified and recorded the correlation of electrophysiological responses when nematode cells were perfused with a variety of pharmacological agents/solutions. I also gained my first exposure to a bench research setting and assisted in laboratory preparation activities as well.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Workshop Leader and Tutor, University of Pennsylvania Philadelphia, PA
September 2007-Present (5 hours/week)

I teach a ninety-minute Calculus Workshop, twice a week, to a class of between 10 and 35 students. The Workshop provides students with a brief overview of new information from their most recent class, as well as shortcuts or different approaches to problem-solving. After assigning students approximately fifteen problems, I assist them in tackling the challenging questions by leading a guided discussion towards the correct solution to the problem. This experience has not only strengthened my calculus knowledge base, but it has dramatically improved my communication and presentation skills as well. I suspect that the ability to simplify complex material to a group of students will prove useful in my future, especially as I try to communicate difficult medical information to patients with little to no medical background.

Member and Tour Guide, Hexagon Senior Engineering Society Philadelphia, PA
September 2006-May 2007 (1 hour/week)

My primary responsibility was to lead tours of the School of Engineering and Applied Science to prospective Penn students and their families. It was very rewarding to represent the School and serve as a resource in this capacity, particularly because I have enjoyed my experience as a student here so much.

Volunteer, Ronald McDonald House Philadelphia, PA
January 2006-Present (2 hours/week)

My responsibilities involve playing with the resident children, as well as general maintenance tasks for the House. From Legos and playing "dress-up" to watching videos and talking to the children about what was on their minds, this was always a rewarding activity. Not only could I help take their minds off of their condition for a few hours, but I was also able to give their parents and caregivers a chance to rest and relax.

Member, Biomedical Engineering Society, University of Pennsylvania Philadelphia, PA
September 2005-Present (2 hours/month)

I attend biweekly meetings of this student-run, professional development-oriented organization to discuss current events and ideas related to biomedical engineering.

APPLICANT QUESTIONNAIRE

This is an opportunity for you to reflect on your background and to describe your most significant experiences for us. Write a minimum of one paragraph on each question (except perhaps 6 & 7). Print out your answers on a separate sheet.

1. Describe the academic program that you have selected at Penn. What have you gained from your studies?
2. Describe your most valuable intellectual experience and explain why you appreciated it. (This could be a class, a research project, or another significant experience.)
3. Identify your most significant healthcare-related experience. How has this influenced your decision to pursue a medical career?
4. Discuss your most rewarding extra-curricular or community activity not directly related to medicine.
5. What strengths and characteristics do you believe set you apart as a candidate for medical school?
6. Do your grades and/or MCAT scores accurately reflect your preparation for medical school? If not, please explain the circumstances. (You must answer this question if your BCPM GPA falls below 3.2)
7. The following question appears on the AMCAS application:
"Were you ever the recipient of any action (e.g., dismissal, disqualification, suspension, etc.) by any college or medical school for unacceptable academic performance or conduct violations?"

If you must answer "yes" to this question, please explain the particulars of the situation and discuss the matter fully with your Pre-Health Advisor.

HPAB APPLICANT RESPONSIBILITIES - STUDENT COPY

Responsibilities for Penn Students and Alumni Requesting HPAB Letter for Fall 2010 Health Professions School Admission:

- 1) Attend the mandatory **HPAB Applicants' Workshop**.
- 2) Meet with your **Pre-Health Advisor**. (Schedule this appointment immediately after your Applicants' Workshop.) Bring to the appointment:
 - Unofficial transcript (from Penn and other colleges)
 - Expanded Resume
 - Personal Statement draft
 - Applicant Questionnaire
 - Photo
 - Penn BCPM GPA Calculation
- 3) Meet with your **Health Professions Advisory Board interviewer**. (Schedule this appointment after receiving contact information for your assigned interviewer by e-mail from Lindsay Mapes.)
- 4) Ask for letters of recommendation and make sure that a **minimum** of 3 appropriate recommendations reach your Career Services Credentials File by the **target date of May 15 and no later than June 1**.

It is **your** responsibility to make sure that the recommendations reach your Career Services Credentials File. You should start the process by asking for additional recommendations to ensure that you meet the minimum requirement by June 1. If your file does not contain these recommendations by June 1, the HPAB cannot prepare your HPAB letter.
- 5) Sign the Health Professions Advisory Board Notice and Waiver.
- 6) Submit a draft copy of your primary application by **June 1**.
- 7) Submit your **List of Recommenders form** (designate 3-6 letters of recommendation you have on file) by **June 4**.
- 8) Ask the Credentials Service to mail your HPAB packets to the medical schools by completing and submitting the Credentials Mailing Request Form and payment.

I certify that I have read and understand the statement of responsibilities for registrants applying to medical schools. I agree to abide by the policies set forth in this manual and in the Applicants' Workshop and understand and accept my obligations with regard to the medical school application process.

LIST OF RECOMMENDERS
Health Professions Advisory Board

Name: _____

Graduation Year: _____

Last 4 digits of SSN: _____

Program to which you are applying (i.e. MD, MD/PhD, DO, Vet, Dental): _____

Please list those recommenders whose letters you would like to have included in your HPAB packet for health professions schools. You must choose a minimum of three letters and may include no more than six. This form must be submitted to the Career Services Office no later than **June 4, 2009**.

Recommender	Relationship to you	Institution/Organization
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

(please print)

I hereby authorize the Health Professions Advisory Board to release letters of recommendation from the individuals listed above to health professions schools.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Submit this form (hard copy or fax) to:

Career Services Office (Credentials Service)
University of Pennsylvania
Suite 20, McNeil Building, 3718 Locust Walk
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6209
Fax: 215-898-2687

HPAB APPLICANT RESPONSIBILITIES – CREDENTIALS FILE COPY

Responsibilities for Penn Students and Alumni Requesting HPAB Letter for Fall 2010 Health Professions School Admission:

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- 2) Meet with your **Pre-Health Advisor**. (Schedule this appointment immediately after your Applicants' Workshop.) Bring to the appointment:
 - Unofficial transcript (from Penn and other colleges)
 - Expanded Resume
 - Personal Statement draft
 - Applicant Questionnaire
 - Photo
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- 8) Ask the Credentials Service to mail your HPAB packets to the medical schools by completing and submitting the Credentials Mailing Request Form and payment.

In signing below, I certify that I have read and understand the statement of responsibilities for registrants applying to medical schools. I agree to abide by the policies set forth in this manual and in the Applicants' Workshop and understand and accept my obligations with regard to the health professions school application process.

Date: _____

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

HEALTH PROFESSIONS ADVISORY BOARD NOTICE AND WAIVER

The Health Professions Advisory Board (the "Board") agrees to release its letter of evaluation only to those schools or scholarship programs designated in writing on the mailing request form. Included with the Board's letter will be all evaluations or recommendations that you have listed and that are part of your file.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, gives you the right to inspect certain records, including letters of recommendation placed in your file after January 1, 1975. However, you may waive this right in writing. Letters of recommendation written in confidence may be given more credence by the recipient. Therefore, although you are not required to do so, we invite you to waive your right to access your Health Professions Advisory Board evaluation. You should be aware that if you have already waived access to a specific letter of recommendation, you will not be able to inspect it by declining to waive access to the Board's letter of evaluation. You must choose one of the options below:

I waive any rights I may have to have access to the Board's letter of evaluation under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.

I do not waive the rights to have access to the Board's letter of evaluation under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.

By signing below, you are requesting the Board to send a letter of evaluation to the school or scholarship programs designated on your mailing request form. If you request a letter of evaluation, the Board is permitted to review student records relevant for the preparation of its letter of evaluation and is permitted to disclose information from such records to schools or programs which you have designated. After you have requested a letter of evaluation, your written consent is not required for the Board's review of records and disclosure of information. This applies to all of your student records at the University, including but not limited to, any records created prior to your graduation from the University, and all records of the University Student Judicial System and Judicial Inquiry Office.

For further information on the review and disclosure of your records, please consult the University's Policy on the Confidentiality of Student Records; if you have questions, consult a pre-health counselor in the Career Services office.

I have read and understand the above information and hereby request and authorize the Health Professions Advisory Board to send letter of evaluation to the schools or scholarship programs I have designated.

Date: _____

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

APPLICANT INFORMATION SHEET
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name: _____ Date: _____

Last 4 digits of SSN: _____ Penn ID: _____

Phone #: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Major: _____

Year of Graduation: _____

Intended program: Medical Dental Veterinary

Seeking Admission for Fall 20_____

Standardized test date (MCAT, DAT, GRE, etc.): _____

Please list at least three individuals from whom you are considering requesting a letter of recommendation, including their name and relationship to you:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

FOR CAREER SERVICES OFFICE USE ONLY

Int. Date: _____ Advisor: _____ HPAB interviewer: _____