



**MEDICAL  
SCHOOL  
APPLICANT  
MANUAL**

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**FALL 2019 MATRICULATION**

**PRE-HEALTH  
ADVISING TEAM**



# CONTENTS

# 01

## OVERVIEW

- Health Professions Advisory Board (HPAB)
- Medical School Application Timeline
- Important Deadlines
- Application Management System (AMS)

# 06

## HPAB PROCESS

- Advisor Interview
- HPAB Documents

# 09

## APPLICATION COMPONENTS

- Transcript
- Semester Hours Conversion
- Work / Experience
- Personal Statement
- MCAT
- Secondaries

# 17

## LETTERS OF EVALUATION

- Asking For Letters
- Submitting Letters
- List of Recommenders
- Requesting Your HPAB Packet

# 24

## INTERVIEWS & DECISIONS

- Interview Preparation
- Deciding on a School

# 26

## USEFUL LINKS

- Transcripts
- Credentials
- Interviewing
- AMCAS
- MCAT
- AACOMAS
- TMDAS



# HEALTH PROFESSIONS ADVISORY BOARD (HPAB)

....individualized HPAB Committee Letter that highlights an applicant's academic achievement, intellectual strength....

Many undergraduate institutions offer a letter from a pre-health committee in support of medical school applicants. At Penn, this committee is called the Health Professions Advisory Board (HPAB), and it is comprised of the Pre-Health Advising Team as well as University faculty and staff, to provide a holistic overview of each candidate who completes our process. Medical schools value the personalized insights the letters provide.

Penn has a large number of applicants to medical school every year, so we have developed a systematic process that enables us to write a comprehensive Committee Letter for those who meet our deadlines.

After meeting with each applicant, the Pre-Health Advising Team writes a thorough, detailed, and individualized HPAB Committee Letter that highlights an applicant's academic achievement, intellectual strength, non-academic accomplishments, communication skills, maturity, fit for health care professions, service orientation, leadership and community engagement.

# MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICATION TIMELINE



## Spring

- Take MCAT by the end of May
- Begin completing primary application
- Obtain at least 3 appropriate letters of recommendation
- Request official transcript

## Summer

- Submit primary applications in June
- Submit secondary application in July/August

## Fall & Winter

Attend medical school interviews

# IMPORTANT DEADLINES

- 📌 Attend a Medical School Applicant Workshop
- 📌 Open a Credentials File
- 📌 Complete Advisor Interview by **April 13**
- 📌 Obtain at least 3 appropriate letters of recommendation in Credentials File by **May 15**
- 📌 Submit LOR Form by **May 22**
- 📌 Upload final Expanded Resume by **May 31**

**Credentials Request Date  
July 19 @ Noon EST**

# APPLICATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (AMS)

The Health Professions Application Management System (AMS) is an online system designed specifically for Penn's HPAB Process.

AMS can be accessed in the Health Professions School tab of the Grad School Study section of the Career Services Website - <https://uapps.vpul.upenn.edu/csonline> (PennKey Required)

After logging into AMS, you will notice that there are three sections of the portal:



Online Credentials File



HPAB Document Checklist



Credentials Request (page 20)

## CREDENTIALS FILE

Your Credentials File, housed in Career Services, serves as a permanent repository for your letters of recommendation for medical school. You can open a credentials file in person, in the Career Services Office, or by visiting the Letters of Recommendation tab in the Grad School Study section of our website.

*\*Letters kept in your Credentials File can only be used for the purpose of applying to medical school.*



# APPLICATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (AMS)

## HPAB DOCUMENTS CHECKLIST

The HPAB Documents page allows you to upload each of the required HPAB documents (page 7). Detailed instructions on how to upload documents can be found at the bottom of the checklist.

### *HPAB Documents Checklist*



- ✓ [Attend Workshop and Open a Credentials File \(Registration Form\)](#)
- ✓ Upload Photo
- ✓ Upload Expanded Resume
- ✓ Complete HPAB Essays
- ✓ Upload BCPM GPA
- ✓ Provide at least 3 Letters of Recommendations by **May 16**
- ✓ Provide a List of Recommenders Form by **May 20**
- Provide a List of Recommenders Form
- ✓ Upload an Application Draft



**December Workshop Attendees:**  
contact beginning on January 8

**Spring Workshop Attendees:**  
contact within 2 business days of  
attending workshop

## ADVISOR INTERVIEW

Contact Ferrell Townsend in Career Services at  
215-898-1789 to schedule the 45-minute interview

Please upload your **HPAB Documents** (Photo, BCPM GPA, & HPAB Essays)\* prior to your 45-minute Advisor Interview. *Failure to upload documents is not a reason to cancel your Advisor Interview.*

*\*Note: Only the Pre-Health Advising Team will have access to these documents and they will not be sent to any medical schools.*

***Due to the high volume of applicants,  
you will not be able to reschedule the  
Advisor Interview***

# HPAB DOCUMENTS

## PHOTO

You should be recognizable and prominent in the photo

## EXPANDED RÉSUMÉ

A sample can be found in AMS

## BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY, PHYSICS, & MATH (BCPM) GPA

List of courses and grades that comprise your BCPM GPA, in addition to the GPA calculation. Follow the format provided in AMS

Include the grades earned in any course taken in these four disciplines, as well as other courses whose content falls primarily in these areas

You can calculate your BCPM GPA by using the GPA calculator found in your Worksheet on PennInTouch

## HPAB ESSAYS

This is an opportunity for reflection that will help your pre-health advisor know you better and prepare you for medical school applications and interviews

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## AMCAS/AACOMAS Application

Upload a completed and submitted application draft before HPAB Packet can be requested (page 20)

# HPAB ESSAYS

1. How has your background shaped your decision to pursue medicine as a career? (500 word max)
2. As the landscape of health care is changing, what are the two most important characteristics a health care provider should possess and why? (500 word max)
3. Describe a time when you failed and what you learned from it. (500 word max)
4. What is the biggest ethical challenge you have ever encountered? How did you handle it? (500 word max)
5. Medicine in today's society is often considered to be a team effort. When were you a member of a team and things did not go as planned? How did you respond? (500 word max)
6. Are you reapplying to medical school? If "yes," please explain how your application has changed / improved since your last application cycle. (No max)
7. Do you believe your grades accurately reflect the strength of your candidacy for medical school? If not, please explain. You must answer this question if your BCPM GPA falls below a 3.1. (250 word max)
8. Were you ever the recipient of any institutional action by any college or university for unacceptable academic performance or conduct violations? If "yes," please explain in detail here and plan to discuss the matter fully with your pre-health advisor. (No max)

# PRIMARY APPLICATION

## **ALLOPATHIC MEDICAL SCHOOLS**

If you are applying to allopathic medical schools (MD), use the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS). The AMCAS application contains the following:

Demographic Information

Academic Record

Work/Experiences

Personal Statement

Letters of Evaluation

Activate the AMCAS application by registering online. The earliest you can begin filling out the application for 2018 will be in early May 2017. Submissions begin in early June and we suggest submitting by the end of June.

## **OSTEOPATHIC MEDICAL SCHOOLS**

If you are applying to osteopathic medical schools (DO), use the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS). This application is very similar to AMCAS, and is available online.

## **TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOLS**

Public Texas medical schools belong to a separate state application service called Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Service (TMDSAS).

# PRIMARY APPLICATION

## ACADEMIC RECORD

List all your courses following the instructions provided by AMCAS.

## TRANSCRIPTS

Only Penn's Office of the University Registrar and any other college or university's registrar's office where you have taken coursework can send your official transcript(s) to AMCAS.

Request an official Penn transcript online via PennInTouch and make the addressee the application service(s) you are using. Then email the AMCAS Transcript Request Form (the Academic Record section of AMCAS explains how to obtain the form) to the Registrar's Office. The Registrar's Office will then attach the form before sending it to AMCAS.

We recommend that you wait to request your transcript until your spring grades appear on it, with the exception of study abroad grades. In addition, review your unofficial transcript for errors before you place a request.

# PRIMARY APPLICATION

## SEMESTER HOURS CONVERSION

Applicants using **AMCAS** *do not* convert their Penn course units but enter them exactly as they appear on the official transcript.

Applicants using **AACOMAS** & **TMDSAS** must convert Penn course units to semester hours for their applications.

For applicants using AACOMAS & TMDSAS,  
***1 credit unit = 4 semester hours.***

For example:

**0.5 c.u. = 2 credit hours**

**1 c.u. = 4 credit hours**

**1.5 c.u. = 6 credit hours**

If you have questions about converting your courses to credit hours, please contact the Office of the University Registrar.

# PRIMARY APPLICATION

## WORK / EXPERIENCE SECTION

List and describe up to 15 of your most important extracurricular and co-curricular activities and awards. Do not include high school activities without consulting your pre-health advisor. You will be asked to write more extensively on up to 3 activities you choose as your “most meaningful.”

## TIPS FOR WRITING DESCRIPTIONS

- List the most appropriate (non-student) contact
- Explain your role, accomplishments, responsibilities and contributions
- Provide what you learned and why it’s meaningful

## PERSONAL STATEMENT

You will write an essay that details one or two adult, not childhood, experiences, in which you were an active participant, and illustrates qualities that make you a strong candidate:

- Strive for a unifying theme
- Provide detailed and concrete examples
- Convey your maturity and capacity for self-reflection
- Convey your commitment to medicine and your “fit” for the profession
- You may submit a draft of your personal statement via email to your pre-health advisor for a critique, prior to **May 18**



# PRIMARY APPLICATION

## LETTERS OF EVALUATION SECTION

Penn applicants must indicate that they will be submitting a “Committee Letter” (not “Letter Packet”). List your pre-health advisor as the Contact/Author. Do not list the individual letters of recommendation in the packet on your AMCAS or AACOMAS application. Later in the application, you will select the schools to which you are applying, and then assign your Committee Letter to each individual school.

## RELEASING YOUR INFORMATION

When AMCAS asks if you want your information released to your pre-health advisor, please indicate “YES.” The aggregate information will help us assemble Penn-specific statistics for future applicants, just as past information was helpful to you.

# MEDICAL COLLEGE ADMISSION TEST (MCAT)

*Take no later than the end of May in the year you apply*

## PREPARATION

- You can discuss your preparation plan with your pre-health advisor. Applicants have had success with a variety of approaches
- The AAMC provides guidance and resources for MCAT preparation online (See Useful Links page 26)

## FEE REDUCTION

Apply for Fee Assistance through the AAMC: <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap>

Please inform us if you receive the Fee Waiver

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Apply well in advance of registration: <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/accommodations/>

## JOINT DEGREE PROGRAMS

Applicants to some joint degree programs might be required to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), in addition to the MCAT. For information about the GRE, go to [www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org)

# MEDICAL SCHOOL ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS (MSAR)

The MSAR is an online resource available through the AAMC that provides a comprehensive list of allopathic medical schools and information about them, including:

- ✔ **Statistics on the range of GPAs and MCAT scores for admitted students**
- ✔ **Admission ratios and tuition for in-state vs. out-of-state applicants**
- ✔ **Detailed information on school curricula**

*Penn-specific admissions statistics* are available on the Career Services website and in the Career Service Library. You can discuss your tentative list of schools with your pre-health advisor.

# SECONDARY APPLICATIONS

Be as diligent and timely as possible in completing and returning secondary applications.

You will start receiving secondary applications (“secondaries”) from most medical schools after your primary application has been verified. **Secondaries often ask you to write additional essays, list the courses you have taken that satisfy a school’s requirements, and pay an additional fee.**

Schools will also request that you submit letters of evaluation — in your case, the **HPAB Packet— which consists of the HPAB Committee Letter and your 3-6 letters of recommendation.**

# LETTERS OF EVALUATION SECTION

In addition to your HPAB Committee Letter, medical schools require that you submit letters of recommendation as a part of your application. *The HPAB Committee requires that you send a minimum of 3 letters and you may send a maximum of 6.*

## ASKING FOR A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

- Give your recommenders at least 4 - 6 weeks' time for them to write your letter

Letters of recommendation from famous and/or well-known people and character references from friends or family members are not advised

- One, or **better two**, letters of recommendation should be from a **science professor or TA**

- If possible, at least **one** letter of recommendation from a non-science professor or TA demonstrates a well-rounded background

- One letter must be from a member of the **standing faculty at Penn**

# LETTERS OF EVALUATION SECTION

## HOW TO SUBMIT LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION



**Complete and sign a Confidentiality Agreement (available in Career Services and on our website)**



Mark your letter CONFIDENTIAL or NON-CONFIDENTIAL, sign, and date your form. Note that medical schools value confidential letters.



Give the Confidentiality Agreement to your recommender who will return it along with their letter of recommendation.



Instructions for your recommender as to where to send their letter are in the bottom-right corner of the Confidentiality Agreement.

# LETTERS OF EVALUATION SECTION



## Letters of Recommendation CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

No letter of recommendation will be processed without a completed and signed agreement!

Note: Not intended for use by students enrolled in an LPS Post-Baccalaureate program. If you are an LPS student please discuss your credentials file options with your advisor.

### APPLICANT INFORMATION \*ALL FIELDS TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT\*

PENN ID:

LAST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ MI: \_\_\_\_\_

GRAD YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

#### INTENDED USE OF LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION:

- ALLOPATHIC MEDICAL SCHOOL (MD)       MD / PHD PROGRAM  
 OSTEOPATHIC MEDICAL SCHOOL (DO)       DENTAL SCHOOL

### RECOMMENDER INFORMATION \*ALL FIELDS TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT\*

LAST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

INSTITUTION: \_\_\_\_\_

As per the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)*, I understand that I may view this evaluation unless I explicitly waive my right to do so below:

- CONFIDENTIAL: I waive my right to view this evaluation  
 NON-CONFIDENTIAL: I do not waive my right to view this evaluation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### ATTENTION RECOMMENDERS:

Please ensure the letter is **signed, dated**, and on **official letterhead**. Unless explicitly asked by the student, address all letters to the attention of a general medical school admissions board.

For more information:  
<http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/faculty/premed.php>

### PLEASE ATTACH FORM TO LETTER AND SUBMIT VIA EMAIL (PDF) OR MAIL:

letters@pobox.upenn.edu  
Career Services Attn: Letters  
University of Pennsylvania  
3718 Locust Walk  
McNeil Building, Suite 20  
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6209

### UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

University of Pennsylvania values diversity and seeks talented students, faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds. The University of Pennsylvania does not discriminate on basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, or status as a Vietnam Era Veteran or disabled veteran in the administration of educational policies, programs or activities; admissions policies; scholarship and loan awards; athletic or other University administered programs or employment. Questions or complaints regarding this policy should be directed to: Executive Director, Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs, Sansom Place East, 3650 Chestnut Street, Suite 228, Philadelphia, PA, 19104-6106 or by phone at (215)896-6992 (Voice) or (215) 896-7863 (TDD).

# REQUESTING YOUR HPAB PACKET



*Requests, placed through AMS, begin at:  
Noon EST on July 19*



One-time flat fee of **\$95**



You must complete the **HPAB Document Checklist** (page 5) and ensure your Letters of Recommendation are on file before placing your request

## LIST OF RECOMMENDERS FORM (LOR)

- Designates the 3-6 letters to be included in your HPAB Packet
- Submit your LOR Form (available in AMS) by **May 22** - you can always update or amend later
- Submit a separate LOR Form **for each program** to which you are applying: MD, MD/PhD, or DO
- Letters included on your LOR Form must be in your Credentials file
- **We will use the most up-to-date LOR Form**
- **We will cancel your request if you request before all of your letters of recommendation are on file**

## APPLICATION ID

- The AMCAS ID has 8 digits and the AMCAS Letter ID has 7 digits.
- The AACOMAS ID has 10 digits
- The TMDSAS ID has 5 digits



# REQUESTING YOUR HPAB PACKET

## HPAB PACKET

- The packet includes your Committee Letter and up to six letters of recommendation
- The author is your Pre-Health Advisor
- The HPAB Packet has its own, unique, Letter ID (AMCAS Only)

## SUPPLEMENTAL LETTERS

- There is an additional fee of \$5 for sending out a supplemental letter of recommendation
- List the author of the supplemental letter of recommendation entered on your applications as the person who wrote it; however, our office will submit the letter on the author's behalf
- The supplemental letter of recommendation will have its own, unique Letter ID, which is different from that of the HPAB Packet

## VIRTUALEVALS (VE)

VirtualEvals is the online letter submissions system for AMCAS and TMDSAS

# REQUESTING YOUR HPAB PACKET

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR PLACING YOUR REQUEST

1. Choose the appropriate program type and enter the Application ID and Letter ID
2. Choose Recipient (Electronically):  
MD – AMCAS LOE  
Texas MD – TMDSAS  
DO – AACOMAS
3. Choose Recipients (Manually)  
Non-AMCAS / Caribbean Schools -  
enter email or mailing address of school
4. Choose “HPAB Packet” or “Supplemental Letter”
5. Proceed and pay with Debit/Credit Card
6. Allow 7-10 business days for your packet or letter to be uploaded
7. You will receive a confirmation email from VE

Please email Ferrell Townsend with questions:  
ferrellt@upenn.edu

# INTERVIEWS & DECISIONS

Interviews begin at the end of **August and can run through the beginning of March**. Acceptances might be offered as early as October or as late as the following June (off the “wait list”). **Each school has its own system and timeline**, so there is no standard timeline for interviews and acceptances.

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION

- ✔ Visit the interviewing section of our website
- ✔ **Pre-Health Interview Workshops** are open to all and offer helpful tips

A **mock interview** in the traditional format can be scheduled **after you have accepted**

- ✔ **an interview invitation from a medical school**. To schedule, call 215.898.1789 or email Ferrell Townsend at [ferrellt@upenn.edu](mailto:ferrellt@upenn.edu)

**Multiple Mini-Interview (MMI) Workshops** are offered to applicants who **have scheduled**

- ✔ **an MMI with a school**. Please email Ferrell Townsend at [ferrellt@upenn.edu](mailto:ferrellt@upenn.edu) to inquire about dates and sign-up

# INTERVIEWS & DECISIONS

## DECIDING ON A SCHOOL

According to the AAMC Traffic Rules for Admissions, you are permitted to hold only one acceptance after April 30. You may remain on the waitlist of other schools, however.



Once you have made your decision, please contact medical schools to release your other acceptances



You can hold multiple acceptances before April 30. Accepting an early offer does not mean you are committed to that school. You can release the acceptance later



Contact the schools' admissions and financial aid offices to be clear on the cost of attending each school

# USEFUL LINKS

**Requesting Transcripts:** [www.upenn.edu/registrar](http://www.upenn.edu/registrar)

**Penn Credentials Service:** [www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/credentials](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/credentials)

**Interview Practice:** <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradprof/healthprof/healthinterview.php#practice>

## AMCAS

**AMCAS General:** [www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org)

**AMCAS Application:** [www.aamc.org/students/amcas/start.html](http://www.aamc.org/students/amcas/start.html)

**AMCAS Contact Information:** [amcas@aamc.org](mailto:amcas@aamc.org) or 202-828-0600

**MSAR:** <https://students-residents.aamc.org/choosing-medical-career/article/admission-requirements-medical-school/>

**AMCAS Course Classification:** <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/course-classification-guide/>

**AMCAS Application Responsibilities:** <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/application-and-acceptance-protocols-applicants/>

**Letters Guidelines Brochure:** <https://www.aamc.org/download/349990/data/lettersguidelinesbrochure.pdf>

**MCAT Registration:** <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/taking-mcat-exam/register-mcat-exam/>

**MCAT Fee Assistance Program:** <http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap>

# USEFUL LINKS

**MCAT Special Accommodations:** <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/accommodations/>

**Financial Aid:** <https://students-residents.aamc.org/financial-aid/>

## AACOMAS

**AACOMAS General:** [www.aacom.org](http://www.aacom.org)

**AACOMAS Application:** <http://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor>

**Contact Information:** [aacominfo@liaisoncas.com](mailto:aacominfo@liaisoncas.com)  
or (617) 612-2889

## TMDSAS

**TMDSAS General:** [www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas](http://www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas)



## CONTACT



215.898.1789



3718 Locust Walk  
McNeil Building, Suite 20



[https://www.vpul.upenn.edu  
/careerservices/currentapplicantsmed](https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/currentapplicantsmed)

