PREPARING FOR A CAREER IN THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS

2021-22
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Dear aspiring health professionals:

Welcome to Princeton! We look forward to helping you explore your interest in serving others through a health career.

At Health Professions Advising (HPA), we work with students and alumni interested in any and all health professions: medicine is the most popular, but we have advised future dentists, veterinarians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, physical therapists, pharmacists, physician scientists, public health professionals, and many others.

This guide will help you plan your path to health professions school. There is no single, correct way to prepare—there is no magical formula that will ensure your acceptance to professional school. We will help you make informed choices about classes, activities, and your future.

In addition to using this guide, we encourage you to attend workshops, familiarize yourself with our website, read Vitals (our weekly e-newsletter), and come to meet with us at any time! We are your advisers for all four years at Princeton and beyond. The sooner we get to know you, the more helpful we can be. Drop-In Hours and individual appointments are available during the school year (times are posted on the HPA website and on Facebook).

We enjoy working with students with every level of interest in health professions—indecision and questions are welcome!

Kate Fukawa-Connelly, director
Sherise Smith, assistant director
Sachiko Datta, health professions adviser
Jennifer Samarel, administrative assistant
SUITABILITY FOR A CAREER IN THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS

It is easy to progress through premed without stopping to reflect, especially if you’ve known “since you can remember” that you were “destined” to become a doctor. Now is the time to think long and hard about your motivation, consider your personal goals and values, and measure them against concrete information about the reality of becoming a health professional.

How do you know if you’re well-suited to pursue a career in healthcare?

- You should have an intellectual interest and ability in science. Different health careers require differing amounts of science mastery.

- You should have a deep and abiding interest in people and their problems, and a service-oriented mentality demonstrated through participation in civic engagement activities.

- You should be ready to work in a team setting, as both a leader and a collaborator. You should be able to work with a wide variety of people as your colleagues and as your patients.

- You should have a realistic understanding of the challenges and rewards of your career of interest gained through reading, shadowing, and otherwise learning about the day to day reality of the career.

- You should be comfortable interacting with patients and others in healthcare settings gained through patient-facing volunteering or work. Some med schools will assign you to your first patients in the first week of school.

Gaining actual experience—through courses, co-curricular activities, internships, volunteering, shadowing, and other activities—will help you clarify your values, skills, and interests, and will help you determine whether they’re best applied to a health professions career.

Reflect on the questions:

- Why do I want to be a health professional?
- What qualities do I want to embody as a professional?
- What can I do to develop these qualities in myself?
The Diversity of Health Professions Careers

The Diversity of Careers in the Health Professions

There are many health professions, each requiring varying amounts of time in school, knowledge and technical skills, and career advancement opportunities. Within medicine alone there are many career options and a wide variety of ways to contribute to society. Doctors work in clinical practice, academic medicine, biomedical research, healthcare administration, public health, college health, government, and many other areas.

The HPA website provides information about exploring a number of health professions, as well as links to gather more information.

US News Best Healthcare Jobs 2021

1. Physician Assistant
2. Nurse Practitioner
3. Physician
4. Speech-Language Pathologist
5. Dentist
6. Veterinarian
7. Orthodontist
8. Anesthesiologist
9. Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon
10. Occupational Therapist

Common questions in considering a healthcare career:

- How much science do I want to study?
- How much schooling do I want to pursue?
- How much responsibility do I want to have?
- What lifestyle do I envision for myself?
- What brings me satisfaction in my day-to-day life?
- How much am I willing to sacrifice for my career goals?
PLANNING YOUR PREMED/PREHEALTH PROGRAM

What Do Medical and Other Health Profession Schools Look For?

The environment in which health professionals work demands high levels of intellectual and interpersonal ability. Here are some characteristics valued by admission committees:

Academic readiness. You will need to demonstrate that you can manage the rigorous curriculum, which will include a higher volume of scientific content than most students encounter as undergrads.

Orientation to learning. Developing strategies that allow you to process and retain vast quantities of information is important. Additionally, you are likely to thrive in the health professions if you are intellectually curious, able to solve complex problems, and interested in lifelong learning. You have to know how to learn and love learning.

Interpersonal skills/ability to work with others. You should be able to relate well to a broad spectrum of people with respect, empathy, and compassion, with an open mind and a willingness to help.

Evidence of understanding of your future career. It is expensive to educate a health professions student and deciding whom to train is a responsibility that schools take seriously—they want to accept students who understand what they are getting into. You will also be more likely to persist in your preparation if you have concrete experience with your future career of interest.

Personal Competencies. Factual knowledge is only part of what makes a skilled physician; personal characteristics, experiences, and attributes are equally significant. Characteristics that are considered particularly important in physicians (and other health professionals) include:

- Ethical responsibility
- Reliability & dependability
- Service orientation
- Social & interpersonal skills
- Teamwork

- Capacity for improvement
- Resilience & adaptability
- Cultural competence
- Oral & written communication

Mateo Gilsilvetti & Denay Richards at the Rutgers—RWJMS accepted student open house
Academic Preparation for Medical, Vet & Dental School

COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL

It is best to be aware of the admission requirements early on in college so that you can time your coursework wisely. The basic requirements for medical schools are outlined in the following chart.

Note that there are two course types we include here: courses required before you begin medical school and courses that may not be required, but are recommended for the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT).

Additional notes:

• While the chart (p. 7) is representative of the requirements at the majority of schools, individual schools may have additional requirements.

• Whenever there is the option, take requirements for a grade, not P/D/F.

• All courses taken at any US college or university will count toward your application GPA even if they do not transfer to Princeton.

• It is preferable to take all science requirements at Princeton during the academic year. Consult with HPA if you plan to take courses in the summer (and see advice, p. 19).

• Your performance in Biology (MOL, NEU, EEB), Chemistry, Physics, and Math (including statistics) courses (i.e., your “BCPM” or “Science” GPA) will be calculated on your application.

• Generally, taking more than the minimum required Biology courses is valued. Consider Genetics (MOL 342), Modern Microbiology (MOL 380), Immune Systems (EEB 327), Comparative Physiology (EEB 314), and other courses with human biology content.

• Many questions about course requirements are answered in the FAQs on the HPA website: hpa.princeton.edu/faqs/academics-faq

Science Credits for Princeton applicants accepted to medical school

mean = 74 credits
or about 18-19 courses

range = 40-132 credits
or 10-33 courses
## COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course type</th>
<th>Course number @ Princeton</th>
<th>Required by most medical schools</th>
<th>Required by some medical schools</th>
<th>Recommend for MCAT prep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Chemistry</td>
<td>CHM 201 (or 207) + CHM 202</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td></td>
<td>✅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Chemistry</td>
<td>CHM 301 + CHM 302/304</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td></td>
<td>✅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>EEB 211 + MOL 214</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td></td>
<td>✅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>PHY 101 or 103 + PHY 102, 104 or 108</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td></td>
<td>✅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biochem</td>
<td>MOL 345</td>
<td></td>
<td>✅</td>
<td>✅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English / Literature</td>
<td>Writing Sem + 1 semester of literature</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td></td>
<td>✅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>1 semester of calculus or AP + 1 semester of statistics</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td></td>
<td>✅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>Psychology and Sociology</td>
<td>✅</td>
<td></td>
<td>✅</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Biochemistry

Biochemistry is required by over 50 US MD schools and recommended by most of the others. The MCAT includes significant Biochemistry content. Members of the class of 2025 should take Biochemistry.

### Math

Over 50 medical schools require college math. Of those, almost 20 require one semester of statistics, and concepts from statistics will be tested on the MCAT. Members of the class of 2025 are strongly encouraged to take statistics in any department.

### Psychology and Sociology

A few medical schools now require behavioral or social science courses. Concepts related to the Psychological and Social Foundations of Behavior are tested on the MCAT. No specific course will align perfectly with the MCAT; PSY 101 and Sociology courses that discuss race and culture (e.g., SOC 227, SOC 236) will be most relevant. Many PSY/SOC courses count toward distribution requirements.
Course Requirements for Medical School

Focus on courses that require reading, analyzing literature, and writing papers for the majority of your grade. See our FAQs and Prereqs Flow Chart online for more.

Unusual Requirements

Students should research the prerequisites and AP policies for public schools in their home state. About 70% of medical students attend their public, state school.

- Residents of Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin should expect to take 3-4 semesters of Biology.
- Residents of Indiana, Nevada, North Dakota, and Wisconsin should take Psychology and/or Sociology.

Alum Advice: Catharine Leahy ‘17, Chemistry with a certificate in Global Health & Health Policy

Pursuing an MD at University of Illinois College of Medicine

Significant college activities: Outdoor Action, Homework Helpers at Princeton Public Library, Princeton Disability Awareness, Orange Key


Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: Use a journal! You'll appreciate having thoughtful memories of meaningful experiences just for their own sake, and it's an amazing tool for reflection and growth. But you will use and appreciate it writing applications and preparing for interviews. It's a lot easier to look over a journal than trying to come up with stories that you may not remember super well.

Stay on top of your prerequisites, but be sure to spend time to explore other careers and majors than those you thought you would do at the beginning. I am so grateful for the time I spent undecided (about my major, post college plans, life goals, etc.) in college, because I am more certain and confident about what I am doing now. Use the awesome opportunities you have at Princeton to explore the many different pathways you can take your life. And while gap years are useful for building that resume, know that it's also an important time for personal growth, finding out what matters most to you, and learning how to survive outside of an academic bubble. Take time to travel, find new hobbies, contribute to your community, and invest in your relationships.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL

General Chemistry

General Chemistry I (CHM 201) (offered in Fall) and General Chemistry II (CHM 202) (offered in Spring). The goal of General Chemistry is to enhance our understanding of our surroundings through a study of matter at the molecular scale. Topics in CHM 201 include chemical reactions, equilibrium, energy and entropy, quantum theory, atomic structure, and chemical bonding. Topics in CHM 202 include introduction to chemical bonding and solid state structure; chemical kinetics, descriptive inorganic chemistry; laboratory manipulations, preparations, and analysis.

Organic Chemistry

Organic Chemistry I: Biological Emphasis (CHM 301) (offered in Fall) and Organic Chemistry II: Biological Emphasis (CHM 302) or Organic Chemistry II: Foundations of Chemical Reactivity and Synthesis (CHM 304) (offered in Spring). CHM 301 will introduce concepts of organic chemistry including the structures, properties, and reactivity of simpler organic compounds. The emphasis will be on the mechanisms of organic reactions, with examples taken from biology when appropriate to illustrate the principles. CHM 302/304 will extend on concepts introduced in CHM 301 to the structures and reactions of more complex molecules, with an emphasis on how organic chemistry provides the framework for understanding molecular processes in biology. General Chemistry (CHM 201/202) is a prerequisite for Organic Chemistry.

Biology

Life on Earth: Mechanisms of Change in Nature (EEB 211) (offered in Fall). An examination of how life evolved and how organisms function. Why did the dinosaurs disappear? What mechanisms can produce the chameleon’s camouflage or the giraffe’s long neck? Why do ecosystems contain such a wide diversity of species when competition between them should eliminate all but a few? How will life on earth change with increasing human domination of the planet? These and other questions related to the origin and future of life, conflict and cooperation between species, and dynamics of ecosystems will be explored.

Introduction to Cellular and Molecular Biology (MOL 214) (offered in Fall and Spring). Important concepts and elements of molecular biology, biochemistry, genetics, and cell biology, are examined in an experimental context.

Physics

Concerned with an introduction to the fundamental laws underlying physics and general application in other areas of science. The treatment in PHY 101-102 is complete and detailed, however, less mathematical preparation is assumed than for PHY 103-104. PHY 108 is designed to introduce life science students to selected topics in physics. Molecular Biology majors should take PHY 101 or 103 (fall) and PHY 108 (spring).

Biochemistry

MOL 345 – Biochemistry (offered in Fall and Spring). Fundamental concepts of biomolecular structure and function will be discussed, with an emphasis on principles of thermodynamics, binding and catalysis. A major portion of the course will focus on metabolism and its logic and regulation. Prerequisites: MOL 214 and either CHM 302/304 or ISC 335. CHM 302/304 may be taken concurrently with MOL 345.

Math & Statistics

Almost any math course will suffice—take what makes sense based on concentrations of interest. Most students take statistics when they are fairly certain of their concentration. We recommend any of the following statistics courses: ECO 202, ORF 245, POL 345, PSY 251, SML 201, SOC 301, SPI 200, SPI 332.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Always check with individual schools for exact requirements, but the following is a basic guideline for some programs of interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prereq</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Vet</th>
<th>Optom</th>
<th>Nurse Prac</th>
<th>Pharm</th>
<th>Phys Asst</th>
<th>PT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen Chem</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Chem</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculus</td>
<td>Few</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Few</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stats</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biochem</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microbio</td>
<td>Few</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anat &amp; Phys</td>
<td>Few</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td></td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Adv bio, Psyc</td>
<td>Varies widely</td>
<td>Psyc, humanities and soc sci</td>
<td>Nutrition, psyc</td>
<td>ECO, Public Speaking</td>
<td>Psyc</td>
<td>Psyc/Soc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dental School:** Prereqs similar to med, but often includes Microbiology (MOL 380). The dental admissions test (DAT) covers biology, general and organic chemistry, perceptual ability, reading comprehension, and quantitative reasoning (no higher than algebra-level problem solving).

**Vet School:** Veterinary school **prerequisites vary widely**, though all include the four basic sciences with labs. Consult with an HPA adviser if you are considering vet school. Veterinary schools require the GRE General Test, which tests verbal and quantitative reasoning, and analytical writing.
ADVANCED PLACEMENT CREDIT AND PREMED

Schools have differing policies regarding Advanced Placement. Most will accept advanced courses that supplement AP credit to satisfy requirements. HPA recommends checking policies for schools of interest. Some academic departments have changed their credit policies for AP exams administered virtually. In these departments, incoming students may be required to take a Princeton test to confirm credit. For details, please contact your Director of Studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AP Score</th>
<th>Satisfies</th>
<th>Recommended additional course(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP Chem 4</td>
<td>CHM 201</td>
<td>CHM 202 or 215 + an advanced chemistry course (beyond Organic Chem and Biochemistry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP Chem 5</td>
<td>CHM 201 + 202</td>
<td>At least one advanced chemistry course (beyond Organic Chem and Biochemistry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP Calculus</td>
<td>MAT 103 / 104</td>
<td>One statistics course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AP Biology**: Some medical schools insist on two semesters of lab. MOL and NEU concentrators will take core lab. EEB concentrators are required to take EEB 211. Other lab courses: Comparative Physiology (EEB 314), Ecology (EEB 321), Human Adaptation (ANT 215/EEB 315).

**AP Chemistry**: Medical schools have not expected an additional chemistry lab course to supplement AP. Past premed students have taken advanced chemistry courses including CHM 440 (Drug Discovery), CHM 305 (The Quantum World), and CHM 306 (Physical Chemistry).

**AP Physics**: Past premed students have taken physics courses including: PHY 108, CHM 305, CHM 306, AST 204 (Topics in Modern Astronomy), or GEO 371 (Global Geophysics). Other courses with an Introductory Physics prerequisite may be appropriate – consult with HPA.

**AP Math**: Students with 2 units of AP in math do not need to take Calculus or advanced math. This is the only exception to the rule about supplementing AP with advanced coursework. A class in statistics is still recommended.

“Giving up AP”: if you do not feel well-prepared in a subject area despite your AP score, we recommend a conversation with HPA advisers or your Director of Studies/Dean to discuss whether or not to “backtrack” in the subject.
YOUR ACADEMIC PLAN

No one academic plan is suitable for all students.

The following timelines show how you might plan the premedical coursework in conjunction with your other academic responsibilities. No one plan is the “right” way, no one plan “better” than another. Speak with an HPA adviser, your faculty adviser, and/or your Director of Studies in order to craft a timeline that most effectively leads to your success given your preparation, goals, and interests.

Starting with one science course

Most AB students should take one of the two-course basic science sequences in the first year. We recommend starting with General Chemistry since it is a prerequisite for Organic Chemistry (and organic is a prereq for biochemistry); math and chemistry are usually taken before biology; physics after math.

At many colleges, students “double up” on sciences in the first year; based on our experiences, Princeton students tend to fare much better taking just one science (and possibly math) in the first semester. If the fall goes well, you might choose to add a second science (probably MOL) in the spring.

BSE students without AP credit will likely take General Chemistry and Physics.

Planning for standardized tests

Included in the following timelines are the premed prerequisite courses, as well as the timing of application and MCAT (timing for DAT and GRE testing, for dental and other prehealth students, varies slightly). Students apply to medical school in June, over a year ahead of their desired date of matriculation. To apply, they must take the MCAT, for which they should complete coursework that covers exam topics.

Deciding when to apply

Most incoming students expect that they will apply “direct entry” in their junior year to enter medical school directly after graduation (i.e., prepare applications in Spring 2025, apply in Summer 2025, graduate in Spring 2026, start medical school in Fall 2026).

Ultimately, more than 70% of our applicants are seniors and alumni, taking one or more “glide” or “gap” years between graduation and matriculation.
### Sample Glide Year Timeline I

**No AP • MCAT junior summer • apply senior summer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021-22 Gen Chem</td>
<td>Gen Chem</td>
<td>Gen Chem MOL 214 or PSY/SOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRI (Fall or Spring)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math (Fall or Spring)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics or EEB 211</td>
<td>Physics or MOL 214</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023-24 Physics or EEB 211</td>
<td>MOL 345 (Fall or Spring)</td>
<td>MCAT (August/September)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOL 345 (Fall or Spring)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2024-25 English/Literature</td>
<td>Prepare application Graduate</td>
<td>Apply to med school in June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025-26 Glide Year Activity</td>
<td>Glide Year Activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026 Start med school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pros:**
- All four years of your course work will be taken into consideration when you apply – most students finish strong.
- Letters of recommendation may be stronger as students move into more advanced course work and can ask for a letter from the thesis advisor.
- Allows for a full summer of MCAT study and more time to retake if necessary.
- The “glide year” allows you to build your resume, gain experience, maturity, and professionalism, and to recharge mentally before taking on the rigor of medical school course work.

**Cons:**
- Need to complete course work addressed on the MCAT in three years (see Sample II for alternative plan that spreads out science coursework)

**Notes:**
- This plan is suitable for MOL, EEB, or non-science concentrators. Chemistry concentrators will be expected to take Physics by sophomore year.
- PSY/SOC are optional but may be helpful for MCAT preparation.
- Always work with your academic adviser and a departmental representative to plan for the implications of your concentration.
# Glide Year Timeline II

No AP • MCAT senior spring • apply senior summer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021-22</td>
<td>Gen Chem</td>
<td>Gen Chem</td>
<td>MOL 214 or PSY/SOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WRI (Fall or Spring)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Math (Fall or Spring)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022-23</td>
<td>Organic Chem</td>
<td>Organic Chem</td>
<td>Stats (Fall or Spring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PSY/SOC (Fall or Spring)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023-24</td>
<td>EEB 211</td>
<td>MOL 214 or PSY/SOC</td>
<td>Apply to med school in June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2024-25</td>
<td>MOL 345</td>
<td>MCAT</td>
<td>Prepare application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English/Literature</td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025-26</td>
<td>Glide Year Activity</td>
<td>Glide Year Activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>Start med school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This plan is suitable for non-science concentrators. Science concentrators will need to take some of the science courses earlier in their curriculum to complete the concentration in a timely manner. Always work with your academic adviser or a departmental representative to plan for the implications of your concentration.

The MCAT should be taken no later than May of the year in which you plan to apply to medical school.

**Pros:**
- Same as Glide Year Timeline I, plus: spreads courses out across all four years; it can be more reasonable for students to do well with a course load that balances sciences more equally with other courses.

**Cons:**
- Juggling MCAT study with thesis requires careful time management.
- Lack of time to repeat MCAT if score is less than desired and still apply early in the application cycle.
### Glide Year Timeline III

**2 Units AP Chemistry • MCAT junior summer • apply senior summer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021-22 EEB 211 or Org Chem</td>
<td>MOL 214 or Org Chem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRI (Fall or Spring)</td>
<td>Math or PSY/SOC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math or PSY/SOC</td>
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<tr>
<td>2022-23 EEB 211 or Org Chem</td>
<td>MOL 214 or Org Chem</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stats (Fall or Spring)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023-24 Physics</td>
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<td>MCAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOL 345</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2024-25 Advanced Chem</td>
<td>Prepare application</td>
<td>Apply to med school in June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English/Literature</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025-26 Glide Year Activity</td>
<td>Glide Year Activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>Start med school</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Glide Year Timeline IV

**2 Units AP Science • study abroad • MCAT junior summer • apply senior summer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021-22 Science I</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math or PSY/SOC</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2022-23 Science 2</td>
<td>Science 2</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stats (Fall or Spring)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2023-24 Advanced Science</td>
<td>Study Abroad</td>
<td>MCAT</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOL 345</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSY/SOC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2024-25 English/Literature</td>
<td>Prepare application</td>
<td>Apply to med school in June</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Graduate</td>
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<tr>
<td>2025-26 Glide Year Activity</td>
<td>Glide Year Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>Start med school</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For students with Biology, Chemistry or Physics AP credit. Here, each “Science” refers to a premedical prerequisite sequence and “Advanced Science” refers to the course you will take to supplement AP credit.
About 20-30% of Princeton applicants choose to apply as juniors to matriculate directly after graduation. The MCAT should be taken no later than May of the year in which you plan to apply to medical school.

Pros:
- “Fast track” to completion of medical degree.
- Some students fear that taking a break will make it harder to “get back into” a schoolwork frame of mind.

Cons:
- Junior summer activities, and grades and recommendation letters from senior year classes and thesis will not be part of your profile when you apply (because you apply in June at the end of junior year).
- Junior year is busy with departmentals and independent work. Adding application preparation and MCAT study, which takes about as much time as a class, makes it difficult to give 100% to so many important tasks.
- Students who apply as juniors to go directly to medical school may be at a disadvantage compared to applicants who have taken more time to build their resumes, develop relationships with recommenders, and gain experience, maturity, and professionalism.
- Lack of time to repeat MCAT if the score is less than desired and still apply early in the application cycle.
- Academically strenuous—it’s more important to focus on doing well than on doing quickly.
### Direct Entry Timeline II: BSE Students

**No AP credit • junior spring MCAT • apply junior year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021-22</td>
<td>Gen Chem</td>
<td>Gen Chem</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PHY 103</td>
<td>PHY 104</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Math</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PSY/SOC</td>
<td>MOL 214</td>
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<tr>
<td>2023-24</td>
<td>EEB 211</td>
<td>PSY/SOC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MOL 345</td>
<td>Stats (Fall or Spring)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare application</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MCAT</td>
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<tr>
<td>2024-25</td>
<td>English/Literature</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
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<tr>
<td>2025</td>
<td></td>
<td>Start med school</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Taking Physics and General Chemistry concurrently as a first-year student is demanding; engineering students without AP credit should speak with their faculty advisers about their options.

### Direct Entry Timeline III: 2 Units AP Chemistry & AP Math

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021-22</td>
<td>EEB 211 or Physics</td>
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<td>Stats (Fall or Spring)</td>
<td>PSY/SOC</td>
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<tr>
<td>2023-24</td>
<td>MOL 345</td>
<td>Science Electives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>PSY/SOC</td>
<td>Prepare application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Adv Chem (Fall or Spring)</td>
<td>MCAT</td>
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<td>2024-25</td>
<td>English/Literature</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
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<tr>
<td>2025</td>
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<td>Start med school</td>
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</table>

It is recommended that you take a minimum of 11 science/math courses prior to application. With AP credit, add additional science courses to reach eleven.
### Direct Entry Timeline IV: 2 Units AP Physics

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021-22</td>
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<td>Gen Chem</td>
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<td>WRI (Fall or Spring)</td>
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<td>PSY/SOC</td>
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<tr>
<td>2024-25</td>
<td>English/Literature Ints</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Graduate</td>
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<td>2025</td>
<td>Start med school</td>
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### Post-Baccalaureate Timeline

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<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021-25</td>
<td>Take whatever classes interest you</td>
<td>Begin prehealth prerequisite courses in postbac program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore your interest in health careers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apply to post-bac programs in senior year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025-26</td>
<td>Course work</td>
<td>Apply to med school in June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026-27</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2027</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Some students decide to defer prehealth prerequisite coursework until after they graduate from Princeton, enrolling in a postbaccalaureate, or “postbac” program, in order to complete their requirements. More information about these programs is available at HPA and on the HPA website: [hpa.princeton.edu/pre-health-after-princeton/post-bac-programs](http://hpa.princeton.edu/pre-health-after-princeton/post-bac-programs)

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, in the 2020 entering medical school class:

- 29% majored outside of the sciences
- 68% were age 23 or older
- 65% took at least one glide year
OTHER ACADEMIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR PREHEALTH STUDENTS

Study Abroad
Future health professionals will need to be broadly educated, mature, adaptable citizens who have had significant experience in the world beyond the classroom. Study abroad is an ideal vehicle for developing skills and attitudes that are valued in the practice of medicine—flexibility, self-reliance, and sensitivity to other cultures. Study abroad can offer prehealth students a unique chance to observe diverse healthcare systems, explore different cultural attitudes towards health and healing, and often, to gain volunteer experience in a unique healthcare setting.

The most common abroad experience for prehealth students is participating in a summer program (classes or internships) since summer does not interfere with course sequences. Taking one semester abroad is quite doable with careful course planning. Similarly, study abroad for both junior year semesters can work for students who take a glide year.

For more information, read “Study Abroad and the Prehealth Student” available on the HPA website, then come and chat with us about your plans. You will also want to visit the Office of International Programs (oip.princeton.edu/).

Summer Courses
Each student is different, with unique circumstances, but we can generalize to an extent: taking prehealth science requirements in the summer is generally not encouraged. Health professional schools prefer that you complete your required prerequisite science courses at your home institution (Princeton) in conjunction with a full course load during the academic year. This method of completing the courses best simulates what the heavy load of science course work in health professions school will be like.

Taking non-science courses in the summers is more acceptable, though this may take away from your ability to pursue health-related activities and to simply take some time to have a break from academics.

That said, there are certainly compelling reasons for moving some course work to the summer, such as a semester study abroad. If you have specific reasons for taking some of your sciences in the summer, please consult with HPA to discuss your specific situation.
**Glide Years**

If you plan for a glide year, you can spread out the rest of your candidacy preparation (classes, activities, standardized tests, potential letters of recommendation) over four years instead of three. In the glide year, most students focus on the area of their candidacy that they are most eager to improve: this could mean taking classes, extending research or service commitments, and/or gaining additional clinical exposure. The year also provides more time for reflection and a chance to refresh before the rigors of graduate education. We work with alums no matter how many years they take between graduation and application. Learn more: hpa.princeton.edu/pre-health-after-princeton/glide-year

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**Other Considerations: Glide Years**

**Pursuing an MD at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine**

**Significant college activities:** Varsity Swimming and Diving Team, Tigresses A Cappella, senior thesis research with SUNY Upstate global health team on Dengue fever in Ecuador, IIP at Semmelweis Medical University in Budapest, PHA, Student Athlete Wellness Leader, Commencement Committee

**Post-college activities:** 2 years of scribing in private practice dermatology, 1 year of clinical research at Dana Farber Cancer Institute, post-baccalaureate classes at Harvard Extension School, volunteering with mobile health clinic

**Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton:** If I could tell my freshman self one thing, I would say to not feel bad or guilty about following my passions and encourage myself to take advantage of all the opportunities at Princeton, but to not feel the need to cram it all in at once. My years at Princeton allowed me to explore so many interests and passions at a high level, from being a varsity athlete to being in a cappella to dozens of other activities. But balancing premed coursework on top of all of these was incredibly daunting, and I simply did not have enough hours in the day to excel at everything. Once I got over my initial reservations about taking a few gap years and decided to incorporate them into my long term plan, I was able to enjoy my Princeton experience so much more. I also found that my three years off since graduating have changed me as a person just as much as (if not more than) my time at Princeton. Learning to be an independent adult outside of the Princeton bubble has given me a much stronger internal locus of control. I was able to immerse myself in clinical and research experiences full time for several years (which I absolutely would not have been able to do while in college) and have confirmed beyond a shadow of a doubt that the long path of medicine is the best career choice I can make.

One important aspect of my application process was crafting my school list - I knew I had to find schools that would value my journey and all of the ups and downs I experienced along the way, and focused on schools that were particularly suited to my strengths. Thankfully I will be matriculating at one of these wonderful schools that is incredibly strong in my interests, which I continued to discover throughout the application process! Having the persistence and resilience in my early years of college to keep pressing forward, even when I doubted my own abilities early on, has paid off a thousand times and I am so eager to help encourage students with similar stories.

---

**Alum Advice: Kathleen Mulligan ‘17, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology with a certificate in Global Health & Health Policy**

**Pursuing an MD at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine**

**Significant college activities:** Varsity Swimming and Diving Team, Tigresses A Cappella, senior thesis research with SUNY Upstate global health team on Dengue fever in Ecuador, IIP at Semmelweis Medical University in Budapest, PHA, Student Athlete Wellness Leader, Commencement Committee

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Choosing a Major

Many think you “should” concentrate in science and that humanities and social science concentrators are less competitive candidates for health professional school. This is not the case. You should choose a major based on questions like:

⇒ What discipline is most interesting to you?
⇒ Which field will best draw on your talents and abilities?
⇒ What do you want to study in your independent work?

Selecting a concentration is not required until the spring of sophomore year (AB) or spring of first year (BSE). See additional resources about major choices:

- hpa.princeton.edu/pre-health-prep/major-choices
- hpa.princeton.edu/faqs/academics-faq/majors-faq
- odoc.princeton.edu/advising/choosing-major

Alum Advice: Andrew Hersh ’18, Economics
Pursuing an MD at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Significant college activities: HPA Peer Adviser, Peer Academic Adviser, McGraw Head Tutor in Macro-economics, Treasurer of CJL, Social Chair of Yavneh, intramural broomball (Go Mighty Meese!), EMT in Jerusalem for a summer, senior thesis in health economics

Post-college activities: Worked as a medical assistant and gained clinical experience at the Retina Associates of New York and Retinal Ambulatory Surgery Center

Princeton is a phenomenal place to learn and grow; don’t be afraid to explore all of the unique opportunities it offers. I loved the premed curriculum but after taking macroeconomics and being fascinated with the subject, I decided to concentrate in economics. Although it seemed that the two fields were miles apart, the experience proved invaluable. As an economics major, I took courses in statistics and econometrics and gained experience analyzing data for my senior thesis—all necessary tools in medical research. My senior thesis offered me the chance to bridge both disciplines by exploring health economics, and it was a privilege working with my advisor on a project with direct implications for the treatment of patients. I definitely encourage students to explore different fields and engage in extracurriculars beyond the medical field—it will be a rewarding experience that will serve you well!

The Princeton and premed curriculum is certainly challenging at times, but Princeton provides many resources to help you succeed. Definitely take advantage of them! Whether it’s going to office hours, attending a McGraw study session, or talking to a peer advisor, Princeton is committed to helping you do well. Professors are available and I value the close relationships I made with some of my favorite professors, which I still maintain. I also suggest working in groups to review problem sets, study for exams, and create review sheets! Enjoy the Princeton experience, make the most of it, and cherish the friendships you’ll make for life!
Some additional considerations when choosing your concentration:

- Health professional schools are interested in students who have challenged themselves in the sciences and have demonstrated strong ability in science.

- Health professional schools are interested in students who have a broad view of the human condition: an understanding gained through the study of literature, history, language, and the social and behavioral sciences.

- If you demonstrate both the ability in science and that broader understanding through a strong academic record, you will be a successful applicant to health professional school. In a typical year, about a third of our applicants are humanities/social science concentrators, and they are just as successful in gaining admission as our science majors.

- It is not necessary to pursue certificates but there are a few that are particularly popular with prehealth students, including Global Health and Health Policy (GHP), Neuroscience, and Quantitative & Computational Biology (especially popular with engineering majors).

Want a current student’s opinion? Talk to some of our HPA Peer Advisers in the residential colleges about their major choices!

**Most Popular Concentrations for Princeton Applicants Accepted to Medical School, 2016-2020**

1. Molecular Biology
2. Ecology & Evolutionary Biology
3. Psychology
4. Chemistry
5. Public & International Affairs
6. Neuroscience
7. Chemical & Biological Engineering
8. History
9. Politics
10. Anthropology
   Economics (tie)
COCURRICULAR PREPARATION

Get involved with activities that matter to you, on campus, in the larger Princeton community, and during your summers. There are seemingly endless opportunities—arts, athletics, service, religious organizations, etc. Find something you enjoy and devote time and energy to it. You will be a richer person for it and you will come to your academic work refreshed. But remember, you are a student first! Heavy participation in activities at the expense of your academic performance is discouraged. Talk with an adviser who can help you navigate your activities and time management.

You may have to work on campus to contribute to your college expenses. Your ability to keep up with coursework and handle a job speaks well of your discipline, motivation, and priorities.

Developing Your Narrative

Where you spend your time will indicate your interests and passions to schools. If you plan to make a claim as an applicant (e.g., “I may be interested in pediatrics”), make sure that you have evidence to back it up (e.g., volunteer work or internships with kids). Some of your cocurricular activities may relate directly to your profession, many will help you develop personal competencies that transfer to your profession, and some just show that you’re a well-rounded, multi-dimensional person: it’s okay to do a few things just for fun!

Health-Related & Clinical Experience

It is essential for you to gain some real-world perspective on your profession of interest. There are many ways in which you can learn about the field, many of which are discussed in detail on the HPA website:

- Work or volunteer in hospitals or clinics
- Pursue internships (posted in the HPA Vitals newsletter, the International Internship Program, PICS program, or through the Center for Career Development)
- Read medical memoirs or other books
- Shadow health professionals
- Work on clinical trials as research assistants
- Serve as Nursing Assistants, Scribes, or EMTs

Seek to gain a realistic understanding of what being a health professional is like, reflect on how your career of choice might be satisfying to you, and consider ways that you will best serve your patients and the profession. This should be a top priority. Many students who do some clinical or service work during the semesters find it easier to keep the “bigger picture” in mind—you’re going into medicine to help people; helping people as you take classes can remind you of this larger goal. Also note: develop and sustain your exposure to clinical practice; do not rely on what you did back in high school or observed through family members who are in health care—you will develop as a person in college, and your perspectives will change.
Research Experience

Many students are interested in health careers due to a fascination with science or society and related problem solving. All students at Princeton will gain research experience beyond peers at most institutions due to our independent work requirements, but some students go beyond this opportunity via work in campus labs, internships in academic medical centers, or glide year research positions. Do research to try it out or because you know you love it, but do not focus your energy here if it is not a passion of yours. Learn more about research at Princeton: undergraduateresearch.princeton.edu

Civic Engagement & Service

Many students are interested in health careers because they gain satisfaction through direct service to others. As a health professional, you will be serving a diverse patient population: learn more about the needs of those different from yourself in service to them. Popular opportunities include working with Community House, the Petey Greene Prisoner Assistance Program, all of the Student Volunteer Corps opportunities, and Princeton Internships in Civic Service (PICS) summer internships. The Pace Center for Civic Engagement coordinates service opportunities at Princeton: pace.princeton.edu
The Health Professions School Application Process

You will prepare for health professions school throughout your time at Princeton by engaging in activities, taking classes, fostering supportive relationships with faculty, and ensuring that you really want to become a health professional. The preparation for and the actual application for medical and dental school begins about two years before you want to matriculate (the timeline differs for other professions). This is an overview of what you will need to do once you have decided to apply.

**Year 1: Preparation and Reflection**

**Oct-Dec:** Attend HPA Applicant Information Session
- Read HPA Applicant Handbook
- Submit HPA Applicant Intake Form
- Applicant Intake meeting with HPA
- Prepare HPA preapplication materials

**Jan-Apr:** Request letters of recommendation
- Finalize HPA preapplication materials
- Craft school list
- Attend relevant HPA workshops

**Feb-Apr:** Preapplication interview with HPA

**By May:** Take MCAT (score release takes 30 days)

**May:** Primary application opens: prepare application
- Confirm receipt of letters of recommendation

**Year 2: Application**

**June:** Submit primary (common) application

**Jul-Aug:** Submit secondary (supplemental) applications

**Aug-Mar:** Interviews

**Sept-June:** Stay engaged in activities
- Send updates to schools that accept them

**Oct-Apr:** Acceptances

**April 30:** Last day to hold multiple acceptance offers

**June-Sept:** Medical school orientation begins
The MCAT

Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT)

Premedical students will take the MCAT. The test will be approximately 7.5 hours including time for breaks. Cost and exact dates of the test are released about a year in advance. The MCAT is divided into four sections and assesses a combination of science and non-science content divided between ten Foundational Concepts.

Additional information about the MCAT may be found online:
- AAMC Resources
- HPA website
- HPA FAQ

Dental Admissions Test (DAT)

Pre-dental students will take the DAT. The test will take approximately five hours, and is offered year-round. The DAT is divided into four sections: Survey of Natural Sciences, Perceptual Ability Test, Reading Comprehension Test, and Quantitative Reasoning Test. Questions are drawn from Biology, General and Organic Chemistry, and math (through algebra). The Perceptual Ability test is unique; it tests your visual and spatial skills, and is not based on subject knowledge. Additional information about the DAT may be found online in the ADA Resources for the DAT.

Other Standardized Exams

Links to information about the optometry, pharmacy, and other standardized exams for health professions school are available on the HPA website.

Study Materials

About half of Princeton applicants choose to take a commercial prep course, and the other half study on their own.
Suggestions for Getting Started

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW NOW

Preparing for and applying to health professions school are long, detail-oriented processes, and HPA is here to help you navigate them! Our general advice for your first two years:

Find your niche. Get involved, but don’t overload!

Pursue your interests in the classroom and beyond, but be careful not to overcommit. In high school, you might have found time for a long list of activities. College rigor and expectations are different, so be careful with your time commitments. Try one or two activities in your first semester. If you find that you have time for more in future terms, go for it.

Learn to navigate academic expectations. As a prehealth student, you have to prove that you'll be able to survive the rigors of professional school. It is essential for all prehealth students to develop good study habits and a college lifestyle that is conducive to academic success. Try to diagnose and treat difficulties early and remedy them. If you need help, many resources are available to you on campus including: professors and preceptors, deans/directors of studies, peer advisers, and McGraw Center and Writing Center staff.

Get to know your faculty. Members of the faculty and your preceptors are great resources. They will not only help you academically, but will also provide you with letters of recommendation when you apply to health professions school. Stop in to meet some of your faculty during their office hours, even if you are in a large course. You do not have to have a significant question to ask as a pretense to visiting with a professor; gaining clarification about course content, discussing study strategies, or asking about a professor’s research interests are a few legitimate reasons for attending office hours (or requesting an appointment if you have a time conflict). The earlier you learn to communicate with faculty, the easier it will become later when you’re looking for research opportunities, asking for letters of recommendation, and otherwise developing these relationships.

Get to know your peers. Studies show that students who have “support groups” on campus do better academically. Almost all students in undergrad (and medical school!) rely on study groups, friends who will help you maintain a balanced lifestyle, older students who can provide advice—all of these are critical in doing well at Princeton. Get to know classmates, use resources available at McGraw, join a prehealth student organization, meet HPA Peer Advisers from your residential college.

For tips, see “How to Speak to Professors” at Project Welcome Mat projectwelcomemat.weebly.com
Final Words of Advice from Princeton Alums

Adam Wang ‘18, Molecular Biology
Pursuing an MD/PhD at the Tri-Institutional Program at Weill Cornell / Rockefeller / Memorial Sloan Kettering

Significant college activities: Research in the Rabinowitz Lab, McGraw Peer Tutor, Peer Academic Adviser, Hospice Volunteer

Post-college activities: Research at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: With the wide variety of academic and extracurricular offerings at Princeton, it can be easy to spread yourself too thin, especially when you have a lot of interests you want to explore. I entered Princeton as a Classics major, participated in arts and humanities related activities, dabbled in global health, and wanted to spend as much time in the lab as possible. It wasn't long before I realized that in juggling all these commitments at once, I couldn't devote a meaningful amount of time to any of them. I decided to focus most of my time on areas I found the greatest passion for: science, teaching, and mentorship. But then my worry shifted to how this might be perceived by medical schools—would I be considered too one-dimensional, boring, stereotypical even? Luckily my interests aligned well with what MD/PhD programs generally look for in applicants, but I realize now on the other side of the cycle that these principles should hold true for all pre-meds. If you are ever feeling overwhelmed with your commitments, know that it will be okay if you let a few of them go. Focus on what excites you most and your dedication and drive will naturally shine through.

Hila Ghersin ‘18, Psychology with a certificate in Global Health & Health Policy
Pursuing an MD at Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Significant college activities: Residential College Adviser, Big Sibs, Orange Key Tour Guide, Baby Lab Research Assistant

Post-college activities: Clinical Research Coordinator at UCSF’s Breast Care Center; member of the Patient Support Corps; Volunteer at Hamilton Families

Words of wisdom about being prehealth at Princeton: Enjoy the Princeton experience and focus on forming meaningful relationships—college is more than a stepping stone to med school. There is no right way to be pre-med and it's a long road, so make sure you are taking courses and doing activities that you are actually passionate about. My favorite courses, and the ones that most shaped my thinking and understanding of society, were AAS & GSS classes I had the opportunity to take as a part of the GHP certificate— and I talked about them in interviews more often than any science course!

Remember to take advantage of HPA's support and experience and reach out to the larger Princeton alumni network. Before I went to each interview I was able to get in contact with a fellow Princetonian who gave me some insight into what the med school is like and what to expect from the interview day, which definitely put me at ease. As you gain more experiences, note the small experiences that bring you joy and were significant learning moments— you will definitely draw on them for essay inspiration, talking points, or for motivation. Finally, to maintain some sanity throughout the application process, try to avoid comparing yourself to others and take a deep breath. You are doing great!
Use this grid to sketch out your plans for classes and activities leading up to your application. An HPA adviser can help you determine how to schedule the pre-health prerequisites.

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- CHM 202
- CHM 301
- CHM 302/304
- MOL 345
- EEB 211
- MOL 214
- PHY 101/103
- PHY 102/104/108
- ENG
- WRI
- MAT
- Stats
- PSY/SOC
These students have volunteered to share their prehealth perspectives with you—reach out to any of them, regardless of assigned college!

If you’d like a peer perspective about a concentration not listed here, ask an HPA adviser—we know a lot of older students who are happy to talk with you about how they navigated Princeton.
Preparing for a Career in the Health Professions

First Year

☑ Explore academic interests: take classes your high school didn’t offer.
☑ Think about the things that you want to explore or accomplish in college. Don’t sacrifice them for your interest in “being premed.”
☑ Strive to do well in your classes: join study groups, foster relationships with faculty through office hours, use the McGraw Center and Writing Center, etc.
☑ Improve your time management strategies and study skills.
☑ Develop your co-curricular interests; seek student organizations where you feel supported.
☑ Attend Premed Society, MAPS, Predental, Prevet group meetings and events.
☑ Attend events that relate to your interests or take you out of your comfort zone.
☑ Meet with an adviser at Health Professions Advising (HPA) to introduce yourself and discuss your academic and career interests.
☑ Start gaining a realistic understanding of the medical world and its diversity.
  • Borrow and read some medically related books from the HPA Library.
  • Surf through the Explore Health Careers website: www.explorehealthcareers.org
  • Read the Health section of The New York Times, or otherwise stay abreast of current events in health care.
☑ Draft your resume and ask the Center for Career Development for their review. Your resume should include academic, employment, and activities information.
☑ Explore and apply for summer volunteering / research / work opportunities.

Summer after First Year

☑ Gain concrete understanding of your career(s) of interest: volunteer in a healthcare facility, shadow health professionals in your potential career area, pursue research in a hospital or academic medical setting.
☑ Continue to update your resume to include recent experiences.
☑ Continue to reflect on your interests, values, and career motivations.

Health Professions Advising (HPA) supports Princeton students and alumni as they consider careers in and prepare for admission to medical, dental, veterinary, and other health professions schools.

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