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Guide to Pre-Heath Studies at Old Dominion University

This book is designed for students who wish to attend a professional health graduate school or program upon graduating from Old Dominion. Programs include, but are not limited to, medical school, dental school, physician assistant programs, optometry school, and pharmacy school. The application process for the different professional schools is similar although the prerequisites may vary.

There are many roads that lead to professional health programs. There is no “Pre-health” major at Old Dominion; there is no set curriculum that you must follow, and there are no set rules. This booklet has been created to help you navigate the many paths that you can take towards your goal of attending a professional health program.

You can major in anything you want to and still attend a professional health program such as medical school. As long as you complete the required prerequisites, you are eligible for admission. For this reason, we recommend that you pursue a course of study that is compatible with your interests. You may change your mind about pursuing a health career, or you may not be accepted into a program.

Old Dominion University established the Pre-Health Advisory Committee (PHAC) to assist students with their application to professional health programs. Medical and dental schools require that students use a university pre-health advisory committee. Other professional schools do not require that students work with an advisory committee, but the services of the PHAC are available to them as well.

This booklet contains general information to guide you but is not meant to substitute for a discussion with your advisor or consultation with application information provided by individual schools or programs. Please be sure to always check with the school to which you are applying to ensure that you have met all prerequisites for admittance.
The Pre-Health Advisory Committee

What It Is
The Pre-Health Advisory Committee (PHAC) assists students with their application to professional health programs.

What We Can Do for You
The committee provides advisement to students in three ways:

- **Committee Letter**
  - The PHAC writes the joint committee letter of recommendation. Most professional schools require one letter from the undergraduate institution; the Pre-Health Advisory Committee provides students with that letter.

- **Mock Interview**
  - The PHAC offers students a “mock interview” to help them prepare for the interview required by professional schools.

- **Personal Statement**
  - The PHAC provides an overview of the personal statement writing process and reviews students’ personal statements for content, flow and grammar.

How to Establish Yourself with the PHAC
Applying to a medical or dental program is a long and rigorous process. It is important to establish yourself as a pre-medical or pre-dental student early in your college career so that you may utilize the appropriate available resources. To establish yourself with the PHAC:

**Attend a PHAC Orientation Session in your FIRST semester at ODU**
This session will:
- provide an introduction to the application process;
- provide you with a timeline and action steps;
- introduce you to the various members of the PHAC.
Who we are and how we help you

Visit Our Website: www.sci.odu.edu/prehealth

PRE-HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RENELDO RANDALL

Director of Advising, College of Sciences PHAC Co-Chair
Point of contact. Writes committee letter. Assists with committee interview
rrandall@odu.edu

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Pre-Health Advisor
Professor of Biological Sciences
Faculty Sponsor: Pre-Health Club, Alpha Epsilon Delta
rstevens@odu.edu

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Asst. Director of Advising
Assists with committee interview
agiles@odu.edu

TAMMY HANNA

Success Advisor
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thanna@odu.edu

TERRI MATHEWS

Associate Dean, College of Sciences
PHAC Chair
Point of contact. Writes committee letter. Assists with committee interview
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committee letter. Assists with committee interview
tmmathew@odu.edu

ERIN MILLS

CMC Liaison
Assists with committee interview preparation
emills@odu.edu

Visit Our Website: www.sci.odu.edu/prehealth
Getting into Professional School

What Are They Looking for in an Applicant?

**GPA**
Will the applicant be able to handle the rigor of professional school?

**Standardized Exam**
Will the applicant be able to pass the licensing boards after their second year?

**Interview**
What will the applicant bring to the student body? Will the applicant make a good medical professional?

**GPA**
Professional schools and programs use a student’s GPA to help them determine if an applicant will be successful in their post-graduate education. The professional school places an emphasis on science coursework completed. The average GPA for Old Dominion students entering medical school over the last 4 years is 3.6; for dental school it is 3.56.

**Standardized exam**
Professional schools and programs use a variety of standardized exams as a means to compare applicants from different undergraduate institutions. The standardized exams also predict an applicant’s success on the licensing boards. The average MCAT score for Old Dominion students entering medical school over the last 4 years is 29; the average DAT score is 18.5.
The Application Process

The pages that follow contain helpful information about the application process for different health programs. For each program, the professional organization is listed along with information about application services, prerequisite exams and prerequisite courses. Prerequisite coursework differs between schools and programs, so be sure to check with the school or program to which you are planning to apply to ensure you have met all prerequisites.

Applying to a professional health program is time consuming. Professional schools and programs require an initial application with essays or a personal statement and a secondary application. The school or program may or may not use an application service.

Professional organizations provide information about the specific career and educational requirements for each health career.

Initial application: You should submit your initial application as soon as the applications become available in the year you plan to apply. Most programs practice “rolling admissions” which means that applications are reviewed as soon as they are received. Students who apply early improve their chances of acceptance.

Secondary application: If a school or program reviews your initial application favorably, they will request more information in the secondary application. This is usually when your letters of recommendation are submitted. The Pre-Health Advisory Committee can assist you with secondary applications.

Application service: Some professional programs use application clearinghouses instead of receiving applications directly. For example, students applying to medical school will submit their applications to AMCAS, who in turn submits the applications to the individual schools. If a program uses an application service, it is usually not optional.

Standardized Exam: Professional schools and programs require standardized exam scores to be submitted with the application. The specific exam varies from program to program. Be sure to check which exam the specific school to which you are applying requires.

Be sure to check with the school or program to ensure you have completed all application requirements. The following pages contain information on common prerequisite requirements for a variety of professional health programs.
Medical School

Prerequisites:
Specific prerequisites vary from school to school. Check with the school to which you plan to apply to ensure that you meet all admission requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Prerequisites for Medical School 2015 (and beyond) Applicants</th>
<th>Old Dominion University equivalents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Biology</td>
<td>Biology 121N/122N - 123N/124N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Chemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 121N/122N - 123N/124N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Organic Chemistry with lab</td>
<td>Chemistry 211, 212, 213, 214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Biochemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Physics</td>
<td>Physics 111N - 112N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Psychology</td>
<td>Psychology 201S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Sociology</td>
<td>Sociology 201S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Statistics</td>
<td>Statistics 130M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Semesters of Anatomy & Physiology (Biology 250/251) are strongly recommended

Professional Organization:
Association of American Medical Colleges
www.aamc.org

Professional Exam:
Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)
www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm

Application Service:
AMCAS
www.amcas.com

Question
What major should I choose if I want to attend medical or another health professional?

Answer
You can major in anything as long as you complete the prerequisites for the professional school.
Dental School

Prerequisites:
Specific prerequisites vary from school to school. Check with the school to which you plan to apply to ensure that you meet all admission requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Prerequisites for VCU Dental</th>
<th>Old Dominion University equivalents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Biology</td>
<td>Biology 121N/122N - 123N/124N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Chemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 121N/122N - 123N-124N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Organic Chemistry with lab</td>
<td>Chemistry 211, 212, 213, 214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Physics</td>
<td>Physics 111N - 112N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Biochemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional Organization:
American Dental Education Association
www.adea.org

Professional Exam:
Dental Admission Test (DAT)
www.ada.org/prof/ed/testing/dat/index.asp

Application Service:
AADSAS
www.aadsas.adea.org

Ask Yourself...
If I am not accepted into the professional school of my choice, will I be happy with my chosen major?

If the answer is “no,” then you are in the wrong major.
**Prerequisites:**
Specific prerequisites vary from school to school. Check with the school to which you plan to apply to ensure that you meet all admission requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Prerequisites for O. Medical School 2015 (and beyond) Applicants</th>
<th>Old Dominion University equivalents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Biology</td>
<td>Biology 121N/122N - 123N/124N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Chemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 121N/122N - 123N/124N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Organic Chemistry with lab</td>
<td>Chemistry 211, 212, 213, 214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Biochemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Physics</td>
<td>Physics 111N - 112N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Psychology</td>
<td>Psychology 201S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Sociology</td>
<td>Sociology 201S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Statistics</td>
<td>Statistics 130M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Most Osteopathic Medical schools require that students shadow an osteopathic physician prior to applying for osteopathic medical school.*

**Professional Organization:**
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
www.aacom.org

**Professional Exam:**
Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)
www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm

**Application Service:**
AACOMAS
aacomas.aacom.com
**Optometry School**

**Prerequisites:**
Specific prerequisites vary from school to school. Check with the school to which you plan to apply to ensure that you meet all admission requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Prerequisites for Optometry School</th>
<th>Old Dominion University equivalents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Biology</td>
<td>Biology 121N/122N - 123N/124N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Chemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 121N/122N - 123N/124N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Organic Chemistry with lab</td>
<td>Chemistry 211, 212, 213, 214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Physics</td>
<td>Physics 111N - 112N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Biochemistry or Molecular Biology</td>
<td>Chemistry 441 or Biology 423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Microbiology</td>
<td>Biology 315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 1 semester Calculus</td>
<td>Math 211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters English</td>
<td>English 110C and 211C / 231C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Statistics</td>
<td>Statistics 130M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Psychology</td>
<td>Psychology 201S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Professional Organization:**
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry
www.opted.org

**Professional Exam:**
Optometry Admission Test (OAT)
http://www.opted.org/info_oat.cfm

**Application Service:**
OptomCas
Optomcas.org
Physician Assistant

Prerequisites:
Specific prerequisites vary from school to school. Check with the school to which you plan to apply to ensure that you meet all admission requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Prerequisites for EVMS PA Program</th>
<th>Old Dominion University equivalents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Anatomy &amp; Physiology</td>
<td>Biology 250 - 251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Chemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 121N/122N - 123N/124N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Organic Chemistry with lab or</td>
<td>Chemistry 211, 212, 213, 214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Biochemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Microbiology</td>
<td>Biology 315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Introductory Psychology</td>
<td>Psychology 201S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Developmental or Lifespan</td>
<td>Psychology 203S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester College Algebra or Statistics</td>
<td>Math 102M or Stats 130M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional Organization:
American Academy of Physician Assistants
www.aapa.org

Professional Exam:
Most require the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or MCAT

Application Service:
Central Application Service for Physician Assistants
portal.caspaonline.org/
Prerequisites:
Specific prerequisites vary from school to school. Check with the school to which you plan to apply to ensure that you meet all admission requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Prerequisites for Virginia Tech College of Veterinary School</th>
<th>Old Dominion University equivalents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Biology</td>
<td>Biology 121N/122N - 123N/124N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Chemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 121N/122N - 123N/124N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Organic Chemistry with lab</td>
<td>Chemistry 211, 212, 213, 214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Biochemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Physics</td>
<td>Physics 111N - 112N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Mathematics</td>
<td>Math 102M and higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters College Composition</td>
<td>English 110C/211C or 231C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Social Science</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You do not always need to complete a Bachelor’s degree to apply to Veterinary medical school. Many schools will accept applications after a student has completed a minimum of 60 credit hours but check with each school to review their policy on completion of the Bachelor’s degree.

Professional Organization:
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
www.aavmc.org/

Professional Exam:
Most require the Graduate Record Exam (GRE)

Application Service:
Veterinary Medical College Application Service
www.aavmc.org/vmcas/aavmc_vmcas.htm
Pharmacy Program

**Prerequisites:**
Specific prerequisites vary from school to school. Check with the school to which you plan to apply to ensure that you meet all the admission requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Prerequisites for VCU Pharmacy</th>
<th>Old Dominion University equivalents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Biology</td>
<td>Biology 121N/122N - 123N/124N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters General Chemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 121N/122N - 123N/124N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Organic Chemistry with lab</td>
<td>Chemistry 211, 212, 213, 214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Physics</td>
<td>Physics 111N - 112N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters Anatomy &amp; Physiology</td>
<td>Biology 250 - 251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Microbiology</td>
<td>Biology 315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Biochemistry</td>
<td>Chemistry 441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semesters English</td>
<td>English 110C/211C or 231C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Calculus</td>
<td>Math 211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Statistics</td>
<td>Stats 130M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 semester Public Speaking</td>
<td>Communications 101R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Genetics, Immunology, Molecular Biology and Cell Biology are strongly recommended

**Professional Organization:**
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
www.aacp.org/

**Professional Exam:**
Most require the Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT)  
www.pcatweb.info

**Application Service:**
Pharmacy College Application Service  
www.pharmcas.org
Attend a PHAC Orientation Session: Attend a PHAC Orientation Session during your first semester. This will get you organized and introduce you to the Pre-Health Advisory Committee (PHAC). Make sure you complete a Pre-Health Interest Form at this meeting to register with the PHAC.

Join a Pre-Health Student Organization: These clubs provide opportunities to hear from speakers in various health fields and to meet professionals in different specialties and admissions officers from different schools and programs.

Volunteer: Start gaining experience in your chosen profession through shadowing, volunteering, and internships. Paid positions will work as well. You want to gain diverse experience, so explore all areas. For example, if you want to become a dentist, volunteer at a free dental clinic, shadow a specialty dentist, and volunteer at a family dental practice.

Start a journal: Journal your experiences; this information will be invaluable when you are writing your personal statement and preparing for your interview as you will need to discuss your understanding of the profession.

Study, Study, Study: During your first year, you should concentrate on establishing a strong GPA, particularly in your prerequisite science courses. If you are not a science major, then it is critical that you do well in the science prerequisites.
Sophomore Year

**Shadow and volunteer:** Continue to gain experience by volunteering, working in paid positions in the medical field, or shadowing a professional in your chosen field. Not only will you gain valuable insights into the profession, you can ask for a letter of recommendation.

**Get to know your professors:** You will need letters of recommendation from your professors and other professionals. Get to know your professors. Volunteer in their lab, or sign up for research credit. Don’t wait to ask for a letter of recommendation. The professor may leave the university.

**Study, Study, Study:** During your second year, you should continue to concentrate on boosting your GPA, particularly in your prerequisite science courses. If you are not a science major, then it is critical that you do well in the science prerequisites.

**Start preparing for Standardized Exam:** Standardized exams, such as the MCAT and DAT, test your knowledge on science subjects. Organize your notes from your science classes and continue to review to be well-prepared for the exam. The best preparation is taking practice tests. The Pre-Health Club offers mock exams.

**Attend Pre-Health and AED meetings:** Professional schools are interested in your leadership skills. Become active in clubs and organizations like Alpha Epsilon Delta (AED), the Pre-Health Honor Society, and assume leadership positions.

**Look into research opportunities:** Professional schools consider your total academic training. Research experience adds to your training. You can obtain research experience by working with a professor in your discipline or by seeking a research internship in a hospital or research center. Contact the CMC internship coordinator in MGB 236 to find out about available research opportunities.
Junior Year

Start the application process: During your third year, you should start the application process. Go to the website for the professional organization for your chosen profession, and review the application process.

Prepare for Standardized Exam: The standardized exams, such as the MCAT and DAT, test your knowledge of science subjects. **Start to prepare NOW.** Some students will enroll in commercial testing preparation services such as Kaplan. The best preparation is taking practice tests. The Pre-Health Club offers mock exams.

Attend a personal statement workshop: The personal statement is an important part of the application. Be sure to attend a personal statement workshop that is offered by the Pre-Health Advisory Committee.

Prepare for the Interview: Meet with Erin Mills to learn how to best articulate in an interview why you want to pursue a career in your chosen profession and demonstrate an understanding of what becoming a health professional means in terms of daily routine and lifestyle. You must meet with Erin Mills for interview preparation before you can schedule your committee interview.

Collect letters of recommendation: Collect letters of recommendation from your professors and from professionals with whom you have worked in a volunteer or shadowing setting. Review the “Etiquette for Letters of Recommendation” on the following page.

Take the standardized exam: Most professional schools practice rolling admissions. This means that applications are reviewed as they are received. The earlier an applicant submits an application, the better the chances that the application will be favorably viewed. Professional schools will not review applications until they are complete, so be sure to take the standardized exam early.
Etiquette for Letters of Recommendation

Do not wait until the last minute.  
It is perfectly reasonable to request that recommendations be submitted within three to four weeks.

Letters of recommendation can be written and collected at any time, but letters that are three or more years old should be replaced with more up-to-date recommendations.

Do not assume that you can’t get a letter from an instructor of a large class.  
Meet with her/him to discuss your application and motivation for applying to professional school. Letters from teaching assistants are generally not acceptable.

Always provide the person writing the letter with some written information about you such as a copy of your personal statement or resume.

Waiver: signing this waiver means you will not be entitled to read your letters of recommendation. Most professional schools prefer that recommendations be confidential.

If you have worked for, shadowed, or volunteered with a doctor or other health professional, ask them for a letter of recommendation. Most osteopathic medical schools require a letter from a DO.

It is your responsibility to request the required letters of recommendation and to ensure that they are submitted in a timely fashion.  
Consider a polite e-mail or telephone call to remind the professors and professionals who you have asked.

Thank the evaluators in advance for writing the letter, and follow up with a note of thanks. Let them know, once you are accepted, where you will be attending school.
Writing an Effective Personal Statement

GETTING STARTED: Before you write

Make a List: Write down a list of all of the items that you would ideally like to mention in your personal statement. Do not leave anything out. You will organize and cut content later. This should include your motivation for applying to the professional health program and what you have done to reaffirm that decision.

Organize Your Points: Refer to your list and start putting your ideas into categories. If an item does not seem to fit into a category, cut that item.

Create an Outline: Once you categorize your points, you will want to create your outline using the format listed below.

GETTING ORGANIZED: Make an outline

Part I:  Introduction

The Hook: This could be a story, quote, or surprising statement, etc., which sets the stage for the rest of your statement. The purpose of the hook is to spark the reader’s interest. If the reader isn’t intrigued from the beginning, he or she probably won’t continue reading.

Thesis Statement: The hook should transition into a thesis statement, which describes the overall theme of the personal statement. It is important to stick to one theme.

Part II:  Body
This is the bulk of your statement. It should address the thesis statement and answer the question posed on the application. Using your theme, you should address why you would be a good candidate for professional school and why you know that you will succeed. Address your strengths, experiences and accomplishments. It is important to be specific by using examples from your experiences to support your statements. Do not make assumptions, use clichés or state the obvious.

Part III:  Conclusion
Conclude the statement by summarizing everything that was previously addressed. The last sentence or two should relate to the hook. The reader should not be left hanging.

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WRITING YOUR STATEMENT:

Start typing
Using the outline as your guide, type your personal statement. Do not worry about editing at this point. This will be done in the next step.

Edit, Edit, Edit
The first thing you should do is click on the spell check button. Then read your statement aloud. This ensures that your paper makes sense and flows correctly. Next review your writing with a fine-tooth comb and correct any spelling/grammatical errors.

PERSONAL STATEMENT WRITING TIPS:

Get a second opinion
It is important that you ask someone to read your personal statement. They may catch a grammatical or spelling error or let you know that one of your points is unclear. Please keep an open mind to feedback given by the reader, as doing so ensures that the statement is legible and interesting when it arrives at the professional school.

Be specific
Admissions Representatives have seen it all. There is no new concept to them. However, you can still make your statement stand out by illustrating your assertions with examples. It is important to avoid generalized statements, such as “I would be a great professional because I have an excellent work ethic.” Admissions Representatives have seen this stated a million times in a million different ways. Instead, write out a story about yourself that illustrates this point. For example, you may want to explain how you worked your way through high school to save up enough money to go to college.

Go beyond the application
Most of your academic and professional history will be noted on your application. The purpose of the personal statement is to give the Admissions Committee a glimpse into your motivation and your ability to succeed in professional school. Therefore, it is extremely important that you incorporate personal stories and examples as mentioned above.

Avoid clichés
Medical schools do not want to hear that you want to “help people.” This statement is overused and is not a strong enough reason to admit you into the school. Remember, the purpose of the personal statement is to set you apart from other candidates.
The Interview

The Interview is the most overlooked portion of the professional health school admissions process.

The limited number of seats in every professional health school class means that admissions committees need to choose their students very carefully. Just because you have a high GPA and test score, does not mean you understand what it takes to become a good health professional. The interview helps admissions committees determine your commitment to and knowledge of your chosen health profession. It also gives the admissions committee an idea of who you are.

Will you “fit” with their program, and will you relate well to patients?

You MUST articulate why you want to pursue a career in your chosen profession and that you will be able to work with all kinds of patients. You must demonstrate an understanding of what becoming a health professional means in terms of a daily routine and a lifestyle. Also, you must convince the committee that you are a better applicant than others who applied.

▼ Consider an internship

Gain experience in a relevant health setting. If you aspire to be an optometrist, a professional school will expect you to have shadowed an optometrist and spent time in an optometrist’s office (paid positions and volunteer experiences will count!)

Keep a journal; this will help you remember what lessons you have learned through your experiences.

During the interview, talk about your experiences, what you learned from your experiences, and how they will help you both in professional school and as a health professional.

▲ The PHAC can assist you with preparing for the interview
Preparing for the Interview

The interview can make or break your professional school application. There are several hundred applicants for every “seat” in a professional school class; therefore, you need to be able to articulate why you are the best candidate for that seat. Failure to articulate an answer to “why you?” will result in failure to get into professional school. The Pre-Health Advisory Committee offers you the opportunity to participate in a committee interview that will help you learn to articulate your strengths and how to use every interview question to your advantage.

Prepare for the Committee Interview:
Make a list of 10 experiences you have had which relate to your skills, ability, or knowledge for admission into the school you have chosen. Concentrate on as many real world patient contacts as you can from internships, volunteering, and shadowing.

For each of those experiences, identify what you did, or what you learned about yourself.

Identify what this demonstrates about you and your desire to go to professional school.

You should know your list of 10 experiences thoroughly and should be looking for any opportunity to work in as many of them as you can during the interview.

Attend an Interview Workshop
Attend an interview workshop to learn how to best articulate why you want to pursue a career in your chosen profession and how your experience will make you a good candidate for a professional health program.

The Committee Interview:
During the committee interview, you will learn how to make every answer count, but you need to prepare in order to meet your goal of getting into a professional school.

When you took Organic Chemistry, you did not know what questions would be asked on the exam. You studied by learning the material and organizing it into a framework from which you could answer questions. YOU are the material for the interview. Know yourself and your experiences well, and put them in a framework so that you can answer questions.
Answering Interview Questions:
Use the following three-part format to answer all questions.

A. Quickly answer the question

B. Give a specific example from your list of ten experiences to illustrate the point

C. *(And this step is critical)* Quickly explain how the specific example from your list of ten experiences will help you be successful either in professional school or as a professional.

A. Answers the Question

B. Give an example using one of your ten experiences

C. Close the circle by stating what this shows about you and your desire to go to professional school

Try to hit all three steps in less than a minute.
Example Question:

“What is the most valuable piece of ‘real world’ advice you have learned about dealing with people?”

A. I have learned how critical it is to remain calm in the face of crisis.

B. When I volunteered in the Red Cross dental clinic, one day we had a patient who needed an extraction, and we had trouble controlling his bleeding. The dentist asked me to assist him, and I did ____, _______ and _______.

C. I learned that as a dentist, I would have to be prepared for the unexpected. I also learned that I have a calm ability to deal with an emergency situation. This has taught me that when I am in dental school, or when I have begun my practice, I will need to focus on being prepared and that I will look to solve problems in a variety of ways to meet the needs of the patient.

Example Question:

“What is one characteristic that your friends would use to describe you?”

A. They would say that I am compassionate.

B. When I was on a mission trip to Nicaragua, I was helping treat patients many of whom had never had medical treatment. I realized quickly that these patients were frightened, and though I spoke only a little Spanish, I was able to comfort the patients by listening and by demonstrating a caring attitude.

C. Being in that situation where I was the outsider, and the one who didn’t speak the language, taught me that compassion is a critical component of treatment, and I will work always to be compassionate with all the patients I treat. I believe that if I am compassionate, they will more easily accept my medical advice and my treatment.
Review your history:
Everything you have done up to this point has prepared you for the next stage of your studies. Consider this; the things you take for granted about you are the very things that an admissions committee might find astonishing and memorable.

Examples:
A student was shadowing a doctor who was treating a patient whose abdominal cavity was maggot infested.
A student was on a Division I National Championship Team
A student saved a fellow Boy Scout’s life when they were camping.
A student immigrated here when he was 12 because his family was considered politically dangerous; they were forced to flee, and he became the sole support of his family.
A student majored in Art and found many similarities between sculpture and the skeletal system.
A student grew up with his uncle who was 3 years older and had Down’s syndrome.

While none of these may apply to you, you have something (and perhaps many things) that will be remarkable. It is your job to make sure the committee knows what these things are!

Dress for success:
Check out the Career Management Center’s Website to determine appropriate dress for the interview!

Appropriate dress for men:
http://www.odu.edu/ao/cmc/pdf/appropriatedresschecklistformen.pdf

Appropriate dress for women:
http://www.odu.edu/ao/cmc/pdf/appropriatedresschecklistforwomen.pdf