Pre-Health FAQ

What do medical schools look for?

Applicants must show academic discipline, personal integrity, empathy, industry, and understanding of professional healthcare. Each school may emphasize different factors, but all are important. A pre-health advisor can evaluate your growth areas and how to develop them.

What do dentistry, pharmacy, optometry, and other health professions schools look for?

Most professions ask for qualities similar to medical schools, but with important differences. Ask a pre-health advisor.

Where do I find reliable information about getting in to professional school?

NOT from internet forums: the information is mostly wrong or overly simplified. NOT from individual doctors: a small sample is never a reliable source.

UT Dallas provides free pre-health advising for its students at HPAC: full-time advisors who are constantly in touch with professional schools, have resources not available to students, and provide customized, individual advising. Students with professional advising gain admittance to medical schools at more than double the rate of students who self-advise.

Current, accurate information can also be found at national profession education sites like AAMC.org and DEA.org.

Can I take community college courses?

Yes, though HPAC recommends taking university sciences if possible. Ask a pre-health advisor for details. Students beginning at community college should take advantage of Comet Connections.

What courses are required by professional schools?

Minimum prerequisites vary by school. An overview is included in the Pre-Health Starter Kit.

What's the Best Major?

Students should major in an area about which they're passionate, then use their electives to study healthcare-related sciences and non-sciences. Seeking your personal interests is important preparation for
Professional schools regularly accept students from all majors.

**Should I get a minor? A double major?**

Minors and double majors do not especially qualify one for professional school admission, but may be appropriate if your interests are split between multiple fields.

**What is HPAC?**

The Health Professions Advising Center helps students prepare to enter health professions. HPAC is many students’ first contact at UT Dallas and supports students throughout their training for and application to professional schools.

HPAC advisors teach classes and help students explore their interests, select classes and experiential learning, find summer experiences and internships, and revise professional school applications. [Contact HPAC](https://oue.utdallas.edu/pre-health/faq/makepdf)

**What is HPE?**

The Health Professions Evaluation process is a suite of support services for health professions applicants. It includes seminars, workshops, and application and essay revisions. HPAC also collects and distributes recommendation letters for medical and dental applicants. Qualifying applicants can also receive faculty interviews and a committee evaluation that help admissions departments get to know you better. An overview is included in the [Pre-Health Starter Kit](https://oue.utdallas.edu/pre-health/faq/makepdf).

**What is JAMP?**

A state program to help high-performing socioeconomically disadvantaged pre-med students. Interested students should inquire during their freshman year at UT Dallas and apply for JAMP at the beginning of their sophomore year.

**How do I gain healthcare experience?**

Usually by donating your time in hospitals, clinics, and community settings. You can supplement that experience by observing practitioners (shadowing) or by working in healthcare—as a pharmacy tech, EMT, Physician Scribe, clinical research assistant, etc.

**How do I gain research experience?**
Usually by identifying research projects to which you'd like to contribute, then donating your time.

Approach the professor or researcher respectfully to discuss your interests and how many hours you want to commit.

**When should I take the MCAT/DAT/OAT/PCAT/GRE?**

"As soon as you're ready, but not until." Most students take an admissions exam after 2 or 3 years of college. Ask an advisor which exam you'll need and what material will be covered. An overview is included in the Pre-Health Starter Kit.

**When do I apply for professional school?**

Traditional students apply after their junior year. Non-traditional students should ask an advisor.

**How will I pay for professional school?**

Financial aid is widely available, mostly in the form of low-interest student loans. Programs like the Native American Health Service and the Uniformed Services may pay for your professional school in exchange for service after you graduate.