

Health Professions Pre-Application Kit

Application year 2008, for 2009 matriculation

You have in your hands an application kit to help you apply to programs in the health professions for matriculation in Fall 2009. Your kit contains information on what to expect in the application process, how the Committee on the Health Professions and the Career Development Center can assist you, and what we will, in turn, expect of you. These guidelines will fit a number of different health professions, and we also guide you toward the discipline-specific information you will need to complete your particular application.

Even if you are not entirely certain that you will be applying this year, please read through this cover letter anyway, and keep the kit for reference. Also, keep your prehealth advisor apprised of what you are thinking, even when your plans change. When we know your plans and ideas, we are best able to help you realize them—no matter what they are.

Your kit contains

- a) a **timetable** for the application process
- b) an **overview** of the application process
- c) a list of **resources** to help you with the application process for your chosen program
- d) a **pre-application** that enables you to begin collecting the materials you will need for your real application. Please submit this preapplication to Dr. David Gardner in the CDC by **March 31, 2008**.
- e) **guidelines** for your letter-writers on how to write a strong letter of support, to be copied and given to each person writing for you.

It may seem early, but there are two reasons to start thinking about your application now. First, your prehealth advisor and the CDC can help you to put together the best application possible when there is still time to meet and get feedback. Second, many professional schools (and most medical schools) consider applications on a “rolling” basis, reading applications and even inviting candidates to interview before the published application deadline. When your application arrives close to the deadline, you may compete for a smaller number of slots. We invite you to begin letting your ideas percolate now as you fill out your pre-application, and to approach your prehealth advisor or the CDC with any questions or concerns.

Good luck, and remember that we are here to assist you.

Sincerely,

Sarah Bacon and David Gardner

On behalf of the Committee on the Health Professions and the Career Development Center

RETAIN PAGES 1 – 6 OF THIS PACKET FOR YOUR REFERENCE.

ONCE THEY ARE COMPLETED, RETURN PAGES 7 – 9 TO THE CDC.

COPY PAGES 10 – 11 AND PROVIDE IT TO EACH OF YOUR RECOMMENDERS

Timetable for application cycle starting in 2008

With notes of special interest to premedical students in italics

Spring 2008

Prepare for and take required entrance exams.

For premedical students, plan to take the MCAT between January and June of 2008. See the MCAT website (URL in Resources) for test dates.

March 31

Submit your preapplication to the CDC. This will allow you to collect many of the resources you'll need for your real application and provides a crucial starting point for dialogue with your health professions advisor and the CDC.

***Applicants who will need a committee letter** (premedical students, sometimes veterinary or optometry students) **must meet this March 31 deadline AND have all of their letters of support on file in the CDC by June 1** to be guaranteed that a committee letter will be ready by August 1. Students missing either deadline risk delaying completion of their committee letter until the Fall.*

April and May 2008

Meet with David Gardner to compile a list of schools to which you would like to apply. Hone your personal statement, showing it to people whose judgment and writing ability you trust. Many students submit drafts to their prehealth advisor and to Dr. Gardner.

June 1

For all applicants with fall application deadlines, it's a good idea to have any letters of support from on-campus faculty on file at the CDC by now (before faculty leave campus for the summer, if possible). *For pre-medical students, letters of support must be on file at the CDC by this date. Early June is also when your online primary application can be submitted. If your application is complete, you are encouraged to submit it by June 30 at the latest.*

July through Fall 2008

Premedical students may be invited to submit school-specific secondary applications. When you receive an invitation to submit a secondary application, notify the CDC and indicate where your letters should be sent. Secondaries require additional application fees, and waivers may be available if there is financial hardship (ask).

Fall 2008 through Spring 2009

Final application deadlines fall within this range, depending on the program. Where admission is granted on a "rolling" basis, applicants who wait until the deadline are at a disadvantage. Also, you may receive invitations to interview. If you do, contact the CDC to set up a practice interview with David Gardner and members of the prehealth committee. Please be prepared to supply a complete copy of your (real) application to the interview committee. Read everything you can find on the schools you are going to visit so that you can ask informed questions.

Overview of the Application Process

You may find that applying to professional school is a lot like taking a fifth course, writing a thesis, or having a second job—it can be exciting (and rewarding) but at times overwhelming in the face of your other responsibilities. Accept that the process can be demanding, and give yourself plenty of breathing room by starting early.

Start by becoming informed about the application process for your chosen health career

(see the list of Resources in this kit and on the CDC web site). Does each individual school have its own application, is there a general application you will complete online, or is it a combination of the two? What prerequisites and supporting materials are requested as part of the application process? Do you have some requirements still to complete, such as the entrance exam, a course or two, or an internship? Your application should reflect every aspect of your qualifications: courses, extracurricular experiences, research, clinical or volunteer experiences, and any personal experiences that demonstrate your maturity, compassion, and commitment to the profession. Collect your ideas as you fill out this pre-application, and pull together a list of your work and volunteer history. Locate an application for your degree program by referring to the Resources list. This is a good time to prepare (or to polish) your curriculum vita or resume. The CDC offers workshops on resume-writing that you might find helpful. Your application demonstrates your attention to detail, so be sure that inconsistencies or errors do not creep in. Pay scrupulous attention to any writing sample such as the personal statement. This essay showcases not just the experiences that have prepared you for your career choice, but also your facility with written English. Write a draft early and *get plenty of feedback* from people you trust.

The Application Process:

Many applicants face a two-step process consisting of primary and secondary applications. On-line centralized application services exist for the purpose of filing primary applications to almost all health professions programs except nursing. See a listing at:

<http://www.naahp.org/factsheet.htm> However, please note that NOT ALL SCHOOLS utilize the centralized services. Schools that read your primary application and wish to learn more about you will ask you to submit a secondary application. These “secondaries” may be requested by the schools as early as July and are specific to each school. Secondaries generally require an additional writing sample (again, ask for feedback on your drafts), an updated transcript if necessary, and an additional application fee. Notify the CDC when you get a request for a secondary so that they can send out your letters of recommendation. Please comply with the guidelines on use of the credentials service at the CDC which can be viewed at:

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/offices/cdc/6803.shtml>.

Entrance Exams:

Nearly all schools in the health professions require you to take some kind of entrance exam. Veterinary schools and graduate schools of Public Health require the GRE, medical schools the MCAT, dental schools the DAT, optometry schools the OAT, nursing schools sometimes require the GRE, and most pharmacy schools require the PCAT. If an entrance exam is required, familiarize yourself with its format, and prepare systematically, either with a self-designed study program and practice exams, or a commercial prep course. Complete the requisite coursework *before* the exam, or at most have one required course in progress when you sit for the exam. Do

not take the exam so late that your scores' arrival will hold up the completion of your application—i.e., no later than June for the MCAT. Note that Kaplan offers some prep courses on campus at a reduced rate for MHC students. Contact the Amherst Kaplan Office at 413-549-5780 for additional information and registration. When you register for an exam, specify that your scores be released to Mount Holyoke College (prehealth advisor).

Transcripts:

Applicants will need to submit transcripts from all U.S. colleges and universities they have attended. If you have a concern about transfer credit, or equivalency credit from study abroad that has not shown up on your MHC transcript, contact the registrar now to take care of it (registrar@mtholyoke.edu). When you are ready to send a transcript, current students can log on to ISIS, order a transcript, indicate where it is to be sent, and it will be sent out the next day. A charge of \$4.00 per transcript will appear on the general bill. Alumnae may write to the registrar (Rm 6 Mary Lyon Hall, 50 College Street) or download the registrar's online form and submit a request by mail. Supply names and addresses of the centralized application service (and/or individual schools) to which you want the transcript sent, and enclose \$4 per transcript.

Letters of Recommendation:

Professional schools will request letters of recommendation. Approach faculty (primarily from prerequisite courses), research mentors, and clinical internship mentors who know your work well, and who you think will take the time to write a thoughtful letter. Ask respectfully and give as much advance notice as you can. Provide the writer with as much supporting information as you can (e.g., your resume, unofficial transcript, a draft of your essay) in order to support their efforts to write a comprehensive letter about you. Someone who suggests that you might want to “ask some one who knows you better” may be indicating that their letter will not be as strong as you might wish. Take them seriously. Once he or she agrees to write, be clear what you are applying for, where the letters are to be submitted, and the deadline. If you can, put all of the information in writing and hand it to the letter-writer when you give them your signed Waiver Form (print out from <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/grafx/cms/content/CDC/WAIVER.pdf>) and Guidelines for Letter-writers (in this packet). In most cases, letters should be submitted to “Credentials” at the CDC, and you can call the CDC close to the deadline to make sure your letters have arrived (x2080). Please comply with the guidelines on use of the credentials service at the CDC which can be viewed at: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/offices/cdc/6803.shtml>.

Committee Letter of Recommendation:

Medical schools and sometimes veterinary and optometry schools request at least three individual letters plus a “committee letter”, written by your Health Professions Advisor on behalf of the Health Professions Advising Committee. This letter is drawn from your advisor's knowledge of you as well as from individual letters, scores, your transcripts, your pre-application and your personal statement. The strength of your committee letter can be vastly improved if your prehealth advisor has gotten to know you well. Just as with individual letters, you must specifically request a committee letter from your advisor. With adequate lead time on requests together with your effort to ensure your file is complete by June 1, advisors will normally be able to have your committee letter written and in your file by the end of July. This timing corresponds to the earliest dates when schools solicit secondary applications from you.

Resources

There are a large number of resources important to your planning, preparation and submission of applications, and they can be found at:

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/offices/cdc/8931.shtml>

Degree programs that use centralized application services

When you register with any centralized application service, specify that your file be viewable by the premed advisor at MHC.

American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS)

<http://www.aamc.org/audienceamcas.htm>

Entrance exam: MCAT

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS)

<https://aacomas.aacom.org/>

Entrance exam: MCAT

Associated American Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS)

<http://www.adea.org/AADSAS/default.htm>

Entrance exam: DAT

Veterinary Medical College Application Service (VMCAS)

<http://aavmc.org/vmcas/vmcas.htm>

Entrance exam: GRE

American Academy of Physician Assistants (<http://www.aapa.org>) offers a centralized service, the CASPA, which covers many, but not all, PA programs.

<https://portal.caspaonline.org/>

Entrance exam: GRE usually, also MCAT, sometimes no exam depending on program.

American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine Application Service (AACPM)

<http://www.e-aacpmas.org/>

Entrance exam: MCAT, GRE, or even the DAT

Schools of Public Health Application Service (SOPHAS)

<http://www.sophas.org/>

All schools of Public Health are listed at the SOPHAS site, including those which don't use SOPHAS.

Entrance exam: GRE, though MCAT, LSAT, GMAT, DAT also often accepted.

Pharmacy College Application Service (PharmCAS)

<http://www.pharmacas.org/>

Entrance exam: PCAT required by about 2/3 of schools, GRE accepted at some

Degree programs that do not use centralized application services

Optometry

See the ASO site for a listing of schools of optometry, which have individual applications.

Association of Schools of Optometry

<http://www.opted.org>

Entrance exam: OAT or GRE

Physical Therapy

American Physical Therapy Association

<http://www.apta.org>

Entrance exam: GRE typically, but please refer to individual schools

Occupational Therapy

American Occupational Therapy Association

<http://www.aota.org>

Entrance exam: GRE typically, but please refer to individual schools

Nursing (second Bachelor's, Masters, Doctor of Nursing Practice)

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/>

Entrance exam: GRE typically, but depends on the school

Entrance exams

Dental School Admission Test (DAT)

<http://www.ada.org>

Medical School Admission Test (MCAT)

<http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/>

Graduate Record Examination (GRE)

<http://www.ets.org>

Optometry Admission Test (OAT)

<http://www.opted.org>

Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT)

<http://tpc-etesting.com/pcat/>

Commercial test preparation is available from Kaplan and Princeton Review.

Kaplan

<http://www.kaptest.com/mcat>

Princeton Review

<http://www.princetonreview.com/home.asp>

Workshops

Throughout the school year, there are a number of important workshops to help you with the process of choosing and applying to health professions schools. Please be sure to attend these whenever possible. Workshop schedules can be viewed at the CDC's calendar web site.

Health Professions Pre-Application for matriculation in 2008

Please type, or print clearly

Contact information

Name: _____

Year of Graduation from MHC: _____

Email address: _____

Country of Citizenship (or state, if U.S. citizen) _____

Address through May '08

Address after May '08

Best way for us to contact you during the semester: _____

Best way for us to contact you during the summer: _____

Health related field and the degree sought: _____
(i.e. veterinary, DVM; nursing, RN; public health, MPH; physical therapy, DPT)

Who is your health professions advisor? _____

Have you met with your advisor? _____

If for some reason you do not have a health professions advisor, request one by filling out the Request for a Health Professions Faculty Advisor form at the CDC by March 15.

What, if any, entrance exam is required for your chosen degree program? _____

Have you taken the exam? _____

(if so, provide date(s) and scores): _____

Date you are planning to take (or retake) the exam: _____

Clinical and Research Experience

List clinical internship experiences you have completed or are planning, including a descriptive title and the dates of the experience. Also list research experiences you have had

Letters of recommendation

From whom do you plan to request letters of support, and in what capacity do you know them?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. (optional) _____
5. (optional) _____

Please attach a **current resume**, being sure that it includes:

- **research and work experience**
- **community or volunteer experience**
- **honors or awards**
- **publications** that bear your name.

Where are you thinking of applying?

A final list of professional schools to which you will apply can be composed in consultation with Dr. David Gardner, but in the space below please write the names of any schools to which you think you might apply. For medical and veterinary applicants, it is wise to include a state school in your home state, if one exists.

Personal Statement

In an essay of 1500 words, please answer this question. *Why do you want to pursue a degree in your chosen field?* Why do you want to be an optometrist, physical therapist, nurse midwife, doctor, veterinarian, or work in public health? Attach your essay to this preapplication.

Here are some questions that can start you thinking about what to put in a first draft.

- Why did you select the field you specified on page 1 of this preapplication? Be as specific as you can—specific details make you stand out.
- What motivates you to learn more about this field?
- What do you want professional schools to know about you that hasn't been disclosed in another section of the application? This might be the place to illustrate any personal qualities, characteristics or skills that you think will enable you to be successful.
- You might also consider addressing the following: Are there obstacles or special hardships that you have had to overcome, or that have influenced your choice of career? Are there irregularities in your academic record that might be worth explaining?
- Your goal is to illustrate to the reader/interviewer who you are. Reflect upon experiences you have had—personal, work, volunteer, research, etc—and when you consider whether or not to talk about them in your essay/interview, consider the following questions: Why did I do it? What did I get out of it? What did I give to it? What did I learn, and how do I understand myself better now? Talking about what an experience *means* to you is more powerful than simply describing the experience itself.

To whom will you give a draft of your personal statement, so that they can read and comment upon it before it is submitted with your real application?

Course Work

Please attach an unofficial transcript of your coursework, including courses taken at other institutions.

List here prerequisite courses you still have to complete:

What is your GPA in the prerequisite courses? _____
 What is your cumulative GPA? _____

Guidelines for writing a letter of recommendation for a student applying to programs in the health professions

Thank you for agreeing to write a letter of recommendation. Because an informative letter is important and may be time-consuming to compose, Mount Holyoke's Committee on the Health Professions has drawn up guidelines to help you and the student get the most out of this effort.

When an admission committee receives a packet of letters for a candidate, they have seen that student's GPA, entrance exam scores, college major and curriculum completed, a list of her extracurricular activities, research, or volunteer experiences, and (typically) a personal statement. They look to letters of recommendation to illustrate personal qualities and abilities that are not obvious from the application itself: a candidate's strengths and weaknesses, academic aptitude and scholarship, social skills, and potential for her chosen career.

Elements considered helpful by admissions committees¹

1. **Information about the relationship between the candidate and letter-writer.** How long and in what capacity you have known the applicant? Informative letters incorporate specific examples pulled from direct contact with the applicant. If you do not know her well enough to offer specific information, please consider declining to write.
2. **Insight into an applicant's personal qualities of integrity, compassion, leadership, professionalism, maturity, determination, and motivation.** As professors or research/internship supervisors we sometimes don't have information about all of these qualities. But observation of a student's behavior in lab, interactions in the classroom, ability to meet deadlines, or perseverance can yield insights into many of these qualities.
3. Information about the applicant's **strengths and weaknesses relative to her cohort**, for example rank in a class, performance relative to other students preparing for a similar career, or maturity/perseverance compared to other undergraduates.
4. Description of an applicant's **social skills**, including her ability to work with her peers, to interact (if applicable) with patients, and to show respect, cooperation or compassion.
5. Some statement of the **applicant's suitability for her chosen career**. Do you think she's a good candidate? If applicable, you may explain any apparent discrepancies in her record, special circumstances, or hardships she encountered in preparing.

Elements considered less helpful:

1. Repeating what the admissions committee knows, such as MCAT/GRE scores or other information available in her application, unless it reinforces a point you are making
2. General praise that is not substantiated
3. A report of a student's grade or rank in a class that doesn't also shed light on her intellectual ability, motivation, or potential as a scholar
4. Very detailed descriptions of a course or research project.

Again, thank you. Most letters can be submitted to Mount Holyoke College's Career Development Center, 50 College Street, South Hadley MA 01075, ATTN: Credentials.

¹ Elam CE, Edwards JC, Comeau R, Taylor ED, Hinkley R, Heldberg C, Johnson MMS. Letters of recommendation. *The Advisor* 18: 4-6, 1998.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Phone 413-538-2080/Fax 413-538-2081

REQUEST FOR LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION AND WAIVER

TO THE STUDENT/ALUM : Complete the following information (print legibly or type) then give this form to your recommender who in turn will complete the below portion of this form and forward it to the CDC along with his/her letter.

Name _____ Class _____

Field of proposed study/employment _____

Recommendation from _____

Title _____ Department _____

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 you are entitled to read the letter you are requesting unless you waive such right of access. Please indicate your preference by circling the appropriate word(s) in the following statement:

I, the undersigned, (circle one) [WAIVE] [DO NOT WAIVE] any right I may have to examine the letter of recommendation written by the above named person.

Signature of Applicant (student/alum) Date

TO THE PERSON WRITING THE RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation will be filed in the Career Development office. At the request of the student/alum, we will photocopy the letter and mail copies to designated schools, employers, etc. Please address the letter "Recommendation Letter For _____."

Please write your letter on LETTERHEAD STATIONERY, sign and attach your letter to this request form and mail it to:

Career Development Center
Mount Holyoke College
50 College Street
South Hadley, MA 01075
ATTN: Credentials

I, the undersigned, understand that the above named student/alum has (circle one) [WAIVED] [NOT WAIVED] any rights to examine this letter of recommendation.

Signature of Recommender Date

Updated July, 2007