



HEALTH PROFESSIONS ADVISING OFFICE

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The Application Cycle

Congratulations. You have reached the point in your journey where you have completed much of the required course work for medical, dental, or optometry school, you may have even taken your standardized test at this point and now all you have to do is apply. This is a long process with lots of important steps, but some good research and legwork by you on the front-end can take a lot of the worry and stress out of it on the back end. Give yourself plenty of time, print out this manual and the [Timeline](#) located on our homepage and follow along. There is no mystery to this process or secret code you need to break. In general, professional schools are concerned with:

- ▶ Overall and science GPA
- ▶ MCAT/DAT/OAT
- ▶ Personal Statement
- ▶ Clinical Exposure to medicine/dentistry, etc.
- ▶ Activities and leadership, particularly related to community service and volunteerism
- ▶ Research

Many resources exist to assist you in this process however the final responsibility for timelines and the quality of your application rests with you. This manual will provide basic information on the following:

- Are you ready?
- Common application services: [AMCAS](#), [AACOMAS](#), [AADSAS](#)
- [Timing](#) the application to enhance your chances of admission
- All about transcripts
- How your application will be processed by the application service
- Secondary applications: what are they and what to expect from them
- The committee letter and how to request it
- Miscellaneous information

HPAO LISTSERV: If you do not get E-mails from us with regular updates, please sign up for our listserv at <http://www.prehealth.umd.edu/premedlistserv.html>

Blackboard is here! When you submit your prehealth packet, you will be added to the HPAO Application Cycle. You may even have been added already if you have submitted any letters of recommendation since October 1, 2007. This Blackboard site will help you monitor documents that have been received by the HPAO, such as packet materials and letters of recommendation.

READ THIS MANUAL AND REFER TO IT DURING THE COMING MONTHS AS YOU APPLY TO MEDICAL /DENTAL OR OPTOMETRY SCHOOLS FOR ENTRY IN 2009. ALSO REFER TO THE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS POSTED AT <http://www.prehealth.umd.edu/prehealthpackets.html>.

While much of this manual focuses on the application to MD granting programs, DO, DDS and several other programs have similar application processes. If you intend to apply to these or any other health professions program, read through the MD section first for general information and then refer to the additional information on specific programs that follows.

ARE YOU READY? HERE IS WHAT THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS WILL BE ASSESSING.

1. Are you ready for the academic rigor?

Schools will be looking for a sufficient and *established* record of academic achievement. There are no points for potential so a strong MCAT score and the promise to do better in the future will not take the place of strong grades and course selection. Ascending grades or overall good performance is critical. Descending grades, doing more poorly as you go along into more difficult course work is very concerning. Schools must also be confident that you are good enough at science (hence the separate science GPA calculation they will require) and that you have sufficient background and basic ability. The first two years of medical school are strictly a science curriculum.

In addition, strong course selection in terms of overall academic load and electing more challenging courses even when it wasn't required, as well as being able to handle the load for which you have registered will be considered. A "W" with a good explanation is okay; a pattern of withdrawals is a problem. Fluff courses here and there do not signal a problem but too many does lighten the load. Remember that medical school is more demanding than any 17 credit semester at Maryland and if you can't do it here, there is reason to suspect that you won't be able to do it there.

2. Can you articulate that medicine or dentistry is the right path for you – for your own reasons?

Through your clinical experiences, have you learned what doctors, dentists, DO's, optometrists, etc., do? Is the field a fit for you? Admissions committees need to know that you have had some quality shadowing opportunities and that you have persisted to find those quality experiences. Use your contacts if you have them (if mom or dad is a physician, dentist, etc.) but persist in getting some experiences that you pursued on your own. If you aren't secure in your reasons for entering the field and you discover in your third year of medical school that you don't like it that is a crisis for you and a lost spot in a competitive class. Schools will not take you without good clinical experience, regardless of your academic ability.

3. Maturity

You must demonstrate that you make good and responsible choices and that you are ready to engage in privileged relationships with patients and colleagues. You must take responsibility for your own successes and especially failures. A pattern of blame when things don't go well is problematic. Never blame the instructor for your poor performance if asked about a grade during an essay or interview.

Take on leadership positions, particularly those that require you to interact with adults. Those people can write you strong letters showing that you were trusted to deliver on something and *you delivered*. Jobs, student organizations Resident Assistant and Teaching Assistant positions, peer advisors – all of these, done well, demonstrate a high degree of personal responsibility. These things can make all the difference in cases where academics are fairly even – which is true for many, many applicants to professional schools.

4. Are you well-rounded or what committees like to call “multi-dimensional”?

With so many people applying who look very similar to one another in terms of quantitative measures, students who stand out are those who have taken a variety of courses for the sake of learning new things, who have gotten out of the classroom and become invested in community service, cultural exploration, language development, travel, etc. However, dabbling in a myriad of things is not as important as becoming invested in the things about which you are passionate. Become involved in things that will help you grow personally and that are meaningful to you; do not try to figure out who the medical schools want you to be. There is no answer to that.

5. Do you have good interpersonal skills and a capacity for empathy?

This goes back to what has already been said and can best be demonstrated through community service and your relationships with others from teachers and advisors to family, friends and the patients with whom you have interacted with during clinical experiences. Your letters and interview will speak volumes about this and it is critically important.

APPLICATIONS TO ALLOPATHIC MEDICAL SCHOOL (MD and MD/PhD PROGRAMS)

AMCAS is a centralized application service operated by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC, see <http://www.aamc.org>). AMCAS is used by all but 8 of the 126 MD-granting schools in the US (including Puerto Rico). The schools that **do not** use AMCAS are:

- University of North Dakota School of Medicine
- University of Missouri-Kansas City (which accepts only high school students applying to the combined BS/MD program)
- The 6 MD-granting schools in Texas that use a different common application service, the Texas Medical and Dental School Application Service (TMDSAS <http://www.utsystem.edu/tmdsas/>). Those schools are U Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, U Texas Houston, U Texas San Antonio, Southwestern Medical School at Dallas, Texas Tech School of Medicine, and Texas A&M School of Medicine. Please note that Baylor College of Medicine in Texas is part of AMCAS. Also, the MD/PhD programs at UT-Southwestern, UT Houston and UT

Galveston also use AMCAS. TMSAS also covers DO and dental schools in Texas.

What does a centralized application service like AMCAS do?

- Collects applicant information
- Collects a set of transcripts for each applicant
- Verifies the academic record, i.e., checks to see that the academic history you reported on your application agrees with that shown on transcripts from schools where you have done college level academic work
- Provides standardized grading information to participating schools
- Provides all other application information to health professions schools
- At the end of the cycle, reports data on applicants to health professions schools and to health professions advisors

The AMCAS application is only available as an electronic application; the URL for accessing the application is <http://www.aamc.org/students/amcas/start.htm>. It is **absolutely imperative** that you take time to read through the information on the site and that you visit it frequently when you have questions or to check for updates. There are important tools posted on the AMCAS site. But be sure that you refer to the information for the 2009 application. This should become available in early May. Be sure to use the links that will provide you with the following information:

- Application Instruction Book
- Application Worksheet
- Grade Conversion Guide
- Flow Chart on application processing
- Application Tips
- Application glossary
- Information on the Fee Assistance Program (FAP)
- Information on applicant responsibilities
- Information on acceptance procedures

Please remember that, in addition to these tools, there is a HELP function that is available on every page of the AMCAS on-line application itself. Use the HELP function and you will save yourself a lot of time and frustration.

Other important information such as direct links to medical schools, and information on medical school curricula and financing your medical education can be found on other areas of the AAMC web site (<http://www.aamc.org>).

Why does AMCAS standardize grading information?

There is no national standard for awarding credits and grades. Some schools are on a course credit system; some are on a semester hour basis. Some award pluses and minuses, such as UMD, some do not. Medical schools need a standardized format in order to compare applicants. Consequently, AMCAS “normalizes” grading systems and calculates what they refer to as an “AMCAS GPA.” That is the GPA that med schools use for their admissions review. In addition, many students have taken courses from more than one undergraduate institution. The AMCAS formula will put all of your course work into one calculation.

If you want to go through the AMCAS calculation to see what your “unofficial AMCAS GPA” would be, you can use the grade conversion information available on the AMCAS web site. We ask you to go through this exercise on our PreHealth packet so that you can see what the medical schools are likely to see and so that you and we can evaluate your trends in the way that the medical schools will. Once processing is complete, AMCAS will notify you of your “official AMCAS GPA” that will be transmitted to the designated medical schools. Refer to the “HELP” keys and FAQ’s on AMCAS for any additional information as the HPAO does not have any more information about this process than is written here.

Timing of the Application—an important way to enhance your chances of acceptance

The AMCAS application will likely be available “on or about” May 3, 2008. You can log in, get a password and begin working on it any time after that date. You can log in and out of your AMCAS application as many times as you need to before certifying and submitting it. The earliest date to submit will be “on or about” June 3, 2008.

I strongly recommend that you initiate your application early in the cycle. You should plan to submit your application between June 3 and early July. It should be fine to submit it any time before the second week in July in order to benefit from “applying early.” On the AMCAS web site there is a link to “deadlines for specific medical schools.” Be aware that these deadlines are the absolute late deadlines. It is always a better policy to ask “when is the earliest I can apply”, and not “when is the deadline” – get the drift?

If you took the MCAT prior to June 1, you should wait until you have received your MCAT scores before finalizing, certifying, and submitting your application. This is because knowing your MCAT scores will help you to finalize the list of schools to which you are applying. However, please note that if you are taking the MCAT after June 1, you should still plan to submit the application by late June or early July. When the scores are reported, many schools will process the applications in the order in which they were received.

Here are a few additional tips:

- **DO NOT begin completing the AMCAS application with a false name, nickname, incorrect AAMC ID, or incorrect information.** You were assigned an AAMC ID when you registered for the MCAT. If you have not yet registered for the MCAT, you will be assigned an AAMC ID when you begin working on the AMCAS application. If you begin completing the AMCAS application without using your AAMC ID, you will be assigned an AAMC ID number that will not be matched correctly to your MCAT scores.
- AMCAS will start accepting official transcripts **on May 1 and not before.** Those of you who were enrolled in spring 2008 courses should wait until **after** your spring grades are posted to request that your transcript be sent. However, you should not wait for grades from Summer Sessions as this will put you late in the application process.

- **Transcript problems are the most common cause of delay in your application—so listen up.** In order to assure that your transcripts are processed smoothly at AMCAS, you should use the AMCAS Transcript Release Forms (TRF). You will print them directly from the AMCAS application. Submit the transcript request form to the Registrar's Office and any other school that you attended from which AMCAS will require a transcript (refer to the HELP function on the actual application). In most cases, the TRF will print with the address of the Registrar's Office at the specific school, so you don't have to look up the address. Remember, a transcript is only "official" if it is sent to AMCAS directly from the Office of the Registrar. It cannot come from you (even in a sealed envelope).

Please note that the HPAO does not send your transcript to AMCAS. The Office of the University Registrar does so at your request. You must submit an official transcript from EVERY college or university you have attended.

- **Status Checks.** After you submit your AMCAS application, you will start seeing a status comment on your entry page. This is to help you monitor the progress of your application following submission. Many schools will also have web sites that allow you to track the progress of your application through their admissions process. **It is your responsibility to follow the status of your applications and to contact AMCAS or the schools as necessary with questions.**
- **Changes to your application after submission.** After you initially submit your application, changes can only be made to a few questions in the application. These include required and alternate ID's, name (including preferred and alternate), and contact information. If you do have to make any post-submission changes (including adding any schools to your list of designated schools), you will need to recertify and resubmit the application after making the changes. You can add schools to which you wish to apply; however, you cannot delete a school. We encourage you to have settled on the list of schools to which you will apply before you actually submit the application.

This is also a good time to mention that you should take care that, as much as is possible, you use a single name on all of your documents. You should enter your name in AMCAS in the same format as your name is on your transcripts (an exception might be if you got married after college and are now using a different name). In spite of there being unique identifiers, sometimes difficulties arise if an applicant ends up with a variety of names on the application, transcripts, letters of evaluation, etc

- **Post-secondary school experiences.** The list of post-secondary school experiences is limited to 15. This change was made several years ago at the request of med schools. They want applicants to choose what they think is important to them and important to call to the attention of med schools. You should not feel that you must have 15. They should be activities to which you made a real commitment. For example, if you went to Habitat for Humanity once, you should not list it. Not only does it not fall into the "important to you" category, but if you are asked in an interview to further describe your involvement with Habitat and you can only say you went once, it will appear that you are making an unsubstantiated claim (not helpful, as you can imagine).

- Designating schools and programs including combined degree programs.** When you designate the schools to which you will apply, you will be asked to select a particular program. In most cases this will be MD. However, some of you are applying to MD/PhD programs and some of you are considering other combined degree programs. You need to be aware that if on your AMCAS application you select a joint degree program for a particular school that designation does not activate an application to that joint program. It is primarily a data gathering function of AMCAS. For example, if you think you want to complete the MD/MPH at Emory, selecting MD/MPH on your AMCAS application will not suffice. You will have to make that clear through the Emory secondary application. If you want to apply to the MD/PhD program at Washington University, you should include Washington University on the list of schools to which you will apply and indicate that you are applying to MD/PhD there. But you should also consult the website of the Washington University MD/PhD program (see <http://www.aamc.org/research/dbr/mdphd/programs.htm> for direct links to MD/PhD web sites) to find out how to initiate an application to the Wash U MD/PhD program (as well as other MD/PhD programs). At most schools, if you are not considered for the MD/PhD program, you will be given the opportunity to leave your application in the pool for the MD program at that school. If you have considered a combined degree program but are not sure about it, you should select MD as the program of choice. You will have an opportunity after matriculation in medical school to consider doing combined degree programs. Applying to an MD/PhD program when you are not fully committed to it can have a negative effect even on your MD application (you will look like you are using poor judgment).
- MD/PhD Programs.** If you designate an MD/PhD program, you will be asked to complete two additional essays—one addressing why you are applying to an MD/PhD program (3000 characters) and the other a specific essay on the research you have done to date (10,000 characters). The MD/PhD essays will be transmitted by AMCAS to the schools to which you indicate you will apply to the MD/PhD program. With regard to MD/PhD applications, some schools will allow you to go ahead and start the application process to their MD/PhD program even before you file your AMCAS application, e.g., the Tri-Institutional Program in NYC. If you are applying to MD/PhD programs, check the program web sites soon to see if that is the case. See <http://www.aamc.org/research/dbr/mdphd/programs.htm> for direct links to MD/PhD programs.
- MSAR.** This publication is available for \$25 on www.aamc.org and is an excellent source to use in beginning to compile your list of schools. It includes information on past applicants to each school, what scores and GPA their admitted students averaged, in-state/out-of-state acceptance statistics (very helpful), deadlines, procedures, etc. It is an important first resource, but you should also plan on visiting the websites of the schools to which you plan to apply to be certain that it is a good fit for you and that you have met all of their requirements.
- Fee Assistance Program.** If you believe you qualify for the AMCAS Fee Assistance Program (FAP), see the info on the AAMC web site regarding how to apply (<http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap/start.htm>). Do it as soon as possible. Money is limited.

- Early submission is important; however, you should **be sure your application is error-free and complete**. Incomplete applications will be returned and can delay your application. Errors, typos, and missing information cannot be corrected after submission. They will be submitted to med schools and med schools may conclude that you do not pay attention to detail (not good).
- Prior to submission, you should **print your application** to check the data you entered at submission.
- It is your responsibility to **monitor the progress of your application** throughout the process. This goes for AMCAS as well as secondary applications.
- **Race and Ethnicity Questions**. This question is optional but helps the AAMC and med schools to track information on their applicants. **The ethnicity question** is designed to identify Spanish/Hispanic/Latino/Latina applicants. If you answer no to that question, you will not need to define your ethnicity further. If you answer yes, you will be asked to define your ethnicity within that group. You may select more than one **racial designation** if that applies. You should be thoughtful in answering this question as individual schools may follow up with questions that probe the depth of your heritage. For example, there are many individuals who have some minimal Native American ancestry but have not been raised with any tribal tradition. Many schools are rightly skeptical that such a student would bring any diversity to their class.
- The **disadvantaged status** question has been further refined in recent years to give you some guidelines in determining if you fall into this category. See the AMCAS Information Booklet on the AMCAS website for further information.
- **PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, AND THEN HAVE SOMEONE ELSE PROOFREAD FOR YOU.**
- The electronic application comes with on screen instructions, a Quick Tour function, Help functions, and if all else fails, an E-mail and phone contact for AMCAS. Use all these resources. Please don't call the HPAO with technical questions about the AMCAS application. We will likely just refer you to the assistance listed above. Our time is better spent preparing your letters. We will invite AMCAS here again this March to cover important details surrounding the application.

Note: Please remember to authorize release of information to me (Wendy Loughlin) as the Health Professions Advisor at Maryland. The only way I can continue to provide information on data for past applicants is if applicants agree to release it to me. I always protect the confidentiality of the information.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU SUBMIT THE AMCAS APPLICATION?

After being "verified" at AMCAS, your application information will be sent electronically to each of the AMCAS participating schools that you designate. Each school will then

communicate with you through the “secondary” or “supplemental” application process, i.e., they will E-mail you and refer you to their web-based secondary application. There may be a handful of schools that still use a paper secondary application through snail mail. Alternatively, they may screen applicants and ask a subset of them to complete a secondary application. It is at the secondary application stage that schools will request that your letters be forwarded to them (see below). **NOTE: the letters are not sent to AMCAS—they are transmitted directly from our office to the schools (see details later in this document).**

APPLICATIONS TO OSTEOPATHIC MEDICAL SCHOOL (DO PROGRAMS)

Osteopathic medical schools also use a web-based common application service and it includes the schools that are members of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM). <http://www.aacom.org>

APPLICATIONS TO DENTAL SCHOOL

Nearly all dental schools are members of the common application service, AADSAS. For the AADSAS application information, see: <http://www.adea.org/DAS/student-applicant/default.htm> ADEA will be invited here this April to cover important details surrounding the application. In addition, dental school applicants should be sure to read the [2009 Dental School](#) applicant instructions located on the HPAO website.

LETTERS OF EVALUATION

Your list of evaluators is due with your PreHealth Packet. If you decide to make changes to your list, **you must do so in writing** to our office. If you do not inform us of changes, we may unnecessarily delay sending your credentials while we await a letter that is not going to come or we may send out letters before getting a letter you wished to include because we did not know to expect it. **Letters from your evaluators should arrive in the HPAO by June 1, 2008.** Remember that many faculty members leave campus in the summer to do their research and/or write elsewhere. It is to your advantage to have assured that all letters are in before the deadline to the best of your ability. It is your responsibility to make sure these letters arrive. HPAO takes no responsibility for following up with your recommenders and getting them to submit their letters.

Letters must be received as originals at the HPAO. We will not accept letters sent by FAX unless the evaluator also sends a hardcopy. Be sure to provide each evaluator with a copy of the [HPAO waiver form](#) (additional copies can be downloaded from our website).

We will only accept letters by E-mail if they are sent as attachments in PDF or Word format are on letterhead and carry a signature. If an evaluator plans to send a letter digitally, he/she needs to contact [Mike Grunberg](#) in advance to make sure his/her process will meet our requirements.

The waiver form must be signed **by you** and returned to us by the evaluator with his/her letter. While you have the option not to waive your right to see your letters of evaluation, **medical schools much prefer confidential letters (i.e., that you waive your right).** If you do not sign the waiver, it will be our policy to proceed as though you waived your right.

When will your committee letter be written?

The first step in requesting a committee letter is completing the [PreHealth Packet](#), which can be found on our website after February 1. The deadline to submit this is August 15. Once this has been submitted, Wendy Loughlin (also referred to as “I” throughout this next section) will review it, make sure you have at least two letters of recommendation on file, provide you with some feedback about your application and list of schools, and refer you to Michael Grunberg to schedule an interview. You must wait to hear from Wendy by e-mail with the feedback before you contact Michael. After that, interviews with committee members will be offered in the following manner:

March 1- June 1 – priority applicants: Priority applicants who meet the June 1 priority deadline with a complete application will be guaranteed a committee letter by August 1, provided they are available to interview in a timely way.

June– August 30: interviews will be arranged with candidates based on their availability, the availability of the Pre-Med Committee members and the timeliness of the submission of the PreHealth Packet. No interviews will be scheduled until you have at least two letters of recommendation in your file. Applicants should expect it to take 8 weeks before a committee letter is produced from the date they submit their complete application. Remember, the Prehealth Packet deadline is **AUGUST 15** –no exceptions. All applicants must schedule their interview by August 30, though the interview may take place after that.

Once the interview is completed, the interviewer will forward his/her notes to Wendy. Priority letters will be drafted but not finalized until spring grades are in.

I will begin by writing DAT, OAT letters for those whose files are complete and preferably who have already taken the MCAT (so that I have those scores). I will thus be writing those letters before they are actually requested. When they are requested (see the paragraph on when you request that we submit your letters), it will be only a matter of printing, scanning, and posting the letters to VirtualEvals. Those letters can be processed within a week of request. VirtualEvals is scheduled to open for the posting of letters on June 15. Thus, we will not be posting letters before then. But most professional schools will not be requesting letters until well after June 15.

At some point, applicants will begin requesting us to transmit letters (see next paragraph), I will then shift to writing letters in the order in which they were requested. However, you cannot request us to transmit your credentials packet until you know that **all of your recommendation letters have been received by our office** (see below).

When do you request that we transmit your letters?

After you submit your application to AMCAS, they will verify your application and then transmit it to your designated schools. At that point, you will begin to receive requests from schools to complete their secondary/supplemental application. (In some cases, the secondaries are actually available from the school’s website at anytime). When you have determined which secondaries you are going to complete and all of your letters of recommendation are in, submit the Credentials Mailing Form to the HPAO and your committee letter, along with your other letters of recommendation will be sent to your schools via VirtualEvals. **IMPORTANT:** without the Credentials Mailing form your letters will not be forwarded to any schools.

When you request that your letters be transmitted using the Credentials Mailing Form, we will need to know the following:

- If you are applying to TMDSAS, we will need your TMDSAS ID number
- If you are applying to MD/PhD programs and if so, which ones
- If you are applying to any osteopathic schools we need your AACOMAS ID number
- If you are applying early decision (in general this is not recommended because other schools will not be able to look at your application until it has been acted on by the early decision school)

TMDSAS is a bit different. They don't use a secondary application process. Rather, at the time you submit your TMDSAS application you can go ahead and request that we transmit your letters (if all of your letters have been received). Remember that your committee letter will be completed based on the preceding plan.

A special note on transmitting letters to osteopathic (DO-granting) schools: Many Osteopathic schools require that applicants have a letter from an osteopathic physician. You need to arrange to have a letter from an osteopathic physician you have shadowed or with whom you have discussed osteopathic medicine sent to supplement the file of letters we post for osteopathic schools. If you decide midway through the application process to add DO schools, we require that you provide us with a statement as to why this type of program is right for you so we can address that when we convert your committee letter to DO.

Transmission of letters to dental schools: We now use the AADSAS letter transmittal portal. Please refer to the [instructions](#) on our website. You will still submit one credentials mailing form with all your schools listed on it.

Timing of Letters: We will attempt to transmit your letters within three weeks of the time we receive your initial request to have the letters transmitted to a school. However, due to the large number of applicants and the amount of time it takes to write an individualized health professions advisor's letter for each of the approximately 300 applicants, we will periodically have a backlog of letters to prepare. At those peak times, it may take as many as 8 weeks to write and post or transmit your letters. Schools realize that each committee letter takes time and that great attention is given to each letter (and they appreciate that fact). However, you can assist in the process by making sure your letters from evaluators have been submitted by the June 1 deadline, filing your PreHealth Packet in a timely fashion (the priority deadline is your best bet), and returning your secondary applications promptly. **When completing secondary applications, indicate where requested that your letters will be from a premedical advisor or "committee." If the specific pre-medical advisor name is requested, list Wendy Loughlin.**

Re-applicants: Much of the above process is the same, with the exception being that interviews are not required or available. Thus, to request an updated committee letter, fill out the [PreHealth Packet](#) for re-applicants, which can be found on our website after February 1. The deadline to submit this is August 15th. Once this has been submitted, Nick Celedon, who works with all re-applicants, will review it, make sure you have at least two letters of recommendation on file, provide you with feedback about

your application and list of schools, and complete your updated letter. Nick may contact you throughout the process to clarify more recent activities in which you have been involved.

Schools that use an evaluation form. A few schools have their own form. Most will accept a committee letter in lieu of this form. In cases where they will not, Washington University in St. Louis is an example of one we can think of, give us the form and we will process it.

Please note that the HPAO will send the same file of Letters of Evaluation to each of the schools to which you apply (with the exception of osteopathic schools as described above). We cannot customize each file for specific schools. Moreover, it is not necessary to do so since every medical school has been fully satisfied with the format of our Credentials Packet. It is not necessary to comply with a school's request for a specific number or distribution of letters when you use the HPAO credentials service.

Letters from summer 2008 experiences: Many of you will be participating in an activity this summer from which you would like to have a letter of evaluation. If we have not already posted your credentials file to your schools, it is not a problem to add additional letters. In general, however, it is preferred by the schools that all of your letters be forwarded at once so as to cut down on the paper flow at their end. We cannot add letters electronically once an initial electronic transfer has been done, either through VE or AADSAS.

Again, if you sat for the April- early June MCAT, you should wait to file your application until you know your MCAT score. You should take into account your score when finalizing the list of schools to which you will apply. If you have done surprisingly well on the MCAT, you might want to add one or two additional "reach" schools. If you did not do as well as you hoped, you might want to add another school or two in the less competitive range. Finally, if your academic record is borderline and I have advised you to think about delaying your application, and you find that you will need to repeat the MCAT you should make the decision to delay your application until next year. Remember, every medical school has stated that it is in your best interest to put forth the strongest application you can as your first application. Applying when you are not yet ready may actually be held against you as a sign of poor judgment.

DAT

Dental schools typically want you to have taken the DAT in the spring or early summer at the latest. See the [ADA web site](#) for details on taking the DAT.

CONDUCT VIOLATIONS/ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE QUESTION

We do require that you submit a Student Conduct Certification Form to the Office of Judicial Programs and they, in turn, will provide us with information on any judicial action ever taken against you. This information **WILL** become a part of your committee letter. Thus, be very certain that you make the same statement on AMCAS about your judicial action report that we will make. Should you have any doubts, please ask us. A word of advice: it is better to admit your mistakes and learn from them than to blame others for your poor judgment. I will be glad to discuss with you how you might approach discussing the disciplinary/academic performance violation appropriately. There is

space provided in the AMCAS application and other applications to describe and discuss a disciplinary action.

Included in the AMCAS and some other applications, is the following question: “Have you ever been convicted of a felony? While the question was new to AMCAS beginning in 2002, it has been asked on some secondary applications in the past. Some schools also ask if an applicant has ever been **charged** with a felony and/or misdemeanor. Please keep in mind that you must be honest about all of your answers. Failure to answer honestly can result in an investigation and voiding of your application.

A NOTE ON RESEARCH

While medical schools do not require that applicants have experience in research, such experience can be an asset to an application and is particularly important if you express an interest in academic medicine. However, if you have done research, interviewers will expect you to describe to them not only what you did, but what your hypothesis was, what you hoped to learn, what your conclusions were, and where the project might go from here—even if you will not be the one doing it. You should be sure to read up on the area of your research and practice describing what you did and why to people with little background in the specific area in which you worked.

SUMMER IN THE HPAO

The summer is the busiest time of year in the HPAO. Thus, we will be less accessible because we will be writing your letters and processing your material – yours and the other 300+ applicants to professional school for next fall. We will have limited walk in office hours during the summer. In addition, we do find time in the summer to attend professional meetings and take vacations, so there will be times that we are not readily accessible. Thus, it is in your best interest to do all that you need to do with our office utilizing the schedule put forth in the calendar posted from our home page so that you do not meet with frustration.

The applications have extensive instructions and help functions. Please refer to those for questions you have about the applications. And refer to this **manual** and the instruction manuals available on the websites of each of the application services for the answers to your other questions. If you contact us with questions covered in these resources, we will simply refer you back to them. We will try to help you with questions that are not covered in resources available to you.

There are parts of the application process over which you have no control. But there are parts of it over which you do have control. Remember to pay attention to details and deadlines during the application process. We wish you the best.