

APPLYING TO MEDICAL SCHOOL?

Learn more about the requirements, application strategies, and where to find helpful resources

If you are applying to medical school, this tipsheet will help you learn how to effectively set yourself up for applications, what is involved in the application process, and where to find helpful resources to assist you. If you are thinking about becoming a medical doctor as a potential career option, check out the "Thinking About Medical School?" tipsheet.

Application Basics

Although the application for each medical school differs, the following items often form part or all the application process. Since applying for medical school takes a significant amount of time, it can be helpful to plan ahead to make sure you meet the deadlines.

Meeting the Deadlines

The application deadlines for medical schools differ. There may also be different due dates for submitting the application requirements. If you are applying to medical schools in Ontario, you are required to use the Ontario Medical School Application Service (OMSAS). Be sure to verify all deadline details for the different schools you are applying to well in advance.

Submitting Your Transcripts

Whether you are applying through a central application service like OMSAS or directly to a program, you will likely need to arrange to have official transcripts sent to the different institutions you are applying. There is usually a fee associated with service. Request these transcripts well in advance of the deadline to avoid any last-minute delays.

Writing the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT)

The MCAT is a standardized test that evaluates your knowledge of both the physical and biological sciences, your verbal reasoning and writing skills, as well as your understanding of psychological, social, and biological influences on behavior. The test is computer-based and takes approximately 7.5 hours. Accommodations are available. There are different ways to prepare to write the MCAT; all can be successful. Some people study alone whereas others take an MCAT preparatory course. Many applicants choose to study for and write the MCAT a year in advance of applying to medical school. This approach can be helpful because it allows them time to retake the test (if necessary). Before choosing to rewrite the test, be sure to investigate how the schools you are applying to consider multiple attempts. Most schools also set an expiry date for MCAT results (often 3-5 years). Medical schools that use the MCAT as part of their admissions process may have a minimum criterion for each section of the test as well as a minimum overall score. Reference each schools' minimum requirements for the year that you are applying. You may also want to consider the average MCAT score of successful applicants for the year prior. This score can be helpful for gauging if you are a competitive applicant. Other things you may want to consider about writing the MCAT are the cost of the test as well as when and where the test is offered.

Writing the Computer-Based Assessment for Sampling Characteristics (CASPer Test)

The CASPer test is a new addition to some medical school applications. Depending on the requirements for the medical school you are applying to, you may need to take the CASPer test. CASPer is an online test used to understand the applicant's behavioural tendencies, based on their responses to different, difficult, everyday situations. The answers to these questions measure the following traits: ethics, empathy, equity, communication, collaboration, professionalism, and judgement. Because the test is online, you will want to make sure that you have a strong internet connection, a functioning webcam, and a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. While there are no formal preparatory courses like there are for the MCAT, there are different examples of scenarios online. Accommodations are also available for this test. Be sure to check the requirements, especially the version of the CASPer test you will need to take as well as when your score is due. (<https://takealtus.com/casper/>)

Writing an Autobiographical Sketch

Most medical schools require that you complete an autobiographical sketch comprised of an itemized list (with descriptions) of different activities you have been involved in. These activities can include employment and volunteer roles, any research experience, awards, extra-curricular activities, and any other relevant activities. You may also be asked to include the name and contact information of a person who can verify your participation. Make sure you seek the permission of the verifier and use their current contact information. Graduate student applicants are often required to submit additional materials such as a letter from their supervisor and/or program. An effective approach to writing an autobiographical sketch is to consider how these activities related to the seven roles described in the [CanMEDS framework](#). Reflect on and describe how each of the activities you have participated in have helped you develop each of the roles outlined in the framework.

Submitting Your Resume or Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Some medical schools will require you to submit a resume or CV as part of your application. Much like the autobiographical sketch, you should consider how each of your experiences relates to the roles outlined in the CanMEDS framework. You may find it helpful to look at the [CV tipsheet](#) for students applying to graduate school and/or a copy of [Queen's Best Resumes Magazine](#).

Writing Personal Essays and Answering Supplementary Questions

Some medical schools ask applicants to submit personal essays or answer a series of supplemental questions. These materials often pertain to your goals and experience and how you imagine you will succeed in the program. Check out Career Service's Research and Personal Statements [tipsheet](#) or one of the several books available in the [Career Information Area](#) to assist you in writing your answers.

Additional Admissions Requirements

Students applying in specialized application streams such as graduate students or Indigenous students may also be required to submit additional materials, letters, or statements. In addition,

some schools allow students who have faced exceptional circumstances to submit supplemental documents to support their request for special consideration. Refer to each medical school's requirements for more information.

References

For admission into Ontario medical schools and most other medical schools, you are required to have three references complete a Confidential Assessment Form (available on the OMSAS or the school's website) and write a reference letter. Both documents are submitted to OMSAS. When considering potential references, choose people who can speak to the quality of your work, skills, and character. Consider the unique value each reference can provide to avoid redundancies in their comments. It can be helpful to connect with each of your references to discuss what you would like them to highlight in their form and letter. Be sure to check the program website for the deadlines and give your referees lots of notice.

Funding

Medical school tuition ranges but can be in excess of \$20,000 per year. However, there is some help available for the application costs, tuition, and other expenses. Some of the resources mentioned here are Ontario-based but similar programs may be available in your home or medical school province or country. Review the Student Awards website at the university you are applying to for medicine-specific awards, scholarships, bursaries, and other sources of funding.

- Ontario Medical Student Bursary Fund: <https://omsa.ca/en/student-services>
- MCAT Fee Assistance: https://www.afmc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2024-MCAT_Fee_Assistance_Program_for_Canadians_Applications_Guide_EN.pdf
- Ontario Under-Serviced Area Program: <https://www.ontario.ca/document/northern-health-programs>
- The Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada: <https://www.afmc.ca/resources-data/education/aspirants-applicants/>

Interviews

Should you be one of the top-ranked applicants, you will likely be invited for an interview. To prepare for this interview you may choose to seek out several different resources. Consider reaching out to current medical student to learn more about their experience and how they prepared. You can also attend interview workshops at Career Services (visit [MyCareer](#) for the workshop schedule). If you would like to do a mock interview, book a Career Coaching appointment through [MyCareer](#) and make a note that would like assistance in preparing for medical school interviews. There are also many resources online that can be helpful for preparing for these interviews.

Canadian Medical Schools

Check with each medical school you are applying to, to ensure that you have the most accurate and up-to-date admissions criteria. If you are applying to a medical school outside of the province or territory you consider your permanent residence, investigate how many out-of-province students the program accepts to build your application strategy.

- Dalhousie University, Faculty of Medicine
- McGill University, Faculty of Medicine
- Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine (McMaster University)
- Memorial University, Faculty of Medicine
- Northern Ontario School of Medicine University
- Queen's University, Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Medicine
- University of Alberta, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry
- University of British Columbia, Faculty of Medicine
- University of Calgary, Cumming School of Medicine
- Université Laval, Faculté de médecine*
- University of Manitoba, Max Rady College of Medicine
- Université de Montréal, Faculté de Médecine*
- University of Ottawa, Faculty of Medicine
- University of Saskatchewan, College of Medicine
- Université de Sherbrooke, Faculté de Médecine and des sciences de la santé*
- University of Toronto, Temerty Faculty of Medicine
- Western University, Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry

*Program offered in French only

Applying to Medical Schools Outside of Canada

Because of the extremely competitive nature of Canadian medical school entrance requirements, some people consider attending medical school in places like Australia, the Caribbean, or Ireland. There are many factors to consider when making this decision including increased tuition and living expenses, the ability to secure the necessary residency training upon returning to Canada, and the challenges of living in another country. If you want to return to Canada to practice medicine, be advised that as of this writing, this still tends to be an extremely difficult process. Look into the requirements for this process by visiting the Canadian Resident Matching Service ([CaRMS](#)), including the National Assessment Collaboration exam ([NAC](#)) offered by the Medical Council of Canada.

Additional Resources

Online resources

Canadian Federation of Medical Students www.cfms.org/

Medical Council of Canada <http://www.mcc.ca/>

Ontario Medical Association <https://www.oma.org/>

College of Physicians and Surgeons (Ontario) <http://www.royalcollege.ca/>

The Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada <https://www.afmc.ca/>

Ontario Medical School Application Service (OMSAS) www.ouac.on.ca/omsas/

CanMEDS Framework <http://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/canmeds/canmeds-framework-e>

Resources at Career Services

Career Services offers drop-in advising to answer quick questions related to all aspects of your career planning and job search. You can also book an appointment to speak with a Career Educator and Coach about your application. Visit [MyCareer](#) for the drop-in schedule and appointment bookings.

What If I Don't Get In?

Receiving letters of rejection can be difficult. After years of planning and effort, it can be disheartening to learn you have not achieved your goal. It may be helpful to reflect on why you were unsuccessful. You may also choose to apply again. Keep in mind that there are many other healthcare related opportunities to explore (see below). Career Services offers 1-1 appointments where you can talk to a Career Educator and Coach about your career plans. They can also help you to establish some next steps if you are feeling lost. Visit [MyCareer](#) for booking availability.

Related Careers

Sometimes people choose careers that are related to medicine that do not involve going to medical school. Some of these careers include

- Naturopath
- Nurse Practitioner
- Physiotherapist
- Pharmacist
- Dietitian
- Chiropractor
- Athletic therapist
- Dentist
- Health Care Administrator
- Optometrist
- Personal Trainer
- Bioethicist
- Orthodontist
- Epidemiologist
- Gerontologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Cardiovascular Technician
- Coroner
- Diagnostic Medical Sonographer
- Medical Imaging Tech
- Midwife
- Paramedic
- Perfusionist
- Phlebotomist
- Clinical Researcher
- Prosthetist or Orthotist
- Chiropodist
- Genetic counsellor
- Public policy analyst
- Speech-language pathologist