

How do I prepare for..... Medical School -- Physician's Assistant Training--Pharmacy School -- Dental School-- Veterinary School—Optometry School.....?

What should I major in at FGCU so that I can be admitted to professional school?

There is no one major that is required for admission to any professional school, nor is there a major that will guarantee admission into a program. Many students choose to major in biology or biotechnology because the common prerequisites for these programs are very similar to the courses required by most professional schools; however, students from all majors in arts and sciences are regularly admitted to professional schools. The required science courses can be taken in conjunction with any major.

Your choice of major should be determined by your interests and abilities. Major in something you truly enjoy. Students who are able to excel academically in both the core required science courses and coursework in non-science courses will have an excellent chance for admission to professional schools regardless of their major.

What courses do I need to take to be admitted to a professional school?

Each school has its own specific requirements, but a survey of schools shows that the following are generally the required courses:

Chemistry- two semesters of General Chemistry (CHM 1045C and 1046C) and two semesters of Organic Chemistry (CHM 2210C and 2211C). Because these four courses are sequential it is critical for you to begin the sequence in your freshman year.

Biology—two semesters of General Biology (BSC 1010C and BSC 1011C)

Biochemistry—one semester is recommended by many professional schools and required by many medical schools (BCH 3023C)

Physics—two semesters (PHY 2053C and PHY 2054C or PHY 2048C and PHY 2049C)

English—two semesters. Some schools also require an additional course in literature.

Mathematics—two semesters. Some schools require or recommend calculus.

Psychology—some schools require or recommend one semester.

Other courses may include: Microbiology, Genetics, Immunology, Statistics, Anatomy and Physiology.

Because requirements will vary among programs, you should contact the schools to which you plan to apply for specific information. Most have websites that will list required courses. (Information about all medical schools is compiled in a yearly publication: *Medical School Admission Requirements United States and Canada*. Similar information for dental schools is available through *ADEA Official Guide to Dental Schools*.) It is important to complete all required coursework by the time you have reached 90 credits at which point you will be

applying to professional school. (Note that pharmacy schools may admit students after 60 credits. Contact the admitting school for further information.)

What are professional schools looking for in their applicants?

Admission to professional schools is very competitive. These programs are looking for students who have successfully completed a rigorous science-based core of courses and who have the personal qualities to be caring and compassionate health care providers.

Generally a professional school will consider all the following before making an admission offer to a student:

- GPA in the specific courses required for admission—all science courses will receive careful scrutiny
- Overall GPA
- Scores on the professional school admission exam (MCAT, DAT, PCAT, VCAT, GRE, etc.)
- Work and volunteer experiences in health care. Students who have spent time in health care demonstrate that they have an understanding of what the profession is about. They have experienced the benefits and rewards as well as the stresses and frustrations of the job.
- Outside interests and activities.
- Written personal statement—It is important for health care providers to demonstrate strong writing skills and explain their reasons for wanting to be a health professional.
- Personal interview—Strong verbal communication skills are an asset to all health care professionals.
- Letters of reference
- Undergraduate research, particularly in the biomedical arena, may be regarded as an important plus.

What are the most important factors for admission?

Your GPA in the required science courses, your overall GPA, and your score on the required admission exam are given the most weight in admission decisions. Schools want to be sure that you have the academic background to complete the rigors of professional school. Other factors, although important, are not given as much weight in the decision process. Your work and volunteer experience, for example, will enhance your application if your grades and test scores are good; however, this experience will not be sufficient to offset low grades or test scores.

Will one bad semester keep me out of professional school?

Generally, one semester of C work will not automatically remove you from the selection process-- assuming that other semesters continue to be strong academically. A pattern of withdrawals or low grades, however, will tend to weaken your application.

When do I apply to professional school?

Because many schools have rolling admission dates, it is to your advantage to apply early in the admission cycle to have the best chance at acceptance.

Each institution will have its own published deadlines for application. Please note that all will require a specific admission exam score (MCAT, DAT, PCAT, VCAT, GRE etc.) as part of the application package. Some of the tests, such as the MCAT are only offered twice a year (e.g., April and August.) Others, such as the GRE and the DAT, can be taken online at a testing center at your convenience. You will need to plan ahead to complete the exam with sufficient time to have the scores reported to the professional school.

Since most application deadlines are in November or early December for the following fall, the admission test should be taken during the spring semester of your junior year so that you will have an option to retake the test in the fall of your senior year if you need to improve your score. Be advised that medical schools and some other professional schools average multiple exam scores. Do not consider your first exam as a "practice test." Prepare for it as if it were your only opportunity to take it. Make sure you have taken the entire chemistry sequence (through Organic II), both semesters of physics, and both semesters of biology before attempting the MCAT. Biochemistry, Cell Biology, and Analytical Chemistry (FGCU plans to offer this in the near future) can also enhance scores.

If you are applying to several medical schools, the American Medical College Application Service provides a resource for processing multiple applications more efficiently. See the links below for more information.

How do I prepare for the entrance exam?

You should plan to begin preparing for the exam six months before you take it. There are many types of study aids available for every professional exam. These range from website practice exams to study guides available through bookstores and full-blown classroom review courses. Investigate all your options for test preparation.

More information

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The following websites may also be helpful:

American Association of Medical Colleges www.aamc.org/students/start.htm
Processing multiple med school applications www.aamc.org/students/amcas/start.htm
American Dental Education Association www.adea.org
American Dental Association www.ada.org
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry www.opted.org
Association of American Veterinary Medical College www.aavmc.org
Schools of Pharmacy www.pharmacy.org/schools.html
Physician Assistant Programs www.aapa.org/pgmlist.php3