

Health Professions Advising: a guide for incoming students

What should a health professions student take first?

- **Start with any of the sciences**

There is no single course sequence for medical, dental or any health professional graduate program. If you plan to be a science (Biol, Chem or Phys) major, simply follow the guidelines for that major. You may want to start by taking Chem 181 *Atoms and Molecules*, Biol 161 *Introduction to Biology 1* or Phys 115 *Introductory Physics 1*. You should try to start the chemistry sequence by the second year, particularly if you are considering medical school. You should take chemistry in the first semester if you are considering studying abroad in the junior year.

- **Think about your mathematics choices.**

The courses required for most health professional schools are a semester of calculus and a statistics course. *Calculus 1* (or a 4 or 5 on the AP AB exam) is required for introductory physics. However, some majors require *Calculus 2*. But, whether you have had an AP course or not, if you had a year of high school calculus, you may be ready for *Calculus 2* (Math 136). If you take Math 136, you do not have to substitute an additional mathematics course; Math 136 meets medical school requirements for calculus. You will not take statistics in your first year; many majors include a statistics course that you will take later in your career.

- **Don't neglect the humanities and social sciences**

The MCAT includes content on psychology and sociology. Psych 100 *Introduction to Psychology* and Socl 101 *The Sociological Perspective* are only open to first and second year students, so these should be taken early in your career. A section of the MCAT will also test your ability to read and understand passages on philosophy, ethics, humanities, and social sciences. While no courses are required for this section, exposure to these areas (as you meet your Common Requirements) will be helpful. Consider taking a course in ethics later in your career. Use Montserrat to meet a non-science/non-social science requirement as you will take plenty of these already.

Additional thoughts

- **Take an objective view of your readiness for laboratory science courses, and don't overdo it**

Many students are not ready to take a "traditional" first-year premed/biology college course load of Biol 161 with lab, Chem 181 with lab, calculus, and Montserrat. Many students should take one lab course, with or without calculus, potential major courses, or introductory psychology or sociology. There is plenty of time to meet additional science requirements over your four years. However, students with a strong high school background who are considering a biology major may want to take two laboratories in the first semester.

- **The MCAT requirements are only for MD and DO schools**

Dental schools have similar requirements to medical schools but the DAT does not test the same material. Other health professional programs have similar but not identical requirements. Nearly all health professional programs require at least one semester of general chemistry (Chem 181) and introductory biology (Biol 161). Some (e.g., PA, NP) do not require physics. Graduate programs are not standardized, so if you are interested in a particular career, you should do some research and speak with a health professions advisor when making a course plan. The health professions advising web page has links for several allied health fields.

Medical and allied health professional school requirements

- The MCAT tests content from five chemistry courses, two biology courses, two physics courses, introductory psychology and sociology, and a statistics course. In addition, medical schools require a semester of calculus and a year of English. Some medical schools have additional requirements, often in biology.
- Dental school requirements are similar to medical school. Allied health requirements vary widely but typically start with a semester or two of biology and chemistry.
- Students may successfully complete these courses and have any major. We encourage students to think broadly about majors – integrating MCAT coursework with some majors will require careful planning, but we are here to help. Likewise, studying abroad requires planning. However, many non-science majors are easy to integrate with medical school requirements.
- Students may elect to take summer or consortium courses or use AP credit to fulfill some requirements, but core lab science (Chem, Biol, Phys) requirements should not be satisfied with summer courses (and certainly not with AP credits).
- It is going to be very difficult for a student to attend medical or an allied health professional school straight out of college, as this requires taking all (up to 15 or sometimes more) courses, scoring well on the relevant entrance exam, and gathering the necessary other experiences by May at the end of the third year. Most students are better served by spreading courses over four years, and it is easier for students to get into medical and health professional schools if they are older. This is typical for students across the country.

Health Professions Advising

- “Health professions advising” (HPA, or “premed”) is not a program, major or concentration.
- The Health Professions Advising Committee consists of faculty members whose primary job is to evaluate and assist students and alumni applying to medical, dental, and veterinary school.
- The health professions advisor and associate advisors will offer advice and assistance to any student planning to attend a health professional graduate school – medical, dental, veterinarian, podiatric, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, physical therapy, pharmacy, optometry, etc.
- All Gateways and Vocare first year advisors have been trained to advise students early in their academic careers.
- Incoming students will be automatically listed in the health professions advising system by answering the first-year questionnaire that they completed over the summer. Students may also sign up with health professions advising later by contacting the HP office at x2533 or stopping by Stein 129A. There is no reason to do both!
- Registration does not guarantee placement in any particular course in any particular semester, but we will do our best to help a student plan a program to meet the requirements of her or his chosen career. Registration is critical for learning about opportunities and deadlines.

Resources

- **The Holy Cross Health Professions Advising Web Page**
This includes a list of medical and other health professional school requirements, course planning tools and other useful resources.
- **Health Professions Advising**
Any first-year student with questions may make an appointment to speak with a health professions advisor by contacting the office at x2533.