Pre-Medicine

What does it mean to be Pre-Med?

At any given time Western has an estimated 450 students on a pre-medicine track. Pre-Med students are those who identify themselves as such, formally or informally. Western does not offer a "Pre-Med" major, and there is no formula for getting into medical school. Applicants are evaluated in multiple areas by medical school selection committees, in a process known as holistic review. All aspects are important: MCAT, GPA (both cumulative and science), letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, and interview, as well as legal and social records.

Pre-Med Education

Medical schools emphasize the importance of a liberal arts education and do not recruit students from one specific major or discipline. Thus, you have flexibility in planning your Pre-Med educational program. Use your undergraduate years to explore many academic fields, to develop basic skills and knowledge, to demonstrate expertise and to experience a field of study (major) of your choice. Pick one in which you excel and enjoy. Popular majors for Pre-Med students are Biology and Chemistry, but students have majored in a diverse range of academic disciplines including Anthropology, Behavioral Neuroscience, Communications, Psychology, History, Philosophy, Languages (i.e. Spanish), and Fairhaven self-designed programs. Some pursue combined majors such as Anthropology/Biology, Biochemistry, and Cellular & Molecular Biology.

Program Checkpoints*

*note that each person’s path to medical school will look different; use this as a guide ONLY

Freshman year:

- Take Math Placement Test; begin appropriate math sequence to complete Calculus: MATH 124, 125.
- Begin General Chemistry series as soon as possible: CHEM 121, 122, 123 [or Honors: 125, 126, 225].
- Begin General Biology series winter or spring quarter: BIOL 204, 205, 206.
- Work on GUR courses, including ENG 101 and PSY 101.
- Begin prerequisite and co-requisite courses for possible major.
- Meet with Pre-Healthcare Advisors (OM 280) to develop a plan of study.

Sophomore year:

- Begin Physics sequence fall quarter: PHYS 114, 115, 116 or 161, 162, 163 (depending upon major).
- Take stats class: MATH 240 (or equivalent in major, if offered).
- Take a second English Composition course: ENG 201 or 202.
- Declare or apply for major.

Junior year:

- Research medical schools and graduate programs.
- Shadow MD and/or DO professionals, if not started previously.
- Begin Biochemistry: CHEM 471, 472.
- Prepare for the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) to be taken the summer after junior year.
- Take a third English composition course as needed: Select from ENG 201, 202, 301 or 302.
- Begin primary application to the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) or the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service (AACOMAS).
- Draft personal statement.
- Request letters of recommendation from professors and professionals.

Senior year:

- Prepare for possible medical school interview with a mock interview (or do spring of junior year).
- Complete major, GUR, WP, and other graduation requirements.
- Two quarters before graduation, meet with declared major advisor and apply for graduation.

NOTE: Advanced Placement may not be recognized by all professional schools as college-earned credit. Check with each school. [It is better to view any earned credits as qualifying to enroll in upper-division courses rather than as “testing out” of prerequisites.]

It is expected that students gain at least 40 hours experience shadowing an MD physician (or a DO physician for osteopathic medical school).

MCAT—Medical College Admission Test is offered twenty times per year (January-September) and includes four sections (1) Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems; (2) Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills; (3) Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems; and (4) Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior. Applicants must take the exam no later than August of the year preceding anticipated admission. MCAT information is available at www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat.

This document has been created for advising purposes only. Please contact Advising for Pre-Healthcare Professions for updates and changes.
Core Courses

Academic course requirements for medical schools vary but, regardless of your major, certain prerequisites are expected by most schools and include:

- General Chemistry series with labs: CHEM 121¹, 122, 123 (5 credits, 5, 4) or [Honors: CHEM 125¹, 126, 225 (5 each)]
- General Biology series with labs: BIOL 204², 205, 206 (5 each) and additional courses under advisement
- Organic Chemistry series with labs: CHEM 351, 352, 353 (4, 4, 3); labs: 354 and 355 or 356 (3, 3 or 2)
- At least two quarters of Biochemistry: CHEM 471, 472 (4 each)
- Physics series with labs: PHYS 114³, 115, 116 (5 each) or PHYS 161³, 162, 163 (5 each)
- Two quarters Calculus: MATH 124, 125 (5 each)
- Statistics: MATH 240 (4) or major equivalent
- One or more intro Social Science GUR course: i.e. PSY 101 (5)
- One year of English is highly recommended and required by some schools: select from ENG 101, 201, 202, 301⁴, 302⁴ (5 each)

¹Completion of MATH 114 or Math Placement into MATH 115 or higher is a prerequisite for CHEM 121 or CHEM 125
²CHEM 121 or CHEM 125 is prerequisite to BIOL 204
³MATH 115 is a prerequisite for PHYS 114; MATH 124 is a co-requisite for PHYS 161
⁴The UW School of Medicine does not accept these or other “how to” courses

NOTE: It is imperative that students begin general chemistry as early in their program as possible.

Additional Resources

To join the advisors’ Pre-med Listserv, e-mail Renee.Murray@wwu.edu with SUBJECT: pre-med listserv, Last name, First name, student number, and major (if declared).

Pre-Med Club: Join this and other WWU Associated Students clubs at as.wwu.edu/clubs/.

WWU Allied Health Advising: www.wwu.edu/alliedhealth

WWU Pre-health Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/wwuprehealth/-updated regularly with links to internships, MCAT study tips, etc.

Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC): www.aamc.org


University of Washington School of Medicine Admissions: www.uwmedicine.org/education/md-program/admissions

American Podiatric Medical Association: www.apma.org

Explore Health Careers: www.explorehealthcareers.org

This document has been created for advising purposes only. Please contact Advising for Pre-Healthcare Professions for updates and changes.