This *Applicant Handbook* is intended as a guide for students ready to begin the application process to allopathic and osteopathic medical school. Much of the information applies to other doctoral level health professions as well, but you should consult with Carol Baffi-Dugan, Director for Health Professions Advising, or Stephanie Ripley, Associate Director, for specifics regarding your intended career.

In addition to this resource you will need to refer to the [HPRC Information Packet](#) and forms. Both the Applicant Handbook and the HPRC Information Packet should be kept throughout the process and referred to when you have questions. They are not substitutes for your contact with Carol Baffi-Dugan, Stephanie Ripley and the program coordinator for the HPRC, but can answer many questions and help you negotiate this complex process.

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MAKING THE DECISION

Is Medicine for Me?

The first and most important thing you do as you begin the application process to health professions schools is to ask yourself why you are applying. Really ask yourself why. Most of you will not want to do this. You have worked too hard to get this far; you know why; you do not want to take the time to really delve into your motivation and to really understand the profession you are choosing; you do not want the possibility that it is not the right choice for you. But this question, this self-analysis, will make you a stronger candidate. It will allow you to step back and assess yourself and your goals, and therefore enable you to convey them to others. **First, take the time to ask.**

There are many health professions available to college graduates and the majority of them require graduate education. A wise student will investigate the various fields to be sure s/he is choosing the best course. Factors such as skills/talents required, work environment, length of training, level of responsibility, salary and labor force projections should be taken into account when deciding. While the focus of this procedural manual is applying to medical school (MD and DO), the process is very similar for dental, veterinary, optometry, and podiatry schools. There is also some overlap in the application processes for physical and occupational therapy, physician assistant, nurse practitioner and the myriad clinical professions that populate our health care delivery system today. For those of you who are choosing one of these professions, there is quite a bit of information at explorehealthcareers.org, much information on http://uss.tufts.edu/hpa, and a list of useful Internet sites in the appendices.

Am I Competitive?

Once you have decided on your career path, you need to decide when to apply. **Apply in strength, not in weakness.** In other words, do not apply until you are a competitive applicant. There is little to be gained from applying if your candidacy is weak, and in fact, there is much to be lost. The time and energy you could be devoting to strengthening your grades, retaking MCATs or gaining valuable health-related experience is being spent on the time-consuming process of applying. There is no necessity to apply after junior year and matriculate into medical school immediately after college. Medical school admissions committees look very favorably on more experienced applicants, and the great majority of Tufts applicants are not going straight to med school from college. The most important thing is that you have strong credentials.

You may find it useful to visit the website of the Association of American Medical Colleges at [http://www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org). Under [https://www.aamc.org/data/facts/](https://www.aamc.org/data/facts/) you will find **FACTS: Applicants, Matriculants and Graduates of US Medical Schools** which provides data about students who apply and are accepted to medical school. At Tufts, the average cumulative GPA of students accepted to medical school is over a 3.6 and the science GPA is almost as high. Students with less than a 3.4 GPA
(Cumulative and science both) are rarely accepted unless it is clear that they have overcome significant challenges to get to where they are. The average MCAT for admitted students is currently 32 total. Students with less than 30 total usually have very limited options for admission. “Distance travelled” and obstacles overcome are taken into consideration, as are all the non-academic aspects of the application but numeric credentials are definitely important. You can seek realistic advice from a health professions advisor on this question as you make your decision.

**When to Apply**

If you are applying this year, **APPLY EARLY**. Many candidates hurt themselves by ignoring this important rule. Applying in the summer rather than the fall of the applicant cycle could make the difference between acceptance and rejection. Tufts and aggregate admissions data show a higher acceptance rate for those students who apply early in the process (June, July, August) than for those who apply later (September, October, or November). However it is not critical to apply by the first possible date in June. Medical school applicants are **wise to wait for MCAT scores** before applying.

Here is a helpful timeline to give you a sense of the application process to medical school:


2. Attend one of the February applicant meetings (see Health-E News).

3. Register with the Health Professions Recommendation Committee April 1, 2015.

4. Have individual letters of recommendation sent to the HPRC by May 1, 2015. (4-5 letters, at least one from a Tufts professor and no more than five – forms on the health professions website)

5. Complete and submit the AMCAS in June, 2015.


7. Complete and submit the AACOMAS (Osteopathic Schools) in August or September, 2015.


Since recommendations are not needed for the application processing to begin and for AMCAS or AACOMAS to send your applications to individual medical schools, you should **not wait for recommendations** before sending in your application.

**TIP:** Throughout this process, you may find it useful to consult with a health professions advisor. You should also be registered with the Health Professions Recommendation Committee so that you will receive the weekly email messages. The advisors are located in Undergraduate Education in Dowling Hall. If you would like to schedule an appointment, you must call the Student Services Desk at Dowling at 617-627-2000. You can also take advantage of Tuesday and Thursday open hours by signing up for a time slot that day at 1:30PM. The advisors are available twelve months of the year and can be reached at carol.baffidugan@tufts.edu or stephanie.ripley@tufts.edu.

They are available to discuss your decision to apply and the strength of your candidacy, to explain the application process, to advise you in selecting a list of schools, and to discuss your standardized test score, among other things.

**THE APPLICATION**

**AMCAS/AACOMAS**

Most health professions schools use a centralized application process. The central application for MD medical schools is AMCAS (American Medical Colleges Application Service) and for DO (osteopathic) schools is AACOMAS (American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service). A list of all the application services with some details about their services and deadlines can be found on the 2014-2015 Application Services Fact Sheet. Both AMCAS and AACOMAS are web-based applications and can be accessed through the website of their professional association.

All MD medical schools in the U.S. participate in AMCAS; all osteopathic medical schools use AACOMAS; the exceptions are the Texas medical schools which use TMDSAS. Usually by May 1, you can access the latest version of AMCAS/AACOMAS on the web and begin working on it. TMDSAS is usually earlier. The earliest date you can submit your AMCAS application is in early June; therefore you can wait until your spring semester is over to start working on it. As stated above, it makes sense to review your spring MCAT scores before submitting your application.

The applications include extensive online instructions with their material. **Please read them - most of your questions will be answered.** They also provide an email address for questions. The application will ask for general information (much like a college application), a detailed reporting of your academic history, a structured presentation of all your activities, jobs and experiences, and a single page personal statement. The first part is straightforward and merely requires a
neat and concise outline of your background. The academic record portion requires you to translate all your college work into a standard format including grades and semester hours.

**TIP**: Use the screen shots posted on the Tufts health professions website to view some of the AMCAS/AACOMAS screens and how they should be completed by Tufts applicants.

**The Personal Statement**

The personal statement is an essay designed to allow you to highlight what you feel is important about yourself and perhaps explain any discrepancies in your application. It is not strictly a “Why I want to be a doctor” essay; however, a sense of who you are and why you are motivated to a medical career should be evident. The autobiography that you will write for the Tufts Health Professions Recommendation Committee is a different exercise but may serve as a starting point for this personal statement. If you apply to osteopathic schools, you also need to address your understanding of the osteopathic philosophy directly. Dental schools specifically ask about your motivation for dentistry.

Writing these essays requires some time on your part. Writing Consultants in the Academic Resource Center will be available throughout the late spring and summer to assist you. There will be a workshop set up in April to go over the process of writing a personal statement. Then individual applicants can work one-on-one with a consultant. It is not a bad idea to pass an early draft by one of the health professions advisors as well, as they can give you an idea of whether the general direction of the statement is accomplishing the goal.

It is a good idea to begin working on your essay early and have the chance to return to it over time to fine-tune it. Knowing where to begin is usually the most difficult part of writing this statement. There are numerous resources that might be helpful including *Write for Success* which offers a variety of guidelines as well as some sample essays. You may order your own copy at [www.naahp.org](http://www.naahp.org) publications. Start by thinking about yourself - what is important to you, what accomplishments make you proud, what experiences have greatly influenced you? These need not all revolve around medicine, but around you! There is no formula, and be wary of those who will tell you about specific things you need to include to make this personal statement effective.

You should plan on doing multiple drafts and having different people, including a health profession advisor, give you their reactions. Your end product should be a very well written, clear and concise essay. Don’t look for a gimmick. Just write something genuine that provides insight into you. Your statement should let the reader learn something more about you than what the application has already told them. In other words, don’t merely reiterate your resume. The reader should conclude that you would be an excellent physician and a wonderful addition to her medical school. That does not mean that you have to tell the reader that directly.
Try to be an individual in this essay - don’t look for a formula. This is your one place to shine in the application.

Transcripts

AMCAS and ACOMAS will require you to send official copies of transcripts from all the colleges from which you earned credits, regardless of whether you later transferred them to Tufts. It is useful for you to have copies yourself when you are completing the application. You should put requests in at the registrar’s office of each college to have transcripts sent when spring grades are posted. If you are taking science classes in the summer, be sure to discuss this with an advisor to see if applying later makes sense, or if waiting until next year is wiser. For Tufts, you should complete the Tufts transcript request form and leave it at the Dowling Student Service desk, along with the AMCAS/AACOMAS transcript request form. Log into your AMCAS/AACOMAS account, and print out a Transcript Request form for each college from which you took courses. Submit this form to the registrar of each college. Some colleges charge a fee to send out transcripts. Be sure to include the fee with your Transcript Request form. Normally students submit their transcripts prior to submitting the actual application in June.

Your goal should be to carefully complete all the pieces of your central application by early summer unless you are taking required courses in summer school. In that case you should submit it in July or August. Do not wait for late summer MCAT scores as that will put you into the process too late. You will submit your application directly to the application service. Be sure to print a copy of your application and keep it along with accurate records of everything you send with dates.

Acknowledgements

The application services provide online status check capability so you can always see what is happening with your application. Keep track of that and be sure that all the pieces required have been received and things are progressing. Once AMCAS and ACOMAS process your application, they will send it to the schools you designated.

Secondary Applications

Those schools will, in turn, send you “secondary applications”. The vast majority of schools do not screen; therefore you should expect to get secondary applications from all the schools to which you apply. The turnaround time is up to 4 weeks for this to happen. “Secondaries” ask for supplemental information but they vary - some may only ask for the school’s application fee and your letters of recommendation; others may ask for extensive further essays. In either case, you should complete them as soon as possible. The advisors are unable to critique any of these essays, but the writing consultants may have time depending on the volume of demand. Once your “secondary” is in, your letters of recommendation have arrived, and your MCAT scores are reported, you have a completed application. Most schools will notify you when this occurs or provide an
on-line status check option as well. It is your responsibility to insure that all materials have arrived at each medical school.

Along with sending “Secondaries,” you will request that the HPRC send your letters of recommendation. You will have a “committee packet” of letters sent on your behalf by Tufts. We use a service called Virtual Evals (or VE) to send these electronically to AMCAS and AACOMAS. You will follow the procedures in the HPRC Information Packet to have your letters sent. Use the screenshots on the HPA website to learn exactly how to list what letters are being sent and how. HPRC packets will be ready for those students who met deadlines and interviewed early on August 1.

Texas and Canadian Schools

While all other MD schools use AMCAS, all the Texas schools, including the one osteopathic school in Texas, use their own centralized application TMDSAS. This opens earlier than AMCAS. All Texas residents should start to look at the site in April so they can submit early applications.

Canadian schools have their own strict, and often distinctive, application processes and also minimum requirements. Those in Ontario use a central application service known as OMSAS.

Foreign Medical Schools

International students should talk with one of the advisors about their options. Odds of acceptance in the US are extremely limited, thus conversation about other international schools is important. US citizens may consider foreign schools as well, although typically they do so after a first unsuccessful US application.

Other Central Applications

Most of the health professions now have their own centralized applications as well. For dental schools it is AADSAS, for podiatry schools it is AACPMAS, etc.

Dental school applicants can link here to a supplement to this handbook that is specific to dentistry.

Veterinary school applicants can link here to a supplement to this handbook that is specific to veterinary medicine.

TIP: A list of all the application services with some details about their services and deadlines can be found on the 2014-15 Application Services Fact Sheet.

Where to Apply

You will not be able to make final decisions on where to apply until early summer, but you can begin working on your central application in late spring. You can also
begin researching schools through the Medical School Admission Requirements MSAR or Osteopathic Medical College Information Book through research online at https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/programs or http://www.aacom.org/InfoFor/applicants. As you choose schools, you should consider your state residency as a primary factor. As a dependent student you are a resident of the state where your parents reside. The majority of state schools accept very few students from out-of-state but they are worth investigating particularly if they are NOT in the northeast and west coast. Take a look at the in-state/out-of state applicant numbers and acceptance numbers offered in MSAR. Nationally, students apply to 15 schools of MD programs on average. At Tufts students apply to an average of 18 MD programs and 5 DO programs. Applying to a larger number does not necessarily increase a student’s chances of admission; wise choices and a timely application make much more of a difference. Please be sure to consult with one of the advisors after you have a tentative list of schools. Do not come and ask us where you should apply. This requires that you to do some self-assessment and research.

TIP: Read about medical education in general BEFORE researching individual schools so you have a context for your choices. And use this fact sheet as well: https://www.aamc.org/students/aspiring/332944/wheretoapply.html. Only then should you visit individual school websites. Schools will often announce their mission – e.g. educating tomorrow’s medical leaders, supplying physicians for rural areas in their state, being on the cutting-edge of medical research – on their websites.

**Early Decision**

A very small number of medical school applicants may consider the early decision option that many medical schools offer. This option allows a student to apply early decision to one (and only one) medical school no later than August 1 and have an answer by October 1. Students may not apply to any other medical school until October 1. This option makes sense for those students who have a clear first choice of a medical school AND are strong candidates for that school. You should consult with Carol Baffi-Dugan if you are seriously contemplating an early decision application to discuss the risks involved.

**TIP:** Keep accurate records of everything you request and send out, keep copies of applications you submit, and keep all notices you receive from schools as well as notes on phone conversations. You can always check online, and both application services will give you a phone number to call if you have questions or problems. AMCAS is 202-828-0600 and ACOMAS is 301-968-4190.

Please agree to have information about your candidacy released to your premed advisor.
The standardized test required by all MD and DO medical schools is the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT). It is given multiple times per year and is a computer-based test. Students who will complete their coursework in the spring semester are strongly advised to take MCATs by April due to the advantage of being an early applicant.

Registration for the MCAT is done online. The deadlines for registering and the dates that registration opens for each test date can be found on the site. It is best to register as soon as possible after the opening date. Again the instructions are fairly clear and should be read carefully.

The MCAT is not an aptitude test and therefore you can, and should, study for it. As a start, you should visit the website and read about the test and perhaps even take some sample tests that can be purchased at www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/. Many have decided to take a commercial review course. The established courses in this area are Kaplan 1-(800) KAPTEST and Princeton Review 1-866-TPR-PREP and ExamKrackers. While there are differences in these courses, they are similar and you will decide which best suits your needs. You can certainly study for the MCAT without taking a costly review course. Commercial review courses will offer you a structured, well-organized plan and set of materials for study as well as the possible psychological advantage of feeling that you have done all you can. However, for those students who are self-disciplined and confident in their ability to prepare on their own, review courses can be an unnecessary expense. There are good review books and sample MCAT tests available online. There is The Official Guide to the MCAT which you should consider purchasing from the AAMC.

When you sit for the MCAT please specify that you will release your score to your advisor. This allows for much better advising at Tufts. AMCAS schools will receive your scores automatically but you must specify AACOMAS and other schools, such as Canadian schools, if you want them to receive your scores. You will be able to access your scores, as will the medical schools, approximately 30 days after the test date.

MCAT2015 launches in April 2015 and tests your knowledge of the premed sciences including biochemistry. It also includes a section on the behavioral sciences and requires critical thinking skills to answer questions, not simply memorization. Tufts students have been evaluated in their courses with this expectation so you should be well positioned for the new MCAT.

Medical schools will not review a student’s application until all materials have been submitted, including MCAT scores. However, there is much processing by AMCAS
and the med schools that can be taken care of while waiting for MCAT scores, so it is still best to submit all other materials in the summer.

**Other Standardized Tests**

Students applying to dental schools will be required to take the Dental Aptitude Test (DAT), which is given via computer virtually every day of the year. Registration materials can be requested directly at [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org). This test should be taken when you have completed the chemistry and biology course requirements (it does not test physics); it also requires preparation. The academic sections require review of material learned but the perceptual ability section will be a new activity for many students. Therefore time spent preparing is important. Vet schools generally require the GRE (available at [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org)). The GRE is computerized and administered throughout the year.

**LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

**The Health Professions Recommendation Committee**

All medical schools, dental schools and some other health professions schools, prefer and often require a composite letter of recommendation rather than individual letters. At most colleges, there is a committee whose role it is to evaluate medical school applicants and write such a composite letter. At Tufts, that committee is called the Tufts Health Professions Recommendation Committee.

You should access the Health Professions Recommendations Committee (HPRC) Information Packet and HPRC forms (on the left hand sidebar in the application process section of our website). You must register with the committee, thereby notifying it that you are a student planning to apply to medical or some other health professions school this year. The program coordinator for health professions advising in Dowling 710 coordinates the Committee work. The information online includes the list of committee members, the procedures you will follow and registration materials you must submit. You complete the information online and submit it electronically. The basic registration deadline is April 1; additional information and individual letters of recommendation are due May 1.

It is best to register with the committee as early as possible. You then determine which individuals you would like to ask for recommendations. You will be assigned a committee member who will interview you and draft your committee letter. All committee members do the same work and all letters are signed in the same way – not by the individual committee member but by the committee chair. All letters are reviewed and edited by Carol Baffi-Dugan and by Professor Harry Bernheim, the committee chair.

**Deadline for registering with the HPRC is April 1st.**
Individual Letters of Recommendation

The HPRC uses all individual letters which you have submitted in composing your composite letter. It also sends all those letters to medical schools. You should have four to five letters in your HPRC file; we will accept a minimum of three and a maximum of five in compiling your committee packet. One of these must be from a Tufts ASE faculty member who has taught you. It is wise to try and have a letter from your academic advisor and/or a faculty member in your major, if possible. The others should be from other professors, employers, internship sponsors, coaches, Tufts staff members or any other adult who knows you well and can evaluate you objectively. Do not submit letters from elected officials and friends of the family.

Recommenders should be approached early and asked if they feel comfortable writing you a good letter of recommendation. You might offer a copy of your transcript, resume, draft of your essay, etc. to help the writer. Your recommender should be sent the appropriate electronic form with the confidentiality statement signed. Unless you have very strong convictions otherwise, you should waive your rights to see the letter - it will be given more weight.

**TIP:** Since you must have a bare minimum of three letters, be sure to ask for 4 or 5 letters.

The Composite Letter

A member of the committee will write a composite letter of evaluation for you. S/he will use the individual letters you submit along with your transcript, resume, autobiography and your interview to pull together as much about you as possible. The end result is a thorough overview of your college years and candidacy that has been reviewed by the entire committee. What is sent to medical schools is this composite letter along with all the individual letters in your file. Individual committee members will begin interviewing candidates on May 5 and finish interviewing on July 31. Once you receive your assignment, you should email the committee member early to schedule an interview for a mutually convenient time in the future. The interview will only be conducted after you have submitted your HPRC registration form and completed your file with required materials and individual letters.

Prior to a scheduled interview you must have all your individual letters in your file. You can check to see if they have arrived by emailing HPRC@ase.tufts.edu and putting “HPRC question” in the subject line. In addition, you must complete the second portion of the registration which includes a resume and your autobiography, as well as a photo of yourself if you are not a current student. You are responsible for seeing that all materials are in your file and notifying the HPRC coordinator to forward it to your committee member. The earlier you are able to gather all your materials and meet with your committee member, the earlier s/he will be able to complete your letter. Medical schools may ask for letters as early as mid-July and
you need to **build in plenty of time** (four to six weeks) for the writing, discussion, formatting and editing of your letter before it is ready to be sent.

### Sending Letters

Please follow the instructions in the HPRC Information Packet for having letters sent. They are not sent automatically; you can submit the request for letters to be sent starting on July 1st. The appropriate form to use will be posted online, and will be emailed to you in June. No requests are accepted prior to July 1.

### DISCIPLINARY ACTION

It is critical that all applicants honestly report any disciplinary action that has been taken by any college or university against them. You will be asked this question in your HPRC registration, in the centralized application, and by individual medical schools. No disciplinary action is as bad as dishonesty or lack of full disclosure. Even if action in not noted on your transcript it must still be reported. You should discuss this with both the advisors and the committee member to whom you are assigned.

The HPRC letter addresses any disciplinary action taken or its absence. All but a couple of medical schools accept this format and do not require additional forms. If a dean’s certification form or disciplinary action form is required it should be submitted to the health professions advisors, not the Dean of Students office.

### FINANCING THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The following figures for the 2013-2014 application cycle will give you an indication of how much you will spend on the application process.

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<tr>
<td><strong>MCAT</strong></td>
<td><strong>$275</strong> (this does not include the cost of a commercial review course which is usually $2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AMCAS</strong></td>
<td><strong>$475</strong> (cost for ten schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AACOMAS</strong></td>
<td><strong>$265</strong> (cost for three schools)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary Fees</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1200</strong> (usually between $75-100 per piece)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2215</strong></td>
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Cost of interviews varies dramatically but includes any wardrobe purchases, travel to and from the interview, and lodging and food while there.

Visit this site for more information on the cost of applying as well as other information about financing medical school: [FIRST (Financial Resources Services and Tools) for Medical Education](https://www.firstinfo.com/)
Fee waivers are available, to a very small number of students, through AMCAS (now combined with MCAT fee waiver) and AACOMAS and once a student qualifies, schools will generally waive their secondary fees. Be sure to read the information about fee waivers on the MCAT, AMCAS and AACOMAS websites carefully and submit your request early.

A very important financial step students should take at this stage of the application process is to have a clean credit rating. Increasingly medical school financial aid offices are requiring that students prove credit-worthiness. Without this you may not be eligible for loans - the major means of financing your medical school education. Take care of this important step now before it can affect your admissions status.

INTERVIEWS AND BEYOND

The last piece of the application process is the medical school interview. In August, you will receive a letter from the advisors with reminders about deadlines and a handout on preparing for interviews and other references. You can meet with an advisor to discuss interviewing in the fall if you like. The most important thing you can do to prepare now for interviews is to read a daily newspaper. This will not only inform you about what is happening in your world but will also give you a good indication of the issues facing our health care system.

For the present, you should know that no medical school will accept a student without first interviewing him/her. Those interviews generally take place between September and April with decisions being made on a rolling basis throughout that time period. Again you can see the advantage of being an early applicant and possibly interviewing in September before any acceptances have been offered, versus February when many have been. Do yourself a favor over the summer and read the newspaper, as well as other material on health care, so you are prepared to discuss it intelligently at an interview.

Medical school etiquette is governed by the “traffic rules” agreed upon by the admissions deans at all medical schools. You will accept any offer of admission and you may hold multiple acceptances as you decide which school to attend. Once you do receive an acceptance you should withdraw in writing from any school that you would not choose over the school that accepted you. This is a courtesy to the school and a kindness to your fellow applicants.

You may hold multiple acceptances as you wait to determine financial aid packages, but by spring AMCAS distributes a list of those holding multiple acceptances to the medical schools. By May, schools have the right to ask you to make your final choice or lose your place in their class. It behooves you, therefore, to take early and appropriate steps to learn of your financial aid package and/or any other information you need to make a choice.
This process varies for osteopathic schools, which often ask for large, non-refundable deposits. You will often not have the luxury of holding multiple acceptances or waiting a long time to make your decision. The same is true for dental and other health professions schools.

**COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**Does it hurt my chances if I take the late summer MCAT vs. spring or early summer MCAT?**
Yes. Due to the rolling admissions process, students who take later MCATs will not have their files complete at medical schools until fall. Med schools are mailing their first acceptances at that time and therefore you are competing for fewer available places in the class. You should make every effort to take the spring MCAT, assuming your required coursework is completed. If you cannot take an early MCAT you should seriously consider whether late MCATs or waiting another year to apply is the most sensible choice for you. You should consult with an advisor on this matter.

**What are good MCAT scores?**
For the current MCAT, the averages for students sitting for the MCAT are usually 8's and those of students admitted is now at 32. There are many variables that go into admissions decisions but it is clear that the MCAT is an important one. If your MCATs are lower than 32, depending on your academic record and other factors, you should consider retaking it. The advantages of possible higher scores must be weighed against the drawback of having late scores hold up your application. There is minimal risk to retaking the MCAT if your original score is weak and you have a plan to better prepare for a second test. *The Official Guide to the MCAT* has an excellent chapter on this question. Again, you should consult with an advisor on this matter.

MCAT2015 will have a totally new scoring mechanism and neither advisors nor admissions deans really know how this will play out. The MCAT staff will provide a percentile to test-takers about 3 weeks after the test which will be a gauge of how you have done. This will also be a time to talk with an advisor.

**What schools should I apply to?**
There is no magic list that is perfect for each student. But you have to do the research and thinking, rather than asking your advisor to hand you a list. Reread the section of this booklet that addresses this question and be sure to use *The Medical Schools Admissions Requirements (MSAR)* book online, the *Osteopathic Medical College Information Booklet*, and school websites to do your research, rather than commercial publications. You should always apply to your state schools and wait until you have all the information you need, including MCAT scores, to make your final decisions. There are some data that will give you a sense of the profile of a competitive applicant (use official guidebooks rather than commercial books). But there is rarely a firm cut-off for GPAs or MCATs that schools use.
What should I write my personal statement on?
Remember that this is a very individual thing. Reread the section on the personal statement in this booklet and use some of the references mentioned. Begin a draft early and ask an advisor for feedback on the direction you are taking. But don’t look for the mold - be yourself.

Can I defer my matriculation - I am not sure I want to go right away?
Medical schools have varying policies regarding deferral. Many will allow deferral for significant reasons such as a Fulbright award or serious family situation. Some are more liberal, while others will not allow deferral at all. You should realize that your school of choice could deny a request for deferral. If you are seriously unsure of your readiness to begin medical school next year, you should consider waiting to apply. A hesitant application may not be your strongest.

Does the HPRC send my transcripts for me?
No. YOU must complete a transcript request form and leave it at the Dowling Student Service desk that will send an official Tufts transcript to the application service. Remember you must arrange with the registrar from each college where you took courses to have official transcripts sent as well. Allow plenty of time for this. Be sure to include the form provided by the application service on its website.

Should I wait for my recommendations to send in my application?
NO! Your initial application is processed without recommendations, so send it in early.

Do I have to report probation I was on in the past, even if it is not on my transcript now?
Yes. You are obligated to report any disciplinary action that was taken by any school, even if it is no longer on a transcript. It is best to discuss this with an advisor and with your HPRC interviewer. What you learned from the experience is important and this is what schools will be evaluating when they review your application. When you give the committee access to this information, we will also put the incident in context in your committee letter. If you neglect to mention an incident, an acceptance could subsequently be rescinded because of the omission.

THE TIMELINE FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL APPLICANTS

This timeline is designed for students who are completing required courses by the spring of 2015. It should also be used as a checklist to insure you are taking all the necessary steps to prepare a strong application.

| February '15 | • Access a copy of The HPRC Information Packet
|             | • Complete the HPRC Registration Form Part I and submit online
<p>|             | • Decide which individuals you will ask for letters of recommendation and approach those people, giving them the HPRC form |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>March</strong></td>
<td>Begin to read about medical education, dental education, etc. on the official association websites. Continue on all other February items</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>April</strong></td>
<td>1st - <strong>deadline to register with the HPRC by submitting part I of HPRC Registration Packet</strong> &lt;br&gt; Possibly sit for an April MCAT &lt;br&gt; Choose a date for DATs and register &lt;br&gt; Prepare a quality draft of your autobiography and a resume for your HPRC interview &lt;br&gt; Obtain and submit unofficial copies of all non-Tufts transcripts to HPRC &lt;br&gt; Find or take a snapshot of yourself for your HPRC file. &lt;br&gt; Continue all from February</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>May</strong></td>
<td>1st - <strong>deadline for all individual letters to arrive into your HPRC file</strong> &lt;br&gt; 1st - <strong>deadline to submit part II of the Registration Packet</strong> by email &lt;br&gt; Begin to complete the AMCAS, AADSAS and/or AACOMAS &lt;br&gt; Texas residents complete the TMDSAS &lt;br&gt; Possibly sit for a May MCAT &lt;br&gt; Schedule an interview date with your HPRC representative &lt;br&gt; Begin to research individual medical or dental schools &lt;br&gt; Discuss your candidacy with a health professions advisor. Complete a transcript request form at the Dowling Student Service Desk and specify that the transcript should include spring semester grades (include the official form from AMCAS, AADSAS and AACOMAS as well - see website).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>June</strong></td>
<td>First date possible to submit AMCAS will be early this month &lt;br&gt; Transcripts are ready to be mailed by the registrar &lt;br&gt; Continue all from May that has not been completed &lt;br&gt; Receive MCAT scores and consult with an advisor on your list of schools</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>July</strong></td>
<td>1st - Plan on submitting AMCAS no later than this day &lt;br&gt; Submit your request to have letters sent to Dowling Hall Student Service Desk for the HPRC program coordinator along with your payment &lt;br&gt; Check on all pieces of the application through the online status check process &lt;br&gt; Begin to receive “secondary applications” from med schools &lt;br&gt; 31st – <strong>last date for HPRC interview</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### August
- 1st – MD Early Decision application deadline
- Plan on submitting AADSAS no later than this month
- Your AMCAS status check should show “transmitted” by this point
- Continue to receive “secondary” applications from schools
- Sit for DATs no later than this month
- Begin to complete the AACOMAS application

### September
- Follow up to be sure all materials have arrived at schools
- Complete the AACOMAS application
- Receive interview handout and prepare for interviews
- Receive interview invitations now through April 2016

### October
- 15th - first date that regular MD admissions acceptances can be offered
- Plan to submit AACOMAS no later than this month

### January 2016
- Check in with an advisor on your status, whether you have been interviewed, etc.

This section is for students who do complete coursework in the spring but do not take MCAT until in the summer (not advised!).

- Follow all the dates/deadlines for the early test takers other than the test itself. You should submit AMCAS but wait for scores to complete secondary applications. Consider applying to just one medical school initially through AMCAS to save money.