

# Pathway to Medical School: Community College

## A Step-by-Step Guide

Becoming a doctor takes careful planning and dedication. If you're starting at a community college, following a clear path will help you meet requirements, gain experience and build a strong application. Here's a step-by-step guide to keep you on track from community college to medical school.

### 1. Determine if Medicine is the Right Career for You

- ◆ Reflect on your interest in medicine, patient care and the long-term commitment involved.

### 2. Start Planning for Your 4-Year College and Major

- ◆ Consider which university you'll transfer to and which major aligns with both your interests and medical school prerequisites.

### 3. Complete Pre-Requisite Courses

- ◆ Begin taking courses required for both medical school and transfer to a 4-year institution.
- ◆ Use the AAMC Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR) to understand the prerequisites for medical schools.

### 4. Engage in Relevant Activities

- ◆ Build a well-rounded medical school application by getting involved in:
  - ◆ Research
  - ◆ Clinical Exposure (e.g., scribing, shadowing)
  - ◆ Community Service

### 5. Transfer to a 4-Year College

- ◆ Successfully transfer to a bachelor's-degree granting institution.
- ◆ Example institutions: UC System, California State Universities.
- ◆ Note: Online colleges are not an option, as many required courses include labs.

### 6. Prepare for the MCAT

- ◆ Begin studying for the MCAT approximately six months before you plan to take the exam.
- ◆ Wait to apply to medical school until after you've taken the MCAT to gauge your level of readiness and competitiveness.

### 7. Submit Your Medical School Application

- ◆ Once you have completed the MCAT and all other prerequisites, submit your application to medical schools.

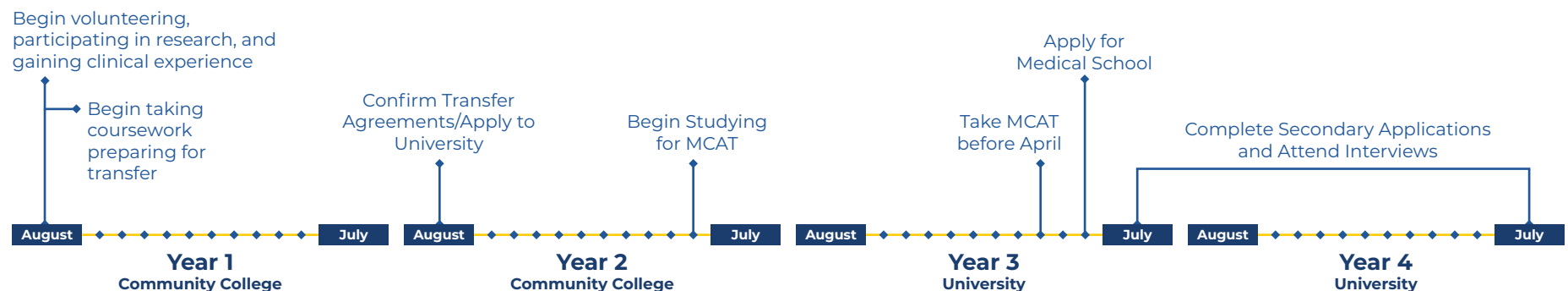
## AAMC Timeline for Medical School Applications

As you begin your premedical journey, the AAMC offers suggested key milestones to help guide your preparation. The AAMC provides a detailed timeline outlining the critical steps in the medical school application process.



Find out more on the AAMC Website:  
[bit.ly/41OkMYh](https://bit.ly/41OkMYh)

### Example Timeline: Community College to Applying to Medical School



For more details and FAQs, visit our website:  
[medschool.uci.edu/pathway-cc-to-ms](https://medschool.uci.edu/pathway-cc-to-ms)

## FAQs & Resources



Scan the QR code to access detailed information and helpful links for the following sections: Experience, Undergraduate, Application, MCAT/GPA, and Additional Resources.

🔗 [medschool.uci.edu/pathway-cc-to-ms?section=faqs](https://medschool.uci.edu/pathway-cc-to-ms?section=faqs)

### Experience

#### Q: How do I get research experience?

A: Start seeking research experience early. While many opportunities emerge after transferring, begin at your community college. Explore faculty-led projects and science clubs, and inquire with professors. Apply for summer programs like NIH, Amgen Scholars, or REU. Investigate local hospitals and medical centers. Proactive persistence is key. Early experiences enhance your competitiveness for future research positions.

#### Q: Is shadowing adequate for clinical experience?

A: Clinical experience should involve direct patient contact. Shadowing alone is typically not sufficient. Seek roles like a medical scribe or medical assistant, where you interact with patients, take notes and record information. Focus on building meaningful, professional relationships with the physicians you work with, as you will need a letter of recommendation from this experience.

#### Q: What type of community service should I do?

A: Choose activities that genuinely resonate with you and reflect your personal values. Admissions committees want to understand who you are, so select meaningful experiences. Be prepared to explain why you chose them, showing how they align with your passion and dedication to helping others.

### Application

#### Q: How do I get letters of recommendation?

A: Start by building a strong professional relationship with potential letter writers. Good choices include upper-division science professors, non-science (humanities) professors, your research PI, or the physician overseeing your clinical experience. If you've made an effort to establish a genuine connection, most of these individuals will be more than happy to write a strong letter on your behalf. Be sure to check each medical school's specific letter requirements, which are typically available on their website.

#### Q: How do I learn more about a medical school I'm interested in?

A: The best way to learn about a medical school is by visiting its website. Most medical schools have detailed pages outlining application requirements and expectations. Take the time to explore different schools, as each one has unique characteristics and criteria. Additionally, the AAMC Medical Schools Admissions Requirement (MSAR) database is a great resource to compare schools and their requirements.



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### Undergraduate

#### Q: Do I have to be a biology major to go to medical school?

A: No, you don't need to be a biology major to apply. Most bachelor's degrees are acceptable, and some medical schools may prefer students from non-science backgrounds. However, regardless of your major, you must complete the required science courses. Biology majors often have coursework that overlaps with medical school requirements, making the path shorter.

#### Q: When should I take my MCAT?

A: Ideally, during your junior or senior year, after completing most of the relevant coursework, which is typically covered in your sophomore and junior years. MCAT test dates run from January to September, so plan ahead and register early, as spots fill up quickly. There are many resources available. Be sure to find a plan that works for you and stick with it.

### MCAT/GPA

#### Q: What score do I need on my MCAT to be a competitive applicant?

A: The MCAT is a key part of your medical school application. While average scores vary, a strong score is crucial for competitiveness. Aim to exceed the average for accepted applicants, but remember that MCAT scores are considered alongside your entire application. Other strengths can offset a lower score.

#### Q: What GPA do I need to be a competitive applicant?

A: While there is no fixed GPA requirement, competitive applicants typically have a high cumulative GPA and a solid PCPM (Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Math) GPA. Keep in mind that GPA is just one factor considered in the admissions process. An above average GPA helps strengthen your application, but other aspects of your profile, such as clinical experience, extracurriculars and personal statement, also play a critical role.

### Additional Resources

To support your journey to medical school, we've compiled a list of valuable resources. This includes information on transfer planning, application requirements and more. For the most current list, scan the QR code.

#### Your School's Academic Counselor

They can assist you in preparing transfer documents, such as the IGETC and TAG agreements.

#### ASSIST.org

This website helps you identify the courses you need to complete at your community college before transferring.

#### AAMC.org

The AAMC website provides essential information about the medical school application process, including details about the MCAT.

#### Medical School Websites

Visit prospective medical school websites for detailed information about the specific coursework required for admission to their medical programs. View our Admissions Requirements to learn more about what UC Irvine School of Medicine offers.