

Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)

What is this MCAT Exam all about?

Don't bother trying to "beat" the exam. The test cannot be beat. There are no secrets to unravel or mysteries to reveal. There is no getting around the fact that if you don't have the fundamental knowledge tested by the MCAT exam, your scores will expose those weaknesses. All the test-taking strategies in the world won't save you! However, there's much you can do to prepare for taking the exam and increase your chances of getting a higher score. You need to be adept in both the biological and physical sciences but you also must know what to expect from the verbal reasoning section. It will be in your best interest to become familiar with the structure of the exam, get comfortable with both passage-based and independent questions, experiment with and decide which strategies work best for you. Analyze why the correct answers are right and the wrong answers not. Then Practice!

What is the role of the MCAT Exam?

It is a reliable screening tool for medical school admissions committees to identify which applicants are most likely to succeed in medical school and those who will not. Admissions committees look not only for students whose base knowledge of scientific concepts will serve as a strong foundation in the early years of medical study but also for those with strong critical reasoning ability and strong written communications skills.

The Exam test both knowledge and reasoning skills. The MCAT consists of three multiple-choice sections: physical sciences (chemistry & physics), biological sciences, and verbal reasoning-along with a writing assessment. It is a computer-based exam and last about 5 hours, 25 minutes. The cost is \$235 as of 2012. There are 52 questions on physical sciences: 70 minutes to complete the section. 52 questions on biological sciences: 70 minutes to complete this section. 40 questions on verbal reasoning: 60 minutes to complete this section. 2 questions on the writing sample: 60 minutes to complete this section.

"Items should be designed to ascertain not simply the examinee's basic knowledge of science or rote memorization of facts, laws, and definitions, but rather the ability to reason or apply this knowledge to specific situations. The examinees is expected to reason through a problem by applying the background knowledge obtained through introductory-level college coursework." Quote from MCAT writers guide. While you may find that higher-level science courses better prepare you for medical school in general, there is no evidence that advanced classes lead to higher MCAT scores specifically!

How often can you take the MCAT? 3 times in one calendar year. There is no lifetime limit!

When should I take the Exam? In most cases, you take the exam in the calendar year prior to the year in which you plan to enter medical school-If you are applying in 2012 for entrance to medical school in 2013 you should take the exam in 2012.

How is the MCAT Exam Scored?

Each of the three MC sections is scored from a low of 1 to a high of 15. There is no penalty for guessing as your score will be based on the total number of correct answers.

How do those with different undergraduate majors do on the MCAT? What do the scores look like when they are broken down by undergraduate major?

The following chart should help you answer the above question. Keep in mind as you study these data that they are not presented to influence your choice of major but rather to demonstrate that many applicants who are non-science majors perform just as well on the MCAT as science majors, IF they take the necessary prerequisites science courses.

Mean and Median MCAT Scores for Applicants to the Medical School Entering Class of 2010 By Undergraduate Major

Undergraduate Major	N	Total (mean)	Physical Sci (mean)	Biological Sci (mean)	Verbal Reason (mean)	Writing (median)
Biological Sciences	22,327	28.1	9.2	9.9	8.9	P =(58 th percentile)
Humanities	1,950	29.6	9.6	10.0	10.0	Q =(75 th percentile)
Math & Statistics	386	30.5	10.6	10.3	9.7	P
Physical Sciences	4,672	29.8	10.4	10.1	9.3	P
Social Sciences	4,997	28.5	9.3	9.7	9.5	P
Specialized Health Sciences*	1,181	25.7	8.4	8.9	8.4	O =(47 th percentile)
Other	7,229	27.7	9.1	9.6	9.0	P
All Majors	42,742	28.3	9.4	9.8	9.1	P

Source: AAMC Data; 2010

* Nursing and physical therapy are examples of Specialized Health Sciences

How Useful are MCAT Scores in Predicting Success?

The better your grades and the higher your MCAT scores, the more likely you are to be accepted into medical school.

- 90% of applicants with a GPA of 3.8 or higher and a total MCAT score between 36 & 38 were accepted. Of those with a GPA between 3.6 & 3.79 and an MCAT total score between 36-38, the percent drops to 85%.
- 82% of examines who scored between 30 & 32 with a GPA of 3.8 or above were accepted.

- 67% of applicants with a GPA of 3.8 or higher and a MCAT scores between 27 & 29 were accepted as were 52% of those with GPAs from 3.6-3.79.
- If your MCAT score is between 24 & 26 your likelihood of acceptance is still reasonable if you have a 3.8 GPA or higher. 42% are accepted with these scores & GPA.
- According to data from 2007 the average student accepted to medical school had a 30.8 MCAT Total Score, a “P” on the writing sample and an overall GPA of 3.65.

Other Selection Factors Admissions Committees Consider:

- Undergraduate GPA
- Breadth and difficulty of undergraduate coursework
- Selectivity of the degree-granting undergraduate institution
- Medical school interview
- Letters of evaluation from undergraduate advisors, faculty members, community service leaders, research sponsors, and/or employers
- Involvement in extracurricular activities, student governance & community service
- Medically related work experience, research, or volunteer service
- The extent to which you have overcome life challenges
- Contribution to the objective of diversity within the educational environment
- Personal statements on the AMCAS and/ or institutional application forms.

Resources from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)

www.aamc.org/mcatguide

Exploring Medicine as a Career:

- AspiringDocs Web Site
- Medical Career Fairs & Workshops
- Considering a medical career

Programs for Pre-Medical Students:

- Summer Medical and Dental Education Program (Free)
- Summer Enrichment Programs
- Postbaccalaureate Premedical Programs

Application and Admissions Resources:

- AAMC recommendations for medical school applicants
- AMCAS (American Medical College Application Service)
- MSAR (Medical School Admission Requirements) – great source for application procedure and deadlines, GPA data, medical school class profiles, costs and financial aid packages.
- Medical School Admissions Offices

Available from AAMC is the 2nd edition of **The Official Guide to the MCAT Exam.**

Includes all the information one needs to know about the MCAT, actual MCAT questions from previous exams, detailed solutions from the test developers, key

questions about the MCAT exam, preparing for the MCAT and much more. Visit the website (www.aamc.org/mcatguide) to order a copy.