Medical School Mentoring

Session 1: All About the MCAT

Presented by: The NH-INBRE Alumni Network

January 31st, 2023
New Hampshire INBRE (IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence) is a program funded by the National Institutes of Health to develop a coordinated network of biomedical research and research training in New Hampshire.

In 2021, the NH INBRE Director of Biomedical Workforce Development implemented a **one-on-one mentoring program for INBRE students** to be paired with INBRE alumni.

Alumni mentoring provides career and academic guidance to current students on a volunteer basis.

In 2022, following the INBRE annual conference, two INBRE alumni recognized an urgent need to provide mentorship support for the numerous pre-med majors at the partner schools.

In 2023, the Medical School Mentoring program was launched for all pre-med students at the partner schools.

Medical School Mentors are current medical students that are either INBRE alumni or volunteers from the lead partner schools.

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**Lead Partners:**
- Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth
- University of New Hampshire at Durham

**Partner Institutions:**
- Colby-Sawyer College
- Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH)
- Franklin Pierce University
- Keene State College
- New England College
- Plymouth State University
- Saint Anselm College
- University of New Hampshire at Manchester

**Associated Members:**
- Rivier University
Medical School Mentoring Program: Goals

- Provide resources, information, and support to students who are on their journey to become physicians.
- To **supplement** the pre-med advising at the NH INBRE partner schools.
- Establish more networking relationships within the INBRE community and beyond.
Mentor Introductions

**Abby:** 4th year in the MD-PhD program at Dartmouth College
Took MCAT in January 2018

**Felipe:** MS2 at Alpert Medical School of Brown University
Took MCAT June 2020
St. Anselm ‘19

**Libby:** 2nd year at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM) Elmira, NY
Took MCAT in June 2020
What is the MCAT?

MCAT= Medical College Admissions Test

- Standardized, multiple choice test
- Required by almost all US medical schools (MD and DO programs)
- Developed by testmaker from Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) to provide schools with a common measure to compare applicants
- 230 questions total over four sections (more on that in a minute)
- 6 hours and 15 minutes of test taking time (7 hours and 30 minutes total with break time included)
- Administered via computer at a certified testing center:
  https://wsr.pearsonvue.com/testtaker/registration/SelectTestCenterProximity/AAMC?conversationId=573185
The MCAT is important

- It is very important (but it’s not your entire application)
- There are few numeric indicators on medical school applications other than MCAT and GPA so admissions teams rely on them to help quickly narrow down thousands of applicants
- Numbers get you “through the door”
- MCAT score has been shown to correlate with Step 1 and COMLEX Level 1 scores

### Table 1. Mean Importance Ratings of Academic, Experiential, Demographic, and Interview Data Used by Admissions Committees to Make Decisions About Which Applicants Receive Interview Invitations and Acceptance Offers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Importance Ratings</th>
<th>Academic Metrics</th>
<th>Experiences</th>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Other Data</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest Importance Ratings (≥ 3.0)</td>
<td>GPA: cumulative biology, chemistry, physics, and math</td>
<td>Community service/volunteer: medical/clinical</td>
<td>U.S. citizenship/ permanent residency (public)</td>
<td>Interview results</td>
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<td>GPA: grade trend</td>
<td>Community service/volunteer: not medical/clinical</td>
<td>State residency (public)</td>
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<td>GPA: cumulative total</td>
<td>Physician shadowing/ clinical observation</td>
<td>Rural / Urban, underserved background</td>
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<td>GPA: cumulative total from postbaccalaureate premedical program</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<td>MCAT total score trend</td>
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<td>Completion of premedical course requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium Importance Ratings (≥ 2.5 and &lt; 3.0)</td>
<td>Completion of challenging upper-level science courses</td>
<td>Paid employment: medical/clinical</td>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
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<td>GPA: cumulative “all other” (not biology, chemistry, physics, and math)</td>
<td>Research/lab</td>
<td>U.S. citizenship/ permanent residency (private)</td>
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<td>Other extracurricular activities</td>
<td>Parental education/ occupation/ socioeconomic status (SES)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lowest Importance Ratings (&lt; 2.5)</td>
<td>Degree from graduate or professional program</td>
<td>Paid employment: not medical/clinical</td>
<td>First-generation immigrant status</td>
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<td>Completion of challenging nonscience courses</td>
<td>Intercollegiate athletics</td>
<td>Fluency in multiple languages</td>
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<td>Selectivity of undergraduate institution(s)</td>
<td>Honors, awards, recognitions</td>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Undergraduate major</td>
<td>Conferences attended, presentations, posters, publications</td>
<td>English language learners</td>
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<td>State residency (private)</td>
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<td>Legacy status</td>
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<td>Community college attendance</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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Data from the AAMC
How much does it cost?

Standard Registration fee: $330

Fee Assistance Program Registration: $135

International testing fee: $120

- This only covers the test and sending of your score to schools
- Preparatory materials will cost extra

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<th>Rescheduling/Cancellation Fees</th>
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<td>Standard Change Fees</td>
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<td>30-59 days before exam</td>
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<td>60 or more days before exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-59 days before exam</td>
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<td>10-29 days before exam</td>
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</table>
MCAT Overview

Psych/Soc 25.0%

Bio/Bio Chem 25.0%

CARS 25.0%

Chem/Physics 25.0%
What are the four sections?

**Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems**  
*59 Questions – 95 minutes*  
Solve problems by combining knowledge of biological and biochemical concepts with scientific inquiry and reasoning skills.  
Foundational concepts 1-3  
- Biochemistry (first semester): ~25%  
- General Biology: ~65%  
- General Chemistry: ~5%  
- Organic Chemistry: ~5%

**Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems**  
*59 Questions – 95 minutes*  
Solve problems by combining knowledge of chemical and physical foundational concepts with scientific inquiry and reasoning skills.  
Foundational concepts 4-5  
- Biochemistry (first semester): ~25%  
- General Biology: ~5%  
- General Chemistry: ~30%  
- Organic Chemistry: ~15%  
- General Physics: ~25%

**Psychological, Social and Biological Foundations of Behavior**  
*59 Questions – 95 minutes*  
Solve problems by combining knowledge of foundational behavioral concepts with scientific inquiry and reasoning skills.  
Foundational concepts 6-7  
- Introductory Psychology: ~65%  
- Introductory Sociology: ~30%  
- General Biology: ~5%

**Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills**  
*53 Questions – 90 minutes*  
Tests your ability to comprehend what you read (everything you need to know to answer test questions are in the passages!!)  
Passage Content:  
- Humanities: ~50%  
- Social Sciences: ~50%

[https://students-residents.aamc.org/prepare-mcat-exam/whats-mcat-exam](https://students-residents.aamc.org/prepare-mcat-exam/whats-mcat-exam)  
[https://students-residents.aamc.org/media/9261/download](https://students-residents.aamc.org/media/9261/download)
MCAT Content

MCAT Question Breakdown

Biology:
- Cardiovascular Systems
- Cells
- Digestive Systems
- Embryogenesis and Development
- Endocrine Systems
- Excretory Systems
- Genetics and Evolution
- Immune Systems
- Nervous Systems
- Musculoskeletal Systems
- Reproduction
- Respiratory Systems

An approximate breakdown of the number of MCAT questions on the MCAT exam.
Total time is 6 hours and 15 minutes (excluding breaks).

Numbers by topic aren’t exact and can vary somewhat
Numbers by topic aren’t exact and can vary somewhat.

Often questions apply chemistry to biological systems.
MCAT Content

MCAT Question Breakdown

Physics: Often applied to biological/medical settings
- Atomic and Nuclear Phenomena
- Circuits
- Electrostatics
- Fluids
- Kinematics
- Light and Optics
- Magnetism
- Thermodynamics
- Units and Dimensional Analysis
- Waves and Sound
- Work and Energy

Psychology:
- Cognition and Consciousness
- Identity and Personality
- Language Development
- Learning and Memory
- Motivation and Emotion
- Neurobiology
- Psychological Disorders
- Sensation and Perception

Sociology:
- Social Interaction
- Social Processes and Behavior
- Social Structure and Stratification
- Social Thinking and Attitudes

Numbers by topic aren’t exact and can vary somewhat
Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills:
- All passage-based questions designed to test your reading comprehension, ability to interpret information, and logical reasoning
- Similar to SAT/other college admission reading sections

What you don’t see… Math!
- No specific math section on MCAT
- But there is math all over the MCAT
- Mathematical principles you should be comfortable with:
  - Basic arithmetic
  - Algebra
  - Exponents
  - Exponentials
  - Trigonometry
  - Geometry
  - Statistics
  - Unit conversions

An approximate breakdown of the number of MCAT questions on the MCAT exam.
Total time is 6 hours and 15 minutes (excluding breaks).
There are 59 questions in each of the three science sections of the MCAT. In each section, **15 questions are discrete while 44 questions are based on passages**.

**Passage Based**

**Discrete Questions**
How is the MCAT scored?

The grading is based on the number of questions answered correctly and there is no penalty for either a question left blank or an incorrect answer.
MCAT “averages”

**Remember**: Averages mean people scored above and below that number.

**Good target score**: 509-511 for MD schools

There is no set passing score - you will be evaluated based on your overall application.

Some schools may have a cut-off; go to their specific school website for more information.

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### What is a Good MCAT Score?

- **Average MCAT Score:**
  - 500 or 125 per section

- **Average score for admitted students:**
  - 508 or 125-127 per section

- **Good score for top medical schools:**
  - 515-520

- **Good score for DO programs:**
  - 502-506
Take away: A high score on the MCAT will have a positive impact on your med school application (but it is not everything)

Table 2. Percentage and Number of 2018, 2019, and 2020 Applicants Accepted Into at Least One Medical School, by MCAT Total Score and Undergraduate GPA Ranges

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<td>44%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>81%</td>
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Data from the AAMC:https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/students-residents/interactive-data/2022-facts-applicants-and-matriculants-data
When is the MCAT offered?

**Note:** scheduling an MCAT exam with accommodations may have different deadlines and protocols.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MCAT Admin</th>
<th>Score Release</th>
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When to take the MCAT?

**When to take the MCAT:**

- After dedicated studying
- When do you want to attend medical school?
  - Gap year?
  - No gap year?
- Do you want room to be able to retake if needed?
- Medical schools see all scored MCATs you have taken

**Testing Restrictions:**

- 24-hour waiting period after you take an MCAT exam before you can register for another
- You may attempt the exam no more than 3 times in a testing year
- No more than 4 times in 2 consecutive testing years
- No more than 7 times in your lifetime

Website to register for the exam: [https://students-residents.aamc.org/register-mcat-exam/register-mcat-exam](https://students-residents.aamc.org/register-mcat-exam/register-mcat-exam)
Suggested Resources

AAMC website account MCAT Official Prep Hub

- Free Resources:
  - MCAT Essentials 2023*
  - Study Guide
  - Free Scored Practice exam
  - Free unscored sample exam

- Other Free Resources:
  - Khan Academy MCAT Video series

- Practice Questions:
  - UWorld, MCAT books

- Courses:
  - Princeton Review*, Kaplan, Magoosh, Blueprint

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**Felipe**
- AAMC official Materials
- ExamKrackers Books and Questions
- Jack Westin CARS question of the day
- Comprehensive Anki Deck from reddit

**Libby**
- Princeton Review Course
  - Classes, Diagnostics, Practice Questions & Full length practice exams (4 AAMC and 5 Course)
- Kaplan MCAT Books
- MileDown’s anki deck & 90 page review PDF
  - Updated version ankipalace.com featured deck

**Abby**
- Kaplan MCAT Books
- AAMC 2 free practice tests (can buy more)
- Question of the day (I used https://mcatquestion.com/, but there are multiple)

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<tr>
<th>*Course</th>
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<td>&gt;500</td>
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<td>515+</td>
<td>&gt;505</td>
<td>10 point increase</td>
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The AAMC website will be your best friend when applying to medical school and taking the MCAT.

Website: https://students-residents.aamc.org
The illness experience shapes the way that people use health information. For patients with a rare health disorder, which is defined as a medical condition that affects fewer than 200,000 individuals living in the United States, online sources of information tend to be particularly important. An example of a rare disorder is Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as “Lou Gehrig’s disease.” ALS results from the progressive loss of motor nerves and affects about 1 out of 100,000 people. About 10% of people with ALS have a familial form of the condition, which is caused by an inherited genetic mutation. Aside from the familial form, the cause of ALS is largely unknown, though it is believed that the disorder results from both genetic and environmental factors. Having a rare medical condition, such as ALS, can make it difficult to meet and interact with others who have the same rare disorder. Despite great distances, online communication provides a form of social interaction for those facing an uncommon health problem. Virtual peer networks provide vital social support for those who are affected by a rare disorder. Research has found that women with rare disorders are more likely to access online support networks than men with rare disorders. Relationships formed through online support networks often become a meaningful part of a person’s identity. Individuals with rare disorders report that relating to others who have the same condition is often easier than trying to relate to friends or family members who do not share their condition.

Question: Over the course of ten years, a rare disorder increases in prevalence such that it eventually affects more than 200,000 people in the United States. Based on the passage and this scenario, which prediction is most consistent with the sociological paradigm of symbolic interactionism?

A) As the number of affected individuals increases, government research funding increases.
B) Affected individuals are less likely to conceal their condition as it becomes less stigmatized.
C) As more people with the condition are treated, it receives less attention as a health concern.
D) Insurance coverage for the condition becomes more likely as more people require treatment.

MCAT® Sample Question Guide | Students & Residents (aamc.org)
Correct Answer is B) Affected individuals are less likely to conceal their condition as it becomes less stigmatized.

Question: Over the course of ten years, a rare disorder increases in prevalence such that it eventually affects more than 200,000 people in the United States. Based on the passage and this scenario, which prediction is most consistent with the sociological paradigm of symbolic interactionism?

A) As the number of affected individuals increases, government research funding increases.
B) Affected individuals are less likely to conceal their condition as it becomes less stigmatized.
C) As more people with the condition are treated, it receives less attention as a health concern.
D) Insurance coverage for the condition becomes more likely as more people require treatment.

Rationale: This is a Sociology question that evaluates the skill of “Scientific Reasoning and Problem Solving” with a theoretical paradigm that is listed under the content category of “Understanding Social Structure.” Symbolic interactionism focuses on how meaning is constructed through small-scale social interactions. As a concept that is relevant to social interactions and the illness experience, social stigma is also closely associated with symbolic interactionism. Thus, the correct answer is option B, which rests in reasoning from the perspective of symbolic interactionism to make a prediction about social interaction and stigmatization. The incorrect options make predictions about large-scale social changes or about the disease itself, which are not consistent with the paradigm of social interactionism.

59 questions in 95 minutes combination of passage-based and discrete stand alone.

Practice questions and exams help you practice your pacing.
Discrete Practice Question

Which is not a characteristic of proteins?

A. Can self-replicate
B. Can act as a hormone
C. Acts in cell membrane trafficking
D. Can bind foreign materials
Question #1

Which is not a characteristic of proteins?

A. Can self-replicate
B. Can act as a hormone
C. Acts in cell membrane trafficking
D. Can bind foreign materials

Answer:

The correct answer is A

Proteins have numerous functions in the body; they can be hormones (chemical messengers), enzymes (catalyze chemical reactions), structural proteins (physical support), transport proteins (carriers of important materials), and antibodies (which bind foreign particles). However, proteins cannot self-replicate; DNA is the only molecule capable of self-replication. Therefore, the correct answer for this question is choice (A).

(B) Opposite. Many proteins act as hormones. Some examples include ADH, insulin and oxytocin.

(C) Opposite. Many proteins aid in cell membrane trafficking; they include the transport proteins that facilitate diffusion across a concentration gradient.

(D) Opposite. Immunoglobulins are proteins and are part of the body's defensive mechanism and that bind foreign agents and work to keep the body safe from foreign invasion.
Discussion: How did the mentors study for their MCAT?
Future Ideas for 2023-2024 School Year

- Meet and greet with medical school admissions: Q&A for students
- Current medical students journey getting into medical school
- What is being a physician like? Panel of attending physicians come talk about their specialties
- Match students up with mentors to read over personal statements/primary and secondary applications
- Suggested activities to “improve” your application (research, volunteer work, clinical experience)
- Mock interviews
- Differences between MD (US and Caribbean medical schools) vs DO medical schools
- What are required for classes for medical schools vs what classes may be helpful for medical school
- What is an MD/PhD? What is the program like?
- What questions to ask during your interview
- What to do during your gap year
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SAVE THE DATE!
Session 2: Personal Statements Dos/Don’ts
February 28th, 2023 7PM EST
Feedback Poll
Q: When you get your score back, Will you be able to see how well you did on each section?  
A: Yes, there is a breakdown of each section with standard deviation/range. Each section will be divided. Each score from each section as well as total score with percentile.

Q: If you take the MCAT more than once will they see all the scores or the most recent?  
A: Yes, they see all the scores.

Q: Where do you recommend we begin studying?  
- Haley: content review, MCAT books, then practice problems  
- Felipe: Generally start with content review then shift focus to questions  
- Libby: Course she paid for helped structure this for her

Q: How "modern" of review material should we be getting? Does it matter if it is always the latest edition?  
A: 3-5 year range. The newest versions probably wouldn't make a difference compared to year prior but greater than 5 years might be too old.

Q: Is it often a challenge to get through the entire section in the allotted time?  
A: Need to pace yourself. Can flag and go back to questions. Move on after a couple minutes, flag question to go back to.

Q: For the chem/ small math problems do you get work paper to calculate things out?  
A: Yes, small white board. No calculator.

Q: When is the last recommended date to take the MCAT for an application year? Also, when do you recommend taking it?  
A: Very specific to your timeline, recommend taking latest in June since it takes a month to send out scores and by that time your application would already be verified and sent out to schools. The earlier the better in case you need to retake. If you take it in January then you have plenty of time to retake later on. Have time to decide if you want to retake. Gives you time to focus on letters of recs, statements, etc. Aim for January-March area.

Q: If you are taking a gap year (or two), should we ask for our letters of recommendation in our senior year or after the gap year(s)?  
- Haley: she took 4 gap years, had college professors write letters and sent them to app that stores them until she applied (letters were written while she was in school). The date should be updated for when you apply.  
- Felipe: committee will write letter, good to also have recs from what you did during gap year because med schools will wonder this.  
- Libby: some schools require a physician letter, so this depends on the school you apply to.

Q: How long does your MCAT score last for?  
A: Standard is 3 years, might differ between schools.

Q: How many letters of recommendations did you guys have?  
A: Depends. Haley and Abby had about 6, but not all were sent. You can select where they go. Some schools require letters from different areas (science, non-science, medical, etc)
How did we study for the MCAT? Extra slide

• Libby
  ○ The Princeton Review Course Live Online
    510+ Guarantee
    ■ Classes, Diagnostics, Practice
    Questions & Full length practice exams (AAMC, Course, TPR)
  ○ 9 Practice Exams
    ■ 4 AAMC and 5 Course
  ○ Started Studying in November 2019
  ○ Last day of Review course April 6th MCAT scheduled for May 9th
    ■ COVID cancellation of this test date
  ○ First practice exam 11/18→6/5 Real MCAT

• Abby
  ○ Original plan: Start studying 6 months in advance and work my way through all Kaplan books steadily
  ○ Was doing MCAT Q of the day for 6 months, but life got in the way of other plans
  ○ What actually happened: 5 weeks of dedicated 8-10 hours studying daily
    ■ Looked at how long each subject book was and made study schedule with ~2 hour blocks per subject
    ■ Skipped content I felt comfortable with (ex: psychology)
  ○ Took 4 practice tests (1 per week after first couple weeks) with realistic timing/breaks
### Foundational Concepts

1. Biomolecules
2. Assemblies of molecules, cells, organs
3. Complex systems of tissues and organs
4. Principles of physics that guide living organism processes
5. Principles that govern chemical interactions and reactions
6. Biological, psychological, sociocultural factors that influence perception, thinking and reaction to stimuli
7. Individual and social determinants of behavior and behavioral change
8. Physical, cognitive and social components of identity and how there influence thinking and interactions with others
9. Social variables and processes that influence our lives
10. Social stratification, inequity, health, and the healthcare system

### CARS Skills

1. Foundations of Comprehension
2. Reasoning Within the Text
3. Reasoning Beyond the Text

### Scientific Inquiry and Reasoning Skills

1. Knowledge of Scientific Principles
2. Scientific Reasoning and Problem-solving
3. Reasoning about the Design and Execution of Research
4. Data-based Statistical Reasoning