

How to be a successful re-applicant...

In 2011, 42,423 individuals applied to allopathic medical school, and 19,585 were accepted (all national data in this handout comes from the AAMC), which is about a 45% acceptance rate; the number of well-qualified applicants far outweighs the number of seats available in US medical schools. For those who were not admitted, there are a number of next steps to consider. This handout will provide some thoughts on each of the following:

1. Do you want to reapply?
2. What about your candidacy could you improve?
3. In what year should you apply?
4. What are the logistical steps to reapplying?

To reapply or not to reapply?

The first step is to decide whether you are still interested in pursuing a medical education right now. Throughout the application process, particularly if you had the chance to interview, you should have thought fairly deeply about your motivation for becoming a physician. You have considered the time it takes to complete your education, the costs, the lifestyle it will entail, the responsibility you will have, and other aspects of the profession. If you find that you've lost that motivation, there are a myriad other possibilities to pursue that may be better aligned with your interests, values, and abilities. Remember that medicine will always be there if you decide to return to it. There is no need to hurry into the application process if you cannot give it your full focus, and it is nearly impossible to follow through with the applications well a second time if you are not completely invested in doing so.

Barriers to Acceptance:

If you decide to continue, you will need to take a critical look at yourself and your candidacy and try to determine areas that you may need to improve before you next apply. In recent years, the following were some of the most significant barriers to acceptance to medical school:

1. **“Numbers:”** Nationally, accepted applicants in 2011 had mean MCAT scores of 9.9 VR, 10.2 PS, and 10.5 BS, mean science GPA of 3.61 and mean overall GPA of 3.67.
2. **MCAT Timing:** Taking an earlier exam gives you an opportunity to know your score before you need to submit your AMCAS, which can help you decide whether or not to apply, and also to choose your school list. Avoid taking the MCAT before they were academically ready to do so. There is some correlation between GPA and MCAT score - if your science preparation is not sufficient to do well on the MCAT, then you may need to consider additional courses beyond an MCAT prep course to gain a better foundation before taking the exam.
3. **Primary Application Timing:** The application cycle requires a number of tasks, all of which must be done in a timely manner in order to have your file completed early, and completed well, at your schools. The AMCAS processing date is one of the key elements of this timeline - you must have your personal statement, activities list, and school

selections ready to submit by June 1st so that your AMCAS is processed quickly, and you can move on to completing secondaries.

4. **School Choices-** You should apply to your public, state schools. You should not apply to public schools outside of your state that accept very few out of state residents. You should not apply to so many schools that you cannot complete your secondaries in a timely manner. You should consider your school list as carefully as possible - read websites, learn about the curriculum, and think about the location and your happiness in different settings. Read the mission statements and descriptions of the schools in the MSAR and see if they appeal to you. Look at the secondary application questions (you can find last year's online copy at (www.studentdoctor.net) and be sure that you'd be willing to fill out the secondary once you receive it. Talk to your pre-health advisor about where Brandeis students who have similar profiles have been accepted in the past.
5. **Secondary Applications-** An early AMCAS means that you will have time to write good secondaries, and it is just as important that you take your time to write detailed, unique essays that answer the questions being asked. The more schools you apply to, the less time you have for each secondary, so it can also be problematic for those students who apply very widely to complete their secondaries in a good and timely manner.
6. **Familiarity with medicine-** Some of the stronger candidates academically who were not accepted did not have a strong familiarity with the clinical environment. This was probably a factor that became most critical at the interview stage, when they were asked about their motivation to work with patients, or their experience in a setting where they cared for others. If you cannot articulate your understanding of health care and patient care, you may be at a disadvantage.
7. **“Intangible Qualities”-** These can include maturity, service orientation, communication skills, leadership ability, ability to work well with others, familiarity with diverse populations, sincerity, self-awareness, and numerous other personal qualities. Think of the kinds of personal qualities you would want in a physician who was treating you or your family members, and think about how to develop these qualities in yourself, as well as how to articulate the ways in which you demonstrate that you have these qualities in your application.

Apply when you are the strongest candidate you can be.

Keep reading to learn WHEN to re-apply...

When to re-apply?

Now, you will need to determine when to reapply. This is a critical step - just as it is best to apply when you are the strongest possible applicant, it is best to apply when you have made substantial improvements to your candidacy from your previous application, particularly in areas that might have been seen as shortcomings in your previous attempt. In many cases, applying in two consecutive years is not the ideal strategy to use in reapplying, as it does not allow enough time for you to improve your candidacy.

As you decide whether to reapply in this cycle, consider the following questions:

- **Academics**
 - If your GPA was low, did you take more classes to improve it, either through a post-bac program or own your own?
 - Can your recommenders speak to your academic ability? If your numbers are low, the letters from those who know you in an academic setting become more critical.
 - Have you completed all of your pre-requisite coursework with grades of C or better?
 - Is your MCAT competitive (preferably 30 or above, 10s in each section)? If you took an MCAT last year and didn't score in the 30s, Admissions Committees will want to know why you chose to go forward with your score rather than studying and retaking the exam this year.

- **Activities**
 - Have you continued to participate in activities, particularly those that show leadership, service, research, and/or clinical exposure?

- **Letters of recommendation**
 - Will you be able to obtain at least one new letter of recommendation that supports your candidacy, preferably addressing areas that may have been seen as weaknesses in the previous application cycle?

- **Motivation**
 - Will you be able to talk about your experiences and your continued motivation for the health profession if you are invited to interview?

- **Timing/Quality of applications**
 - Will you be able to have your AMCAS submitted by June 1st, with a new personal statement and updated activities list?
 - Are you ready to complete new secondary essays?

If you answered no to any of these questions, then this year is probably not the best time to reapply. Consult with a pre-health advisor on strengths and weaknesses in your candidacy before continuing with the application cycle.

Keep reading for more suggestions...

Suggestions for re-applicants:

If you decide to reapply in this cycle, keep the following considerations in mind:

- **Stay in touch with an advisor throughout the process.** It's more difficult being off campus and applying. Meet with a pre-health advisor in the spring to get organized and create a game plan. Send an email every couple of weeks to let us know how everything is going, and to make sure that you are still on track.
- **Write a new essay.** Your personal statement should be new and current. While you do not need to focus solely on what you have done since your last application, Admissions Committees expect that you have gained some perspective on yourself and your motivation in the application process, and this should be reflected in what you write.
- **Apply early.** This is critical. You're scrutinized more closely as a Reapplicant; you know how the timing should work, so stay on top of your application timeline.
- **Reconnect with the clinical setting.** If it has been a while since you spent time working with patients, returning to a volunteer position, EMT work, becoming a Certified Nurse Assistant and working in an assisted living facility, or otherwise getting some hands-on work is encouraged. This will both demonstrate your commitment to the AdComs, and help you to remember why it is you're tackling this application process again.
- **Check in with current medical students.** You may know a number of people who are now in medical school. Learn more from them about their schools that will help you gain an inside perspective on some of the schools you might apply to, and see if they have insights for you on the application process this time round.
- **Don't rule out DO schools.** To learn more about the DO profession, start with <http://aacom.org>, which has a section especially for prospective applicants.
- **Practice your interview skills.** If you received interviews for your previous applications but were not accepted, it may be beneficial to work on your interview skills, and oral communication skills in general. This could include mock interviews with friends, coming back to the Hiatt Career Center and meeting with an advisor, or taking a public speaking or acting class to help you improve in these areas.

Keep reading for suggested timelines...

Logistics and Timelines:

Logistically speaking, reapplicants are welcomed to continue working with Brandeis to complete future applications. The process is less time-intensive than a first application. Reapplicants do not re-interview with the Premedical Board (except in situations where multiple years have elapsed, and an interview would be in your best interest). Your original composite letter of recommendation is sent to schools, along with a 1-2 page addendum that describes your activities since the previous application, and copies of all your new letters of recommendation.

This is the timeline to follow as a reapplicant:

ASAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Contact Pre-Health Advising to let know that you may be reapplying. We will give you directions on how to access the Latte course page for applicants. Schedule a meeting if you are in the area and would like to catch up in person.
April-June	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Retake MCAT, if necessary.▪ Work on drafts of personal statement and activities list with a pre-health advisor and/or your Premed Board advisor.
June-July	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Submit primary application.▪ Submit updated materials to Pre-Health Advising (check the Pre-Health Professions Applicant Handbook for list of required materials).
July-October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Once your primary application (e.g., AMCAS, AACOMAS) has been verified (grades have been checked), email Pre-Health Advising a copy (you can save AMCAS as a pdf, and AACOMAS as an html file).
July-August	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Work on secondaries▪ Pre-Health Advising will write an addendum to your composite letter.▪ The composite, addendum, and all letters of recommendation are sent to your schools.
September 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Deadline for Pre-Health Advising to receive updated materials and letter (it is okay if the primary application arrives later). If your materials are not complete by this time, it is probably in your best interest to postpone your application until a later year. If your materials have not been received, then your old composite letter will be sent, without an updated addendum.