

# GENERAL TIMELINE FOR STUDENTS APPLYING IN 2026

Information for Juniors and Seniors, or any RU alumni planning to apply to medical/dental school in 2026. This is for students who wish to start medical/dental school in July/August 2027

## **NOW**

### **STANDARDIZED TESTS**

*You do not need your scores to apply, but your application process will be more efficient if you have a score in hand.*

- **MCAT**

If you have not taken the MCAT already, you should be studying and have a target date to take the exam. It takes at least 4 weeks for your scores to be processed so it is optimal to have taken the exam by May and no later than late June. Please note that if you have not registered for the exam yet, you may have limited choice in terms of date and location.

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/register-mcat-exam/register-mcat-exam>

Please be sure to read MCAT Essentials for Testing Year 2026. <https://students-residents.aamc.org/register-mcat-exam/publication/mcat-essentials-testing-year-2026>

Make sure to reserve a good portion of your final study time before the exam for taking practice exams in conditions that closely simulate the actual exam conditions. Remember, most people score better on their practice exams so if you barely make your target score on your practice exams, you are probably not ready for the exam. More information and registration information are available at: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/taking-mcat-exam/>

- **DAT**

Register for the DAT 60 to 90 days before your planned test date. Aim to take the DAT in late spring or early summer because scores are processed immediately. More information and registration information are available at: <https://www.ada.org/education/testing/exams/dental-admission-test-dat/apply-for-the-dental-admission-test-dat>

**When registering for the MCAT/DAT, please remember to release your scores to the HPO by selecting “Yes” to the Advisor Release option (<https://students-residents.aamc.org/register-mcat-exam/publication-chapters/release-personal-information>) or entering our email address as a recipient ([hpo@dls.rutgers.edu](mailto:hpo@dls.rutgers.edu)).**

## OPTIONAL SITUATIONAL JUDGMENT TESTS (SJTs) REQUIRED BY SOME SCHOOLS

- PREview  
Register for the AAMC PREview exam in early spring (around March) of the year you apply to medical school, as registration opens then, with testing windows running April through September/October, allowing time to take it while prepping primaries and ensuring scores arrive before deadlines, especially if required by some schools for application review. Always check the AAMC website for exact dates and specific school requirements via the [MSAR](https://students-residents.aamc.org/aamc-preview/take-aamc-preview-professional-readiness-exam) (Medical School Admission Requirements). (<https://students-residents.aamc.org/aamc-preview/take-aamc-preview-professional-readiness-exam>)
- CASPER  
Register for the Casper test in April or May and take the exam while preparing for your primaries (i.e., your AMCAS application)—or soon after—because a few schools have begun requiring a Casper score before they review your application. It takes 2–3 weeks for your Casper exam to be scored and distributed to the med schools on your list. You want your Casper results to reach med schools by the time you submit your secondary applications in July. ([TAKE CASPER](#))

## NOW THROUGH JUNE 2026

### LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- ✓ Work on getting your letters of recommendation in order. It is important to ask early, as some letter writers only write letters for a particular number of applicants and may fill up. This is especially true of science professors.
- ✓ YOU DO **NOT** NEED your letters to submit the primary application.
- ✓ Most medical schools require a minimum of 3 letters of recommendation. Two should be from professors/TAs/Instructors who have taught you in a course in biology, chemistry, or physics. One should be from a professor/TA/Instructor who has taught you in a non-science course. Some dental schools require 3 science letters. Additional letters can come from other coursework, medical/dental-related experiences, research, jobs, etc. It is your responsibility to make sure you have letters in your file that meet the requirements of the schools to which you plan to apply.
- ✓ Letters that are recent in relation to the time you apply are more highly valued, as they reflect who you are now, not who you were.
- ✓ There is **no limit** to the number of recommendations you may submit to your HPO file. Avoid letters that are subjective personal testimonials.
- ✓ Some schools may require a letter from a professional in the field that you have shadowed or worked with. Check the requirements of the individual schools to which you plan to apply.

- ✓ There is no specific due date for these letters to be in your HPOdrome account, but optimally, all requested letters will be in your HPOdrome account by June 2026, so you can release them when you are submitting your secondary applications.
- ✓ You will need to indicate in your primary application that your letters come from the HPO. See our website for instructions. DO NOT list your individual recommenders.
- ✓ You will need to fill out and submit release forms (separate forms for each application service) for us to release your letters.

## **JANUARY 2026**

**FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE APPLICATION PROCESS, SERVICES, AND EXPECTATIONS. THE HPO WILL ENDEAVOR TO KEEP YOU INFORMED BUT, ULTIMATELY, YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE.**

### **AAMC (MD)**

#### **2027 AAMC application cycle dates**

- 2027 AMCAS application opens on or about May 1, 2026
- On or about May 28, will be the first day you can submit your completed primary application (official transcripts with spring grades, personal statement, list of activities, and other personal information).
- On or about June 28. is the first day that completed, verified applications will be sent to medical schools.

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/>

### **AACOMAS (DO)**

**2027 AACOMAS application cycle dates** will be posted sometime in late winter/spring 2026. Typically, applicants can begin filling in their applications in April. See:

<https://aacomas.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>

**Application Info:**

<https://www.aacom.org/become-a-doctor>

## **AADSAS (Dental)**

**2027 AADSAS application cycle dates** will be posted sometime in late winter/spring 2026. Typically, applicants can begin filling out the application starting in May.

General information:

[https://www.adea.org/GoDental/The\\_application\\_to\\_dental\\_school\\_ADEA\\_AADSAS.aspx](https://www.adea.org/GoDental/The_application_to_dental_school_ADEA_AADSAS.aspx)

## **TMSAS (Texas Medical and Dental Application Service)**

If you're applying to schools in Texas, they use their own system:

<https://www.tmsas.com/>

## **NOW – MAY 2026**

### **PERSONAL STATEMENT**

You should have a working draft of your personal statement by now. Attend a Rutgers Career Exploration and Success workshop (careers.rutgers.edu), give it to friends to read, put it in a drawer for two weeks and look at it again. See link for more tips: <https://hpo.rutgers.edu/students/current-students/63-personal-statements-for-medical-school>

### **WORK/ACTIVITIES/EXPERIENCES**

- ❖ For AMCAS, start thinking about this important part of your application. You will be asked to complete a section where you include the work and activities relevant to your application. For example, on AMCAS, you can write about up to 15 activities with descriptions that are up to 700 characters in length. You can then select up to 3 of those activities as most meaningful and write an additional 1325 characters on each of those activities. It is important not to treat this as a resume. You need to elaborate as much as you can about your roles, responsibilities, insights gained, and what you learned from the experience. It is also important to include details about the difference/impact you made through the activity. This section is as important as, or more important than, your personal statement. While writing about your experiences, you should also keep in mind how they connect to the AAMC's 17 core competencies.

Now is a good time to assess your strengths and address any weaknesses! Laying out a tentative template of what you would be able to include in your application now will help you see strengths and weaknesses in your non-academic profile while you still have time to do something about the latter.

There are 19 categories that you can select from when entering your activities. You do not need to list something from each category.

- ❖ For AACOMAS, you may enter an unlimited number of experiences and will have up to 600 characters to describe them.
- ❖ AADSAS has 8 categories from which to choose for your experiences. You can write up to 600 characters about each experience and can select up to 6 as the most meaningful.

## **DISCIPLINARY CLEARANCE**

Please contact the Office of Student Conduct <https://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/records-transcripts> to find out if you have ever been the subject of institutional action. If so, ask to review your file. The centralized, primary application services for health professions schools (AMCAS, AACOMAS, AADSAS, OPTOMCAS, etc.) will ask if you have EVER been the subject of disciplinary action by your institution (Rutgers) and expect you to be honest. Some require verification as part of their secondary or final admissions process. Be informed and proactive! It is far better to be truthful than to forget or ignore something and be found out later. It might appear that you are trying to cover something up.

## **APRIL – MAY 2026**

Finalize your school list.

- Use the MSAR for allopathic medical schools: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/medical-school-admission-requirements/medical-school-admission-requirements-applicants>
- Use choosedo.org for DO schools: <https://choosedo.org/us-colleges-of-osteopathic-medicine/>
- Use ADEA for dental schools: [https://www.adea.org/GoDental/Application\\_Prep/The\\_Application\\_to\\_Dental\\_School\\_ADEA\\_AADSAS/Deciding\\_where\\_to\\_apply.aspx](https://www.adea.org/GoDental/Application_Prep/The_Application_to_Dental_School_ADEA_AADSAS/Deciding_where_to_apply.aspx)

## **MAY 2026**

1. Finish the spring semester strong, both in terms of grades and activities.
2. **Contact the Rutgers registrar and have transcripts with final grades sent to the appropriate application service.**  
<https://transcripts.rutgers.edu/transcripts/index.html>  
**Remember**, if you have credit from other colleges or universities, you must contact the registrar at those schools and have official transcripts sent from there to the application service. Neither Rutgers, nor the HPO can do this for you. This includes college credits earned while in high school.
3. Continue working on your personal statement. Finalize by the time your application cycle opens.

4. Finalize MCAT/DAT plans (if not taken already).
5. **Submit applications to AACOMAS and TMDASAS \*Remember to follow the instructions on our website for filling out the letters of recommendation section so that the schools know your letters will be coming from us, not from your individual letter writers.**

## **LATE MAY/EARLY JUNE 2026**

- ✓ **Submit your AAMC, AACOMAS & AADSAS applications as early as possible.** This is really important. The longer you delay the further behind you will be in the line of thousands of applicants medical schools have to review.  
Remember: you do not need your test scores or letters of recommendation to submit your primary application. You do need your personal statement, transcripts (unofficial to fill out the application, official with final spring grades, to send to the application service), and at least one school you plan to apply to (if you are waiting for scores, you may want to do this and add more schools once you get the score).
- ✓ If the schools to which you are applying require one or more situational judgment tests, register for and take them sometime in June:
  1. Register for and take the PREview exam: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/aamc-preview/aamc-preview-professional-readiness-exam>.
  2. Register for and take the CASPER: <https://acuityinsights.app/>
- ✓ Start prewriting your secondary responses.

## **JULY 2026**

- ✓ Plan to release your letters of recommendation. Check your HPOdrome account to make sure all of the letters you requested are there. Fill out the appropriate HPO release forms. You **MUST** have submitted your primary application before submitting the release form. Once we receive the release form, we will review the letters in your file and choose the strongest (a minimum of 3 letters, 2 science and one non-science but we may choose more if they provide strong support for your application, or at your request) and upload them as a packet to your applications. See instructions on our website. (<https://hpo.rutgers.edu/resources/releasing-letters-of-recommendation-to-amcas-aacomas-or-aadsas>)
- ✓ Work on finishing your secondary applications, optimally within 2 weeks of receiving the request to fill them out.

## **MID-AUGUST 2026**

- ✓ Have all your application materials submitted to the medical/dental schools. This includes your MCAT/DAT, primary and secondary applications, letters of recommendation, etc.
- ✓ Start preparing for interviews

## **SEPTEMBER 2026 – MARCH/APRIL 2027**

- ✓ Continue preparing for interviews.
- ✓ Send letters of interest, with updates. Some schools will accept them, some will not. You should only include significant updates and wait until at least a month has passed since you submitted your secondary application. You can do this before receiving interviews, if accepted by schools and if appropriate.
- ✓ Send letters of interest/intent after having interviews and/or getting placed on a waitlist (again if accepted by the school(s) and if appropriate. Note: a letter of interest should show that you are a good fit for the school and are interested in attending if admitted. A letter of intent should show that you are a good fit AND intend to matriculate if admitted.
- ✓ Depending upon the school admissions process, acceptances may begin in September and run through the end of the year.

### ***Considering a gap year??***

***As the competition for entrance to medical/dental school intensifies, the role of the gap year has become more common. The gap year can be an excellent opportunity to gain further clinical experience, prepare for or retake the MCAT/DAT, or complete a biomedical master's degree to enhance your academics. Consider speaking with an HPO advisor to weigh the pros and cons of applying during the traditional end-of-junior-year timeline versus a gap year to enhance your overall strength as an applicant.***

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Podiatry and Optometry schools have later deadlines find out more here:

Podiatry: AACPM: <http://www.aacpm.org>

Optometry: OPTOMCAS: [www.optomcas.org](http://www.optomcas.org)