

Demystifying the Admissions Process – for UCSF PROPEL Students

(Produced by the UCSF School of Medicine Office of Post Baccalaureate and Outreach Programs 2025)

1. Getting started: Do the research! Read about medical schools/PhD Programs by visiting their Web page. You can find general information about the application process at these sites:

<https://students-residents.aamc.org/>

<https://meded.ucsf.edu/admissions-md-program>

Read the Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR from the AAMC). It contains a lot of useful information about specific medical schools.

2. Application to specific medical schools programs: What are these?

MD MD/PhD

MD/MPH MD/MS

PRIME

3. Application: Review the AMCAS website in detail! Review application instructions and study the application! We will have another seminar in which we go over the AMCAS in detail to introduce you to the application.

4. AMCAS Application Specific Categories: Think of the AMCAS application as a forum for you to give biographical information to the schools.

Other Impactful Experiences: family, education, language, economic (include this information in biographic section as well)

Experiences: *Quality not Quantity.* Make sure you list all *important* experiences including research, posters and publications, community service, employment, teaching, and awards.

Personal Statement: Start thinking about what you want to say on this page *now*.

Why MD/PhD Statement: Start thinking about what you want to say on this page *now*.

Research Essay (10,000 characters): have your PI and a trusted research mentor review this with you.

Academic information: schools attended, grades, courses taken (all), MCAT scores ("all" are shown)

Institutional Action or misdemeanor or felony explanation: listed and explained.

5. Secondary Applications: What is included in this process?

This includes a request for further information such as letters of recommendation and often additional essays. Private schools tend to send secondary applications to everyone. UC schools will only send a request if they are interested in learning more about you. At UCSF, applications are screened and not all applications are selected to receive a secondary application; approx. 500 students are interviewed.

6. PreView and Casper/Altus Tests: Some medical schools require either the PreView or Casper tests prior to interview. PreView is administered by the AAMC, and is a standardized exam designed to assess examinees' understanding of effective pre-professional behavior across eight core competencies for entering medical school. PreView: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/aamc-preview/aamc-preview-professional-readiness-exam>. The Casper test has a similar function but is not exclusively used for medical school assessments. This test has an additional section that includes video response, recording your answers. Not all medical schools that require Casper, require the second section. Casper:

<https://takealtus.com/casper/>

KIRA TALENT test: is an on-line asynchronous admissions tool in which applicants answer pre-designated interview questions in a timed recorded platform. As of 2022, to our knowledge, UCI is employing this platform. In 2024, CDU is also using this platform during interviews.

When should you take these tests? Most schools that require these tests do not have a specific deadline to take the test, however there are a few schools that require you take the test before you complete your secondary. Check the applicant websites for deadlines at those schools that require these tests. As a rule of thumb, you should take the test prior to your interview.

7. Letters of Recommendation:

At UCSF, applicants are asked to submit a minimum of three letters of recommendation, (including two from instructors). Useful letters are from instructors who *know you well*. Also helpful are those who show supportive evidence of your work and contribution to research, community service, or health-care related field.

How many do you need? How many are too many?

How do you ask for a letter of recommendation from a professor?

What type of class/professor is required for letters?

Does it matter if your letter is written by a “hot shot” researcher, Nobel Prize winner?

What about a letter from your research P.I.?

What about character references or recommendations from family friends, neighbors, grade school teachers?

8. Invitation to interview

Traditional one-on-one

MMI

Panel interviews

Post Interview Etiquette:

Do you write a note of thanks?

Do you provide a letter with additional “new” information?

9. What Happens Next?

After the interview you will either be accepted, wait listed, put “on hold” or declined

What to do if you are wait listed?

Multiple acceptances: the AAMC requires that applicants who receive multiple acceptances narrow their list to three schools by a specific date, then narrow the list further to one school by the end of April.