

DARTMOUTH

Health Professions Program

Med/Vet/Dental Application Newsletter Overview of the Application, Composite Process, Etc. 2024-2025 October 2023

Whether you plan to apply to MD, DO, Dental, or Veterinary school, it is time to prepare for the 2024-2023 application cycle. Over the next several months we will keep you updated about your tasks ahead. In this newsletter, we will emphasize understanding the overall application process, including the time-sensitive Composite Letter of Evaluation process. We will also include information about the MCAT and financial assistance. Please make sure to thoroughly read this and all following newsletters posted to the MedApp2024-2025 listserv.

The language of these newsletters will tilt towards MD schools, but please note that nearly all of it applies directly to DO and Dental, and much to Veterinary school as well (except letters), and it is relevant for some other clinical graduate programs.

It can feel both exciting and a little nerve-wracking as you proceed, but we will help you know what actions to take, and individually assist you with assessing and reflecting on your overall application.

Your HPP team is here and happy to help you throughout the entire process!
Sarah, Nicole, and Rae

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Sign-Up for the MedApp2024-2025 Listserv!

If you have not already, **please make sure to sign-up for the MedApp2024-2025 listserv** (see link to the sign-up form below) if you plan, or are seriously considering, applying to the 2024-2025 Med/Vet/Dental application cycle. As we get further into the cycle, we will use this listserv exclusively to convey crucial information about the application, so it is to your benefit to sign-up for the listserv so you can receive these communications.

Note: If you are a current senior, when filling out the sign-up form it will be beneficial to you to also enter a non-Dartmouth email so you can continue to receive communications after you graduate, and your Dartmouth email becomes deactivated.

MedApp2024-2025 Listserv Sign-Up Form:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc4A5hdR4uckZOukolAiKHRO_wK8bada8DRbmqH84jz-GUhmQ/viewform?usp=pp_url

Where Can I find HPP Application Resources?

You can find all our resources, newsletters, and forms related to the application/composite process on our website: <https://www.dartmouth.edu/prehealth/applying/>.

Additionally, you can also find on our website links to recordings of our application workshops and medical school admissions webinars:

https://www.dartmouth.edu/prehealth/applying/app_podcasts.html

We strongly encourage you to bookmark these pages. We'll of course continue to send you our resources and recordings through the listserv as we move through the application cycle, but these are great reference pages to find all the information you need quickly and easily.

Looking Ahead: Application Components & Timeline

It is essential to be aware of and understand the components of a complete application and the tasks and timelines of each.

- If you were unable to attend our recent “Overview of the Med/Vet/Dental Application” workshop, we highly encourage you to [watch the recording](#) or review the attached PDF for all the necessary information.
- **Review the [2024-2025 Application Timeline](#)** (see attached) for information about the deadlines and tasks for the entire application process.
- We highly recommend that you download and save all the links and attached documents for ease of reference.

Understanding the Composite Letter of Evaluation Process

The most timely thing you should be thinking about now is the Composite Letter of Evaluation – which is Dartmouth’s version of a “committee” letter. It is very unique process and important to gain a clear understanding of what it is and the tasks it entails.

- **Review the [2024-2024 Overview of the Composite Letter Process](#)** (see attached) for detailed information and instructions about the composite process. It is your responsibility – and to your benefit – to know the process!
- **Review the [2024-2025 Composite Process Timeline](#)** (see attached) for information about deadlines and tasks.

Choosing Your Letter Writers

Once you understand the composite process, reflect on who you would like to ask to write your composite letter and letters of recommendation. Feel free to consult with a pre-health dean!

- You are responsible for choosing your writers and clearly communicating deadlines and timely information to them. You are also responsible for creating your PrivateFolio account (our letter dossier service) and submitting the appropriate forms to HPP.
- It is not too soon to start asking writers if they are able/willing to write for you. Use the attached 2024-2025 Composite Process Timeline to help you set deadlines as you receive confirmations from your writers.
- **We do have resources to help both support writers and composite writers with the writing process.** If any of your writers would like to review those resources, let them know they can reach out to Rae Stokes at Health.Professions.Program@dartmouth.edu.
- If you have any questions about letter logistics or PrivateFolio, feel free to reach out to Rae at the above email.

Tips for Choosing Your Writers

Your composite writer can be from any of these categories, though they are most often faculty. They must be a member of the Dartmouth Community (Dartmouth College, Geisel, or DHMC).

We highly recommend your writer group include:

- Two faculty who have taught you in a science class (one can be neuro or engineering, if science-focused).
- Consider including at least one faculty from your major (if you’re not a science major), and/or from another type of class that was meaningful for you.
- Writers from outside the classroom, such as a research supervisor (PI), coach, internship supervisor, job supervisor, FSP faculty, extracurricular activity, etc. They can be individuals outside of Dartmouth as well.

The best combination of writers will demonstrate different facets of you and your experiences, in and out of the classroom, and provide insight into some of your intellectual, professional, and personal qualities.

Questions That Arise

1. **I'm nervous about bothering the people I want to ask to be my writers. Is it really okay to ask them?** YES! Part of working in an educational environment is the value system of supporting student's growth. Writing letters is part of faculty and staff members' roles. You want to ask people who have seen in action in some way.
2. **How do I ask?** If you see them regularly, feel free to ask in person. However, it is perfectly okay to start the conversation through email. Some ideas for how to proceed:
 - If they don't already know, inform them of your goal and plan to apply to med/vet/dental school. Ask if they would consider writing you a composite/support letter. Inform them of the specific reasons why you are asking them to write for you (ex. you appreciate the class you took with them or the conversations you had with them, or working with them in class, lab or research, or job/internships allowed you to experience growth in a particular way, etc.) Invite them to meet at their convenience in person or through Zoom to further discuss if this is something they are willing to do.
3. **What if I am not "friends" with any of my writers like I was in high school?** There are a range of ways someone can "know" you. The best choices for writers are those who have had the chance to observe relevant qualities and characteristics—even if you weren't at the level of being "buddies." Were you an active participant in class who demonstrated an interest in learning? Did you speak to a professor before/after class or during their office hours? Did you engage during collaborative learning/flipped classroom spaces? Were you inclusive? Collaborative? In smaller classes did you lend something to discussions; engage with the material, etc.?
4. **How do I get a letter from my lab because I mostly work with a grad student, not my PI?** Because this is super common, PIs and grad students are usually very willing to combine their efforts. Grad students often draft a letter or summarize information that the PI will formalize into a final letter. It's okay to directly ask them about this.
5. **My internship supervisor was worried that they don't have a formal writing background, can they still write?** Most certainly! Medical schools want to learn about their applicants and appreciate that writers from any background can write sincere, thoughtful letters.

What should I do after my letter writer says yes?

1. Agree on a due date see the attached **2024-2025 Composite Process Timeline**.
2. Open a [PrivateFolio](#) account (this is where your SUPPORT WRITERS – not your composite writer – will upload their letters).
3. Create a Letter of Recommendation Request to each of your support writers. This will prompt PrivateFolio to send them an upload link.
4. Send each of your writers your resume and autobiographical sketch (and transcript if requested).

The Autobiographical Sketch

The autobiographical sketch is a useful way to help aid your letter writers with the writing process by providing them with relevant information about your background, motivations, abilities, experiences, etc. In addition to the auto sketch, you may find it useful – if your writers are willing – to meet to discuss your application.

The self-reflection involved in this project is also a great way to begin the reflection that is essential for the application itself. The format is flexible. Write your sketch as an essay or in sections or even bullet points. You can choose/create your own relevant sections (ex. family influences, growing up, before college, academics). Make sure to highlight experiences that were especially meaningful or relevant to your journey and you personally. Address this essential question, “Why medicine?”.

The autobiographical sketch is also a place to share any unique challenges you may have experienced, but you don’t have to share this with your writers if you don’t want to. Feel free to discuss this with an advisor. Questions to consider for your autobiographical sketch (and ultimately for your application), are below.

Self-Reflection & Questions to Consider

Self-reflection is vital for the auto sketch and for excellent application writing. Consider the following questions:

- What were your formative experiences with your family, education, or community before college?
- What experiences have you had over the years that have been meaningful to you?
- How have you grown academically and personally? Do you have any academic challenges to discuss?
- What classes have meant the most to you?
- Have you conducted research? How has it been meaningful to you?
- What extracurriculars or passions (music, athletics, etc.) are you involved in? How have they inspired or surprised you? What do you find meaningful about them?
- Have you engaged in certain themes in your studies or experiences (ex. working with children, elderly, disadvantaged communities, etc., or researching autism, dementia, oncology, etc.)?
- Why do you want to study medicine/dentistry? What has influenced and affirmed this choice? Who has influenced or inspired you?

Assessing Your Application

If you haven’t already, we highly encourage you to consider meeting with a pre-health dean to review and assess the strength of your application. We are here to assist you in achieving a successful outcome! You can schedule a meeting using [Sarah Berger’s](#) or [Nicole Roeper’s](#) Calendly links, or by reaching out to Rae at Health.Professions.Program@dartmouth.edu.

MCAT Registration

For the first half of the 2024 testing year (January – June), registration will open on October 24th and October 25th at noon EST. For more information soon about registration, testing dates and sites, and how to prepare, please see our attached MCAT Newsletter.

The Financial Assistance Program (FAP)

The AAMC does have a [Fee Assistance Program \(FAP\)](#) to help defray the cost of the MCAT and AMCAS application.

- **IMPORTANT NOTE!** To access the benefits, you must be approved before you register for the MCAT exam or apply to medical schools using the AMCAS application. Fee reductions are not retroactive.
- We strongly recommend you give yourself at least a few weeks for the FAP application process. First you'll need to [gather the information you need](#) (tax and income info etc) in order to apply, then, the application process itself can take up to 5-10 business days to be approved, so keep that in mind as you [prepare to apply](#).
- If you qualify for the FAP you also receive it for the AMCAS application (within a certain timeframe).
- If you miss the FAP eligibility by a tiny fraction, it can't hurt to contact the FAP Office directly. They are constantly changing their policy during COVID.
- If you miss applying for the FAP before you sign up for an MCAT slot you can still apply to see if you will qualify for the fee reductions for the AMCAS application itself.
- If you qualify, most medical schools will reduce or waive the fees for secondary applications as well.

Dartmouth Class of '85 Bridges to Health Professions Fund

Thanks to the generous donation of the Class of '85, we have the Bridges to Health Professions Grant to help defray the costs of preparing for and taking the MCAT for a few students with high financial need. We will be sending out more information within the next few weeks about the application, so please stay tuned!

