

# Berkeley

## PRE-MED & OTHER HEALTH PROGRAMS



### What should I major in at Berkeley, if I want to go to medical school?

There is no preferred pre-med major. Every year students with majors in the social sciences, humanities, chemistry and engineering are accepted to medical school from Berkeley. If you want to study biology at Berkeley, you can choose from more than 25 areas of specialization in the biological sciences, such as Molecular Environmental Biology, Genetics and Plant Biology, or Nutritional Sciences in the College of Natural Resources. Chemical Biology in the College of Chemistry and majors in the Department of Integrative Biology or the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology in the College of Letters and Science offer more options.

While any undergraduate major is acceptable, you must fulfill the following requirements to prepare for medical school:

- two years of chemistry (general and organic) with lab
- one year of physics with lab
- at least one year of general biology with lab

Some medical and other health professional schools also require some or all of the following courses:

- calculus
- English
- advanced biological science and/or biochemistry

We recommend that you check with the schools to which you intend to apply by reading specific school websites or reviewing the *Medical School Admission Requirements* at [aamc.org](http://aamc.org) or in the Career Center Info Lab at 2111 Bancroft, once you have settled into your first semester at Cal.

**The most important thing for you to do is to complete the required preparatory course work in college and to maintain a high GPA.** (Note that AP credits will not satisfy prerequisites at most medical schools.) Select an academic area that interests you and allows flexibility in taking the required pre-med courses.

### What should I do when I'm not in class?

One option is to experience the health care environment in a paid or volunteer position during college. Or you could actively engage in pursuits that support your interests and talents and demonstrate your strong leadership skills (e.g., in community service, the arts, or athletics).

**Berkeley offers excellent undergraduate preparation for medical and other health-related professional schools and sends an impressive number of students on to these graduate programs each year.**

**Cal, like most universities, does not offer a specific "pre-med" major.**

**Few colleges in the United States do, because there is no specific major required for admission to medical or other health-related schools.**

**All students obtain a bachelor's degree before admission to medical school. For students seeking admission to dentistry, veterinary medicine, optometry, and other health-related graduate programs, many have received a bachelor's degree prior to admission.**

Many Berkeley students who are admitted to medical school also have done research during their undergraduate years at Cal. The campus offers a variety of ways to get involved in undergraduate research, including the Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program. Students also may contact professors directly and ask to join their research projects. The opportunity to perform research as an undergraduate is one of the advantages of enrolling at Berkeley.

### Does Berkeley have a medical school?

Berkeley does not have a medical school on campus, but that has no bearing on your admission to medical school. Large numbers of Berkeley students enter medical schools all over the United States each year.

The campus has a limited medical program with UC San Francisco through its graduate program in health and medical sciences. Each year a small number of graduate students are simultaneously enrolled on the Berkeley and San Francisco campuses where they complete the five-year Joint Medical Program earning a M.S. in Health and Medical Sciences from UC Berkeley and a M.D. from UC San Francisco. Information on the program is available at [jmp.berkeley.edu](http://jmp.berkeley.edu).

### Does it make a difference where I complete my academic preparation for medical or other health-related schools?

The quality and reputation of the college or university from which you graduate can play a role in your acceptance to a medical school. The high quality of Berkeley students and the campus' worldwide academic reputation are major factors in the success rate of Cal's applicants to medical

school. Many attend UC and other California medical schools as well as out-of-state private schools.

Berkeley's acceptance rate is consistently higher than the national average. In 2007, approximately 77 percent of senior applicants who obtained an overall GPA of at least a 3.4, and obtained a total MCAT score of 30 or higher, were admitted to a medical school. Medical school acceptance statistics may be viewed on the Career Center's website at [career.berkeley.edu/MedStats/MedStats.stm](http://career.berkeley.edu/MedStats/MedStats.stm). Note that when comparing Berkeley's acceptance rates with those from other schools, not all schools compute their average in the same fashion. Some only count a portion of their applicants (e.g., those over a certain GPA), thus raising the acceptance rate. Berkeley considers all applicants when calculating its acceptance rates.

### What do medical schools look for in applicants?

Medical schools look at a number of factors when selecting their students:

1. College GPA. This is an important factor. Science and non-science grades are considered separately. Year-by-year improvement trends and recent grades are very important. An excessive number of courses taken passed/not passed could work against you because medical schools cannot interpret your accomplishment accurately. Many medical school admissions officers assume that a GPA would be lower if all courses had been taken for a grade.
2. The Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT).

Before taking the MCAT, you should have completed a year of college courses in each of the following subjects:

- general biology
- general chemistry
- organic chemistry
- physics

Successful applicants plan for a semester or summer to study for the MCAT after these courses are completed. The test has four sections: Verbal Reasoning, Physical Sciences, Writing Sample, and Biological Sciences. Information on the MCAT is available at [aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm](http://aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm).

3. The personal statement and/or personal interview. This is an opportunity to inform the school of factors not reflected in your GPA or your application. Consequently, it is important to have a clear sense of your motivation and your goals and to articulate them effectively.
4. Letters of recommendation. These should be from individuals who know you well and can write knowledgeably about you. Get to know several professors early in your college career so they can provide a compelling recommendation on your behalf.
5. Motivation. Since medical school admissions officers often look for evidence of genuine concern for others, as well as personal interest and knowledge about the health field, prior experience—either paid or voluntary—can be crucial in the selection process. Research is not necessary for the successful applicant; exposure to the medical work environment is required.

### How competitive is admission to medical schools?

Interest in careers in medicine remains high. This is also true of other medical-related fields, making admission to all health profession schools very competitive. As a result, you should consider and prepare for an alternate career or continued study.

### Does Berkeley prepare students to become veterinarians?

Yes, Cal graduates do well in gaining admission to veterinary schools such as the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of California, Davis. You do not need to complete your undergraduate work on a campus with a veterinary school. Requirements vary from institution to institution so check school information well in advance of applying.

Required undergraduate preparation in science usually includes:

- two years of chemistry
- one year of physics
- one year of biology

Other requirements usually include:

- English
- general humanities
- social sciences

Advanced courses which are often required before entry include:

- embryology
- genetics
- animal physiology
- microbiology or immunology
- animal behavior

Professional schools usually require practical experience, either through volunteer or paid employment.

### What other professional health programs does the Berkeley campus offer?

At the undergraduate level, a four-year program in nutritional sciences is available through the College of Natural Resources ([cnr.berkeley.edu](http://cnr.berkeley.edu)), which leads to a B.S. degree and ultimately to professional accreditation as a dietitian.

At the graduate level, the Health and Medical Sciences Program has an option in genetic counseling. The Graduate School of Public Health ([sph.berkeley.edu](http://sph.berkeley.edu)) offers a wide range of both academic and professional programs related to public health concerns. The School of Optometry offers a postbaccalaureate four-year professional degree program ([spectacle.berkeley.edu](http://spectacle.berkeley.edu)).

### How can I get help in preparing and applying for medical school and other health professional programs?

Berkeley's Career Center ([career.berkeley.edu](http://career.berkeley.edu)) employs pre-health program counselors and maintains a variety of reference materials and catalogs from medical and other health-related programs throughout the United States. It also provides a letter of recommendation service, holds workshops on applying and writing your personal statement, and facilitates interviews and recruitment visits with representatives from graduate and professional schools.

If you are a pre-med student, you should attend the series of programs offered by the Career Center for new pre-med students each fall semester to make certain you have the essential information to keep on track.

### For more information...

- The publication Medical School Admission Requirements is available from the Association of American Medical Colleges: [aamc.org](http://aamc.org)
- Pre-medical student web pages vary in focus. Sometimes they provide information for college and high school students about getting into medical schools and about what it is like to be a medical student. For examples see: American Medical Student Association

at [amsa.org](http://amsa.org) or Student Doctor Network at [studentdoctor.net/index.asp](http://studentdoctor.net/index.asp).

- Information about admission requirements of U.S. and Canadian dental schools is available from the American Dental Education Association, [adea.org](http://adea.org).
- See the Health Career webpages [career.berkeley.edu/Health/Health.stm](http://career.berkeley.edu/Health/Health.stm) or stop by the Career Center for details on a career in Advanced Practice Nursing following your undergraduate work at Cal.
- Information about pharmacy school admission requirements is available from the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, [aacp.org](http://aacp.org).
- Information for applicants to schools and colleges of optometry is available from the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry, [opted.org](http://opted.org).
- Information about veterinary school admission requirements is available from the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges, [aavmc.org](http://aavmc.org).
- Information about osteopathic school admission requirements is available from the American Association of Osteopathic Medicine, [aacom.org](http://aacom.org).

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