UVA School of Medicine

Admissions Policies & Procedures

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I. Admissions Policy Summary

Mission Statement:

“To provide excellence, innovation, and superlative quality in care of patients, the training of health professionals, and the creation and sharing of health knowledge within a culture that promotes equity, diversity, and inclusiveness.” The faculty believes that the educational mission of the School of Medicine, as well as the medical profession itself, is best served by an admissions process that results in the selection of a diverse and multi-talented student body. The Admissions Committee, when choosing the class, considers not only academic credentials such as GPA and MCAT, but also the personal characteristics and life experiences of applicants.

Admission to the School of Medicine will be granted to those applicants who, in the opinion of the Admissions Committee, will make the most significant contributions to society as members of the medical profession. In making its determination the School will consider factors such as:

(1) the applicant’s general academic ability based upon a careful examination of all academic transcripts, including factors such as the grade-point average, the difficulty of the curriculum in which the degree was earned and the hours spent on outside employment or other time-consuming extracurricular activities; (2) the applicant’s capacity for the academic study of medicine based upon the MCAT score, and (3) other relevant personal qualities and characteristics of the applicant, including factors such as the applicant’s career goals, cultural and educational background and experiences, moral character, leadership qualities, commitment to community service, ability to think and act independently, and interpersonal and communication skills and evidence of having worked effectively as a member of the team. The applicant should seek to have those persons writing letters of recommendation discuss such factors.

The University of Virginia uses a holistic approach when screening and evaluating applicants for the School of Medicine. We seek a class of students who represent diversity in all forms, which include, but are not limited to: interests, experience, academic excellence, research, volunteer activities, community service, healthcare experience, gender, underrepresentation in medicine, disadvantaged background, and rural/socioeconomically disadvantaged Virginians (often first-generation college). We seek applicants who will bring exceptional qualities, skills and/or cultural experiences to
the educational experience and the practice of medicine.

We seek students whom, we believe, will demonstrate and embody cultural competence. The Cultural Competence Committee at the University of Virginia defines cultural competence as the ability to function "effectively as an individual or organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, practices, and needs presented by patients and their communities. This includes demonstrating sensitivity and responsiveness to patients’ and colleagues’ gender, age, culture, religion, disability, physical appearance, ethnicity, gender identification, and/or sexual orientation.” The steering committee has recently preferred the term “cultural responsiveness” over cultural competence, but the latter term is used more broadly.

Selection Criteria

Criteria for selection and details about the selection process can be found on the Admissions Office website at:

https://med.virginia.edu/admissions/application-process/.

For requirements, see section Requirements for Admission below.

In addition, brochures are available to prospective students and applicants, their advisors and other interested parties, both on the website as well as in hard copy. These brochures, which are updated yearly, are also taken to recruiting events. This information is also published in the current edition of the Premedical Advisor's Reference Manual published by the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions, Inc. Information is also updated yearly in the Medical School Admissions Requirement (MSAR) publication as well as the Graduate Student Record which is linked to the Admissions website. In addition, we provide this information in person as well as by phone or email when inquiries are made.

Method of Application

The University of Virginia School of Medicine participates in the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS) sponsored by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). Applications may be accessed directly from their website. AMCAS applications must be submitted no later than November 1 of the year prior to the year of desired enrollment. Students are selected and notified of their acceptance on a rolling admissions basis beginning October 16; therefore, early application is advantageous. All applicants will be required to pay a non-refundable application processing fee unless granted a fee waiver via AAMC.

Requirements for Admission

Applicants should note that the University of Virginia School of Medicine considers applications only from applicants who have completed a minimum of 90 semester hours or who have graduated from an accredited college or university in the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom. Applicants in a degree program are expected to complete their degree before matriculation. Applicants who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. are eligible to apply provided they have completed a minimum of 90 semester
hours of course work at an accredited college or university in the United States, Canada or the United Kingdom.

The requirements for admission are also available to students on the University of Virginia Graduate Record website:  www.virginia.edu/registrar/catalog/grad.html

Selection of College Courses

The recommended courses listed above form the essential background for the scientific study of medicine. Many courses contributing to a well-rounded liberal education are of direct value and, although proficiency in the sciences is essential to the understanding of medicine, concentration on the sciences is not necessary. Medicine is concerned with a variety of social and community challenges and requires a broad cultural background as well as scientific education.

Students pursuing a graduate or professional degree at the time of application must complete their program requirements prior to matriculation into medical school.

Technical Standards

All matriculants and current students (“Candidates”) must possess the physical, cognitive, emotional and interpersonal capabilities necessary to complete the medical education program and to provide highly effective patient care within the medical education program. These capabilities are called Technical Standards, the essential functions that all medical students must demonstrate to meet the requirements of a general medical education. Candidates—whether for admission, academic promotion, or graduation—must meet these Technical Standards, with or without reasonable accommodation. (See http://www.medicine.virginia.edu/education/medical-students/admissions/the-uva-som-1/technical-standards-policy-1.html for details of these capabilities.) These technical standards are predicated on the school’s learning objectives that are considered essential for completion of the M.D. degree. They have been approved by the Curriculum Committee and the Dean of the School of Medicine.

Medical College Admission Test

The Medical College Admission Test is required of all applicants. All students must present scores from tests taken no later than September 30 of the year prior to the year of matriculation and no earlier than April 1 of three years prior to the year of matriculation.

Personal Interview

Students are not accepted for admission without a personal interview with the Admissions Committee. Selected individuals are invited for interviews after review of their completed application. The Admissions Committee does not grant regional interviews, telephone interviews, or interviews by applicant request.

II. Application Process
A. Each applicant will be screened, assessed and compared to the pool of applicants for that year using the following pieces of information:

- Primary AMCAS and UVA’s supplemental application, including personal statement and letters of recommendation
- MCAT – this must be taken no later than September 30th of the year prior to matriculation and no earlier than April 1st of the three years prior to the year of matriculation.
- GPA
- Major/s
- Additional Degrees
- Experience
- Volunteerism
- Shadowing experience
- Other clinical experience
- Research
- Innovation
- Leadership
- Interest in Underserved Populations
- Past careers
- Personal interests
- Diversity of the class
- Cultural competency/Cultural responsiveness

B. If invited, applicant will be invited to interview with two members of the Admissions Committee, either two faculty members or one faculty member and one 4th year medical student.

C. The GPA and MCAT are considered to be important. There are no cut-offs although an MCAT of 8 or less in any category generally is not considered to be competitive.

III. Admissions Procedures

A. Processing of Applications

B. General Requirements:

- All applicants must submit a completed AMCAS application and UVA supplemental application before the deadline.

- All applicants must have completed a minimum of 90 semester hours of course work in an accredited college or university in the United States, Canada or the United Kingdom.

- Applicants who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. are eligible to apply provided they have completed at least 90 semester hours of coursework in an accredited college or university in the United States,
Canada or the United Kingdom.

- A bachelor's degree is strongly encouraged from those that have attended college in the United States.

- The University of Virginia School of Medicine no longer has required prerequisite courses. We have no science or humanities requirements. However, it is recommended that students consider courses in Cell Biology, Biochemistry, Human Behavior and Statistics, as students find these courses to be helpful during medical school.

MCAT Requirements:

- The Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) is required of all applicants. All applicants must present scores from tests taken no later than September 30th of
AP Credit:

- The University of Virginia will accept AP credit, provided the undergraduate institution awarded credit towards graduation (not just exemptions) and those credits appear on the applicant’s official transcript.

C. Screening of applications

1. The University of Virginia uses a holistic approach when reviewing applications.
2. The screeners are members of the Admissions Office, namely: the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs, the Assistant Dean for Admissions and the Director for Admissions, but may include others as consultants, such as the Senior Associate Dean for Education and the Assistant Dean for Education.
3. The GPA and MCATs are reviewed, in additional to the personal statement, and experiences section on the AMCAS application.
4. The supplemental application is reviewed, with a particular focus on the answers to three essay questions.
5. The Admissions Committee develops guidelines for the screening process each year.

Primary verified applications are received through AMCAS and all of these applicants are sent an invitation to complete the school’s online supplemental application. The supplemental application requires an $80 application processing fee. Applicants who received an AMCAS Fee Assistance Program (FAP) waiver automatically are granted a waiver of the UVA supplemental application fee. Applicants submit a premedical advisor’s letter of evaluation or, if this service is not available, they submit a minimum of 2 letters of recommendation, preferably from professors or the equivalent (such as research supervisors or physicians who have supervised the applicant in a health care setting). Additional letters of reference are welcomed.

An application is complete when the AMCAS application is verified, the supplemental application is complete and the application fee paid, letters of evaluation/recommendation are received and the Virginia residency status form (if appropriate) is completed. When a substantial number of applications are complete, the review process begins—generally in mid-July of each year. Applications are screened by the Associate Director for Admissions, the Assistant Dean for Admissions and the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs, who evaluate applications to determine who will be invited for interviews. Screening criteria include academic excellence, evidence of extracurricular activities that reflect an interest in serving the community and working with people, evidence of a commitment to a career in medicine, evidence of leadership, letters of recommendation and the personal statement. In addition to the characteristics of the individual applicant, the screeners consider the contribution that each applicant can make to the diversity of the entire class and the learning environment. These criteria are established and reviewed annually by the Admissions Committee in accordance with the strategic vision of the School of Medicine. The screening process occurs over a long period of time. Some applicants are quickly determined to be recipients of interview invitations. Others clearly do not meet our interview criteria. And a large
number of applicants are reviewed repeatedly and by all screeners in order to achieve maximum fairness to the individual applicants and to ensure diversity in each matriculating class.

Letters of recommendation are screened for evidence of intellectual curiosity, ability to work with others (teamwork), and interpersonal and communication skills. Approximately 650 applicants are invited for an interview, an on-Grounds visit that includes an orientation session, lunch, a tour of the medical center with fourth-year medical students, and two half-hour interviews with two members of the Admissions Committee. Each applicant is interviewed by one faculty member of the committee and one student member or two faculty members of the committee. Applicants are interviewed only by members of the Admissions Committee. There is an optional session on financial aid at the end of the interview day. Applicants are interviewed in groups of six or eight, from Monday through Thursday for twenty-four weeks from early September until early March.

D. The Interview Process

1. Each year, approximately 650 applicants are invited for an interview.
2. Interviews are conducted Monday-Thursday from the first Tuesday in September until the first week in March.
3. Depending on the day of the week, six or eight students are invited to be interviewed. Students self-select their interview date online. On the day of the interview, students are welcomed by the Associate Director of Admissions and provided an overview of the day, including the names and disciplines of the two Admissions Committee members who will interview them. The Assistant Dean for Admissions meets with the applicants as a group for one hour and presents an overview of the school and the curriculum. Tour guides, who are 4th year students, take the applicants to lunch and then the group returns for the interview process which takes place in the afternoon. Students are invited to remain for a session with a financial aid officer. The Office of Admissions is located within the Medical Education Building and abuts the major classroom which is used by first year students. This was done intentionally so that first year medical students are able to greet the applicants if their schedules permit. Generally, a few students stop by throughout the morning and afternoon. This informal meeting allows the applicants to interact with current medical students.
4. Applicants are interviewed by two of the 31 members of the Admissions Committee.
   These two individuals are either two faculty members or a faculty member and a 4th year medical student.
5. Interviewers are assigned their applicants the week prior so that they can review the application in advance. Admissions Committee members are informed that
applicants are told to expect a comprehensive evaluation of the application by each interviewer.
6. Two 30 minute interviews are conducted for each applicant.
7. Following the interview, interviewers write an interview summary, which includes their recommendations (offer, alternate, deny)

The Admissions Committee Process:

The Admissions Committee meets each Friday morning during the admissions cycle to make decisions on the applicants who were interviewed that week (rolling admissions). Interviewers present each applicant, and a vote is held. The decision to offer, place on the alternate list or reject, is based on the same components in the screening process with an emphasis on the interviewer’s impression on the following attributes: evidence of commitment to medicine, compassion and empathy, ability to work in a small group format or as part of a team, a connection to patients and their families, and the applicant’s contribution to the class diversity. After discussion the Admissions Committee decides on one of three options for each applicant: accept, alternate list, or reject. A majority of committee members is necessary for a quorum, and the majority of those present must be members of the faculty. Interviewers must make their recommendations to the committee prior to the discussion and without discussion between the interviewers, i.e., independent assessments of the applicant. Should one of the interviewers happen to be absent for a discussion when there is disagreement between the interviewers, the committee decision is deferred until both interviewers are present. While this is an uncommon occurrence, the goal is to give each interviewed applicant the most fair review by the committee. The chair of the committee votes only in case of a tie.

Decisions:

In accordance with AMCAS traffic rules, applicants are notified weekly of decisions no earlier than October 16 of each year. Accepted applicants must complete and return a Class Reservation Form within three weeks of the date of the acceptance letter in order to hold a position in the class. No deposit is required.

Applicants who are rejected after interview are sent a letter notifying them of this decision shortly after the Admissions Committee meets (after October 16). Applicants who are rejected without an interview begin to receive letters notifying them in November.

The alternate list:

Applicants placed on the Alternate List receive an explanation of how the list functions and when they might expect to hear from the Admissions Office, typically after April 30. Because students may not hold multiple acceptances past April 30 per AMCAS traffic rules, withdrawals generally come in at that time, possibly opening a few seats in the class. Alternate List candidates are encouraged to add materials to their applications while they wait if they think
additional information will be helpful should the Alternate List be visited. As positions become available over the summer, the Associate and Assistant Dean for Admissions determine which applicants on the alternate list are most appropriate—based on all information available, including the interview notes - and those individuals are offered a position in the class.

IV. The Admissions Committee and Oversight of the Admissions Process

The Admissions Committee Chair is the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs. Appointment as Chair is considered to be part of the Associate Dean’s essential duties and job description and is not term limited. Three other members on the Committee remain permanently on the committee as part of their job description: the Associate Dean for Diversity, the Assistant Dean for Admissions and the Assistant Dean for Medical Education. In total, the Admissions Committee is composed of 32 members, 31 of whom are voting members. The Director for Admissions is present, but is a non-voting member. Admissions Committee faculty members are appointed for a three year term, with the possibility of one consecutive renewal. One third of the committee turns over each year. Members may be invited to return after a two year hiatus for an additional term. These individuals are selected and invited to attend based on their reputation for clinical, research or educational excellence and are identified both by members of the Admissions Office, Committee and the Dean’s Office. The goal is to have diverse and broad representation of interdisciplinary faculty. Admissions Committee students are composed of ten 4th year medical students. Each student serves a one year term. All students are invited to apply; applicants are interviewed by two members of the Admissions Office (Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs, the Assistant Dean for Admissions and/or Director for Admissions). Ten students, representing a diverse group of individuals, are appointed to the committee each year.

Following a nomination, all members of the Admissions Committee are appointed by the Dean of the School of Medicine.

Prior to the start of interviews, all new faculty admissions committee members and all medical student members are oriented to the application process and the mechanics of how systematically to review an application. Handouts are provided which outline the application review and interview process, discussion of the interview process and procedure, as well as guidance on writing the interview report. Training is provided on the admissions application software and members are oriented to each aspect of the primary and secondary application.

During the orientation process, the Committee discusses the essential and desirable qualities of students entering medical school. These are divided into: intelligence/cognitive skills (such as GPA, MCAT’s, demonstration of ability to think and respond, the ability to demonstrate independent thought and depth, and the ability to make good judgments with new information
and demonstrate and understanding of the practice of medicine) – found in letters of recommendation, evaluations and the interview, personal experience (evidence of personal exploration of what it means to be a doctor, and an understanding of professional and social obligations and expectations, recognition of the role of research and scientific rigor and the understanding of medicine as a vocation and a field of service), personal attributes (integrity/honesty, commitment to the practice of medicine, compassion for others, enthusiasm/passion for a career in medicine and professionalism) as well as a recognition that there are a few individuals who are highly qualified and gifted individuals who might not use the medical degree in a traditional way and might expand the horizons of the field of medicine in a significant way. Applicants are asked as part of the secondary application how they will contribute to the diversity of the class and the learning environment based on their diverse and unique qualities. As part of their orientation to the primary and secondary application, Admissions Committee members are directed to this question, so that during the interview Committee members can refer to this question and the applicant’s response in order to assess interviewees on matters related to cultural competence and ability to engage with a broad and diverse patient population. The presence of the Associate Dean for Diversity as well as an orientation and training session on cultural competence and diversity assist with this discussion during the Committee Meetings prior to a vote. During the orientation process, guidelines are provided which outline what is allowed and what cannot be asked during the interview process. Interviewers are informed that questions on the following topics are considered discriminatory and therefore prohibited: race or ethnicity, gender, marital status, childcare/pregnancy plans, sexual orientation, mental or physical health, religious affiliations, age and political views or affiliations. In addition, interviewers are asked to refrain from questions which deal with controversial issues, such as abortion or euthanasia. Interviewers are also told that the AAMC Group on Student Affairs has asked Admissions Committees to refrain from asking applicants to list the other medical schools to which they have applied.

Prior to the beginning of each interview season, members of the Admissions Committee participate in an all-day retreat. This serves to educate and inform the Committee on the admissions process, including training and education on cultural competence (such as individuals underrepresented in medicine as well as cultural differences when and an introduction to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues), the regulatory issues such as non-discrimination policies, and reminders on the confidential nature of the process.

The School of Medicine is committed to diversity and excellence in education. Our mission is “to provide excellence, innovation, and superlative quality in care of patients, the training of health professionals, and the creation and sharing of health knowledge within a culture that promotes equity, diversity, and inclusiveness.” Our vision includes the following philosophy: “In all that we do, we work to benefit human health and improve the quality of life” and this includes being “a leader in training students and faculty in providing health care free of disparity”. We have defined the following candidates as Added Value Groups (AVG) in the learning environment whom we actively seek to recruit and retain: African American, Hispanic/Latino, LGBT, rural/socioeconomically disadvantaged Virginians (often first- generation college students).
Each member of the Admissions Committee annually signs a confidentiality agreement, and these agreements are maintained by the Admissions staff.

D. Offers:

We are a state institution. We have no quotas. We seek a class of approximately half in-state Virginian and half out of state. We extend approximately 300 offers each year for a target class of 156.

E. Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP)

The MSTP process runs in parallel to the regular MD program. Applications are reviewed by the Office of Admissions (Associate Director and Assistant Dean) as well as members of the MSTP program (Director and Associate Directors of MSTP Program). There is a two day interview process. MSTP applicants are interviewed on specific and designated Thursdays between September and March. The MSTP program distinguishes its offers for a target of 6 students. All MSTP applicants must be interviewed and offered a position by the Admissions Committee (after being interviewed for two half hour blocks by two members of the Admissions Committee) before an offer can be extended by the MSTP program. These students are presented first on the Friday mornings when MSTP applicants are discussed. The Director of the MSTP program is present during this conversation and the vote and then departs after the decisions are made.

V. Oversight of the Admissions Process

Evaluation of Admissions Policies, Procedures and Activities

The Office of Admissions falls under the Office of Medical Education which is headed by the Senior Associate Dean for Education. The Senior Associate Dean for Education has a weekly meeting with the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs.

The Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs has a weekly meeting with the Assistant Dean for Admissions and the Associate Director of Admissions.

The Assistant Dean for Admissions meets weekly with the Associate Director for Admissions.

An end of cycle survey is sent to all students to whom an offer has been made. One survey is sent to those who will matriculate and another survey is sent to those who chose to attend another medical school. These surveys include questions related to all aspects of the admissions process. Feedback is provided informally by unsolicited applicant e-mails, calls and cards.
Attendance is recorded for each Admissions Committee meeting. This ensures that a quorum of faculty is present before a vote can be held. A quorum is defined as a majority of the faculty on the Committee present for the vote.

The Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs presents an annual report to the Dean of the School of Medicine and the Senior Associate Dean for Education. This includes information on the students who have applied, been invited for interview, interviewed and offered positions in the School of Medicine. This report is prepared in March and distributed weekly until the class has matriculated. In addition, this information is shared at a monthly Dean’s meeting throughout the admissions cycle.

A yearly medical education retreat chaired by the Dean of the School of Medicine is held in the spring which includes discussion of the immediate and long term goals for the Office of Admissions. The Dean provides the charge to the Admissions Committee annually at the orientation retreat.