

General Information Concerning Pharmacy School:

The prerequisite course work required for pharmacy school is extremely variable between institutions. As such, it is not possible to recommend any general curriculum that is universally required by pharmacy schools in the United States. Unfortunately, this means that it is entirely the student's responsibility to obtain information regarding prerequisite course work for the pharmacy school(s) of interest. Information for most pharmacy schools in the United States can be found at <http://www.pharmcas.org/collegesschools/schoolpages.htm>.

In addition to curricular requirements, approximately half of the pharmacy schools require the Pharmacy College Admissions Test (PCAT). This exam has five sections: verbal ability, quantitative ability, biology, inorganic/organic chemistry, and reading comprehension. The five sections contribute to a composite score that ranges between 100 and 300, with the national average typically being around 200. The student should keep in mind that this is not the average score accepted by pharmacy schools. Most programs typically require higher scores for acceptance.

Some pharmacy schools require letters of recommendation or an evaluation from the pre-professional committee. Once again, this is an area of extreme variability between programs. Certain programs prefer the single pre-professional committee evaluation while others prefer three individual letters of recommendation while others neither accept nor consider letters of recommendation of any kind. Once again, due to the variable nature for this requirement, the student must investigate this matter for all pharmacy schools of interest by visiting the web site above.

Finally, many pharmacy schools expect a certain amount of service or work experience in the field. As with all other requirements, this can be extremely variable between programs. Once again, the student is advised to investigate this matter for all pharmacy programs of interest.

Getting Ready to Apply to Pharmacy School:

Following completion of the prerequisite course work required by the school(s) of interest, the student should begin the process by registering with the Pharmacy College Application Service (PharmCAS) found at <http://www.pharmcas.org/applicants/start.htm>. Once registered the student should complete the on-line application form. Complete instructions are found at the link provided above. In addition to prerequisite course work, approximately half of the pharmacy schools in the United States also require the Pharmacy College Admissions Test (PCAT). The student can obtain information concerning where and when to take this test by calling (800) 622-3231. Many UNLV students seek to gain admission to the University of Southern Nevada Pharmacy Program. This program requires no letters of recommendation (nor will they be considered) and it is not necessary to take any kind of standardized test. Detailed information regarding the admission requirements for this school can be found at http://www.usn.edu/html/admissions_req_detail.phtml?id=163&action=detail_view&item_id=289. Although it is not possible to provide true time lines, information provided below contains suggestions for responsibilities the student may need to satisfy during each year of college.

Freshman Year:

As with any pre-professional degree plan, it is prudent for the student to take either the SAT or the ACT. Although it is currently not required for admission, this is important, as the scores will be used to place students in the appropriate Math and English courses. In addition to the standardized test, prospective students should take the Chemistry placement test to determine if they are eligible to immediately enroll in CHE121 (General Chemistry I). Information concerning when and where to take the Chemistry placement test can be found at <http://www.unlv.edu/Colleges/Sciences/Chemistry/Placement/>. Information concerning taking the Biology placement test can be obtained by visiting the Biology Department Office located in WHI 101.

Why take the placement test? Without taking these exams, the student cannot enroll in the General Biology, General Chemistry, or English courses required for admission to any professional school. Instead, the student will spend at least the first semester (if not the entire freshman year) simply satisfying prerequisite course work required to take the prerequisite course work that professional schools require. The end result of failing to take the placement tests is usually the delay of acceptance to pharmacy school by at least a year, unless the student compensates by either taking classes during the summer or having multiple semesters with exceptionally heavy course loads (19 credit hours or more).

In addition to taking the placement test, it is prudent for the student to investigate all pharmacy schools of interest. Since the prerequisite course work varies greatly between schools, the student must identify all course work required for all schools he or she plans to apply to. The student must organize this information into a comprehensive list and check off each prerequisite when completed. Failure to do so may result in the inability to apply to all schools of interest. The majority of pharmacy schools in the United States provide prerequisite information at <http://www.pharmcas.org/collegesschools/schoolpages.htm>.

Some pharmacy schools may require service or specific work experience. The student should use the summer months following the freshman year gaining such experience if required. Once again, it is the student's responsibility to determine if pharmacy schools of interest have such requirements.

Sophomore Year:

The student should consult the composite list of prerequisites composed during the freshman year and continue working towards completing them. If any of the schools require specific service or work experience, the student is advised to obtain this experience either during the semester or during the summer months following the sophomore year. If the student seeks acceptance to a Pharm.D. program, it is highly advisable to begin looking into obtaining research experience in one of the life science disciplines (biochemistry, chemistry, or molecular biology to be specific).

Junior Year:

This is the most complicated year for pre-pharmacy students. This is due to the variability of admission requirements that exists across pharmacy schools. Approximately 50% require the Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT) and/or the Test of English as a Foreign Language Test (TOEFL). The student must determine if the school of interest requires any standardized test. Testing dates for the PCAT vary from year to year. If required, information on testing dates can be found at <http://www.pharmcas.org/applicants/tests.htm>. When registering for the test, the student should arrange for PCAT scores to be sent directly to PharmCAS. The student will find information concerning this on the above link. To obtain information on PCAT registration and test taking centers, call 1-800-622-3231 or write to:

Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT)

Harcourt Assessment
Customer Relations - PCAT
19500 Bulverde Road
San Antonio, TX 78259

The majority of pharmacy schools participate in the Pharmacy College Application Service (PharmCAS) located on the web at <http://www.pharmcas.org>. This service opens on June 10th and it is advisable for students to begin the application process as early as possible. The student should register and complete the on-line application form to initiate this process. As with any professional school, the application is not complete until all transcripts from all colleges and universities are submitted.

Requirements for letters of recommendation or an evaluation from a pre-health committee also vary between pharmacy schools. It is the student's responsibility to determine which, if any or both, are required. If necessary, the student should schedule an interview with the pre-health committee as soon as PCAT scores are available and the PharmCAS application is complete. Obtaining the evaluation from the pre-health committee is often the rate-limiting step for completion of the application. The student will minimize any delays by scheduling an interview with the pre-health committee as early as possible. To accomplish this, the student requires four components: three letters of recommendation, a personal statement indicating the student's motivation and intent, a list of pharmacy schools the student intends to apply to, and a resume summarizing all relevant work and volunteer experience. Once assembled, the student should submit these items to the pre-health committee and schedule an interview. The pre-health committee will prepare and submit the evaluation based on the packet and the interview. The sooner this interview is scheduled, the sooner the student's application is complete. The ambitious student will schedule an interview as soon as the PCAT score is available. This requires the student to have the letters of recommendation, personal statement, list of pharmacy schools, and resume by mid-May of the junior year.

The student should continue to acquire relevant service or work experience during the summer months following completion of the junior year if required. It is also prudent to review prerequisites and plan to register for any final requirements during the senior year.

Senior Year:

Make one final inspection of the prerequisite sheet compiled during the freshman year and make certain nothing is deficient. If any thing is lacking, it must be completed prior to entry into pharmacy school. If all prerequisites are finished, the student should enroll in course work for personal enrichment and enjoy their last year of college.