

# UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

## *Admissions Committee Procedures and Criteria*

The mission of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine is to improve the health and well-being of individuals and populations through cutting-edge biomedical research, innovative educational programs in medicine and biomedical science, and leadership in academic medicine. We strive to implement this mission with the highest professional and ethical standards, in a culture of diversity and inclusiveness, and in an environment that enables each individual to develop to his or her fullest potential. Acceptable applicants come from widely diversified backgrounds; small colleges and large universities, large cities and rural areas; those who have purely scientific emphasis and those who have majored in the arts, history or literature; those who have pursued any of a wide range of extracurricular activities or work experience (e.g. human service organizations, sports, arts, politics or other activities). Inevitably, the importance of several criteria used in evaluation will vary with each individual applicant. Broadly educated students with intelligence, integrity, energy, creativity and motivation are sought. A holistic process is used to assess candidates. Delineated below are the details by which candidates for admission shall be determined in order to carry out the School's mission.

### A. Definitions

1. "UPSOM" means the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.
2. "Committee" means the UPSOM Admissions Committee.
3. "Dean" means the individual who holds the position of the Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences and Dean, School of Medicine.
4. "Associate Dean" means the individual who holds the position of Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid.
5. "Assistant Dean" means the individual who holds the position of Assistant Dean of Admissions.
6. "Chair" means the individual who will lead and facilitate the Admissions Committee meetings.
7. "GAP" (Guaranteed Admit Program) means the special program for high school seniors who are admitted to the University of Pittsburgh as an undergraduate and guaranteed admissions to UPSOM as long as program requirements are met.
8. "Executive Committee" means the annual sub-committee comprised of current experienced Admissions Committee members appointed to advise the Associate Dean with key Committee decisions.
9. "LCME" means the Liaison Committee on Medical Education.
10. "AMCAS" means the American Medical College Application Service.
11. "AAMC" means the Association of American Medical Colleges.
12. "MCAT" means the Medical College Admissions Test.
13. "Subcommittee" means an ad hoc committee appointed by the Associate Dean from current Admissions Committee members to consider waitlist applicants, special program applicants, and other decisions in the admissions process.
14. "SPAEP" means the UPSOM Summer Premedical Academic Enrichment Program
15. "Linkage Program" means those candidates applying through post baccalaureate programs with which the University of Pittsburgh has a formal agreement to consider for admission without the use of a MCAT score.
16. "Waitlist Subcommittee" means the annual sub-committee comprised of current experienced Admissions Committee members appointed to make decisions on acceptance for applicants placed on the waitlist.

### B. General

The Committee is responsible for rendering admissions decisions on students applying to the UPSOM for the Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) degree. The actions of the Committee shall be guided by instructions provided from the Dean and given at

the beginning of each admissions cycle. In addition, as part of the policy of the school to encourage diversity in the student body, the Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion will provide information to the committee at the beginning of the interview season, to update the committee on the status of candidates who are underrepresented in medicine (URIM). This update will include information on the numbers of URIM candidates applying and matriculating to medical school on a national basis as well as the local figures.

C. The Admissions Committee

1. Committee Composition

The Committee shall consist of a minimum of 20 faculty members and 18 medical school student members. The Associate Dean of Admissions shall function as Chair of the Committee. In the absence of the Associate Dean and for consideration of the GAP and Linkage candidates, the Chair will be the Assistant Dean of Admissions. The Chair is always a non-voting member. The Associate Dean of Admissions shall nominate members for the committee from the Interviewing Committee, chosen to assure a broad representation of the various departments and divisions. The committee will then vote on new members from this pool. Student members, without professionalism issues or at academic risk, are eligible to apply for the representative positions and will be chosen by an election with senior members of Admissions and Student Affairs along with class presidents and the president of the student body. All Committee members undergo unconscious bias training.

2. Membership Term

Faculty members serve a term of three years. Faculty terms may be renewed as necessary to ensure appropriate faculty representation and distribution of Committee workload as determined by the Associate Dean of Admissions. Student representatives serve a term of one year and are eligible to apply each admissions cycle while enrolled in the UPSOM.

3. Meetings

Regular meetings will be scheduled to rank candidates, provide important admissions information and to make key decisions in the admissions process. For decisions, a quorum of 13 voting members with no more than six voting student members is required. Approximately, one third of the faculty and one third of student members will be present to vote at ranking meetings. Therefore, student representatives will hold six voting seats which will be rotated among the eighteen student members. Special meetings will be scheduled to consider Transfer students, Linkage Program candidates, Summer Premedical Academic Enrichment Program (SPAEP) Early Assurance candidates and those entering under the Guaranteed Admit Program (GAP). Special meetings will be chaired by the Assistant Dean.

D. General Administrative Admissions Policy

1. Nondiscrimination

UPSOM complies with applicable federal, state, and local laws related to admissions, including, but not limited to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX, the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. More specifically, UPSOM shall not deny any otherwise qualified application admission based on his or her race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital, veteran, or disability.

2. Applicant Technical Standards

The UPSOM's technical standards for students can be found at [https://www.medadmissions.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/PolicyonTechnicalStandards\\_000.pdf](https://www.medadmissions.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/PolicyonTechnicalStandards_000.pdf). Further, the Faculty of the School of Medicine endorses the Report of the AAMC Special Advisory Panel on Technical Standards for Medical School Admissions (January 25, 1979), which can be found at

3. Citizenship Status

All persons having at least one full year of higher education in the United States or Canada and otherwise meets all admission requirements for matriculation may apply to the UPSOM regardless of citizenship status.

4. Transfer or Admission with Advanced Standing

Individuals interested in transferring to the UPSOM will only be considered, if space permits, for the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) year of the curriculum and only from LCME accredited M.D. degree granting medical schools. Each year, the UPSOM Registrar, in consultation with the Associate Dean of Student Affairs and the Office of Admissions and Financial Aid, determines the availability of entry in the upcoming third year class. Those wishing to transfer must have a compelling personal reason (usually involving a health related issue or family situation), the academic credentials (GPA & MCAT) within the same range of our matriculated students and be in good academic standing with his/her current medical school. Applicants are required to complete an application (compelling reason for transfer and prior extracurricular activities), provide a Dean's letter of recommendation (applicant is in good standing and will successfully complete the first two years of a medical school curriculum), and provide documentation that the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1 is taken prior to matriculation. Students wishing to transfer solely on the basis of academics or dissatisfaction with their current medical school will not be considered. Qualified applicants, as determined by the Associate Dean of Admissions and the Executive Director for Admissions, will be extended an invitation to interview. During the interview, the applicant must articulate and demonstrate, to the Associate Dean of Admissions and an Admissions Committee faculty member, excellent communication skills, the compelling reason for the transfer and have the relevant characteristics comparable to those of the medical students in the third year class. After interviews are completed, the recommendation of whether to admit transfer applicant(s) is made by a committee consisting of the Associate Dean of Admissions, the Assistant Dean of Admissions, the Associate or Assistant Dean of Student Affairs and the Executive Director for Admissions and Financial Aid. The recommendation will be approved or rejected by the Admissions Committee at the spring special programs meeting. (See Medical Student Transfer Policy at:

<https://www.medadmissions.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/Medical%20Student%20Transfer%20Policy%20January%202019.pdf>).

5. Delayed Matriculation

Students seeking to delay matriculation must do so in writing specifying the reasons for the deferral. The Associate Dean of Admissions may grant such deferral to a limited number of accepted candidates. Accepted candidates who are granted the delayed matriculation must reapply to the UPSOM in the year they wish to enter following the deferral. A progress report from the applicant or his/her preceptor must be sent to the Admissions office by January of the year in which the student will matriculate. Those approved for deferral must sign and adhere to a Restricted Deferral Agreement given by the Associate Dean of Admissions.

E. Admissions Committee Procedures

1. The UPSOM utilizes the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS), whose processes can be found at <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/understanding-application-process/>.
2. Applications for admission shall undergo a screening process by the Associate Dean, Assistant Dean or other

committee members (including administrative members). Suitable applicants will be invited for interviews on the basis of the criteria established annually by the Committee.

3. No student shall be accepted to UPSOM for the M.D. degree without an interview. Faculty interviewers will be provided a limited amount of information from the AMCAS application (this will include the personal statement, pertinent essays and activities but will exclude the applicant's GPA, MCAT score, and letters of recommendation). Student interviewers will only be provided the applicant's name and undergraduate institution from the AMCAS application.
4. Each interviewed applicant shall be ranked by Committee members after reviewing a minimum of the contents of the application summary face sheet. The entire application is available on-line under our secure website for the committee members to review. At the end of the ranking process, all candidates interviewed who have not withdrawn, will be categorized into four groups by committee decision 1) acceptance; 2) waitlist tier one; 3) waitlist tier two; 4) rejection. Once a candidate is placed into one of these four categories, the ranking is no longer used for decisions to admit from the waitlist.
5. As withdrawals occur, applicants will be nominated from the waitlist by a subcommittee consisting of experienced admissions committee members selected by the Associate Dean, who chairs this subcommittee but does not vote. The full Committee delegates authority to make decisions on admission from the waitlist to this subcommittee. Suitability for the school, as determined by our mission statement, will be considered in the waitlist decisions. The waitlist tier position will be one parameter used in deciding admission from the waitlist. These decisions will be made at special meetings scheduled by the subcommittee or through email correspondence and will be communicated to the full Committee.
6. Only members present, either in person (which includes virtual or online) or by phone can participate in decisions.
7. Formal notification of Committee actions shall be sent to each applicant by the end of the admissions review process (generally the end of January or early February). Under no circumstances, unless authorized by the Associate Dean, shall the actions of the Committee be imparted to anyone before formal notification be received by the applicant. All Committee actions are deemed final.

F. Criteria for Selection of Candidates

1. Medical College Admissions Tests

The scores achieved by an applicant on this national test give the Committee some indication of the applicant's intellectual achievement. The MCAT must be taken no more than three years prior to application. MCAT scores are required of all applicants with the exception of those applicants who: (1) are guaranteed admission through the University of Pittsburgh Guaranteed Admissions program (GAP); (2) apply through the Linkage Programs between the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and the approved post baccalaureate programs; (3) are entering the Oral Maxillofacial Surgery Program; and (4) are entering through Early Assurance through the Summer Premedical Academic Enrichment Program (SPAEP).

2. Academic Quality Point Average

An applicant's Quality Point Average (QPA) must be interpreted in terms of the selectivity of the college attended. Specific major courses of undergraduate study are not defined by the Committee; however, college programs should be designed to enable the student to assimilate the great quantity of scientific information required in medical school. In addition, knowledge of the humanities, the behavioral sciences and the arts are essential in order to best serve the demands of the medical profession. An interest in continued learning and an aptitude for scholarly pursuits is

indispensable.

3. Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are important in the selection process. These may include work experiences, research endeavors, and activities demonstrating an indicated concern for one's fellow human, interest in learning more about medicine or other professions and occupations, talent in the arts or leadership ability.

4. Letters of Recommendation

No limit shall be placed on the number of letters of recommendation an applicant can submit; however, the evaluation and recommendation of the official premedical committee of the student's undergraduate college is preferred. If such a committee does not exist, then letters from different departments, preferably from senior faculty are preferred. Letters from research mentors are also welcomed. While any three individual letters will be accepted, it is preferred that the applicant submit three academic letters. Letters from non-academic sources constituting character references are helpful if the author has direct and personal knowledge of the applicant. Anonymous letters concerning an applicant shall not be considered.

5. Written Essays

All essays, written as part of the AMCAS application and essays specific to our institution, are reviewed.

6. Personal & Academic Journey

The background of each applicant will be considered with particular attention paid to any disadvantage that the applicant has overcome. This disadvantage may be, but not limited to any of the following, financial, geographic, underserved, socioeconomic, or familial.

7. Performance on Interview Day

Since no student shall be accepted for admission without an interview, the interview day constitutes a very important part of the criteria for admission. Interviewers shall be designated from the faculty by the Associate Dean and are chosen for their ability to obtain insight into the applicant's personal competencies, as determined by the Committee, and to communicate this information to the Committee. Interviewers shall not have access to academic credentials and objective test scores, since it is important that the interview report stand as a separate, unbiased source of information to the Committee. In addition to faculty interviews, interviews by enrolled students of the School of Medicine are also conducted. The interview day may also include group activities during which the applicants' performance is also evaluated, particularly for teamwork and leadership abilities.

G. Applicant File Security

The application file or any part thereof, of any applicant shall be accessible only to members of the Committee, members of the Office of Admissions & Financial Aid, and the Dean or his/her representatives.

H. Follow-up

The Associate Dean will regularly provide the Committee with updates or reports on the outcomes of each matriculated class (never distinguishing or identifying individual students). The outcomes could help identify features of applications that are associated with risk of failures, including unprofessional behavior in medical school, as well as features that are associated with success, such as election to any academic honors, societies or organizations or the recipient of any awards (i.e. Humanism Award).

**SCOPE**

This policy applies to:

- Applicants to the MD degree program
- Admissions Committee members, including faculty and student members
- Admissions Interviewers
- Associate and Assistant Deans for Admissions and Financial Aid
- Staff and faculty of the Office of Admissions and Financial Aid

**POLICY AUTHOR(S)**

- Office of Admissions and Admissions Committee

**RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- Policy on Technical Standards for the Admission, Retention, and Graduation of Applicants and Medical Students
- Policy on Transfer Students

**REFERENCES**

- LCME Standard 10.3: Policies Regarding Student Selection/Progress and Their Dissemination: The faculty of a medical school establish criteria for student selection and develop and implement effective policies and procedures regarding, and make decisions about, medical student application, selection, admission, assessment, promotion, graduation, and any disciplinary action. The medical school makes available to all interested parties its criteria, standards, policies, and procedures regarding these matters.

**APPROVALS**

Admissions Committee: 09/08/2021

Educational Policy Committee: 10/12/2021

Executive Committee: 10/29/2021

Dean: {DATE - mm/dd/yyyy}