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Post-Baccalaureate Primer For Prospective Medical School Applicants

There are Two Types of Programs

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Academic Enhancer Programs

Academic Enhancer programs are for candidates who want to improve their academic records. Programs offer undergraduate coursework or graduate coursework, a combination of both or the opportunity to receive a master's degree. Programs run from 1 to 2 years. They may have connections (called linkages) with health professions schools.

Some things to think about:

- Do you want to remain at your undergraduate school for another year, or would you prefer to go somewhere new?
- What type of program do you want - formal or informal?
- Do you need to improve your MCAT score? If yes, select programs that are geared to MCAT course content and offer prep courses.
- Consider the advantages and disadvantages of full-time programs and part-time programs?
- Would you best be served by taking courses at the undergraduate level or graduate level courses or both?
- Do you need support services? Does the program provide them?
- What is the tuition? Do you need financial aid? Is it available and for how long?
- Do you care about location?
- Do you want a day or evening program? Do you need to work while taking courses?

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Career Path Changer Programs

Career Path Changer Programs are for candidates who have taken few, if any, sciences courses. They offer basic coursework; some offer advanced courses as well. Programs run from 1 to 2 years. Some have connections with health professions schools.

These programs fall into three categories.

Formal Programs:

- Well organized
- Structured - students go through the programs in an ordered way
- Selective – the application a process is rigorous, including an application, recommendation letters and sometimes an interview
- May have relationships with medical schools

Informal Programs:

- Less structured than formal programs
- Larger than formal programs
- More flexible regarding start and end times than formal programs
- Less selective - admission policies tend to be open
- May have relationships with medical schools

Continuing Education "Programs" are:

- Not structured
- Not selective
- Not specifically related to premed study

Cautionary note: If you are thinking about taking individual courses rather than participating in a formal program, you should take two science courses per semester, at a four-year college, to show medical schools that you can handle the academic load.

Timeline: There is no standard application deadline for premed post-bac programs. Some schools align their programs with their undergraduate schedule, while others offer multiple cycles throughout the calendar year, each with its own set of deadlines. Still other schools offer rolling admissions, and a few offer combinations of the all of the above. Check with each program that you are considering to learn its deadlines and response timelines.

Questions to ask:

- **Will I be guaranteed a seat in the classes and labs I need to take?**
- **Is tutoring or other academic assistance available?**
- **Will I receive a composite letter of evaluation? Who will it be from?**
- **Do you offer workshops on applying to medical school?**
- **Will I be assigned a pre-health advisor?**
- **Will I be part of a community of students?**

Resources:

- Association of American Medical Colleges
  https://apps.aamc.org/postbac/#/index
- National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions
  http://www.naahp.org/PublicResources/PostBaccalaureateOptions/PostBacArticle2.aspx
- The Student Doctor Network
  http://www.studentdoctor.net
- Individual program websites
- Pre-health advisors at your undergraduate institution

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