

Timeline for Pharmacy Admissions

The following timeline is meant as a general guide to help pre-pharmacy students focus on the most important tasks at any given time. It is based off a typical 4-year plan for graduating with a B.S. degree from OSU. Your plan may be slightly different, especially if you transferred to OSU or attend part-time. Check in with your academic advisor about your progress regularly and work with your advisor to develop an individualized plan that works for you.

First Year

- 1. Adjust to college coursework and build a good foundation of grades and knowledge. This is a challenge for many students, so be sure to seek help from on-campus resources like your instructors, TAs, the Mole Hole, Math Learning Center, and Academic Success Center.
- 2. Shadow, volunteer, or interview a pharmacist to confirm this career field is a good fit for you.
Not sure about pharmacy? Check out other options with the "Guide to Related Careers and Majors for Pre-Pharmacy Students".

Sophomore Year

- 1. Gain experiences through volunteering, working, undergraduate research, study abroad, etc.
- 2. Assess your academic performance. Most successful pharmacy applicants have a 3.0 overall GPA or higher. A strong applicant would have a 3.5 GPA or higher. How do your grades look so far? What changes do you need to make in order to improve?

Junior Year

Junior Year, Fall Term:

- 1. Assess your academic progress. When will you graduate? When will you apply to pharmacy school?
- 2. Gain any final experiences this year that you want listed on your application. In general, try to have:
 - a. An experience in a health care setting
 - b. An experience working with different types of people (age, socioeconomic status, etc.)
 - c. An experience directly related to pharmacy (shadowing, working, etc.)
 - d. An experience lasting at least one year to show long-term commitment
- 3. Consider who you will ask to write your letters of reference for your PharmCAS application.
You will need between two and four letters. We recommend at least one academic reference (i.e. professor) and one professional reference (i.e. health care professional, work supervisor).
- 4. Focus on your grades. This year are the last grades pharmacy schools will see on your transcripts.

When should I apply?

The pharmacy application cycle begins in the summer when PharmCAS opens and ends the following fall when new students enter PharmD programs. The earliest students can apply is the summer before the year that they will finish the prerequisites for the PharmD program(s) where they wish to apply. Most students on a typical four year plan apply the summer prior to senior year. Then they complete their prerequisites senior year, graduate in spring, and (hopefully) begin pharmacy school in the fall. This typical timeline may or may not be right for you. Consider when you want to begin pharmacy school, whether your grades and experience are competitive enough at this point to gain admission, and whether you feel ready to apply.

Junior Year, Winter Term:

- 1. Learn about different pharmacy schools using PharmCAS School Directory and pharmacy school websites.
- 2. Learn about the application process via PharmCAS Preparing to Apply articles and school websites. For most students, applying to pharmacy school is a two-part process (the general PharmCAS application followed by supplemental applications for individual programs).
- 3. Make decisions about the PCAT. Will you take PCAT? When? If taking the PCAT, register and schedule your exam now (registration opens early March).
As of 2015, 88-percent of PharmD programs require the PCAT.

Should I consider a gap year?

For various reasons, students may choose to wait a year or two before applying to pharmacy school. The time between finishing college and beginning professional school is often referred to as a gap year (or years). One advantage of a gap year is that it allows pharmacy schools to see your full academic record, including senior year, when evaluating your application. Strong grades in challenging science courses in senior year can increase students' competitiveness. Many students work in a health care setting (i.e. pharmacy technician, medical scribe) during the gap year(s) in order to gain additional experience, save up money, and/or gain resident status for future in-state tuition eligibility. One challenge is that students taking a gap year need to be intentional about staying in contact with professors from the past in order to obtain strong letters of recommendation.

PCAT Dates:

{
July
September
October/November
January*
}

*Some schools do not consider January scores

Junior Year, Spring Term:

- 1. Attend on-campus events for pharmacy applicants.
For example, the Health Professions Fair in mid-April brings admissions representatives from 60+ professional schools to campus. Watch the listserv for other events such as the personal statement workshop and presentations by the OSU College of Pharmacy.
- 2. Decide where you will apply to pharmacy school.
- 3. Create a personalized timeline for the application process, including PharmCAS and supplemental application deadlines, PCAT date, and your goal dates for completing each piece of the application.
- 4. Create a budget for the admissions process including PharmCAS and supplemental application fees, PCAT fees, travel to interviews, interview attire, tuition deposits, etc.
- 5. Review the prerequisite courses for each of your PharmD program selections. Be sure that you have or are able to complete all of the required courses.
Contact program representatives directly with any questions. Many programs will do a prerequisite review if you email them your unofficial transcripts.
- 6. Plan your senior year classes and check the plan with your academic advisor. You will need to list these planned courses in your PharmCAS application.
- 7. Decide how you will study for the PCAT.
We recommend beginning to study 2-3 months prior to your exam date. Options include study guide books, official practice tests, and test prep courses. Only use resources for your test year (not old editions).

How many schools should I select?

We recommend selecting 3-5 pharmacy schools where you match or exceed the statistics of the previous entering class in terms of average GPAs, average PCAT scores, and desired experiences. It is okay for one of your schools to be a bit of a stretch where you don't quite measure up to the program statistics, but the majority of the schools you select should be realistic in terms of competitiveness. Program statistics are available on school websites and the PharmCAS School Directory. Nationally, the average number of pharmacy schools per applicant is 5.6. The average for OSU students is 4.2. Carefully research the pharmacy schools' curriculum, mission, practical experiences, dual-degrees (if applicable), and other opportunities to make sure the school is a good fit for you. Do not apply to any school that you would not be willing to attend if that school was your only acceptance.

But I don't want to move away from Oregon or the West Coast!

Where you apply is a personal decision based on many factors. However, you may be limiting your chances of admission by selecting only pharmacy schools in a narrow geographic region. For a more complete explanation, please see "The Case for Applying Broadly to Pharmacy Schools" document.

“Application Summer”:

- 1. Start your PharmCAS application as soon as it opens (usually mid-July).
- 2. Work on the most time-intensive components of the application first:
 - a. Personal statement
 - b. Activities
 - c. Entering coursework.

Questions? First check the detailed explanations in the PharmCAS Help Center, and then email PharmCAS if still needed.
- 3. Send official transcripts to PharmCAS from all colleges/universities attended. Arrange to have the PharmCAS transcript request form included with each transcript.
- 4. Request letters of reference from selected individuals. Letter writers submit their references electronically through PharmCAS.

We recommend asking no less than one month prior to your first application deadline (further in advance is preferred). Provide your letter writers with a copy of your resume and personal statement to help them write a personalized letter.
- 5. Apply for PharmCAS fee waiver if qualified based on income guidelines (usually due in September).

Apply early since waivers are granted on a first-come, first-serve basis.
- 6. Submit your PharmCAS application for Early Decision if desired (deadline is usually early September).

Should I apply via Early Decision?

Early Decision (ED) can be a good option for students who have a strong first choice pharmacy school. Students may only apply to one school through ED and agree to enroll if accepted. It is a good way to lock in your spot early in the application cycle if you have one school you would prefer above all others. Applying via Early Decision communicates to the pharmacy school that they are your first choice, and some schools give special or priority consideration to ED applicants. The downside is that ED may reduce your choices. Since you can only apply to one school in the ED round, you will not be able to compare between schools or admissions offers. However, if the selected school decides not to admit you in the ED round, they may reconsider you in the regular decision round later on. Also, at this point you would be free to apply to other pharmacy schools. Not all pharmacy schools participate in Early Decision, so if your first choice school does not use ED, then applying as an Early Decision applicant is not advisable.

PharmCAS Advisor Release:

We encourage you to check “Yes” on the Advisor Release statement in the privacy section of the PharmCAS application. Checking “yes” allows the primary OSU pre-pharmacy advisor to view your application in order to provide assistance and track your application throughout the process. This can be very beneficial to you, especially if any issues arise.

Senior Year

- 1. Submit your PharmCAS application (regular deadlines – November through March).

Apply early! Schools that use rolling admissions will have more interview spots available early in the application cycle than later.
- 2. Submit supplemental applications (deadlines and processes vary by school).
- 3. Complete the PharmCAS Fall Update after fall term grades post and send updated transcripts (December).
- 4. Prepare for pharmacy school interviews.

Mock interviews are available from the OSU Career Development Center. Some pharmacy schools use a Multiple Mini-Interview (MMI) format while others use a traditional format. Learn about what these mean.
- 5. Consider your secondary plan. What will you do next year if not admitted in this application cycle?
- 6. Interview at pharmacy schools (usually November – April).
- 7. Assess your status at each school. Consider adding one or more additional pharmacy schools if you have not received interview offers by this point (February – March).
- 8. Accept admission and pay deposit at pharmacy school of your choice. Or take steps toward pursuing your secondary plan if not accepted.

What if I don't get accepted?

This question is on nearly every student's mind during their application year. Minimize your stress by making a secondary (aka. back-up) plan. If you plan to reapply to pharmacy school, identify the weaknesses in your application and consider how you can improve (i.e. improve grades, gain more experience, etc.). If you do not plan to reapply, consider why you wanted to pursue pharmacy and explore other career paths that involve those same elements. For further advice on this subject, see the “Alternative Options for Pharmacy School Applicants” document.