



The University of Texas at Austin
Health Professions Office
College of Natural Sciences

PRE-PHARMACY GUIDE



UT Austin
PAI 5.03
512-471-3172
Visit our Website



Table of Contents

Doctor of Pharmacy.....	<u>3</u>
Selecting A Major	<u>3</u>
Pre-Pharmacy Self-Assessment.....	<u>4-10</u>
Pre-Pharmacy Prerequisites Time Line & Courses	<u>11</u>
Pharmacy School Application & Activities.....	<u>12</u>
Pharmacy Schools in Texas and Important Links	<u>12-13</u>
Taking Courses Away from UT	<u>13</u>
Studying Abroad.....	<u>13-14</u>
Claiming AP/IB Credit	<u>14-15</u>
To Q or Not to Q.....	<u>16-17</u>
Academic Assistance	<u>18</u>
PCAT Information	<u>18-19</u>
Need a GPA Booster – Post Bacc Information	<u>19</u>
Research Schools Before You Apply	<u>20</u>
Time Line for Applying to Pharmacy School	<u>21</u>
Application Services	<u>22</u>
Letters of Reference	<u>22</u>
Personal Statement.....	<u>22</u>
Interview Tips/Preparation	<u>22-23</u>
Research Current Events in Pharmacy & Health Care	<u>23</u>
Financing Your Pharmacy Education	<u>24</u>
Summary of Health Professions Office Services	<u>25</u>

Preface

The information presented in this document provides important resources for UT Austin students planning on applying to Pharmacy School.

Additional Pre-Health Professions resources including prerequisites, time lines and application information for the following Health Professions: Dentistry, Physician Assistant Studies, Pharmacy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Optometry and Veterinary Medicine can be found on the Health Professions website:

<http://cns.utexas.edu/health-professions>

Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.)

Pharmacy is a doctoral health profession in which licensed professionals provide information about medications to patients and health care professionals. As "medication experts," pharmacists are concerned with safeguarding the public's health in matters relating to medication distribution and use and disease state management.

Pharmacists play a vital role in improving patient care through the medicine and information they provide. Pharmacists dispense medications prescribed by physicians and other health practitioners and monitor patient health. They advise physicians and other health practitioners on the selection, dosages, interactions, and side effects of medications.

Individuals who hold a Pharm.D., can also be pharmaceutical scientists, who are expertly trained to discover, develop, test and manufacture new medications. Typical pharmaceutical scientists spend most of their time in a laboratory discovering and learning how different compounds interact with disease-causing cells and organisms. In addition, they investigate how these compounds interact with the human body to ultimately determine if they can become new drugs.

For more information on pursuing a degree in pharmacy, see the [American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy website](#).

Additional information: <http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/Field/9/Pharmacy>

Selecting a Major

For many pharmacy school programs, a bachelor's degree is not required; these schools only require the completion of the pre-pharmacy pre-requisites to apply. **However**, some schools may require a bachelor's degree so check with the schools you wish to apply to beforehand.

If your pharmacy schools require a bachelor's degree or if you want to complete one before applying to pharmacy school, what should you major in at UT? A common myth is that you have to major in a science degree as a pre-pharmacy student. We recommend that you choose a degree based on your interests. It is important to choose a major based on your academic interests rather than one that you think looks good to pharmacy schools. Choose a major that you are passionate about, whether it is a major in liberal arts, business, public health, or something else entirely. Completing the prerequisites for pharmacy school can be accomplished regardless of your major.

Pharmacy schools accept students who show broad interests in their academic coursework through a non-science major. Choose a major that may serve as an alternate career path in case you change your mind about pharmacy school.

Explore majors/health professions further at one or more of the following resources:

- My Next Move <https://www.mynextmove.org/>
- Occupational Outlook Handbook <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/home.htm>
- Explore Health Careers: <http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/home>

Pre-Pharmacy Self-Assessment

The assessment below is designed to assess pharmacy school application strengths. If you are a new Pre-Pharmacy student use this assessment as a planning guide for your Pre-Pharmacy Pathway. (Please check out the New-Pre Health Students page under Current Student on the Health Professions website: <http://cns.utexas.edu/health-professions>).

Are you working towards submitting a well-rounded application?

Start by Developing Your Personal Qualities

Individuals who are successful in their pursuit of a health care career possess qualities that they develop as young adults. These include: Good Judgment, Self-Discipline, Leadership/Accountability, Reliability, Motivation/Persistence, Honesty, Maturity, Compassion/Empathy, Integrity, Intellectual Curiosity, Strong Work Ethic, and Cultural Competency. Develop these qualities through the experiences and activities you choose to get involved with.

I want to develop my following qualities:

How am I going to develop these qualities (be specific)?

Here are some ideas to get you started:

Get Involved & Gain Experience

There are several ways you can get involved. Get involved in what you are interested in. This is key! There are many things you can do to build your application that include but are not limited to: volunteering, shadowing, studying abroad, and/or participating in a summer program. Get involved on campus, tutor, and mentor, teach, and participate in Rec Sports. The list goes on and on. If you are considering adding study abroad to your list, check out the study abroad section in this guide. Always remember to be yourself and do what you enjoy.

Volunteering

Experience giving back to the community will be looked upon favorably by professional school admissions committees. If some of your volunteering is in a pharmacy or other health care setting, you can combine volunteering with exposure to the field. A community service activity in which you are directly helping people face-to-face is of the most value, and making an ongoing commitment to that community service gives you time to grow and gain real value from the experience.

Volunteer Experience	Dates (can list time period or individual dates)	Hours	Responsibilities

What have I learned about myself through these experiences?

Have I involved myself in a diverse set of experiences? What skills have I enhanced/gained through these experiences? (For example: I have become a better communicator through my volunteering experiences at the local hospital – explain how you have done this.)

I want to explore the following volunteer activities:

Quick Tip:

Volunteering is required for some pharmacy schools. It is a good idea to balance your volunteering and make sure to have some of your volunteering in a health care setting. Track your volunteer hours, as most professional school applications will ask for details of the time you spent volunteering. Keep a record of your volunteer supervisor(s), including name(s) and title(s).

Shadowing

Shadowing means working directly with a health care provider in their professional environment. You have the opportunity to observe how they plan their day, how they interact with their patients, how they chose their career, and how they feel about current events!

Pharmacist Name or Name of Experience	Specialty	Hours	Type of Experience: Shadow/Volunteer/Paid

What have I learned from these experiences?

I want to reach out to the following pharmacists to inquire about shadowing:

Quick Tip

Finding a health care provider who is willing to allow you to shadow can be a challenge, but it is worth the effort. Many students start with their own health care providers. You may also network with other pre-health students to see where they have shadowed. [Check out HPO's Shadowing Resources](#)

Direct Patient Care Experience – Getting Your Pharmacy Technician Certificate!

It can be good to gain some hands-on experience to add to your application. Obtaining your pharmacy technician certification can help you in many ways. It can help you to get a job in the pharmacy field and gain valuable experience. It can also open doors for shadowing opportunities and is a good option to explore if you are considering applying to pharmacy school.

Steps to getting your Pharmacy Technician Certification:

- 1) Prepare for and take the Pharmacy Technician Certification Exam (PTCE)
 - The [Pharmacy Technician Certification Board](#) (PTCB) has a national certification program that enables pharmacy technicians to work more effectively with pharmacists to offer safe and effective patient care and service. PTCB administers a nationally accredited certification examination for pharmacy technicians which tests knowledge in all practice settings.
- 2) Apply for Pharmacy Technician Certification through PTCB.
- 3) Apply to become a Registered Pharmacy Technician in the state of Texas.
 - [Application](#) for Texas State Pharmacy Technician Registration Application. Complete this if you are certified by Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB).

Leadership

Leadership, which can be developed in many different ways, needs to be demonstrated. Think about how you are developing leadership qualities and skills. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Teaching / TA a course
- Get involved in student organizational leadership

Name of Organization	Position/Title (ex. Communication Director, President, Member, etc.)	Total participation time (ex. 2 years, 3 semesters, etc.)	Duties/Activities participated in with this organization/group

What is the most important thing I have learned about myself from these experiences?

Brainstorm some specific ways I can develop my leadership skills:

Student Organization Involvement

Extracurricular activities help you become a well-rounded student because you develop not only knowledge and thinking skills but also social skills, group work, empathy, team building, organizational and motivational skills.

I am a part of the following student orgs:

I want to join the following student orgs:

Quick Tip:

There are over 1000 registered student organizations on campus. There are close to 30 health-related organizations. Check the Office of the Dean of Students HornsLink website (<https://utexas.collegiatelink.net/Organizations>) for a searchable database of student orgs.

Academics

Academics include your overall and science GPA's and PCAT Scores. How well are you doing? Are you taking between 14-17 credit hours per semester? Are you keeping your grades up? Use the GPA calculator in your UT Direct account to figure out your GPA.

Overall GPA* _____

*This includes all course taken at UT and other institutions

Science GPA _____

Quick Tip

To be competitive for pharmacy school, you will need average overall and science GPA's of at least 3.5 or above, depending on the schools you plan on applying to. This means you need to be making A's and B's with more A's than B's. If you are behind in your classes, don't wait until you get your first poor test score to ask for help. Check out [Sanger Learning Center](#) for more information on academic assistance.

My PCAT Scale Score/Percentile Rank:

Writing/Mean ___/___ Verbal Ability ___/___ Biology ___/___ Chemistry ___/___

Reading Comprehension ___/___ Quantitative Ability ___/___ Composite ___/___

Quick Tip

On the current PCAT, the average of matriculated students have a Composite Percentile Rank of 50-70%. While you should aim for a 70-80%, each school may have different averages. Please see the [PSAR website](#) for more information on each Pharmacy school's requirements. Please see a Pre-Health Professions Coach if you have further PCAT questions, and check out the PCAT system portion of this guide.

Get in the Habit of Personal Reflection

Your insights about who you are as a person and how your experiences have shaped you will be of tremendous benefit when it is time to write your personal statement (a required part of your professional school application). Keep a journal handy so you can jot down your thoughts and observations!

Track Your Progress

What characteristics do I have that I feel will help me be an excellent pharmacist?

Have I had experience working with people from backgrounds different from my own? What impact has it had on me?

Why do I want to be a pharmacist?

Can you go beyond loving science and wanting to help? Remember there are many helping professions out there? Why this one?

Does your application reflect a diverse set of extracurricular activities over time? Y N

Have you shown consistency with your volunteer activities/community service? Y N

Get to Know Your Faculty

This can be challenging at UT Austin—the campus is huge and most of the classes in your first year have large numbers of participants. Even though the professors can sometimes seem tough or intimidating, most of them are very approachable one-on-one. Visit your professors during office hours, even if you are doing well in their class. It will make your request for a future letter of evaluation much easier.

Who are your letter writers?

I would like to ask the following faculty for letters of evaluation:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

I would like to ask the following fourth individual for a letter of evaluation; this letter will add a different dimension to my application:

- 1) _____

****Once you have completed this self-assessment, if you have not spoken with a Pre-Health Professions coach either through attending drop in's or during an appointment, we recommend that you do so in order to discuss these topics as well as your application strengths as a whole. Make sure to track your progress!*

Notes:

Pre-Pharmacy Prerequisites Timeline

This time line is an example of how UT Austin students may complete the pre-pharmacy course requirements for the Texas pharmacy schools.

Some Texas schools and many out-of-state pharmacy schools require the courses listed in Year 3; however, these courses are highly recommended to be well-prepared for any PharmD program.

[SEE COURSE DETAILS, FOOTNOTES, and UPDATES on the PREREQUISITE COURSES pdf on the PRE-PHARMACY PATHWAY PAGE under PREREQUISITES, TIME LINE & STATISTICS](#)

In addition to the courses below, complete the UT Austin Core Curriculum and plus any additional General Education and Science courses required by individual schools. See specific schools for details.

FIRST YEAR	<u>Fall</u> Calculus Chemistry I Biology I	<u>Spring</u> Statistics Chemistry II Chemistry Lab Biology II	<u>Summer</u> Physics I Physics I Lab
SECOND YEAR	<u>Fall</u> Organic Chemistry I Genetics Biology Lab Professional Comm. Skills	<u>Spring</u> Organic Chemistry II Organic Chemistry Lab Microbiology Microbiology Lab	<u>Summer</u> PCAT preparation Take PCAT July or Sept. Apply in July or August
THIRD YEAR	<u>Fall</u> Anatomy	<u>Spring</u> Physiology Physiology Lab	<u>Summer</u> Continue pharmacy experience and activities to become well-prepared for pharmacy school

NOTE:

Most students require a minimum of 3 years to complete requirements.

Many students complete a bachelor's degree and apply in the summer or early fall before Year 4 to start pharmacy school in Year 5.

First & Second Year Pre-Pharmacy Activities

First and Second Years

- + Subscribe to *HPOinfo e-mails* [here](#)
- + Take an average to heavy course load: 14-16 hours is considered a normal pre-pharmacy course load. It is okay to take 12-13 hours your first semester at UT Austin.
- + **Get to know your professors.** You will need faculty evaluations when you apply to pharmacy schools. Two from science faculty are recommended.
- + Meet with a pre-health professions coach in the Health Professions Office to explore health professions and to discuss your goals and preparation, especially how to make the most out of your first two years.
- + Declare a major by your second year on campus. Work with your academic advisor.
- + Get involved in extracurricular activities (*e.g.*, student organizations, volunteering, and shadowing in medical settings, community service).
- + Attend the Health Professions Fair each year, generally held in February or March, to visit with representatives from pharmacy schools and other health professions programs.
- + Keep viable career alternatives open.
- + Visit pharmacy school web sites; decide where you will app

Pharmacy Schools & Important Links

General information on the profession and a list of accredited programs in the United States are available at: [American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy](#)

There are seven fully accredited schools in Texas where one can earn a Pharm. D. degree.

Texas Pharmacy Schools (Public)

- [Texas A&M Rangel College of Pharmacy](#) (Kingsville and College Station)
- [Texas Southern University College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences](#) (Houston)
- [Texas Tech University HSC School of Pharmacy](#) (Amarillo and Abilene)
- [University of Houston College of Pharmacy](#) (Houston)
- [University of North Texas System, College of Pharmacy](#) (Fort Worth)
- [University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy](#) (Austin)

Texas Pharmacy Schools (Private)

- [University of the Incarnate Word, Feik School of Pharmacy](#) (San Antonio)

There are two new PharmD schools in Texas that are working toward accreditation status.

New Texas Pharmacy Schools (Public) – (See school sites for information on their current status.)

- [University of Texas at El Paso, School of Pharmacy](#) (El Paso) – [Pre-Candidate Status](#)
- [University of Texas at Tyler, Fisch College of Pharmacy](#) (Tyler) - [Candidate Status](#)

Important Links and Information:

See our [Pre-Pharmacy pathway](#) web page to learn more about preparing for and applying to Pharmacy schools.

Most Texas and out-of-state pharmacy programs use the **Pharmacy College Application Service (PharmCAS)** which usually opens during the summer. Students apply during the late summer and early fall, one year prior to starting pharmacy school. Application deadlines vary from school to school.

Useful links:

- [Pharmacy Career Information](#)
- [PharmCAS](#)
- [Pharmacy College Admission Test \(PCAT\)](#)
- [UT College of Pharmacy Admission Statistics](#)
- [Information for Foreign Students and Graduates](#)

Pharmacy School Prerequisite Courses

For the most updated and current Pharmacy school and prerequisite courses, please visit the Pre-Pharmacy Pathways page [here](#). Completion of the courses listed on this site will prepare you for Texas and most out-of state United States Pharmacy schools. If you need to find out the pre-requisites for an out of state school you can consult the [PSAR](#) admission requirements guide and/or also contact that particular schools admissions office and check out the [PharmCAS School Directory](#).

Can I take Courses Away From UT?

Completing your coursework at UT (your home institution) is considered best preparation for health professions schools. For students who find it necessary to take courses away from UT, we offer the following recommendations.

- KEY:** UT: Take classes at UT Austin
4YR: If necessary, okay to take class at other 4 year institution
CC: If necessary, okay to take class at community college

	Pre-Medical	Pre-Dental	Pre-Veterinary	Pre-Optometry	Pre-Pharmacy	Pre-Physician Asst	Pre-Physical Therapy	Pre-Occupational Therapy
Biology & Chemistry	UT	UT	UT	UT	UT	UT	UT	UT
Physics	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR or CC	Not Required	4YR or CC	4YR or CC
Statistics, Calculus	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR or CC	4YR or CC	4YR or CC	4YR or CC
English & Rhetoric	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR	4YR or CC	4YR or CC	4YR or CC
Other Pre-requisites	Generally, it seems to be okay to take other prereqs away from UT Austin, if needed; however, students should contact individual professional schools' admission offices for questions about specific courses.							

General Recommendations:

1. Taking courses away from UT can give the impression that the student is avoiding UT Austin's rigorous courses; therefore, it is important to earn excellent grades at both community colleges and other four-year institutions.
2. It generally appears to be okay with professional schools to take government and history requirements at other four-year institutions or community colleges.
3. For other general requirements students can check with professional schools' admission offices.

Studying Abroad?

Most health professions schools require that prerequisites be taken at U.S. accredited schools, and some will accept credits from Canadian accredited schools.

Although exchange program courses and some affiliated program courses are counted as in-residence credit by UT Austin, according to Texas state law, foreign course work cannot be counted in the GPAs for application to graduate and post-baccalaureate professional schools. The rules and policies can vary among the

professional schools. Students who plan to study abroad should research this carefully for the schools and application services they plan to apply to. Look in the education requirements, transcripts, and FAQ sections of their web sites for information about foreign course work and study abroad. [See example on next page.]

UT Austin faculty-led courses are “in-residence” courses as well as U.S. credits, and so courses like Organic Chemistry II (CH 320N) taught in Spain by UT Austin faculty can be used to satisfy a prerequisite; however, for many students taking these rigorous courses in only 5 weeks may not be recommended. It is important that pre-health professions students master these courses and retain this knowledge for success in entrance exams and in advanced studies.

The UT Austin Health Professions Office very strongly recommends that our students satisfy their health professions prerequisites at UT Austin. Use the study abroad opportunity to study the culture and language of that country and to satisfy general education requirements if approved by your academic advisor. Science courses that are not considered direct preparation for the health professions can be considered as well. (Examples: research, ecology, environmental science; but NOT cell, molecular, micro, anatomy, physiology which figure heavily into your preparation and readiness for professional school and the admissions committee’s assessment of your application).

STUDY ABROAD

If you participated in a “Study (Education) Abroad” program under the auspices of a US institution and the international course work appears on the U.S. transcript as regular itemized credit, only list the US institution on your PharmCAS application. Do NOT list the international (foreign) institution. Arrange for only the US transcript to be sent to PharmCAS. PharmCAS will process study-abroad course work in the same manner as US coursework.

OVERSEAS US INSTITUTIONS

PharmCAS recognizes “overseas US institutions” that are:

1. Located outside US borders,
2. Accredited by a regional institutional accrediting agency recognized by the US Department of Education, and
3. Use English as the primary language of instruction and documentation.

If you attended an overseas US institution listed below, report it to PharmCAS in the same manner as your US institutions by sending an official transcript to PharmCAS and listing all coursework on your PharmCAS application. US institutions with campuses overseas (such as the University of Maryland at Munich) are also considered US colleges for which transcripts are required and all course work must be listed. Please note that this list of overseas institutions is not all-inclusive. Contact PharmCAS if you have questions.

For full content on the PharmCAS web site see:

<http://www.pharmacas.org/preparing-to-apply/what-youll-need-to-apply/transcripts/>

What about Claiming AP/IB Credit for Prerequisites?

While we generally recommend that as a pre-health professions student you not “claim” AP/IB credit for prerequisite courses such as biology, chemistry, English, physics, and mathematics, these are important decisions that you must make and that require your careful consideration.

It may seem like a convenient way to eliminate hours from your degree plan and accelerate your path to professional school, but claiming credit can actually be detrimental to your preparation for success on entrance exams and in professional studies. Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses vary in rigor, and they are generally not equivalent to the rigor of UT Austin courses. However, your AP/IB courses can be very good preparation for taking these courses at UT Austin, providing the opportunity to

master that material, become better prepared, enhance your GPA, and demonstrate your academic ability and readiness for advanced study in health professions schools.

Unless you are academically very well prepared, it is best to start with the introductory courses. Please consult with your academic advisor for help in determining your readiness for higher level science courses. Most schools that accept AP/IB credit will expect you to take additional upper-division course work in that area of study.

Science Courses

Biology and Chemistry

If you claim credit in courses like BIO 311D and BIO 311C you may not be adequately prepared for the rigorous next course here at UT Austin, BIO 325 (Genetics). If you claim credit for CH 301 and CH 302, your first college level chemistry course at UT Austin will be CH 310M (Organic Chemistry I).

Honors students in biology and chemistry may claim test credit, register in the honors sequence for biology or chemistry, and will take additional upper-division credits in those areas, making up for the lack of first-year hours in those disciplines.

Your UT Austin faculty will expect you to be prepared to learn and understand the material conceptually and theoretically in order to understand test questions well enough to earn A's on your exams. They will teach material beyond the textbook that was not presented in your high school courses. You will be in second year courses with many students who took General Biology and General Chemistry here and are well prepared to handle the exams in the more advanced courses. They will set the standard for the grade scale or curve in your classes.

Physics

Physics is required to prepare for some health professions schools. In some cases, you will be tested on physics in your professional school entrance exam. We strongly recommend taking physics at the college level if you are preparing for a professional school that requires physics.

Calculus and Statistics

For the Texas medical schools, if you take statistics in the classroom here at UT Austin, you can use statistics to satisfy the math prerequisite. Then if your degree plan or any of your science courses require calculus, you can decide with your academic advisor whether to use credit-by-exam or take the course(s) in the classroom.

For all health professions schools, both in Texas and out-of-state, it is important to check their admissions web sites for any restrictions and preferences on credit-by-exam.

Non-Science Courses

It is usually acceptable to claim credit-by-exam for general education or core curriculum requirements such as history and government. Claiming this type of credit may give you time to take the courses that will prepare you for professional school and school entrance exams. On the other hand, critical thinking skills and an understanding of ethics, society, community, cultures, history, and human behavior are important for your success now and throughout your professional and personal life. Taking college level courses is a good way to develop these areas of knowledge.

English Literature, Rhetoric, Writing

If you claim credit for freshman writing and literature courses, we recommend taking additional courses in the classroom at the college level. Even if your high school verbal skills were strong, this type of academic skill weakens over time if you do not use it.

Verbal skills are extremely important to your success in your undergraduate course work, your entrance exams, in professional school, and as a health care professional. You must be able to read efficiently, at a good rate, with high comprehension and critical thinking skills. You must develop and maintain a good vocabulary, not just for the sciences but also for social and behavioral sciences, ethics, policies and regulations, and procedural information. Many admissions deans recommend reading well-written novels in addition to your textbook material.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Although most **pharmacy schools** accept AP credit for admission, **some schools** do not.

Review the information on our prerequisite courses lists and check individual school admissions websites or contact their admissions offices to be sure about each school's expectations. Taking courses in the college classroom will help you to compete for admission and to succeed in professional school. We strongly recommend that you use these courses as building blocks that will be the foundation for your future career.

To Q or Not to Q (or to switch to pass/fail)

No admissions committee for any health professional school likes to see "Q drops" on a transcript. This is an indication that something became too much for you to handle and that you chose to drop the course rather than see it through. There are times when the Q-drop is the best course of action, however, keep reading to see how your choice may affect your competitiveness for professional school.

More of a problem if:

1. **Q-dropping is a pattern on your transcript.** Two Q-drops can signal a possible pattern; three Q-drops create a definite pattern.
2. **It occurs in a context of inconsistent grades.** To be competitive for professional school, you should be making A's and B's with more A's than B's. If you have semesters which include B's and C's – even one or two C's, your grades are inconsistent by a professional school's standard.
3. **It's one of your prerequisite courses for professional school.** In this case, you might consider sticking with the class on a pass/fail basis. Then you only need to earn a D to earn credit. **Check with your academic advisor** about whether you can use the pass/fail option.
4. **It's any science-based course,** since the bulk of professional school curriculum will be science based.

Less of a problem if:

1. **It's the only Q-drop on your transcript at time of application to professional school.** You will want to choose wisely however, depending on the course. If you are taking a lower division or introductory course, keep in mind that upper division courses will be more challenging. You may want to hold on to that "one and only Q-drop" for later.
2. **It's a non-science course.** While professional schools want you to do well in all classes, they are likely to be less concerned if you dropped a sociology or business class.

What if there are non-academic reasons for needing to Q-drop?

Sometimes personal or family emergencies and other special circumstances make it difficult to find time for and focus on your studies. Sometimes for new students it is difficult to make the transition to UT. If you are dealing with something that is getting in the way of your school work, it is very important that you get help.

1. Talk to your academic advisor and/or an advisor in your college student division office.
2. Check out the support services at the [Counseling and Mental Health Center](#).

When is switching to pass/fail a better option?

This should really only be undertaken when you are reasonably certain that you can pass the class, in other words, earn at least a D. An F from a pass/fail course is just the same as an F from a letter grade course. If you are taking a pre-requisite course that you must repeat (and you meet the above criteria of being reasonably sure you can pass), you should consider the pass/fail option. This will allow you to continue your exposure to the material for the entire semester. This will create a much stronger foundation when you repeat the course.

What if I keep the class and then I make a C or lower?

No one wants to explain a poor grade in a class, but there is actually much to be learned about being responsible for your grades (see exercise below). Talking about how you might change your strategy going forward can be not only a sign of maturity and integrity, it can also demonstrate your resilience. All of these qualities are important to future health professionals.

What did you learn from this experience?

While it can be tempting to blame others for the need to Q drop a class, you must understand that the responsibility is 100% yours. To help you identify your responsibility, ask yourself these questions.

1. Could I have met with the professor to see what I could do to improve my understanding?
2. If my professor was difficult to understand or hard for me to follow, did I look for other sections of the courses to sit in on so that I could learn the material in a different way?
3. Could I have identified that I needed assistance earlier in the semester? (In time to have possibly salvaged my grade)
4. Could I have managed my time better so that I had appropriate time to devote to the class?
5. Could I have checked out resources for tutoring through the Sanger Learning Center?
6. Could I have adjusted my priorities (lowering especially those which are non-academic) to allow focus on my studies?

Preparing for the possible professional school interview question

You will want to spend some time reflecting on what you could have done differently so that you did not have to drop the class (see above). If you are asked about the Q-drop, you should be able to explain where things went wrong, what you learned from the experience, and how you might choose differently in the future. Remember the Health Professions Office does provide tips in the Interview Prep appointment and can help you practice your response.

Academic Assistance

Academic Support

[Sanger Learning Center](#) is a great place to go if you need assistance succeeding academically. They have tips and appointments centered around the following:

Academic Support
Utilizing Faculty Office Hours
Visiting with Your Teaching Assistants (TAs)
Improving Your Study Skills
Course-specific Study Groups

PCAT INFORMATION

Applicants for the Entering Year 2016 and Later

The PCAT is a specialized test that helps identify qualified applicants to pharmacy colleges. It measures general academic ability and scientific knowledge necessary for the commencement of pharmaceutical education. The PCAT is constructed specifically for colleges of pharmacy.

The Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT®) is administered in a computer-based test (CBT) format. The standard administration of the PCAT will normally occur on one or more dates in July, September, October, November, and January. Check out the [PCAT Website](#) to find open dates.

PCAT Preparation

The PCAT is divided into five sections: Biology, Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Critical Reading, and Quantitative Reasoning are multiple-choice subtests, and the Writing subtest on health, science, and social, cultural, or political issues.

The [PCAT web site](#) has a lot of very helpful information about preparation and planning for the test. The Official PCAT Practice Test™ is now out and can be bought through AAMP's PCAT [exam prep](#) page. The guide includes:

- **PCAT Multiple-Choice Practice Tests** — Three complete sets of five multiple-choice subtests include items like those you will find on the actual test, provide explanations for each item, and allow you to print out a diagnostic score report with your results. A timer is provided if you choose to simulate timed conditions like the actual PCAT.
- **PCAT Writing Practice Tests** — Four different writing prompts allow you to compose essays on topics like you will find on the PCAT, have your essays scored electronically, and immediately receive a score report with your results. A timer is provided if you choose to replicate the time limit of the exam.
- **PCAT Study Guide** — This 150-page booklet contains detailed information about the structure and contents of the PCAT, scoring information, and sample items for the five multiple-choice subtests (formerly on Practice Test 1) and the Writing subtest.

PCAT Scoring

Your score report will contain five separate scores (one for each section of the test) and a composite score. The five multiple choice sections—Biological Processes, Critical Reading, Quantitative Reasoning, Chemical Processes—are scored based on the number of correct answers. Your initial "raw score" is then converted to a scaled score ranging from 200-600. Your composite score is calculated by taking the average of your scaled score on each multiple choice section. Pharmacy schools will see both your individual section scores and your composite score. Your Writing Sample will also be scored, but separately. Your essay is reviewed by two graders, whose scores are averaged. You will then receive a score on a scale from 1-6.

In addition to your scaled scores, you will receive your percentile rank for each section and for your composite score. For example, if your percentile score is 60, this means that you scored higher than 60 percent of the other test takers. The composite percentile rank is frequently the number students use when discussing their PCAT scores.

Within **5 weeks following the end of the testing window**, your Official Score Report will be available online for 1 year from the date of your test administration, and official test scores will be sent by the U.S. Postal Service to the institutions you designated to receive your scores. Pharmacy schools will only accept official test scores.

Need a GPA Booster?

For some students, taking additional courses could help prepare for pharmacy school and strengthen their application in case they need to apply again. This could mean instead of applying for pharmacy school in the third year, students stay for their fourth year and pursue graduating with their bachelor's degree. This gives them the opportunity to take more courses or retake their pre-requisites for pharmacy school. Another option for students who have already completed an undergraduate degree and/or need to improve their academic standing for a more competitive professional school application is to pursue a graduate degree before pharmacy school.

What are the Different Options?

Essentially there are two different options for students hoping to attend pharmacy school:

Completion of Bachelor's Degree: This option may be for students who want to stay in undergraduate school for their fourth year and graduate with their bachelor's degree instead of applying for pharmacy school during their third year. Students may want to continue taking advanced science courses to strengthen their GPA or continue gaining clinical or volunteering experience.

Completion of Graduate Degree: If students graduate with their bachelor's degree but wish to continue improving their GPA, a master's degree in science is also an option. These are for students who:

- Want to stay academically engaged during a gap year while applying to pharmacy school.
- Need to raise their GPA to become a more competitive medical school applicant. Research programs and find out what schools need for the application. This may require taking other standardized tests such as the GRE. Some programs of interest to pre-pharmacy students could include:
 - [Master of Science in Pharmacotherapy](#) (UT Austin)
 - [Master of Science in Health Outcomes and Pharmacy Practice](#) (UT Austin)
 - [Master of Science in Pharmacy Leadership and Administration](#) (UHouston)

- [Master of Science in Pharmacology and Neuroscience \(UNT\)](#)

Research Schools Before You Apply!

Thinking about what type of pharmacy school you are looking for? Not sure what you want in a school? Check out the following possible criteria for evaluating a pharmacy school's fit for you!

1. Size of your cohort
2. Prestige of the institution
3. Training facilities / Affiliations
4. Opportunity to do research
5. Support programs – tutoring, counseling, student health services, childcare
6. Community building – student organizations
7. Options for financial aid/scholarship
8. Outreach/Service to Community

Examples:

- Youth Outreach (Austin)
 - San Jose Clinic (TX Southern)
9. Combined degree programs (PharmD + PhD, MS)
 10. Family/Friends (Support in close proximity)
 11. Lifestyle – outdoorsy, athletic, cultural arts, etc.
 12. Centers/ Institutes /Programs that align with your Pharmacy School Goals

Other Resources to explore:

Written and published by the Association of American Colleges of Pharmacy. This guide is packed with crucial information on applying about how to make yourself a better prepared and stronger applicant, and everything about the entire admissions process. You get details about the PCAT exam, how admissions decisions are made, and information on diversity in pharmacy schools, financing, applicant and matriculant data, and more.

Rank the schools you intend to apply to by interest here:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

Follow the Timeline for Applying to Pharmacy School

Spring Semester/Summer

- Begin compiling list of experiences; include details such as dates, hours, tasks and responsibilities
- Begin drafting personal statement
- Ask evaluators for letters of evaluation
- Pharmacy applicants: Purchase Pharmacy School Admissions Requirements guide online through www.aacp.org/ then click on "Publications"
- Research schools to determine where to apply
- Attend Health Professions Fair, usually held in February or March to visit with professional schools and have a professional headshot taken for your application

June/July

- **PharmCAS Application open**
- Obtain official transcripts from all institutions attended. Review for accuracy of information and use as reference for completing application
- Print and read application service instructions; Make a plan or "to do" checklist
- Be sure to read instructions about score reporting; these vary year-to-year and by schools
- Request transcripts from all institutions attended to be sent to application services
- Finish personal statement
- Submit when application is complete (this includes your summer grades) and you are confident you've done your best! (**Earlier is better – Apply by September 1**)

August/September

- For those that are ready, take the PCAT; we recommend taking these exams no later than September and after taking Organic Chemistry and Microbiology
- For PharmCAS schools, **Early Decision Deadline is around early September, submit all materials by then.**

Fall Semester

- Send friendly reminder to recommenders at the end of the month if haven't already submitted letters of evaluation
- Schedule interview prep appointment with Health Professions Office
- Interviews begin

November/December

- **If applied early decision, and did not receive an offer, apply regular admission by November 1.**
- Interviews begin in January and some interviews will occur in Sept/Oct so make sure to turn in your applications early

January/April

- For some schools, interviewing continues until March
- Schedule an interview prep appointment with the Health Professions Office, if you haven't done so yet.
- Offers go out October through April

Application Services

Pharmacy College Application Service

[PharmCAS](#) is the only application service for Texas and most out-of-state schools. It is the application service you will use to apply to the 6 public and 1 private pharmacy schools in Texas.

Letters of Reference

Letters are key pieces to your professional school application. You can have a maximum of four (4) references on your PharmCAS application. Do NOT send more than four references to PharmCAS. Send any additional references directly to your designated pharmacy schools. Pharmacy schools may not consider extra references. Check your school's entry on the [PharmCAS Directory](#) to see what types of evaluations are required, recommended and not accepted by each institution. A few schools prefer that applicants send references directly to the institution. This information will be included on their directory page. Also check out our [Requesting Letters](#) resources.

Writing Your Personal Statement

A Pre-Health Professions Coach can discuss your ideas before starting your personal statement. We will help you brainstorm ideas and help you stay on track. Please check out our [personal statement resources](#).

Interview Tips and Preparation

It is important to professionally and properly represent yourself to an admissions committee. From what to wear, to anticipating what questions you might be asked, our Pre-Health Professions Coaches are here to help you prepare for your professional school interview. Find valuable information by visiting the [Interviewing Tab](#) on the HPO Application Resources Page:

Practice Improving Your Interview Skills:

- Schedule an Interview Prep Appointment with a Pre-Health Professions Coach by calling our front desk 512-471-3172.

Prepare & Practice

Be prepared to discuss your strengths and weaknesses, obstacles and inspirations, current events and personal attributes. The following sample questions are meant to provide you with a better understanding of why the interviewer might be asking the questions that they do. By asking you certain questions, interviewers are attempting to gain a better understanding of your personality.

- Tell me about yourself.
- How would you know when you are successful as a pharmacist?
- What do you feel is the weakest part of your application and why?
- Have you ever worked with people who come from a different background than you? What was it like?
- As you know, Plan B is sold over-the-counter. How do you feel about pharmacists who refuse to sell Plan B?
- Talk about a time where you feel you've had a positive impact on someone else and why you feel that way.
- What is your greatest accomplishment?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?

- Discuss a time where you've made a mistake and how you overcame it.
- What are three words you would use to describe yourself?
- Have you done any research or shadowing? What have you learned from it?
- Have you been able to travel abroad? What was that experience like?
- What was the biggest disappointment you've experienced?
- What is a recent insight you've had about yourself?
- What are different types of intelligence? What types are your strongest and weakest?
- What was the last book you read?
- Why did you decide to study your major?
- What was your favorite or least favorite class at UT and why?
- What other hobbies or interests do you have outside of school?
- How do you study and manage your time?
- How do you handle stress?
- When did you first decide you wanted to study pharmacy? What inspired or continues to inspire you?
- Who has helped you most either in your academic or personal life?
- Do you want to work with a particular type of population? Have you worked with this group in the past?
- What type of people do you get along with and what type of people get on your nerves? Why?
- Talk about a time you've had a conflict with someone else and how you handled it.
- Have you or someone you know ever been a patient? What was that experience like?
- Why do you want to study pharmacy?
- What do you think clinical pharmacy is about?
- In your personal statement, you discussed _____. Tell me more about that.
- Why do you want to attend this pharmacy school/program?
- Why should we pick you over other applicants?
- How will you decide which pharmacy school you will attend if you receive multiple offers?
- How do you plan to finance your pharmacy education?
- If you are not accepted into pharmacy school, what do you plan to do?
- Do you think continuing education should be mandatory for pharmacists?
- What do you feel "professionalism" as a pharmacist means?
- What would you do if you wanted to implement a diabetes education program and the community doctors were against it?
- What do you think of legislation banning the sale of syringes without a prescription?
- Provide an example of a time that you had to make an ethical decision. What was the situation and what did you do?
- How will various health care reforms affect pharmacy?
- How do you see the role of pharmacists changing in the future?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Research Current Events in Pharmacy & Health Care

AMERICAN PHARMACIST ASSOCIATION

www.pharmacist.com

PHARMACY CHOICE

www.pharmacychoice.com

DRUG TOPICS

www.drugtopics.com

TEXAS PHARMACY ASSOCIATION

<https://www.texaspharmacy.org/>

TEXAS STATE BOARD OF PHARMACY

www.tsbp.state.tx.us

NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO ARCHIVES

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health/>

Financing Your Pharmacy Education

Start by adding it up! Figure out your costs and then create a budget.

Add It Up! Don't forget to include all Living Costs (Cost of Attendance is often more than tuition alone.)	
Tuition:	
Rent:	
Food:	
Entertainment:	
Health Insurance:	
Laboratory Fees:	
Car Insurance:	
Gas:	
Other Travel:	
Other Expenses:	

Utilize the below resources to help you with your adding it up worksheet:

Financial Literacy Guide from AACP:

<https://www.aacp.org/resource/financial-literacy>

To find out about tuition and fees at specific pharmacy schools, consult the [Pharmacy School Admissions Requirements \(PSAR\)](#).

FAFSA: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>

AACP Financial Aid & Scholarships:

<https://www.aacp.org/resource/financial-aid-and-scholarships>

Pre-Health Professions Services

Applying to Professional School? We are here to guide you!

See a HP Peer Coach if you have questions in one or more of the following topic areas:

- Going over pre-requisites ("What do I have to take to get into X school?")
- Shadowing opportunities ("how to find, importance of, what is")
- Leadership opportunities ("how to find, importance of, what are")
- Patient care experience ("how to find, importance of, what is")
- Clubs/organizations
- How to ask for letters of recommendation/evaluation
- Course load ("Is this reasonable to take in one semester?")
- Study habits/tutoring resources
- Test-taking strategies
- How to use HPO services

Pre-Health Professions Coaching Appointments

Schedule a Pre-Health Professions Coaching session to meet with a Pre-Health Professions Coach. These appointments cover:

- Progress checks ("How am I doing?; What else do I need to do?")
- Application Strategies/resources
- Choosing letter writers ("Who should I ask?")
- Academic turnaround ("I am worried about my GPA")
- Potential gap year planning/Post Bacc discussions
- Academic dishonesty/legal issues
- Reapplication strategies
- Study abroad timeline
- Alumni or Post Bacc Student questions

TO Q or NOT TO Q Discussions

Not sure what to do? Thinking of dropping a course? Then you can schedule an appointment with a Pre-Health Professions Coach about deciding on Q dropping or the pass/fail option. Check out our TO Q or NOT TO Q guide in this guide before your appointment.

Personal Statement Brainstorming

Come speak to a Pre-Health Professions Coach to discuss your ideas before starting your personal statement. We will help you brainstorm ideas for the content of your essays. We have additional personal statement resources [here](#).

We no longer review personal statements in the Health Professions Office. However, we have developed a partnership with the University Writing Center for personal statements. The [University Writing Center](#) is an excellent resource to utilize when writing application essays. Their trained Writing Consultants can help you at any stage of writing, from getting started to making recommendations for a polished finished product.

Interview Prep Appointments

Discuss interview strategies and practice a couple of interview questions with us! You will go over any questions you have and practice a couple questions of your choice with a Pre-Health Professions Coach in this 30-minute appointment. You will receive tips and feedback to help you in your professional school interview. Dressing up for your HP Interview Prep appointment is optional, if you

would like feedback on your clothing choice and you want to test whether it will be comfortable, or they can just discuss appropriate attire with you.