

The Cost of Applying To Health Professions School

Applying to medical, schools requires an upfront investment. This guide will walk you through the expenses you will encounter in the application process.

Sample Medical School Application Expenses

	Range of costs	Sample cost
MCAT preparation	Varies widely (minimally ~\$300)	\$500
MCAT registration	\$320	\$320
School selection resource: MSAR	\$28	\$28
Primary (common) application to MD schools: AMCAS	\$170 for the first school \$40 for each additional	20 schools: \$930
Transcript fees	Varies by school	\$20
Letter storage fees	Varies by school	
Secondary application fees	Approx. \$50-\$150 per school	National median[1]: \$1200
CASPer test	\$10 to take, \$10 per school to distribute scores	\$40
Interviews: Travel to and from the school's city/town	~\$0-500 per interview	
Transportation within school's city/town	~\$0-100 per interview	3 interviews @
Lodging and food	~\$0-200 per interview	\$400 each: \$1,200
Interview suit and shoes	varies	
Deposits	May be non-refundable, varies from school to school	
Second look visits: travel to/from the school, lodging	Optional, varies	

Total: \$4,238

This is only a sample. Expenses vary significantly with the most variation tied to type of standardized test prep, number of applications, and number of interviews. In the following pages, we share more details about each expense and some tips on maximizing your investment.

General Advice

- Sometimes it makes sense to cut costs but sometimes it's in your best interest to make some financial sacrifices to reach your goals. Work with mentors and reflect carefully on your needs as you navigate this.
- There is often a tradeoff between time and money. Sometimes it makes sense to slow down to maximize results and sometimes it doesn't. Take time to weigh the pros and cons.
- Have a frank discussion with family regarding their level of support early in the process, as it may affect your decisions moving forward.

- Have a frank discussion with the Pre-Health Professions advisors about the strength of your candidacy in relation to your goals. Apply only if you feel confident that you can meet your goals. Having to reapply increases the time/financial/emotional cost of applying.
- Apply for a credit card that offers points for travel / lodging. Use this credit card for application expenses, then use the points accumulated toward interviews.

Fee Assistance Programs

Participating in fee assistance programs is one of the most significant ways to save money. Read through the websites for these opportunities to see if you might qualify.

Premed students

- The [AAMC Fee Assistance Program](#) (FAP) provides ~\$1500 savings on MCAT prep, MSAR, and AMCAS, and many medical schools will waive secondary application fees if you qualify for the FAP. Apply for the program before you begin MCAT study. Benefits last for up to two calendar years.
- If you apply to osteopathic (DO) medical schools, an [additional fee assistance program](#) is available.

MCAT Preparation

The range of costs

- Least expensive: Borrow HPA library books for test prep (free) and use the free AAMC resources. Use free test offers and free trial opportunities and buy the [AAMC Official Prep Bundle](#) (\$294) for the practice tests and question bank.
- Not too expensive: the above, plus add Next Step practice exams (\$99-\$249, [free practice bundle available](#)) and the [U World question banks](#) (7 day free trial, \$199-\$299 depending on length of subscription)—these have been highly recommended by recent students.
- Middle-range: Next Step, Kaplan, Princeton Review, and Examcrackers are popular test prep companies. They offer in-person or online courses that range from \$1,500-\$2,000+. UTC's Office of Professional Development hosts and [MCAT Preparation Course](#) taught by Kaplan each spring semester.
- More expensive: Private tutoring, offered through the above companies or other sources from \$2,500-\$4,000+.
- Most expensive: Summer Full-Immersion “Boot Camp” programs, which include individualized tutoring, coaching, and other tailored amenities: \$10,000-\$15,000+

Tips on maximizing your investment

- The [Association of American Medical Colleges \(AAMC\)](#) administers the MCAT: their official advice is more likely to be accurate than prep companies, reddit, etc.
- Talk with UTC students/alums, read through [AAMC profiles](#) for examples of others' experiences.
- Consider what you need as a learner to maximize your confidence and your readiness for the exam.
 - Creating your own study plan can be done on your own budget and with your own timeline. You should be willing to do research on the front end (e.g., talking with students who have taken the exam, using official resources, developing a structured “syllabus” for yourself).
 - Read AAMC advice on [how to create a study plan](#).

Standardized Test Registration

The range of costs

In addition to the exam itself ([\\$320 for MCAT](#)) you will need to travel to/from the test site. If there are no seats at a test center nearby, you may need to travel further / stay overnight in preparation for the exam. There are also fees associated with rescheduling or canceling the test.

Tips on maximizing your investment

- Be realistic about when you'll be ready to take the test. It's expensive (in terms of time, money, and emotional wellbeing) to have to take it more than once.
- Once you're confident that you'll be ready, register early: you'll have the best chance at booking your exam at a test center that's local / convenient, which can minimize travel fees.
- If you may need to reschedule or cancel, keep track of the fees to do so: you pay less / receive a larger refund if you make changes early.

Primary Applications / School Selection

The range of costs

- **US MD programs (not including Texas public schools):** you will complete the [AMCAS application](#). The AMCAS fee is \$170 for the first school, \$40 for each additional.
- **US MD/DO/dental programs in Texas:** you will complete the [TMDSAS application](#). The TMDSAS fee in is \$185 flat, no matter how many schools you apply to.
- **US osteopathic medical (DO) programs:** you will complete the [AACOMAS application](#). The AACOMAS fee in is \$195 for the first school, \$45 for each additional.
- **Transcript fees:** UTC charges a \$2.50 to have transcripts ordered with an additional \$1.00 fee for transcripts to be sent electronically to AMCAS. If you took classes at other colleges/universities, you will pay their fees, if applicable.
- **Letter of recommendation fees:** Some services like [Interfolio](#), there may charge additional fees for submission of letters of recommendation to AMCAS.

Secondary Applications

The range of costs

- Each school sets its own secondary application fee. MD program secondary fees range from free to about \$150.
- Some medical schools require the [CASPer test](#) as part of the secondary application this will be an additional \$20 paid to the CASPer test administrators.

Tips on maximizing your investment

- Research secondary application fees in past years before applying. If you don't think you'd realistically complete a school's secondary given the cost or content, leave them off your initial school list and save that \$40 upfront AMCAS fee.
- Contact schools directly to inquire about fee assistance. Be ready to share some background about yourself and your financial situation. HPA can help you craft this message.

Interview Process

The range of costs

- **Travel to the school's city:** you will be expected to travel to the school's location. You may receive an invitation to interview within a few weeks, so there is less chance to search for travel discounts.
- **Overnight stay:** most interviews begin in the morning and continue through the late afternoon, so it is often only feasible to travel the day before and stay overnight prior to your interview.
- **Travel within the school's city:** you will have to pay for transportation from the train station/airport to your housing, and from your housing to the school itself.
- **Interview attire:** professional dress (i.e., suit and dress shoes) is expected, along with dry cleaning costs.
- The national median spent on interviews according to the [Matriculating Student Questionnaire \(MSQ\)](#) was \$650. Over 20% of MSQ respondents reported spending \$2,000 or more on interview during the medical school application process.
- [Middlebury College](#) surveyed their applicants in 2016 and 2017. The average cost per interview reported by respondents was about \$410.

Tips on maximizing your investment

- Consider interview expenses while crafting your school list. Try to be realistic about whether you would really choose a school at a distance versus one near your support network.
- Contact schools directly to inquire about travel assistance. Be ready to share some background about yourself and your financial situation. HPA can help you craft this message if you'd like.
- If you're offered dates that will make travel especially expensive, contact schools and ask if there are alternatives given your financial situation.
- **In the area messages:** If you travel for an interview, contact other schools where you've applied to let them know that you're in the area to try to coordinate visits. Even if you feel like a school is out of your range, it's worth a shot—the worst they can do is say no!
- **Interview clothes:** Most interviews take place in fall/winter—shop at the end of the season before you apply for suit sales. Try thrift/consignment stores and outlets. The Center for Career and Leadership Development at UTC hosts the [Suit Up](#) Event each semester in partnership with JC Penny. Students can purchase professional attire at a steep discount.

Deposits

When you are accepted to a school, you will often be asked to put down a deposit to hold your seat. Some deposits will be refundable by a certain deadline.

The range of costs

- MD Programs: The [AAMC](#) recommends that initial deposits should not exceed \$100 and should be refundable at least until April 30, and recommends that the deposit be credited toward tuition should the student enroll at the school.
- DO Programs: The [AACOM](#) does not have a stated deposit fee and recommends that schools give applicants a more limited amount of time to submit matriculation documents, and do not provide guidance regarding whether or not a deposit should be refundable/credited to tuition. Some DO school deposits are \$2000+.

Tips on maximizing your investment

- Research deposit amounts and policies, especially for DO schools, prior to applying so that you are aware of these upfront costs.
- Put deposit deadlines in your calendar so that you remember to withdraw from schools during the window that you can receive a refund, if applicable.

This guide was adapted for the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Pre-Health Professions Advising Program from the Office of Health Professions Advising at Princeton University. Please share for educational uses (not for commercial use)! If you have any tips to add, email them to us at hpa@princeton.edu.

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[1] National median data from the AAMC Matriculating Student Questionnaire: <https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/students-residents/report/matriculating-student-questionnaire-msq>