

Choosing Ontario Med Schools

The first couple of pages of the application require an applicant to provide personal and contact information. Screen shots of those sections are not provided.

We are starting the application at the “Questions” section. There are 3 questions that you need to answer. You are given 100 characters for each question if you choose the answer “yes.”

The questions are:

1. Have you ever been enrolled in an MD program?
2. Have you ever failed at university?
3. Has your undergrad program been interrupted?

If you need to answer any of these questions with a yes, state facts and don't make excuses. Talk about how you overcame a situation, how you are moving forward or have moved forward and show your motivation and ability for success.

There are 6 Faculties of Medicine that you can apply to through the OMSAS site. If you are applying to other Canadian med schools outside of the province apply directly to each individual school. Be aware that a limited number of out-of-province candidates are accepted into programs. There are a total of 17 med schools in Canada. If you are applying to US medical schools, complete your application through AMCAS which is a centralized application website for US med schools. AMCAS opens in May and it is highly recommended that you submit your applications by the end of June. If you are considering applying to a medical school outside of North America, that is Canada or the US, please come for a 15-minute drop-in appointment or book a “Professional/grad school planning appointment” as it is important for you to understand that it can be challenging to get a residency position in either Canada or the US after the completion of an MD degree. If you cannot complete a residency, you cannot practice as an MD.

This is a screen shot of what you will see if you apply to all of the Ontario medical schools.

Review each schools information in the OMSAS Instruction Booklet and each of the school's websites to have a good understanding of the type of teaching style (such, lecture format versus problem-based learning which is also called PBL, length of program, whether you can apply after completion of your 2nd year, etc.). It is important to review what the admissions committee requires in a candidate such as: a competitive GPA, MCAT scores, and experience.

If you are a graduate-level applicant please review the information about applying as many schools require a letter from your grad supervisor indicating your expected date of completion. For some programs completion of a research-based graduate degree can put you into a separate application category.

If you are interested in applying to MD/PhD programs, it is necessary for an applicant to submit a separate application to each program. All of the Ontario medical schools offer the MD/PhD option; however, there are limited spots.

Let's take a look at some school specific minimum and competitive numbers.

At McMaster, there is a formula used to determine if a candidate will be invited to an interview. They weigh 32% on your GPA, 32% on the MCAT, and 32% on the CASPer. If you will be finished your graduate degree by the application deadline of October 1st (your degree must be conferred by this time), McMaster also awards, up to 1% bonus points in the formula for a Master's degree and 4% for a PhD. Although McMaster states that 3.0 is the minimum average to be considered, competitive applicants generally have around a 3.8 cGPA.

At the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, they weigh 1/3 each on: GPA, Autobiographical Sketch and essays, and context (which is the region in which you grew up). 3.83 was the average GPA in 2015 even though they state a minimum average of 3.0. The competitive average has been steadily rising each year since the program opened. Their final decision is based on 50% pre-interview (the weighted formula we just discussed) and 50% on the interview.

At Ottawa, they use a weighted GPA for the 3 most current years only. They evaluate per year, not per semester, and 3rd year is weighted higher than 2nd year which is weighted higher than 1st year. If you are in co-op, they will only count the years where you have completed 2 academic terms within an academic year (which is Sept. to August). A competitive weighted GPA of **at least 3.9** is needed.

Queen's uses two formulas to calculate your GPA. The cumulative OMSAS GPA will be used first & if students don't meet an initial standard, then a 2 year GPA will be calculated (using your most recent 2 full-time years). Any academic year where the applicants have completed two co-op work terms will not count as part of the 2 year GPA.

We met with a U of T Admissions member, and they discussed realistic averages for both undergraduate and graduate school applicants. The minimum published GPA is 3.6, but Toronto recommends that you aim for 3.8 to be competitive. For graduate students (who have completed a research-based graduate degree), a slightly lower GPA may be accepted (around the 3.6 minimum).

Toronto uses a weighted GPA for any applicant who has completed a full course load (that's 5 courses per semester) for their entire undergraduate studies. Any combination of credits that adds up to 5 in an academic year will satisfy the weighted GPA requirement (for example 4 lectures at .5 CRs each and 2 lab courses at .25 CRs each will count as a full course load for one semester).

Anyone applying after completion of three years of study will have their lowest 3 full-course equivalent grades removed from the GPA calculation, and after completion of four years, their lowest 4 full-course equivalent grades will be removed. Toronto removes the lowest overall grades, not the lowest grades in each year of study.

If applicants are in co-op and complete 2 work terms within 1 academic year (September-August), they are still eligible for the weighted GPA. Course level (meaning taking 300 level courses and higher for the majority of your courses 3rd year and later) is important.

Western looks at your best two years of full-time study (between Sept & April), and a minimum GPA of 3.7 in **each** year must be met. Course level is also important for Western. If you attended high school in a designated area labeled "SWOMEN" (The Southwestern Ontario Medical Education Network) you are given extra consideration (it is a partnership of over 50 communities located throughout Southwestern Ontario that offer rural and regional education and training opportunities to undergraduate and postgraduate learners.)

If you are a co-op student, they will not accept any years where you have 2 different academic years within a Sept-August cycle (For example if in the fall you were in your 3B term and in the winter you were on a co-op term, and then in the spring you were in your 4A term, it will not count – This might only be an issue for Rec and Leisure students and some Engineering programs.

Minimum MCAT scores for the 2015-2016 cycle (which are posted in February each year on Western's website) were stated for the SWOMEN and aboriginal applicants as:

A minimum score of 8 in each section with an overall score of 31 for the old MCAT or 124 in the Biological and Biochemical Foundations section and 125 in the other sections with an overall score 384 for the new MCAT. For all other applicants, a Verbal Reasoning score of 11, and 10 in each of the other sections with an overall score of 31 for the old MCAT, and 130 in the CARS section and 127 in the other sections with an overall score of 384, was required.