Welcome to the Post-Baccalaureate Pre-Medical Program at the University of Virginia! In addition to the prerequisite courses you’ll complete this year, you’ll work closely with your advisor(s) to prepare for your medical school application. Throughout the year, you’ll complete assignments for which you will receive tailored feedback. We want you to understand the strengths of your candidacy and have everything ready to go when application portals open next May. A lot needs to be done this year. Be sure to use this advising syllabus and meet with your advisors to stay on track.

**Pre-Program Recommendations**

We have heard from numerous PBPM alumni that the book, [A Mind for Numbers](https://www.amazon.com/Mind-Numbers-Science-Flunked-Algebra-ebook/dp/B00G3L19ZU/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3H1XPNP9MP4AE&keywords=a+mind+for+numbers+by+barbara+oakley&qid=1651153889&sprefix=a+mind+for+numbers%2Caps%2C89&sr=8-1), was incredibly helpful in preparing to succeed in science courses at UVA. The author, Dr. Barbara Oakley, also has a [free Coursera course, Learning How to Learn](https://www.coursera.org/learn/learning-how-to-learn), covering the material presented in her book.

Although we don’t cover MCAT topics like Psychology/Sociology, & CARS during the program, we encourage you to use your “free time” now to start reviewing or practicing. Coursera offers [a free Intro to Psychology course](https://www.coursera.org/learn/introduction-psychology) along with [Khan Academy’s Behavior Unit](https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat/behavior), [Individuals & Society](https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat/individuals-and-society), [Society & Culture](https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat/society-and-culture), and [Social Inequality](https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat/social-inequality).  In addition, here are some [CARS practice passages](https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat/critical-analysis-and-reasoning-skills-practice-questions).

**Who is my advisor?** You will meet with your assigned advisor to discuss specific application materials/assignments. For any other questions, concerns, or needs, feel free to email [postbac@virginia.edu](mailto:postbac@virginia.edu) or request a meeting with either advisor. Susan and Jillian meet regularly and keep each other apprised of each student in the cohort.

Students will work on the following items:

**Experience Sections are assigned to Susan Salko**

**Personal Statements are assigned to Jillian Golaszewski**

**Office Hours:** [Schedule to meet](https://www.uvapbpm.com/advising) via Zoom or In-Person as space is available

**Goals & Objectives**

1. ***Do well academically***

* Ask for help and utilize support resources
  + Classmates
  + Professors
  + Teaching Assistants
  + Supplemental materials such as online resources and/or peer tutoring sessions
* Build strong time management and organizational skills

1. ***Prepare for & do well on the MCAT***

* Prioritize academic coursework
* Do weekly UWorld assignments
* Commit to practice questions on a regular basis
* Dedicate one weekend a month to MCAT prep

1. ***Invest the time to create thoughtful & strategic application materials***

* Attend group advising workshops
* Work closely with an advisor to prepare Experiences & Personal Statement
* Commit to the suggested timeline to ensure timely completion
* Budget time for drafting, editing, and re-writing Experiences section & Personal Statement

1. ***Construct a well-researched & balanced school list based on good “fit”***

* Consider your priorities in your medical school experience
* Use AAMC MSAR to research medical schools
* Thoughtfully deconstruct school mission statements
* Take thorough notes on each school during research process to use when writing secondary application essays

1. ***Speak knowledgeably about the US Healthcare system in interviews***

* Regularly attend US Healthcare class
* Use journal to capture thoughts, reflections, & important concepts
* Engage in respectful discourse with professors and classmates
* Prepare and present a well-researched and easy to understand presentation within specified time limits

1. ***Mock interview & use feedback to improve your interviewing skills***

* Schedule a mock interview before your 1st interview

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **June** | **July** | **August** | **September** | **October** | **November** |
| Focus on Gen Chem  Rank Clinical Volunteering Options | Focus on Gen Chem  Complete volunteer site-specific paperwork, interview, &/or orientation | Work on Experiences assignment | Meet w/ advisor to review Experiences assignment & Competencies Assessment | Submit Personal Statement Rough Draft  Meet w/ Advisor to review | Create Interfolio Account  Letter Writer List Due |
| **December** | **January** | **February** | **March** | **April** | **May** |
| Begin MCAT Studying  Consider glide year opportunities  Finalize Experiences & PS drafts | School List rough draft due  Post-Test Competencies Assessment Due  Take MCAT practice exam | Continue MCAT studying & taking full length practice exams throughout semester  Register for MCAT | Apply for Glide Year jobs  Register for AAMC PREview Exam | Register for CASPer exam | Order transcripts for AMCAS & AACOMAS  Take MCAT |

**Application Materials Assignments:**

Core Competencies: Self-Assessment: Due September 4th & January 15th

Experiences: Due September 25th

Personal Statement: Due October 30th

Letters of Recommendation: Due November 6th

School List Draft: Due January 15th

Mock Interview: July-December

*\*\*All assignments should be submitted via Canvas.*

**Core Competencies: Self-Assessment: Pre-Test due September 4th & Post-Test on January 15th**

The AAMC created the [Pre-Med Core Competencies](https://students-residents.aamc.org/real-stories-demonstrating-premed-competencies/premed-competencies-entering-medical-students) that guide medical education programs. As such, PBPM students will be held to a similar code of professional conduct throughout their time at UVA. This assessment can help you to identify your strengths and set goals for areas of improvement. You’ll find a copy of this assessment on Canvas which we ask you to complete in early September and review it with your advisor. It can be revisited throughout the semester, but you’ll be expected to complete the same assessment in January to determine growth and re-set any goals as necessary. See pages 5-8.

**Experiences Worksheet: due September 25th**

Medical school applications (AMCAS, AACOMAS, or TMDSAS) do not permit students to submit a resume or curriculum vitae. Therefore, your Experiences section will serve as the complete record of all extracurricular and professional experiences along with any awards, hobbies, etc. You can submit up to 15 Experiences, but 3 of those 15 can be marked as Most Meaningful which allows additional space to discuss the experience. See [***Experiences Section website***](https://www.uvapbpm.com/experiences-section) which includes the Experiences Worksheet for more details.

You must either use the Experiences Worksheet or write your Experiences drafts in a Word format as it will be important to check character counts (700 characters with spaces for basic descriptions; an additional 1325 characters for Most Meaningful comments).

**Personal Statement: Rough Draft Due October 30th**

Both AMCAS and AACOMAS limit the Personal Statement to 5300 characters with spaces while TMDSAS has a 5000 character limit (including spaces). This is about 1.5 pages, single spaced. When writing your rough draft, feel free to make it longer as editing down is easier than adding more.

The primary purpose of this essay is to express why you want to become a doctor. Here are some questions to consider as you prepare this essay:

* *What led me away from my former career and towards a career in medicine?*
* *How did my decision get confirmed?*
* *What do I feel I would contribute to the field/patients?*

This space should not re-list what’s already included in your Experiences worksheet. Instead, use this space to give context to your story or provide deeper personal reflection on your collective experiences that led you to commit to becoming a doctor. Transferrable skills from previous academic majors or professions can also be included here.

While there is no “right” way to do write this “personal” statement essay, advisors can help you work through your story.

**Letters of Recommendation list:** **due November 6th**

Please open an [Interfolio account](https://account.interfolio.com/signup/dossier/deliver) this Fall choosing the Dossier Deliver option as these will need to be transmitted to your applications at a later date. Compile a list of who will be writing on your behalf in the application cycle by mid-Fall semester. (We recommend collecting approximately 5-7 letters of recommendation via Interfolio.) All PBPM students should request their Committee Evaluation authored by Susan, Jillian, & Dr. Powers using [Salko@virginia.edu](mailto:Salko@virginia.edu) and using July 1st as the deadline.

This Fall, contact your recommenders to ask if they’re willing to support your candidacy to medical school. After confirming their support, send them an electronic request through Interfolio. We recommended addressing letters using “Dear Admissions Committee members” and using the [AAMC Guidelines for Writing a Letter of Evaluation for a Medical School Applicant.](https://students-residents.aamc.org/prehealth-advisors/guidelines-writing-letter-evaluation)

At a minimum we recommend submitting our Committee Evaluation, two science faculty member letters, and another letter of your choice (previous employer, professor, physician). You can select additional letters based on the instructions given from individual schools.

Important Notes:

* You’ll most likely need to ask 1-2 PBPM science faculty members for a letter of recommendation, so be sure to invest in these faculty relationships throughout the year.
* Your letters are sent with the secondary applications (late June/early July) and not needed to submit your primary application.

**School List: Preliminary List January 15th**

We recommend that students apply to 20-25 medical schools. The medical school admissions process is *very* different than your undergraduate application experience whereas statistically you should reasonably hope to be interviewed and accepted to one of the 20-25 schools.

Do not apply to state medical schools where you don’t have residency. There are a few exceptions for those who do not have a medical school in their state of residence. For instance, students applying to the University of Washington without being a Washington resident should be residents from Alaska, Idaho, Montana, or Wyoming [due to a special program](https://www.uwmedicine.org/school-of-medicine/md-program/wwami). Therefore, we strongly recommend starting your list with your own state’s public medical schools and then considering private schools to round out your list.

Medical schools care about yield, i.e. - how likely are you to attend there? As such you need to focus on “fit”. Some questions to ask yourself:

* What do you want out of your medical school education?
* Will you be close to a support network?
* What special programs does a school offer that seem appealing? Have you done similar programs/endeavors? Can you explain why you want to do them or do more of that?
* Any special populations that you would like exposure to?
* How does a medical school describe their “mission”? How do your values and experiences align with that mission?

Use the [AAMC MSAR](https://mec.aamc.org/msar-ui/#/landing) to research schools and use the [UVA PBPM Alumni Directory](https://www.uvapbpm.com/uva-pbpm-alumni-network) to connect with past students who have attended your schools of interest.

It’s OK to just have a preliminary list to discuss with your advisor. While you don’t need to finalize your school list until June, when you have your MCAT scores, having a list of ~20-25 schools before then is a good starting place for your conversation with an advisor.

**Linkage: Decide by November 1st**

If you’re planning on applying to University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine via the linkage agreement, your application timeline will be different from what is outlined above and below. Be sure that you meet the eligibility requirements for the linkage before discussing the option with your advisor. Also review the narrated PowerPoint presentation entitled [“Linkage Agreements @UVA”](https://www.uvapbpm.com/advising-workshop-presentations) and [see this webpage](https://www.uvapbpm.com/linkage-information) for more information regarding the admissions process and timeline.

**Mock Interview: Can be conducted July-December**

You know that adage “Practice makes perfect”? This applies to interviewing! We have an [entire webpage dedicated to interview preparations](https://www.uvapbpm.com/interviewstream) including common questions, lists of MMI prompts, and specific things to consider when preparing for a virtual interview. Your advisors are happy to conduct a mock interview with you in the spring semester but are also available throughout the summer and fall. We have a [specific Mock Interview appointment available](https://www.uvapbpm.com/advising) so you can work with both advisors through either a traditional interview or MMI style.

**Core Competencies: Self-Assessment**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name:** |  |  |
| [The Premed Competencies for Entering Medical Students](https://students-residents.aamc.org/real-stories-demonstrating-premed-competencies/premed-competencies-entering-medical-students) begins with ***Commitment to Learning & Growth.*** Please reflect on your personal abilities & consider setting goals for how you want to learn and grow personally and professionally this year. |  |  |
| An average rating of 0 to 5 will be given for each of the 10 competencies.  Individual areas of excellence or improvement will be noted.  0= None 3= OK  1= Needs considerable improvement 4= Very good shape  2= Needs some improvement 5= Excellent | **Pre-Test**  **Date:** | **Post-Test**  **Date:** |
| **AAMC Professional Competencies** | **Total Score** | **Total Score** |
| 1. **Commitment to Learning & Growth:**   \_\_ Sets goals for continuous improvement and for learning new concepts and skills.  \_\_ Demonstrates the ability to receive, integrate, and utilize feedback from peers, faculty, and administrators.  \_\_ Solicits and responds appropriately to feedback.  \_\_ Engages in reflective practice for improvement. |  |  |
| 1. **Cultural Awareness & Humility:**   \_\_ Appreciates how historical, sociocultural, political, and economic factors affect others’ interactions, behaviors, and well-being.  \_\_ Demonstrates an awareness of their own belief systems, values, needs, and limitations and the effect of these on personal and professional behavior.  \_\_ Shows an appreciation and respect for multiple dimensions of diversity.  \_\_ Recognizes and acts on the obligation to inform one’s own judgment and addresses bias in themselves and others.  \_\_ Engages diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work.  \_\_ Interacts effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. |  |  |
| 1. **Empathy & Compassion:**   \_\_ Recognizes, understands, and acknowledges others’ experiences, feelings, perspectives, and reactions to situations.  \_\_ is sensitive to others’ needs and feelings.  \_\_ demonstrates a desire to help others and alleviate others’ distress. |  |  |
| 1. **Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others:**   \_\_ Behaves in an honest manner, upholds UVA Honor Code in all situations, and encourages others to behave in honest and ethical ways.  \_\_ Cultivates personal integrity and resists peer pressure to engage in unethical behavior.  \_\_ Considers multiple &/or conflicting principles & values to inform decisions  \_\_ Maintains healthy habits and boundaries to avoid consequences of burnout. |  |  |
| 1. **Interpersonal Skills:**   \_\_ Demonstrates an awareness of others’ needs, goals, feelings, and the ways that social and behavioral cues affect peoples’ interactions and behaviors.  \_\_ Adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues.  \_\_ Treats others with respect, especially in the classroom during discussions.  \_\_ Demonstrates appropriate behavior in and out of the classroom. |  |  |
| 1. **Written & Oral Communication**:   \_\_ Effectively conveys information, thoughts, and feelings to others using spoken and written words and sentences.  \_\_ Respectfully listens to others’ opinions and thoughtfully considers meaning/intent behind others’ words.  \_\_ Recognizes potential communication barriers and adjust approach or clarifies information as needed. |  |  |
| 1. **Reliability and Dependability:**   \_\_ Consistently fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner.  \_\_ Follows through on commitments and acknowledges to others when overcommitted.  \_\_ Is dependable regarding all academic and program-related assignments, attendance, and deadlines.  \_\_ Understands consequences of not fulfilling one’s responsibilities to self & others |  |  |
| 1. **Resilience and Adaptability:**   *\_\_* Demonstrates the ability to manage the stresses of a demanding profession by developing effective coping skills, that include professional and personal support systems.  *\_\_* Seeks help & support when needed.  \_\_ Is persistent, even under difficult situations, and recovers from setbacks.  \_\_ Adjusts behavior &/or approach in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles. |  |  |
| 1. **Service Orientation:**   \_\_ Demonstrates a desire to help others and sensitivity to others’ needs and feelings.  \_\_ Recognizes and acts on his/her responsibilities to the cohort, University, and greater communities.  \_\_ Understands the patient/family perspective and experience. |  |  |
| 1. **Teamwork & Collaboration:**   \_\_ Works collaboratively with others and prioritizes shared goals.  \_\_ Shares information and knowledge with others & provides feedback.  \_\_ Adjusts from team member to team leader based on one’s own & others’ expertise & experience.  \_\_ Directly and respectfully deal with conflict in a timely manner.  \_\_ Participates in academic, social, and professional opportunities during the year. |  |  |
| **Total Ratings** |  |  |
| **Score Key:**  **0-80= Needs Improvement**  **81-120= Reasonable**  **121-160= Very Good**  **161-200= Excellent**  **List 1-2 professional development goals for this year:** |  |  |

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**10 Rules of Good Studying**

**By Barbara Oakley, PhD, PE**

**1. Use recall.** After you read a page, look away and recall the main ideas. Highlight very little, and never highlight anything you haven’t put in your mind first by recalling. Try recalling main ideas when you are walking to class or in a different room from where you originally learned it. An ability to recall—to generate the ideas from inside yourself—is one of the key indicators of good learning.

**2. Test yourself.** On everything. All the time. Flash cards are your friend.

**3. Chunk your problems.** Chunking is understanding and practicing with a problem solution so that it can all come to mind in a flash. After you solve a problem, rehearse it. Make sure you can solve it cold—every step. Pretend it’s a song and learn to play it over and over again in your mind, so the information combines into one smooth chunk you can pull up whenever you want. **4. Space your repetition.** Spread out your learning in any subject a little every day, just like an athlete. Your brain is like a muscle—it can handle only a limited amount of exercise on one subject at a time.

**5. Alternate different problem‐solving techniques during your practice.** Never practice too long at any one session using only one problem‐solving technique—after a while, you are just mimicking what you did on the previous problem. Mix it up and work on different types of problems. This teaches you both how and when to use a technique. (Books generally are not set up this way, so you’ll need to do this on your own.) After every assignment and test, go over your errors, make sure you understand why you made them, and then rework your solutions. To study most effectively, handwrite (don’t type) a problem on one side of a flash card and the solution on the other. (Handwriting builds stronger neural structures in memory than typing.) You might also photograph the card if you want to load it into a study app on your smartphone. Quiz yourself randomly on different types of problems. Another way to do this is to randomly flip through your book, pick out a problem, and see whether you can solve it cold.

**6. Take breaks.** It is common to be unable to solve problems or figure out concepts in math or science the first time you encounter them. This is why a little study every day is much better than a lot of studying all at once. When you get frustrated with a math or science problem, take a break so that another part of your mind can take over and work in the background.

**7. Use explanatory questioning and simple analogies**. Whenever you are struggling with a concept, think to yourself, How can I explain this so that a ten‐year‐old could understand it? Using an analogy really helps, like saying that the flow of electricity is like the flow of water. Don’t just think your explanation—say it out loud or put it in writing. The additional effort of speaking and writing allows you to more deeply encode (that is, convert into neural memory structures) what you are learning.

**8. Focus**. Turn off all interrupting beeps and alarms on your phone and computer, and then turn on a timer for twenty‐five minutes. Focus intently for those twenty‐five minutes and try to work as diligently as you can. After the timer goes off, give yourself a small, fun reward. A few of these sessions in a day can really move your studies forward. Try to set up times and places where studying—not glancing at your computer or phone—is just something you naturally do. **9. Eat your frogs first.** Do the hardest thing earliest in the day, when you are fresh.

**10. Make a mental contrast.** Imagine where you’ve come from and contrast that with the dream of where your studies will take you. Post a picture or words in your workspace to remind you of your dream. Look at that when you find your motivation lagging. This work will pay off both for you and those you love!

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**Ten Rules of Bad Studying**

**By Barbara Oakley, PhD, PE**

*Avoid these techniques—they can waste your time even while they fool you into thinking you’re learning!*

**1. Passive rereading—sitting passively and running your eyes back over a page**. Unless you can prove that the material is moving into your brain by recalling the main ideas without looking at the page, rereading is a waste of time.

**2. Letting highlights overwhelm you.** Highlighting your text can fool your mind into thinking you are putting something in your brain, when all you’re really doing is moving your hand. A little highlighting here and there is okay—sometimes it can be helpful in flagging important points. But if you are using highlighting as a memory tool, make sure that what you mark is also going into your brain.

**3. Merely glancing at a problem’s solution and thinking you know how to do it**. This is one of the worst errors students make while studying. You need to be able to solve a problem step‐by‐step, without looking at the solution.

**4. Waiting until the last minute to study.** Would you cram at the last minute if you were practicing for a track meet? Your brain is like a muscle—it can handle only a limited amount of exercise on one subject at a time.

**5. Repeatedly solving problems of the same type that you already know how to solve.** If you just sit around solving similar problems during your practice, you’re not actually preparing for a test—it’s like preparing for a big basketball game by just practicing your dribbling.

**6. Letting study sessions with friends turn into chat sessions**. Checking your problem solving with friends, and quizzing one another on what you know, can make learning more enjoyable, expose flaws in your thinking, and deepen your learning. But if your joint study sessions turn to fun before the work is done, you’re wasting your time and should find another study group.

**7. Neglecting to read the textbook before you start working problems.** Would you dive into a pool before you knew how to swim? The textbook is your swimming instructor—it guides you toward the answers. You will flounder and waste your time if you don’t bother to read it. Before you begin to read, however, take a quick glance over the chapter or section to get a sense of what it’s about.

**8. Not checking with your instructors or classmates to clear up points of confusion.** Professors are used to lost students coming in for guidance—it’s our job to help you. The students we worry about are the ones who don’t come in. Don’t be one of those students.

**9. Thinking you can learn deeply when you are being constantly distracted.** Every tiny pull toward an instant message or conversation means you have less brain power to devote to learning. Every tug of interrupted attention pulls out tiny neural roots before they can grow.

**10. Not getting enough sleep.** Your brain pieces together problem‐solving techniques when you sleep, and it also practices and repeats whatever you put in mind before you go to sleep. Prolonged fatigue allows toxins to build up in the brain that disrupt the neural connections you need to think quickly and well. If you don’t get a good sleep before a test, NOTHING ELSE YOU HAVE DONE WILL MATTER.