

# DARTMOUTH

Health Professions Program

## Med/Vet/Dental Application Newsletter Most Important Things to Do and Consider Now

2025-2026

December 2024

Hi everyone!

As we head into the new year, the application process will begin to feel more “real.” **It is crucial that you understand and are prepared for the necessary action steps ahead to submit your application in the Summer.**

This newsletter addresses the most time-sensitive tasks you need to do and consider now. Most importantly, if you haven’t already, make sure to understand the Composite Letter of Evaluation Process ASAP and start making your requests to those you would like to write for you. **Be sure to read below for more information about the composite process.** You’ll also find information about application costs, and reminders about the MCAT and Financial Assistance Program (Program), as well as some introductory information about Situational Judgement Tests (SJTs).

In our next newsletter, we’ll start discussing writing for the application and what you can do this Winter to be well-prepared within a good timeline. As always, please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or would like to assess the strength of your application at this time!

Sending you our warmest regards and wishing you well through the holidays ahead!

Best wishes!

Sarah, Nicole, and Rae

### Contents

<b>Where Can I find HPP Application Resources?</b> .....	2
<b>Your Important Letter Process Tasks</b> .....	2
<b>Parts of a Complete Application</b> .....	3
<b>The Composite Letter of Evaluation</b> .....	3
<b>Your Role in the Composite Process</b> .....	3
<b>HPP’s Role in the Composite Process</b> .....	4
<b>PrivateFolio</b> .....	4

<b>The Autobiographical Sketch</b> .....	4
<b>Self-Reflection and Questions to Consider</b> .....	5
<b>MCAT Timing and Preparation</b> .....	5
<b>MCAT &amp; Application Costs</b> .....	5
<b>Fee Assistance Program (FAP)</b> .....	6
<b>Fee Assistance for Other Health Professions</b> .....	6
<b>Institutional Actions</b> .....	6
<b>Situational Judgement Tests – CASper &amp; AAMC Preview</b> .....	6
<b>What are SJTs? Why are they part of the application process?</b> .....	7
<b>Are SJTs something to worry about? Should I be preparing?</b> .....	7
<b>When do I need to take it? Is there a cost?</b> .....	7
<b>Assessing Your Application</b> .....	7

## Where Can I find HPP Application Resources?

As we move through the application cycle, we'll post links to our [newsletters, resources, and forms to the HPP website](#), You can also find recordings of our [application workshops and medical school admissions webinars](#). **We strongly encourage you to bookmark these pages for your ease of reference.**

## Your Important Letter Process Tasks

Check Off	Action
	Review this newsletter.
	Watch the recording of the <a href="#">Overview of the Application Workshop</a> .
	Review the <a href="#">Composite Process Handbook</a> for information about the composite process, choosing writers, setting deadlines with writers, the autobiographical sketch, PrivateFolio, and timelines.
	Make your final writer choices and finish requesting your letter writers.
	Establish deadlines with your writers.
	Create your <a href="#">PrivateFolio account</a> . Be sure to inform your support letter writers (not your composite writer!) that you will send them a letter request form (from PrivateFolio) which will include a link to upload their letters to PrivateFolio. Let them know to check their spam/junk folder – the letter request can sometimes end up there.
	Inform your support letter writers that you will send them your autobiographical sketch, resume, and/or transcript (you can share your transcript with anyone who asks or anyone you wish to).

	Write your autobiographical sketch. Find more information about how to write and auto sketch below and by reviewing our <a href="#">Autobiographical Sketch Tips &amp; Advice</a> document.
	Send your autobiographical sketch and resume to your support letter writers <b>ideally at least 4 weeks before your agreed letter deadlines.</b>
	For your composite writer, upload your autobiographical sketch, resume, and transcript to PrivateFolio (even if you have already sent these materials to them).

## Parts of a Complete Application

A COMPLETED application for medical school has four main parts and an additional part (if required by the programs you are applying to) – the Situational Judgement Test. Most medical schools evaluate your application once they receive all parts. For more information, please review the [Overview of the Application Workshop](#).

1. Your MCAT score for DO/medical school (DAT for dental school and GRE for veterinary school).
2. The primary application – a common application (AMCAS for medical school, TMDSAS for Texas medical schools, AACOMAS for DO schools, AADSAS for dental school, and VMCAS for veterinary schools).
3. The Dartmouth Composite Letter of Evaluation Packet (or a Dartmouth Letter Packet of Evaluation if you plan to only submit support letters and not a composite letter).
4. The secondary application (essays for individual schools).
5. Situational Judgement Tests (CASper and AAMC PREview – see more under Situational Judgement Tests below).

## The Composite Letter of Evaluation

Please review the [Composite Process Handbook](#) for more detailed instructions about Dartmouth’s unique composite letter of evaluation for DO/medical and dental schools, including timelines and deadlines. **Do this ASAP if you have only recently decided to apply! It is YOUR responsibility to understand the process.**

## Your Role in the Composite Process

1. Choose and request your writers. Send your writers a PrivateFolio letter request, autobiographical sketch, resume, and/or transcript.
2. **Communicate deadlines and information to support writers.**
3. Create a PrivateFolio account (see link under PrivateFolio section below) and upload your autobiographical sketch, resume, and/or transcript.
4. Submit the [Release to Composite Writer Form](#) when all your support letters and other documents have been uploaded to PrivateFolio. This lets HPP know to send your letters, autobiographical sketch, resume, and transcript to your composite writer.

Remember that you can continue to maintain and enhance your relationships with your writers throughout the year ahead. Reach out to all your writers to ask if they'd like to meet and discuss your application and goals.

### **HPP's Role in the Composite Process**

HPP oversees the composite letter process. We ensure the integrity and quality of the final composite packet. We deliver your support letters and documents to the composite writer. We review each composite letter and work directly with composite writers. We create the final packet and ensure confidentiality. Your HPP Assistant Deans, Nicole Roeper and Sarah Berger, are happy to meet with you to discuss your choices for writers. Your HPP Program Coordinator, Rae Stokes, oversees the logistics of the letter process and Privatefolio.

### **PrivateFolio**

[PrivateFolio](#) is where your support letter writers (not your composite writer!) will upload their letters. It is also where you will upload your autobiographical sketch, resume, and transcript. **Be sure to waive your confidentiality (this is VERY important to medical schools).**

### **The Autobiographical Sketch**

Many of you may be wondering what to focus on when writing your autobiographical sketch. While you will send your autobiographical sketch to all your support writers, it is especially useful for your composite writer. The composite writer is responsible for synthesizing their experiences with you, along with the information shared by you and your support writers. Overall, the composite writer provides context to your abilities, experiences, and who you are as a person. As such, your autobiographical sketch is an important resource for achieving this goal. In addition to the information below, you can learn more about how to write an autobiographical sketch by reviewing our [Autobiographical Sketch Tips & Advice document](#).

The self-reflection involved in this project is a great way to begin the reflection that is essential for the application itself. The format is flexible. Write your sketch as an essay or in sections. You can choose/create your own relevant sections (ex. family influences, growing up, before college, academics, highlight experiences that were especially meaningful/relevant to your goals, highlight other experiences meaningful to you personally, why medicine?, etc.).

The autobiographical sketch is also a place to share any unique challenges you may have experienced. If you don't wish to share that with all your writers, add it for your composite writer, or have a thoughtful discussion with them. The context provided by the composite writer can be very beneficial in some circumstances. Feel free to discuss this with an advisor. Questions to consider for your autobiographical sketch (and ultimately for your application), are below.

## Self-Reflection and Questions to Consider

Self-reflection is vital for the autobiographical sketch and for an excellent application. Consider the following questions:

- What were your formative experiences/values with your family, education, or community before college?
- What experiences/interests have you had over the years that have been meaningful to you?
- How have you grown academically and personally? Do you have any academic challenges to discuss?
- What classes have meant the most to you?
- Have you conducted research? How has it been meaningful to you?
- What extracurriculars or passions (music, athletics, etc.) are you involved in? How have they inspired or surprised you? What do you find meaningful about them?
- Have you engaged in certain themes in your studies or experiences (ex. working with children, the elderly, disadvantaged communities, etc., or research into autism, dementia, oncology, etc.)?
- What kind of service and/or health related experiences have you had? Why do you want to study medicine/dentistry? What has influenced and affirmed this choice? Who has influenced or inspired you?

## MCAT Timing and Preparation

We strongly recommend that you take the MCAT and know your score before you submit your Primary Application. It takes 30-35 days to get your score back after you take the exam. With this in mind, we recommend that you take it by May of the year you apply (latest, June). If that is not feasible, please discuss your plans with an advisor so we can help you figure out what makes sense for you. Please review the [MCAT section on our website](#) for tips and a review of available resources.

## MCAT & Application Costs

For planning purposes, keep in mind the following costs that will accrue during the application process.

- MCAT: \$335 as well as the costs associated with any preparatory materials you purchase, which can vary greatly.
- AMCAS: \$175 processing fee, including one school. Additional \$45 for each school thereafter. On average, people apply to 23 schools. So the AMCAS application totals approximately \$1,000.
- Secondary application fees average between \$75-150 per school (ask for a waiver if you qualify for the Fee Assistance Program, see Section 8).
- Situational Judgement Tests (SJT): See Section 10 for more information about costs.
- As far as we know, interviews continue to be remote. The main costs would be for clothing. After an acceptance has been offered, some schools will offer the opportunity for an in-person visit. This would be the only other cost to account for.

## Fee Assistance Program (FAP)

Learn more about the [MCAT and AMCAS Fee Assistance Program here](#). See below for information about fee assistance for dental, DO, and veterinary applications.

Please note that you must have applied and qualified for fee assistance before signing up and paying for the MCAT. It is not retroactive, though you would still qualify for the AAMC MCAT prep materials and the AMCAS application. If you qualify for the MCAT FAP you will receive all AAMC MCAT prep materials for free and will have no fees if you change the date of your exam.

If you qualify for the FAP in the same cycle in which you are applying, you are also qualified for the AMCAS FAP program. It can take up to six weeks to have the FAP approved, so plan accordingly. It will require getting paperwork and records from yourself and your family. If you did not apply before you took the MCAT but think you might qualify, apply at least 6 weeks before you submit your AMCAS.

If you do qualify for FAP, it will usually reduce or waive secondary application fees as well. Be sure to ask every school.

## Fee Assistance for Other Health Professions

- [Dental School Application Fee Assistance](#)
- [Osteopathic \(DO\) Application Med School Fee Assistance](#)
- [Veterinary School Application Fee Assistance](#)

## Institutional Actions

If you had an institutional action while at Dartmouth, please speak with us. If you are unsure whether the experience you had is considered a reportable institutional action, please speak with us. You are required to share this information in an application. Through confidential conversations, we can help clarify what constitutes an institutional action, help you write about it in your application, and work with you on how it gets integrated into your composite letter.

## Situational Judgement Tests – CASper & AAMC Preview

A number of medical schools now utilize what are called Situational Judgement Tests (SJTs) as part of the application process. Two SJTs are being used at this time.

1. [CASper](#): this is the SJT that most people have heard about, created by a company called Altus (not to be confused with Altius the MCAT prep company).
2. [PREview](#): This SJT was created by the AAMC and is called the “PREview Professional Readiness Exam.”

*We will share a newsletter with more details at a later date.* For now, here is a short description to start answering questions you may have.

## What are SJTs? Why are they part of the application process?

- SJTs present ethical and real-life scenarios and provide opportunities for applicants to respond to them. Depending on which one you are taking (CASper or PREview), your responses might be prose, verbal (recorded), or multiple choice.
- Given the limited elements medical schools have to assess potential candidates, they are exploring whether SJTs can provide another layer of insight into candidates.

## Are SJTs something to worry about? Should I be preparing?

- SJTs are an extra component but not something to worry about. They can even be fun. They've helped people prepare for their interview cycle.
- Yes, you can prepare, and we think you should. Be on the lookout for our SJT newsletter soon. However, **please do NOT let the internet persuade you that need to pay for any preparation services.**

## When do I need to take it? Is there a cost?

- Since some medical schools are now waiting for SJT scores before they consider an application complete, we suggest setting a date by early to late July if not sooner. It takes a few weeks to score. Later is okay, but we'll steer you toward signing up at the earlier end. Again, we do think preparation makes a big difference. While not difficult, you DO want to understand how best to approach it. Because not every school requires it, it will help to know what schools are on your final med school list.
- Yes, unfortunately, there are additional costs attached to CASper and PREview.
  - The cost to take CASper is \$85, which includes the distribution of your results to 7 schools. For additional schools, there is a \$16 distribution fee per school. They waive the fees for applicants who qualify for the AAMC Fee Assistance Program.
  - PREview is a flat fee of \$100. They also waive the fees if you qualify for the AAMC Fee Assistance Program.

## Assessing Your Application

It's important to apply with a strong, competitive application. We are committed to helping you be well-positioned for success with personalized feedback based on our years of experience and assessment. We can review your academic and extracurricular portfolio to help you assess if any aspects of your application need strengthening. We can also help assess if this is your best year to apply whether for personal, academic, or other reasons.

You can schedule an appointment via Calendly with [Sarah Berger](#) and [Nicole Roeper](#). If you are unable to find a time that works for you, please contact Rae Stokes at [Health.Professions.Program@dartmouth.edu](mailto:Health.Professions.Program@dartmouth.edu) or 603-646-3377.





