

As you move forward into your application cycle, please utilize the PreHealth Advising Office for questions and concerns. We are here as a resource to all current and former Penn State students.

### PreHealth Advising Team



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### Professionalism

It is imperative to your reputation as a candidate (and to the health professional admissions officers) that you adhere to standards of professional behavior. These standards center on your ability to behave in a respectful and organized manner during all aspects of the application process. A [Group Advising Session on Professionalism](#) can be found in SharePoint.

This includes approaching evaluators, providing them with information and instructions, and expressing appreciation for their efforts. This extends to all members and staff of PreHealth Advising. **Please do not email multiple members of the team with similar questions.**

### Intent to Apply

The [Intent to Apply](#) form indicates that you are planning on applying to professional school in the upcoming cycle (2024-2025). On this form you will identify your applicant type (first type/reapplicant); your previous experiences with PreHealth advising; and rank your preparation in seven common areas of your application.

After submitting the Intent to Apply form, you will be added to the **2025 Health Professions Portfolio Canvas Page**. Alumni can [reactivate their access account here](#).

## Advising Services

### Individual Advising

PreHealth Advising also offers individual appointments to all PreHealth students and alumni of Penn State coming from any campus and any major. Current students will need a PreHealth referral in Starfish.

### Level UP Group Advising

PreHealth Advising offers “Level UP” Group sessions during the fall and spring semester. These sessions are meant to provide big picture advice on preparing for your application year, whether through informative sessions or active and engaging workshops. The updated calendar of events can be found on the PreHealth Advising [website](#). Recordings are currently housed in SharePoint.

### Drop-in Advising

Drop-in advising is meant for brief concerns that will take less than 10 minutes to resolve. Please utilize all resources (website, canvas, group advising sessions).

### Alumni Advising

Many Penn State candidates for professional programs opt to take one (or more) gap/glide/developmental years. Alumni of Penn State are welcome to utilize all services offered by PreHealth Advising. Alumni may call the office at (814) 865 7620 to schedule an appointment with a PreHealth Adviser.

### PreHealth Advising SharePoint

The PreHealth Advising SharePoint page has replaced our historically used Canvas Page. In SharePoint you can find enhanced information helping you during and through your application year. Follow the steps in the LinkTree to gain access to SharePoint.

### Penn State PreHealth Podcast

The [Penn State PreHealth Podcast](#), hosted by John Moses-Brownson and Kimberly Johnson, covers a wide variety of topics for PreHealth students. It is free and available on all streaming platforms.

### Letter Packet

All students applying to medical, dental, optometry, or podiatry schools should plan to use the PreHealth Advising letter packet service veCollect. For more information, please read the **Letter Packet Guide**.

### Health Professions Portfolio

The Health Professions Portfolio is a mock application built in Microsoft Excel designed to help prepare students for their real application service. For more information, please read the **Health Professions Portfolio Guide**.

### Comprehensive Review

The Comprehensive Review is an in-depth review of a student’s application materials and a mock interview. Interviews can be scheduled in October, and they begin in January through June. It is expected that all candidates to medical, dental, optometry, and podiatry schools complete a comprehensive review. Students who complete an interview typically have **significantly higher acceptance rates**. For more information, see the **Comprehensive Review Guide**.

### Application Material Reviews

In addition to a Comprehensive review, PreHealth Advisers can review personal statements, activity descriptions, secondary essays, and more. PreHealth Advisers may prefer that students review these in **scheduled meetings**.

## Suggested Timeline

| 2023                       |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |                                 |   |   |                                   |          |
|----------------------------|---------|----------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|---------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|----------|
|                            | January | February | March | April | May | June | July | August                          | September   | October                                       | November                          | December |
| Group Advising Sessions    |         |          |       |       |     |      |      | Application Year Overview       |   | Health Professions Portfolio (HPP) Workshop   | HPSP w/ Army                      |          |
| Application Prep           |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |                                 |   | Reserve Comprehensive Interview Slot          | Request Letters of Recommendation |          |
|                            |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |                                 |   | Work on Portfolio for Comprehensive Interview |                                   |          |
| PreHealth Advising         |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |                                 | Application Year Overview   | Start HPP & Schedule Comprehensive Review     | Personal Statement Workshop       |          |
|                            |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |                                 | Meet with PreHealth Adviser to discuss your plan.   |   |                                   |          |
| Exams/Testing              |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |                                 | Prepare for your standardized exam.   |   |                                   |          |
| Development                |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |                                 | Continue Involvement, seek clinical experiences, continue research, serve others, and keep a journal of your thoughts and experiences |   |                                   |          |
| Common Application Service |         |          |       |       |     |      |      |                                 |   |   |                                   |          |
| Other                      |         |          |       |       |     |      |      | Submit the Intent to Apply Form | Scheduling Comprehensive Review   |   |                                   |          |

| 2024                       |   |                                |                                |                                   |  |  |   |   |   |         |          |          |
|----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|---|---|---------|----------|----------|
|                            | January   | February                       | March                          | April                             | May  | June   | July  | August  | September   | October | November | December |
| Group Advising Sessions    | HPP / CR Check In   | School Choice NHSC Scholarship |                                | Apply w/ PreHealth Adviser: CASPA | Apply w/ PreHealth Adviser: AMCAS, AACOMAS, AADSAS | SJT: Casper & PREview                            | Secondary Essays  |   |   |         |          |          |
| Application Prep           | Research & finalize your school list.   |                                |                                | Research your schools.            |  | Prepare for secondaries.                         |   |   |   |         |          |          |
|                            | Continue working on app/portfolio. App coaching with PreHealth Advising.  |                                |                                |                                   |  |  |   |   |   |         |          |          |
| PreHealth Advising         | Comprehensive Reviews Begin   |                                | Meet to discuss final prereqs. |                                   |  | Request your Letter Packet                       | Schedule appointment(s) for secondary essay support/assistance. |   |   |         |          |          |
|                            | Comprehensive Reviews occur for students with completed portfolios, in certain health professions.                                    |                                |                                |                                   |  |  |   |   | Update your PreHealth Adviser on interviews, offers, etc. |         |          |          |
| Exams/Testing              | Prepare for your standardized exam.   |                                |                                |                                   |  | Schedule & take Altus Suite (CASPer, Duet, etc.) |   |   |   |         |          |          |
|                            | Schedule and take exam during this time.  |                                |                                |                                   |  | Schedule & take other SJT exam(s), as needed.    |   |   |   |         |          |          |
| Development                | Continue Involvement, seek clinical experiences, continue research, serve others, and keep a journal of your thoughts and experiences |                                |                                |                                   | Summer Experience                                  |  |   | Continue Involvement, seek clinical experiences, continue research, serve others, and keep a journal of your thoughts and experiences |   |         |          |          |
| Common Application Service |   |                                |                                | Primary Applications Open         | Input Primary Application Info                     | Submit your application early                    | Write, review, and submit secondary essays.                     |   |   |         |          |          |
| Other                      | Scheduling for Comprehensive Review   |                                |                                |                                   |  |  |   |   | Offers begin. Varies by health profession/program.        |         |          |          |
|                            | Interviews!   |                                |                                |                                   |  |  |   |   |   |         |          |          |

| 2025                       |  |          |       |                                     |  |  |  |        |           |         |          |          |
|----------------------------|--|----------|-------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|--------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|
|                            | January  | February | March | April                               | May                                      | June   | July   | August | September | October | November | December |
| Application Prep           |  |          |       |                                     |  |  |  |        |           |         |          |          |
| PreHealth Advising         | Discuss potential update letters/letter of intent/other communication with schools/programs.   |          |       |                                     | If no offers, discuss reapplicant cycle. |  | Email us if you are interested in serving on a panel or talking to student groups/first year seminars. |        |           |         |          |          |
|                            | Meet with adviser to discuss strategies, if no interviews  |          |       |                                     |  |  | Let us know where you decided to attend!   |        |           |         |          |          |
| Exams/Testing              |  |          |       |                                     |  |  |  |        |           |         |          |          |
| Development                |  |          |       | If no offers, reflect on candidacy. |  |  |  |        |           |         |          |          |
| Common Application Service | Different application services have different mechanisms for indicating your interest or commitment to a particular program. Work with a PreHealth Adviser for help with this. |          |       |                                     |  |  |  |        |           |         |          |          |
| Other                      | Interviews!  |          |       |                                     |  | Begin your Health Profession Program (Start time varies by school/program) |  |        |           |         |          |          |

## Application Systems

It is critical to submit early applications to your health professions program. See below for estimated dates.

### Medical: ([AMCAS](#) = MD; [AACOMAS](#) = DO)

- AMCAS opens: Early May 2024
- AMCAS submissions begin: Late May 2024
- AMCAS initial application transmission: Late June 2024
- AACOMAS opens: Early May

### Dental: [AADSAS](#)

- AADSAS opens: Mid-May 2024
- AADSAS submissions begin: Late May 2024

**Podiatry:** [AACPMAS](#) opens Early August 2024

**Optometry:** [OptomCAS](#) opens late June 2024

**Physician Assistant:** [CASPA](#) opens late April 2024

## Application Process

The application process for health professions programs typically involves three main stages: the primary application, the supplemental (secondary) application, and interviewing.

### *Primary Application*

During the primary application stage, applicants provide personal information, academic information including courses taken and grades, and details about their experiences in the healthcare field or related areas. This may include volunteer work, research projects, internships, or employment in healthcare settings. Additionally, applicants are required to submit a personal statement that highlights their motivations, experiences, and aspirations in pursuing a career in the health professions. They also compile a school list of the programs they wish to apply to. **Letters of Recommendation and Test Scores are NOT required to submit a primary application.** The *processing* of your primary application may take up to 6 weeks from the time you both submit your application and your transcripts are received.

### *Secondary Application*

The supplemental or secondary application stage typically involves completing additional application materials specific to each program. This may include writing school-specific essays or responding to prompts related to the program's values, mission, or unique requirements. Prerequisite checks are conducted to ensure that applicants have completed the prerequisite courses required by each program.

By the time you are submitting secondary materials, plan to also submit your letters and test scores. Schools will mark your application as completed when they have a verified primary application, completed secondary materials, a test score (if required including CASPer or PREview), and letters of recommendation.

### *Interviews*

Interviews play a crucial role in the health professions application process as they provide an opportunity for applicants to showcase their interpersonal skills, professionalism, and suitability for the field. Interviews allow admissions committees to assess applicants' communication abilities, ethical reasoning, and personal qualities that go beyond academic achievements and test scores. The timing varies between health professions programs, so please consult with a PreHealth adviser if you have questions.

# Letter Packet Guide

## What is a Letter Packet?

PreHealth Advising at Penn State utilizes a **Letter Packet** service. We **do not** offer committee letters. The letter packet is a collection of up to six letters of recommendation and is used for medical, dental, optometry, and podiatry programs. Each packet contains a cover letter written by our office providing context to candidates from Penn State. Physician Assistant programs do not accept letter packets.

The PreHealth Advising team **strongly recommends** that all candidates to these programs use the letter packet. It is an expectation from many health professions programs that students utilize the services available. A letter packet is **required** for all students planning to participate in the comprehensive review process.

## What are the benefits to using the Letter Packet?

In addition to verifying students' letters, students who utilize the letter packet service have significantly more successful cycles. Students who used a letter packet and applied to medical school last year had a 69% acceptance rate, 25% higher than those who did not. Students who utilize the Letter Packet service can also expect to have their letters to be stored in our archive for several years if they wait to apply or end up needing to reapply.

## How do I access the Letter Packet service?

Following the **Portfolio Kickoff Workshop** on October 3rd, students applying to medical, dental, optometry, or podiatry programs will be able to request access to this service by [signing the FERPA release form](#) and paying the corresponding account fee. The fee for this service is **\$50**. Students who demonstrate financial need may request an evaluation for a waiver from the PreHealth Advisers. If your fee has not been paid or waived, we will not be able to release your letter packet to the application services.

Once your fee is paid (or waived), the PreHealth Advising team will reach out with your next steps in a follow up document. The document will include instructions for requesting your letters of recommendation, checking the status of your letters of recommendation, and submitting your letter packet to your application service.

**You do not need letters of recommendation for a comprehensive review or to submit your primary application.**

# Comprehensive Review Guide

## What is a Comprehensive Review?

The Comprehensive Review is a developmental application coaching session designed to prepare students for their health professions candidacy. It blends a mock Review with specific application feedback on your drafted application materials (Health Professions Portfolio, Autobiography, Secondary Essays). Reviews are offered starting in the spring semester to students applying to medical, dental, optometry, or podiatry programs.

The PreHealth Advising team **strongly recommends** that all candidates to these programs complete a Comprehensive Review. It is an expectation from many health professions programs that students utilize the services available. Much like the intent to apply form, completing a Comprehensive Review does not commit you to applying. In fact, nearly 25% of students who Review opt to take additional time for various reasons.

## What are the goals of the Comprehensive Review?

The goals of the Comprehensive Review include helping you provide context to your experiences, emphasize the strengths of your candidacy, and identify ways to address any areas of weakness. PreHealth Advisers will help candidates put together an application package that can tell a cohesive story of who they are. Students can expect to receive additional assistance in navigating their health profession applications, and guidance on making strong decisions in relation to the process.

## What are the benefits to doing a Comprehensive Review?

Students who complete a Comprehensive Review can expect in-depth feedback on building their candidacy for their intended health profession. This includes advice on developing your personal statement, describing your experiences on your application, organizing your school list, and more. All materials needed for a Review are of use when completing your full application in the spring.

For students matriculating to medical school in 2023, **students who completed a Comprehensive Review and applied had a 77% acceptance rate**, 21% higher than students who did not Review. For dental students, Reviewed students had a 79% acceptance rate, 16% higher than students who did not Review.

## How do I schedule a Comprehensive Review?

Following the **Portfolio Kickoff Workshop**, students applying to medical, dental, optometry, or podiatry programs will be able to **immediately** schedule their date through the Health Professions Portfolio Canvas page. Dates will be available from mid-January through the end of June. The final day to schedule a Comprehensive Review will be June 15<sup>th</sup>.

## What do I need to complete a Comprehensive Review?

Prehealth Advising has developed the **Health Professions Portfolio**, which resembles the primary application of each application service. The materials do not need to be perfect and can be drafted versions. To complete a Review, students will need to submit a health professions portfolio, an autobiography draft, and the responses for one school's set of secondary essays. These must be submitted to the Portfolio Canvas page by one week prior to a Comprehensive Review. If materials are not submitted, a student's Review may be canceled.

**You do not need an entrance exam test score OR letters of recommendation to complete your Review.**



Prehealth  
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**Review Scheduling Opens in  
October 2023**