



RICE UNIVERSITY

Academic Advising

A close-up photograph of a hand wearing a white nitrile glove. The hand is holding a black stethoscope and a white N95 respirator mask. The mask has a yellow circular filter in the center and some text printed on it. The background is a blurred white surface, possibly a lab coat.

Health Professions Advising Open File Guide: Getting Started

2023 Admissions Cycle



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Part I: Getting Started

Welcome to Open File!

The purpose of the documents on the Open File website is to provide details and guidance about the application process to medical and dental school. Rice submits a Health Professions Advising Committee (HPAC) letter to formally introduce you to schools and provide a narrative on your candidacy. This is an optional service but a Rice tradition for over 30 years. Students are welcome to apply to schools directly, but most medical schools across the country have come to expect the HPAC letter from Rice applicants.

For students who would like to have an HPAC letter, we require that all applicants read the documents on the Open File website carefully, follow instructions, consider guidelines and suggestions, and adhere to all deadlines. This will significantly enhance your chance for acceptance to medical or dental school and reduce inefficiencies in the process. Throughout the documents, we provide context and explanations as to why the required materials and information are necessary to your finalized application.

At the bottom of the Open File website, you will find a [timeline](#) for each step in the process that you must follow.

The Strong Candidate

If you are planning to apply for Fall 2023 admission, we recommend that you reflect and determine if you meet all the components for a strong applicant, which include:

- Academic Performance (overall GPA and science GPA)
- Standardized Test Scores (MCAT/DAT)
- Clinical Exposure and Experiences
- Service and Community Involvement (Altruism/Empathy)
- Uniqueness: Interests, Perspectives, and Experiences
- Leadership and Teamwork
- Research (Intellectual Curiosity)
- Interpersonal/Communication Skills
- Character: Ethics, Integrity, Honesty, Responsibility
- Letters of Evaluation

If you are unsure, you can make an appointment with an advisor to discuss your candidacy. It is best to apply when you are ready and feel your application is at its strongest.


Importance of Deadlines

As part of the Open File process, we will need significant information from you. Without sufficient information in an organized and timely manner, our ability to best represent your candidacy is hindered, so we encourage you to commit the time and energy necessary for each task. Please also consider that most health professions schools operate on rolling admissions, so delays in submitted materials may significantly impact your admission. Our office is typically well ahead of the timelines, but we need your help to maintain this standard.



Opening your HPA Applicant File

Opening your Health Professions Applicant File is a two-step process. **(1)** Pay the \$100 registration fee: <https://signup.rice.edu/openfile23> and **(2)** fill out the Health Professions Applicant Information Form: <https://bit.ly/hpa23info>. Completion of **BOTH** steps is required for registration. It is entirely your responsibility to make sure both steps have been done; the Health Professions Advising Committee will not contact you if your registration is incomplete. Both the payment portal and Health Professions Applicant Information Form will close at 10:00am on Friday, January 14, 2022; anyone who misses the deadline and wishes to register will need to reach out to hpa@rice.edu. Late registrants will receive a cover letter and will be ineligible for the pre-application appointment with an advisor.

When submitting payment for the \$100 registration fee, please make sure to sign up using the email you want added to the HPA 2023  Box folders. If you already have a Box account through your Rice email, then you will need to use your Rice email when submitting payment. If you are a Rice alum, you will need to use a non-Rice email, as your Rice email may be deactivated in the middle of the Open File process and you will lose access to Box. If you have concerns regarding your ability to pay the \$100 registration fee, please reach out to hpa@rice.edu.

The Health Profession Applicant Information Form asks for comprehensive details, including contact information, health profession program of interest, academic record (major, minor, etc.), and admission test scores. All of this information is crucial to our office's records and organization, and is required for us to know how to advise you and prepare your Health Professions Advising Committee letter. In addition, you will provide the following:

- Required waiver to your right to access your letters of evaluation from faculty and community members
- Required authorization for the Office of Student Judicial Programs (SJP) to release your disciplinary record information to the Office of Academic Advising
- Recommended authorization to release basic information to the Rice Alumni in Medicine group
- Recommended authorization to release basic information to future applicants
 - The OAA is creating a directory of students that matriculate to medical school that can be shared with future applicants by request, including name and email address. By sharing your contact information, you give permission for the OAA/future applicants to reach out to you.

Confirmed receipt of your registration fee and completion of your Health Profession Applicant Information Form officially opens your Health Professions applicant file for the 2023 cycle. Upon confirmation, you will be provided access to your own individual Box folder labelled **Last Name, First Name (HPA 2023)** and the **HPA 2023 Applicant Resources** Box folder. If you already have a Box account associated with the email provided at submission of payment, then the invitations to the two Box folders will be automatically accepted. If you do not already have a Box account associated with the email provided to us, then you will need to **manually accept the invitations. If you do not accept the invitations within 30 days, Box will revoke your access to the folders.** Please accept the invitations as soon as you receive them, and check your spam/junk folders in case you do not see them.



Completing Your File

Completing your file with the OAA includes several steps. All are necessary prior to our completion of your Health Professions Advising Committee letter and subsequent submission to the appropriate application services.

- Submit 6 documents to your individual Box folder labelled **Last Name, First Name (HPA 2023)**:
 - SJP Disciplinary Waiver Request
 - Paragraph outlining your high school accomplishments (written in third person)
 - Detailed curriculum vitae (CV)
 - Completed draft of your personal statement
 - Completed Pre-Application Appointment Form
 - Letter Writers Box Note
- Request letters from your evaluators and complete the letter writers box note
- Schedule and complete a pre-application appointment to clarify content of the Pre-Application Appointment Form (optional, but **strongly** suggested)
- Submit your application to:
 - [American Medical Colleges Application Service \(AMCAS\)](#)
 - [Texas Medical and Dental School Application Service \(TMDSAS\)](#)
 - [American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Service \(AACOMAS\)](#)
 - [American Association of Dental Schools Application Service \(AADSAS\)](#)
 - Or other appropriate application service

Please recognize that the Health Professions Advising Committee will draft and complete ~230 letters for medical and dental applicants in spring/early summer 2022. This is an enormous undertaking and is simply not possible without your compliance with deadlines. Each letter contains considerable detail specific to the candidate and requires personalization. For this reason, non-compliance with deadlines will result in a shorter and less descriptive HPAC letter. Immediately following the January 28 at 10:00am materials submission deadline, we will check applicant individual Box folders for the requested materials. **Applicants who do not follow the material requirements and deadlines will receive a cover letter as opposed to the full-length committee letter and are ineligible for the pre-application appointment with an advisor. Additionally, they are not eligible for the medical mock interviews hosted by the Rice Pre-Medical Society (RPMS) and the dental mock interviews hosted by the OAA.**

The following sections provide some basic guidelines regarding the required submissions listed above, and more details are available in the HPA 2023 Applicant Resources Box folder.

SJP Disciplinary Waiver

The [SJP Disciplinary Waiver](#) allows communication between Student Judicial Programs (SJP) and the OAA regarding your disciplinary record. If an applicant has any honor code or conduct violations, please review the [SJP Website](#) for additional information. Please release your record to the “Office of Academic Advising” and sign the bottom of the form. You **do not need** to upload a copy of your ID.



High School Paragraph – Brief Summary of Achievements

The purpose of this section is to provide guidelines for the paragraph summarizing your high school achievements. We have provided a few examples in Box for your reference – please [click here](#) to access them. Keep in mind that the Health Professions Advising Committee will use this paragraph to provide context about your high school accomplishments with respect to your transition to college and to your more recent preparation for acceptance to a health professional school. Be sure to write in third person and to include details such as your GPA, test scores, and significant honors or scholarships. **Please make your paragraph no longer than 4 sentences.**

Curriculum Vitae (CV)

The HPA 2023 Applicant Resources Box folder includes the [CV template](#) all applicants are **required** to use for their CV submission. **You must use the CV template we have provided.** Its design allows you to provide us with relevant, specific information regarding your candidacy for health professional school. Therefore, we look for academic achievement, research experience, clinical exposure, leadership experience, volunteerism and other altruistic activities, extracurricular involvement, honors and awards, etc. Be sure to list every activity you have done since graduating high school (not just medically-related activities). While the OAA provides this CV template for use during Open File, note that you will not need to provide a CV to the application services. If you would like assistance with using your CV for other endeavors, please contact the Center for Career Development (CCD).

Personal Statement

You will find [prompts, resources, and guidelines](#) about personal statements from a variety of perspectives including those of medical school admissions deans in the HPA 2023 Applicant Resources Box folder. RPMS will host personal statement workshops in the coming months. In addition, the Center for Academic and Professional Communication (CAPC) provides consultations regarding personal statements for those applying to various professional schools. As a starting point, reflect on the experiences listed in your CV and describe how they have shaped your motivation to pursue medicine. For CAPC consultations, it is recommended you provide a copy of your pre-application appointment form. We strongly suggest that you start with a draft of your personal statement as soon as possible, as the process takes several iterations and significant revision following feedback from a variety of individuals. Additionally, we suggest that you avoid topics of a nature about which you are not willing or able to answer specific questions.

Pre-Application Appointment Form

This [form](#) asks specific questions which allow you to expand upon elements of your CV, reflect on your motivations for pursuing health professional school, and articulate your views about the profession. We have designed this form to mimic the questions that admissions committees ask on their secondary applications, so treat this form like an actual application. **You are required to provide thorough and complete answers and descriptions for the applicable questions and each of your activities. If you do not, your Pre-Application Appointment Form will be deemed incomplete and you will be ineligible for a Pre-Application Appointment, and will receive a cover letter as opposed to the full-length committee letter.**



Letter Writers Box Note

As one of the six documents required for the January 28 materials deadline, you will need to complete the [Letter Writers Box Note Template](#). Please save a copy of the template to your individual Box folder and record the information of your intended individual letter writers, with a required minimum of three letter writers. Please provide your letter writers' names, work emails, work phone numbers, as well as the type of relationship you have with each (ex. science professor, principal investigator, volunteering supervisor, etc.) and the date on which you requested the letters of recommendation. If you have not yet requested a letter from a recommender, please put the date by which you intend to request the letter.

Requesting Letters of Evaluation

Requesting supporting letters of evaluation from professors and other community members is a critical aspect of your application. To successfully obtain strong letters of evaluation from evaluators, you need to consider the following:

- Number of letters
- Who, how, and when to ask
- Guidelines and deadlines for evaluators
- Relinquishing your right to see letters

We typically encourage students to request evaluations from three or four individuals, as less than three is too few, and there is often no additional benefit from more than four letters unless a specific program makes this request. MD/PhD applicants must request evaluations from a supervisor from each research project in which the applicant has participated.

Although the ideal set of evaluators is highly dependent on the applicant, carefully consider how you select your evaluators. We suggest the following letters if possible:

- Professor of a science course (could overlap with major professor)
- Professor in your academic major
- Supervising research professor or someone related to your clinical activities
- Letter from individual who can provide a strong character reference

Most schools accept the HPAC letter in lieu of a second letter of evaluation from a professor of science or engineering. A small number of schools still require two letters from science/engineering professors in addition to the HPAC letter. Please consult specific schools' instructions to be certain you are adhering to their requirements.

There could easily be overlap among these individuals. The character reference could come from a wide range of possible evaluators who you know well through your research, health-related positions, volunteer work, or other Rice or non-Rice related programs. The most important factors are familiarity and commitment to providing a strong letter of evaluation.

Timing is critical, so you will need to ask early. Faculty members receive many requests for letters of evaluation, and writing a thoughtful, quality letter takes time. Providing your prospective letter writers with adequate notification and appropriate supporting documents is absolutely essential.

Be sure to provide an evaluator the option of saying no. If an evaluator does not have time or is uncomfortable writing on your behalf, it will likely result in a shorter, less effective letter. It is best to have



honesty from an evaluator, which will allow you to find another who is enthusiastic to support your application.

Waiving your right to see your evaluations provides greater credibility. Non-confidential requests can make it more difficult for your evaluators to write honest, candid, and objective letters. Likewise, schools are informed if evaluation letters are non-confidential, and whether correctly or incorrectly, perceive them with less credibility. In order to participate in Open File, you are required to waive your access to both the committee letter and all individual letters of evaluation.

We strongly encourage all applicants to request their letters of evaluation by January 28 to allow evaluators adequate time to write a strong letter of evaluation. All applicants are required to complete the [Letter Writer Box Note Template](#) in their individual Box folder so the HPAC can have a record of each applicant's intended letter writers and their contact information. A checklist and email templates for letter requests are available [here](#).

Make sure your evaluator is aware that letters are due to the HPAC by Friday, May 20, 2022. Letter writers are required to submit their letter through the Health Professions Advising Letter Writer Portal. **Please make sure to send them the [Instructions to Writers of Letters of Evaluation document](#)**, as it provides important information on letter requirements and detailed instructions on how to submit their letter through the portal.

As individual letters are received, the HPAC will update the Letter Writer Box Note in your individual Box folder so that you can keep track of the status of each letter. If you have any questions regarding the status of a letter or need to update your Letter Writer Box Note, please reach out to us at hpa@rice.edu.

Additional Resources in HPA 2023 Applicant Resources Box Folder

There are more resources in the [HPA 2023 Applicant Resources Box folder](#) to assist with your application processing. These resources include but are not limited to:

- This Health Professions Open File Information guide
- Guidelines (and template) for the high school paragraph submission
- Guidelines (and **required** template) for health professions applicants' Curricula Vitae (CV)
- Guidelines for personal statements and optional essays
- Pre-Application Appointment Form
- Interview resources
- Information for re-applicants

Pre-Application Appointment

Immediately following the document submission deadline (January 28 at 10:00am), the HPAC will lock applicant individual Box folders to verify that all the required materials were submitted and that they are complete and thorough. **Students who do not follow the material requirements and deadlines will be notified via email that they will receive a cover letter as opposed to the full-length committee letter and are ineligible for the pre-application appointment with an advisor.**

Starting February 7, students who meet all requirements and deadlines can schedule a Pre-Application Appointment with an OAA advisor to clarify or expand on any aspect of your materials. This 45-minute appointment also allows us to get to know you better and offers perspective about the steps you have



taken to prepare for that opportunity. While the office will always support our candidates to medical and dental school, we will also try to provide constructive feedback about the steps the candidate has already taken and additional steps they might continue to take to improve their candidacy. The tone of the meeting is relatively informal, but it is an opportunity to practice your interviewing skills. Please dress business casual. We expect professional demeanor and communication style from you. Keep in mind that every interaction is an opportunity to provide an impression. You have until March 30 to schedule the Pre-application Appointment, and until April 6 to complete the appointment.

Research Schools

Deciding where to apply is critical to your application yet challenging and time-consuming. Several important factors to consider include:

- Public school residency requirements (public institutions in your home state are typically a good place to start)
- Curricular approach (such as traditional lecture vs. problem-based learning, block scheduling, grading system, research focus vs. primary care focus, etc.)
- School's mission and vision, as well as school culture
- Location and cost of attendance: tuition and living expenses

In addition, it is costly to apply to health profession programs. Consider all costs including the primary application fee, secondary application fees, cost of sending transcripts, transportation to/from interviews, lodging, meals, etc. If you have concerns about the associated costs, make sure to check out the [Association of American Medical Colleges Fee Assistance Program](#), [American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Fee Waiver Program](#), as well as the [Rice University Access and Opportunity Portal](#).

There are several resources to assist applicants with their research including the [Medical School Admission Requirements \(MSAR\)](#), [Texas and Medical Dental School Application Service](#), and [Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine \(AACOM\) Choose DO Explorer](#). While the MSAR requires a subscription, the OAA allows students to access the database through our office. If you would like to use the MSAR, please email us at hpa@rice.edu.

Every February, the Office of Academic Advising hosts the annual Health Professions Fair. This past year we hosted over 40 different health professions schools on campus to meet with students and discuss their programs. Some of our previous guests have included the Duke University School of Medicine, University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine, Baylor College of Medicine, and more. It is a great opportunity to explore schools and make a more personal connection with them, and we hope to offer this opportunity virtually this year.

For medical school applicants, please keep in mind that you may apply to both MD and DO programs; MD graduates and DO graduates can practice in any medical specialty anywhere in the country. As of 2020, both MD and DO graduates participate in the same residency matching process. Acceptance to either type of school will allow you to reach your career goals in medicine.