



RICE UNIVERSITY

Academic Advising

A close-up photograph of a hand wearing a white nitrile glove. The hand is holding a silver 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 image of a person in a white lab coat.

Health Professions Advising
Open File Guide:
The Ongoing Application Process

2026 Admissions Cycle



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Part III: The Ongoing Application Process

Committee Letter and Letters of Evaluation

When will my Health Professions Advising Committee (HPAC) letter be submitted to medical and dental schools?

Please allow the Office of Academic Advising (OAA) adequate time to process all HPAC letters and individual letters of evaluation. **If all of your letters have been received and you have submitted the [Locked Letter Form](#), please refrain from contacting the OAA until Monday, July 14, 2025**, to check on the status of your committee letter submission.

How will I know when my HPAC letter has been uploaded to the application services?

The OAA will submit your HPAC letter along with individual letters of evaluation to the application services as one PDF file. After it is uploaded, you will receive an email confirmation from hpa@rice.edu.

Can I customize the letters of evaluation in my committee letter that are sent to professional schools?

Your HPAC letter, along with individual letters of evaluation, will be sent to all of the allopathic, osteopathic, and/or dental schools to which you apply. You cannot customize your letters for individual programs. However, when you fill out your Locked Letter Form, you can list the order you'd like your letters packaged.

Supplementary letters of evaluation are accepted by many schools. If you are using AMCAS, you can upload additional letters to be shared with all of your medical schools, a designated group, or a single school. Additional letters are not sent through the OAA and must be uploaded directly to the application services. Please refer to the application manuals for details.

If I request an additional letter of evaluation after my HPAC Letter is uploaded, will it delay the processing of my application?

If you requested additional letters and schools have not reviewed your application yet, they may wait for the additional letter to arrive, therefore postponing the review of your application. For this reason, it makes sense to submit additional letters later in the process, perhaps if you are not getting interview invitations or are placed on a waitlist.

Making Changes to Your Application

If I changed my fall coursework or if I am not taking a course from what I listed on my application, do I need to notify schools?

Generally, this is not an issue and you do not need to contact schools. They likely will take note of this change if you are completing a missing prerequisite course or finishing a graduate/post-baccalaureate program.



If I decide to postpone my application, what do I do?

Please inform the OAA **as soon as possible** at hpa@rice.edu. If we are informed too late into the cycle, the committee may not be able to issue you a refund for the Open File registration fee.

How do I update schools on plans for a gap year?

Many schools will ask about your gap year in their secondary application. You can also discuss it during an interview or in an update letter to be sent later in the application cycle.

How do I update schools that I have changed my major, dropped a second major or minor, or switched from a BS to a BA degree?

Ideally, you have planned ahead and made these major, minor, or degree changes before you submitted your primary application so this does not pose a problem for you. If need be, you can send changes directly to a program. You must double-check if a school is open to receiving updates after application submission. If so, they may prefer updates be communicated directly to their Admissions Office or via the application portal.

Secondary Applications

After you submit your primary application, set your focus on secondary applications. Secondary applications vary among institutions. Certain institutions do not have a secondary application, while others become available after you have confirmed receipt of your primary application. Check with each school for their secondary application policy. It is best to submit applications as soon as possible, and it is recommended to submit them within two weeks of receipt.

How much time should I dedicate to secondary essays?

You should spend a considerable amount of time working on your secondary essays. Look to your peers, family and friends to review your essays. While schools may ask the same questions, be sure to tailor your essays to each school. Proofread for spelling and grammar mistakes.

How do I approach optional essays?

Make every effort to answer all essay questions. To address “why this particular school,” review your research and identify key features that are well-suited to your interests and you as a person.

Think carefully about the “diversity” question. It is important to acknowledge the importance of diversity and that you have learned from exposure to diverse cultures and experiences.

Ongoing Contact with Programs

Do grades matter after I submit my application?



Absolutely! If you do not interview by December, you will want to send updated grades for the Fall 2024 semester that demonstrate your continued academic success. Additionally, schools typically request for your final transcript prior to matriculation.

How do I complete a “Dean’s Form/Certification?”

The two-step process for Dean’s Certification is found in the HPA 2026 Resources Box folder under [Dean’s Certification](#).

What if I decide to apply to additional medical schools?

This is not an issue. Be sure to follow the specific instructions outlined for each respective application service to include these additions.

What if a school told me that I would hear within four weeks, and it has been six weeks since I interviewed?

Patience is key! On occasion, schools do not meet their stated timeline for notifying an applicant. No news does not always mean bad news from a school. Waiting is part of the process.

Is it ever appropriate to notify another medical school in a city you have been invited to interview that you will be in the area?

You should only make this request if you are traveling an unusually long distance, but schools will vary in their response. Express gratitude for their consideration and any opportunity to interview whenever that may occur.

What does it mean when my application is “on hold?”

Likely, admissions committees want to review more applicants before they make a decision on your application. By late February/early March, most “on hold” applicants have either been invited for interviews or have been rejected.

Letters of Interest, Updates, or Intent

When should I send a “letter of interest?”

A letter of interest is appropriate to send to schools where you have not been interviewed, have not heard anything at all, following placement on a waitlist or after you have received official notification from a school that your application is on hold. Reiterate or elaborate why you feel you are a good fit for this particular school and how you can contribute to the incoming class. The letter should be concise, focused, and no more than a few paragraphs. This letter can include new information about your activities, updates when you have new grades, or simply to express your continued interest for a program.



Include your applicant ID number. It is important to follow specific-school directions for submitting additional information. Some schools discourage the submission of additional information, so respect their policy.

How do I update schools on new activities or accomplishments?

While this rarely influences decisions about your application, it is appropriate to include this in a letter of interest or when solicited by a specific school.

When is it appropriate to send a “letter of intent?”

We recommend students only send one “letter of intent” if you are on a waitlist of your top choice school after April 30. The letter is only appropriate if you intend to matriculate to that school. It is not appropriate to send to schools where you have not received an interview.

Waitlist

What does it mean to be on a waitlist following an interview?

This simply means the medical school has not accepted you yet, but it also does not want to reject your application. Notification of a waitlist status can be a good time to send a follow-up letter of interest to express your continued interest in a school. Being on a waitlist means that you have a chance of being accepted, and you should not lose hope. You can stay on waitlists well into summer, even if you are accepted to other schools.

If I am on a waitlist, when might I be admitted?

You will only be admitted when a spot opens. This can happen any time between May and matriculation. Schools report that they accept the highest number of waitlisted students during May and June but can accept students later in the summer. You cannot accept an offer of admission from another school after you have started orientation at a school.

Please note after 5:00 pm on May 15, no medical school in Texas may offer a position to an applicant already accepted by another medical school in Texas.

Are waitlists ranked?

Some schools rank their waitlist while others do not. Remember that you have been deemed qualified for admission by being placed on the waitlist. When accepted applicants withdraw from an incoming class, the medical school will look to admit waitlisted candidates who would best balance the composition of the class.



Texas Match

Texas resident applicants must rank all schools at which they interviewed regardless of whether or not a pre-match offer was received. Applicants holding a pre-match offer who have interviewed at school(s) that did not extend an offer may rank one or more of those schools higher than the pre-match offer school without risk of losing the pre-match offer. If an applicant holds a pre-match offer and matches to a school they have ranked more highly, the pre-match offer will be withdrawn. Pre-match offers will also be withdrawn through the match process from all other lower-ranked schools. The applicant can still be selected by schools which they ranked higher than the school to which they matched. If applicants are holding multiple pre-match offers, they will come out of the match holding only one offer. A case study provided at the end of this document illustrates these points. Applicants who do not enter their match preference ranks by the deadline will automatically be withdrawn from all medical schools regardless of whether or not an early offer has been made.

Following the match, rolling admissions will continue through the beginning of orientation at each medical school. Medical schools will continue to make offers from their alternate pools which may include applicants who are currently holding an offer at another Texas medical school. However, the Texas medical schools have agreed that after May 15, no school may make an offer to an applicant already holding a place at another Texas medical school.

Texas resident applicants must rank all schools at which they interviewed regardless of whether or not a pre-match offer was received. The deadline for applicants to submit their match preference rank list online was January 31 by 5:00 pm CST for 2026 applicants, so please follow TMDAS's website closely for deadline updates. More information on the match can be found in this [video](#).

Getting Accepted

I just received an acceptance letter. What do I do?

Congratulations! Celebrate this achievement. If you receive and hold multiple acceptances, you have until April 30th to narrow it down to one school. After this point, you are in danger of having offers rescinded. Once you have decided on your school, follow their instructions for submitting a deposit and any other steps they require.

Are there any advantages to interviewing at a school after I have already been admitted to my top choice?

No. If you continue to interview after being admitted to your top school, you are taking up valuable interview slots for candidates who may be interested or seriously considering that medical school. If you have been admitted to your preferred school, you have an ethical obligation to notify the remaining schools that you have accepted an invitation to attend elsewhere. It is never acceptable to no-show for an interview. This is a poor reflection of you and Rice University; the OAA will be notified of this behavior.



I am thinking about deferring admission for a year. Can I do that?

Each school has its own deferral policy. Some will not allow deferrals at all, some only allow students to defer if they have received a significant opportunity or have an emergency, and others will allow you to defer with no issue. Check with each school regarding their policy. In general, we do not recommend students apply to medical or dental school if your intention is to defer your admission.

What do I do about schools that require a deposit? Will I get that money back if I choose not to matriculate?

Most medical programs have deposits of \$100 or greater. The deposits are usually refundable before April 30 or will be applied toward your tuition if you ultimately attend the school. For many DO schools, the deposits are between \$500-\$1500 and are typically not refundable.

What if I am accepted, but my preference is to attend a school where I am waitlisted?

You can stay on a schools' waitlist until classes start. Keep in mind Texas medical schools will not offer positions after May 15 if you have already been admitted to another Texas program. You should deposit to a school where you have been accepted. At some point in late spring or early summer, you should move forward with plans to attend the accepted school because you will need to make preparations.

What if I am accepted but my preference is to not go to the medical school I was accepted at this cycle and try again in a future cycle? What is blacklisting?

This is an extremely unwise choice. Getting accepted to any medical school in the United States is a very difficult endeavor, and turning down your acceptance(s) just to try again in a future cycle is unlikely to turn out well for you. Many schools will **blacklist** candidates who turn down their offer and try again in the next cycle or a future cycle. This means if you turn down an offer, do **not** expect to be accepted there ever again. The OAA and HPAC will **not** work with anyone who does this, and we will **not** allow you to sign up for Open File in a future cycle if you turn down an acceptance.

April 30

Why is April 30 important?

AMCAS has Application and Acceptance Protocols that outline deadlines, policies and responsibilities. One policy states that applicants can hold multiple acceptances until April 30 of the year of matriculation. By April 30, all applicants must select one school. Students must notify all schools of their decision or they risk having all offers of admission rescinded. Once schools know how many students will be matriculating, they may begin using their waitlist to fill any open spots.

What if it appears I will not be accepted?

When is the appropriate time to meet with the OAA staff if I'm not hearing from schools?



You are advised to keep in touch with the OAA throughout the process, and if you have not received interviews by the end of December, you should contact us in the spring. Likewise, if you are on waitlists or on hold in May, you should speak to an advisor.

If I am not accepted this cycle, should I make alternative plans for next year and/or consider reapplying?

This is a difficult decision that involves weighing how long to remain available for an admission offer versus making alternative plans for the fall and beyond. **Reapplying right away is not always best.** You want to be sure your application is as strong as possible, which may mean taking additional time to address areas of weakness in your application before applying again. Your second application should feature new and different experiences. Developing a new personal statement also helps demonstrate the additional experience and maturity you have gained since the last time you applied. While waiting before applying again may be frustrating, it often means the difference between being accepted and not. Commit to spending the time to become the most competitive applicant as possible.

What are some barriers to acceptance?

These can range from metrics such as GPA and test scores, test timing, clinical exposure, volunteer work, research, or more. Additional barriers include the timing of your primary application submission, your choice of schools, secondary application submission, or interview skills. You will need to assess your candidacy, reflect on where you can make concessions, and determine how to improve your overall application before you next apply.

Closing

Please remember that the application process is long and challenging. Prepare ahead of time by reading the application service manuals when they are released in late spring. We understand it can be overwhelming, but have patience. We all wish you luck!