



Canadian and American Medical Schools: *Application Considerations*



OVERVIEW

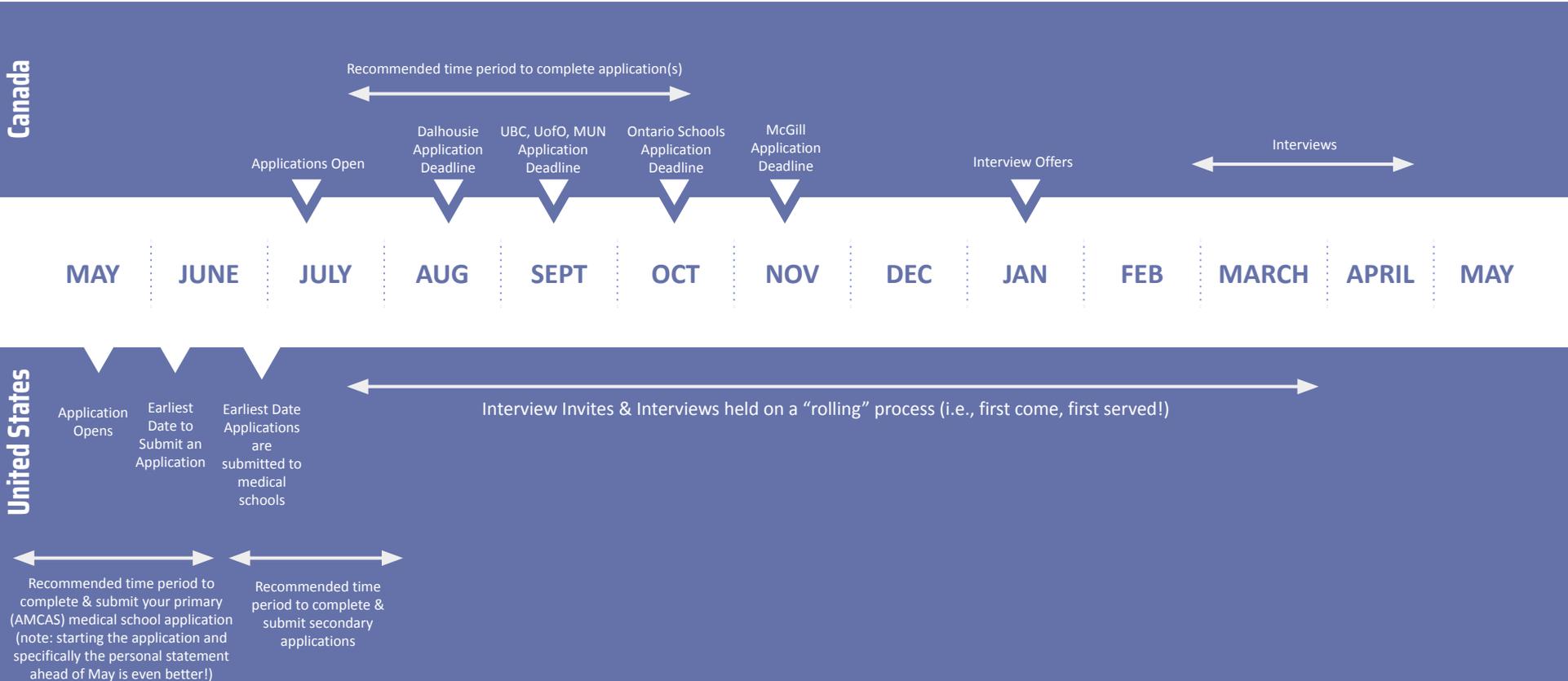
This document aims to provide some helpful considerations for applicants applying to both Canadian and American medical schools. Included in this document are timeline recommendations, tips from mentors and a list of some helpful resources to help guide the application process.

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TIMELINE

The below is a high-level overview of the timeline for Canadian and Medical School Application process. In order to manage timelines effectively and increase the likelihood of success, a recommended time frame for working on different components of each application is included.



TIPS



Choosing Your List of Schools

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When I began researching to apply to medical school in the US, I discovered quickly that unlike in Canada, where there are under 20 medical schools but they are all relatively equal in their quality of education and prestige, the US has over 150 medical schools with a huge range in quality of education and national/international recognition. Similarly, the different schools have different cutoff GPAs and MCAT scores for admission. As a result, I found it difficult to decide which schools to apply to, given that I could only complete a fixed number of applications due to time and financial constraints. The AAMC has an online database called the Medical School Admission Requirements (MSAR) that compares the different medical schools by listing important information including GPA and MCAT cutoff and size of the medical school class. It also provides information indicating if the school accepts international and/or Canadian applicants (depending on the school, Canadians may or may not be considered international applicants). Even with the MSAR database, I would highly recommend contacting each school you are interested in directly to ensure that they will be accepting Canadian applicants for your admission cycle.”





Shadowing

“Clinical shadowing is an important component of US applications, though it is neutral to negative on Canadian applications. It will likely be challenging to have a successful AMCAS application without clinical experience.”



Finances

“Before sinking your time into applying, consider how much it costs to apply (~\$130 USD/school) and attend. Note that Canadian banks will not necessarily extend you a loan large enough to cover the cost of attending (those big med student line of credits typically are only for those attending Canadian institutions) and as an international student you will likely need to provide proof of funds or put the money in escrow to get a student visa. Check if the school will be able to offer you financial aid.”



Pre-Requisites

“US schools typically have more pre-requisite requirements than Canadian schools. Make sure you meet these requirements before applying! If you are early in undergrad and planning to apply to the US, make a plan to take these courses if it doesn't fall into your degree plan by default.”



Reference letters

“US applications often have specific reference letter requirements (e.g. professor who taught you in a science course, professor who taught you in a non-science course, non-academic reference). You can request a set of reference letters from different people and select which ones get sent to each school. Check the requirements carefully.”

Getting an Early Start on US Secondary Applications

“ Some secondary essay topics/prompts vary for school year to year, but they often stay the same. Since the timeline for US and Canadian medical schools is so tight, you might want to get started on secondaries early. Previous year’s secondary essay prompts can often be found via google or blogs like mededits.com. This allows you to get a head start on secondaries before you receive them. ”



Managing timelines 1/2

“ US schools have rolling admissions which means that they continually send out interviews and admissions throughout the cycle, starting the first date when applications can be submitted. Thus, interviews can be sent even before the final application deadline. US schools also utilize a primary and a secondary application. The primary application is done through AMCAS, which is a more general application where you list the activities you are involved in and write a personal statement. The primary application is sent to the schools that you indicate you would like to apply to. Once the primary application is received by US schools, they will send out a secondary application if you have met their requirements. The secondary application contains essays specific to each school. What this means is that for those applying to the US, it is to your advantage to submit your US applications as soon as possible as the sooner you submit your primary application, the sooner you can start and submit your secondary application, and the greater your chances of obtaining an interview. You are able to open the AMCAS portal a month (May) before the first date when applications can be submitted (June). I encourage everyone to start populating their primary application as soon as possible to submit during the first week of application submission. I populated my own AMCAS application in May, submitted the first week of June, received my secondary applications and submitted them soon after, and received interview offers in August and September. By mid-October, I had received an admission offer from a US medical school.

With this timeline in mind, Canadian schools do not offer rolling admission and have hard and fast deadlines for their applications in late September/early October. It is ideal to wrap up primary and secondary applications to US schools during the summer and to be able to focus on Canadian applications in the Fall. As a result of submitting the US primary and secondary applications you will have done a lot of the legwork for the Canadian applications. Keep your head up! It is definitely a lot of work and Excel will be your best friend to keep track of requirements for all schools, but it is possible to do both! ”





Managing timelines 2/2

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You have to write a full personal statement for US schools, which is generally not the case for Canadian schools. Start early, revise often! Get lots of people to read it before submitting it. It's a really important part of your application so don't wing it at the last minute! As a specific tip for the personal statement: focus on what you learned from your experiences and how they contributed to your overall goal of becoming a doctor. The details of the experience are much less important to the reader than what you took away from it. On a similar note, keep the focus on you. It feels weird to talk exclusively about yourself, but it's a personal statement. For example, your experiences may include a component of a patient experience (yours or others) or helping someone else - don't get too caught up in describing the other person's experience, you only have so many characters!

US applications involve WAY more essays and writing. Try to get everything in early and out of the way before September so you can focus on Canadian applications by then. Get people to read what you write! Be mindful of biting off more than you can chew, writing alllll those essays can get very tiring. Also, keep copies of your essays because many schools ask similar secondary essay questions so you can usually reuse them (with some editing).

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RESOURCES



Helpful Resources

1. **AAMC Website & Overview of Medical School Application Cycle:**
<https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school>
2. **Medical School Admission Requirements™ (MSAR®) for U.S. and Canada (Online) | 1-Year Subscription**
<https://store.aamc.org/medical-school-admission-requirements-msar-for-u-s-and-canadian-medical-schools-online.html>
3. **A helpful blog on some considerations** in terms of both the application cycle, “canadian-friendly US medical schools”, as well as implications for residency, etc:
<https://www.shemmassianconsulting.com/blog/american-medical-schools-that-accept-canadian-students#part-2-considerations-for-canadians-applying-to-us-medical-schools>
4. A helpful framework with examples for **writing USA Personal Statements:**
<https://www.shemmassianconsulting.com/blog/medical-school-personal-statement-analysis>

