

Additional Guidelines for Committee Letter Support from the MCAC

The TCNJ MCAC strives to make awarding of the committee letter (aka composite letter, letter of letters) as transparent as possible. We would like to support every student applying to medical programs; however, the committee letter is a competitive process based on a careful evaluation of the student relative to the admission standards for professional school (medical, dental, podiatry, optometry). The evaluation can result in three possible outcomes explained below. Importantly, while the examples provided are realistic, each applicant is treated as an individual and evaluations can vary based on unique circumstances.

- **Support**

- The applicant meets or exceeds all the criteria listed below for their professional school. This includes test scores, GPA, volunteering, shadowing/patient contact, and strong letters of recommendation.
- Examples
 - Dental: DAT score of 22, GPA 3.8, exceptional letters of recommendation, 3 years dental office assistant, public health minor, and GSA involvement, 1-year Smile Program volunteer
 - Medical (allopathic): MCAT score of 512, GPA 3.7, strong letters of recommendation, 250+ hours of EMT, 6 years volunteering in hospice care, 5 x 400-level classes, chemistry minor, and extensive leadership experience
 - Medical (osteopathic) MCAT of 507, GPA of 3.9, strong letters of recommendation, first responder training, 250+ hours CNA, leadership in AMSA, 1-year medical scribe (ER) at RWJ
 - Optometry: OAT score of 360, GPA of 3.6, strong letters of recommendation, strong record of shadowing multiple optometrists, volunteering in the field, WILL program, public health minor, and some leadership experience
 - Podiatry: MCAT of 504, GPA of 3.6, strong letters of recommendation, 2 years shadowing experience, 3 years starting NCAA athlete
 - Combined degree program applicants should significantly exceed the general requirements. For example:
 - MD/PhD: MCAT \geq 515 or higher, GPA \geq 3.8 or higher
 - Extensive research experience with a record of presentation(s) and/or publication(s)
 - For an applicant with a lower GPA due to early struggles but a high MCAT score (e.g. GPA 3.3, MCAT 513), the MCAC may offer a composite letter outlining the extenuating circumstances.
 - For an applicant with difficult personal circumstances (e.g. death in the family, significant illness, child/adult care responsibilities, etc.), the MCAC may offer a composite letter if the sum total of the application is strong

- **Partial support**
 - The applicant meets many of the criteria listed below.
 - Examples:
 - For an MCAT score of 506 and GPA of 3.8, DO applications may be supported with a composite letter, and a letter packet for MD applications
 - For an MCAT score of 503 and GPA of 3.7, Caribbean allopathic applications may be supported with a composite letter, and a letter packet for US medical schools
- **Letter packet**
 - Student meets some of the criteria to be considered as a candidate for professional school
 - Examples
 - Applying to only MD programs only with an MCAT of 505 and a GPA of 3.9
 - The applicant has a 3.9 GPA but a 502 MCAT score

Committee letter criteria and considerations

It is important to remember that committee letters are decided on a case-by-case basis after a complete review of the student's complete application, letters of recommendation, and test score(s). While there is no minimum test score or GPA to request a committee letter, competitive numbers are:

School	Test	Score	GPA
US/Allopathic (MD)	MCAT	510	3.6
US/Osteopathic (DO)	MCAT	506	3.6
Caribbean/Allopathic (MD)	MCAT	500	3.5
Podiatry (DPM)	MCAT	500	3.5
US/Dental (DDM/DDS)	DAT	20	3.5
US/Optomety (OD)	OAT	330	3.5

Importantly, *those values are NOT the minimums to request a composite letter*; rather, they represent the profile of students who have been granted committee letters and have been successful in gaining admission to professional schools. The basic considerations for granting a committee letter (but not limited to):

- Test scores and GPA are competitive with those indicated above
 - Test scores and GPA are consistent with each other (i.e. high GPA should result in a high test score)
- Individual letters of recommendation (professional, STEM academic, non-STEM academic, and others) strongly support the student and do not express any concerns

- It is **STRONGLY** recommended that you have a letter from a medical professional in your field of interest that comment on your aptitude/suitability for continued work in the area. For example:
 - Podiatry applicants should have a letter of recommendation from a podiatrist
 - DO applicant should have a letter of recommendation from a DO
- Transcript - performance in preparatory courses (required for professional schools) and advanced courses in STEM or selected discipline (e.g. 400-level psychology courses for a psychology major)
 - While your GPA is important, deep engagement and a rigorous course of study are equally important. For example:
 - Advanced courses (400-level) course in your discipline
 - Advanced courses outside your discipline (second majors, minors, etc.) are also considered
- Significant contributions to the college or department (GSA, NCAA, Tribeta, etc.)
- Leadership, sustained membership, and contribution to clubs and organizations that support the medical profession or a passion of the student (AMSA, TCNJ Dance Team, TCNJ Orchestra, etc.)
- Shadowing in the chosen field and passive/observational experiences
 - For example, DO applicants should have shadowed a DO and requested a letter of recommendation from a DO
- Active experiences with direct patient contact are preferred over passive experiences
 - Hands-on work with patients and medical certifications (EMT, CNA, MT, etc.) are NOT required but are weighed more heavily than passive experiences
- Volunteering toward the greater good (medical missions, Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, Habitat for Humanity, senior center, church/temple/synagogue outreach, scouting troop leader, etc.)

Other considerations and comments

- We understand that some applicants may have to maintain significant hours of employment while at TCNJ due to family circumstances and may have lower levels of engagement prior to application. As such, the MCAC considers the situation of each applicant carefully before a decision is made.
 - In addition to measurables, we also consider outstanding circumstances that are specific to each student (PELL-eligible, ESL, life events, first-generation college, etc.) which can impact test scores and/or GPA.
- Applicants are not automatically eliminated for a single bad grade or slightly lower GPA when balanced with a competitive test score. For example:
 - MCAT score of 513 and a GPA of 3.4 may be fully supported by the MCAC if the low GPA was a result of low grades in freshman year
- Deep sustained engagement in a few activities with measurable outcomes is weighed more heavily than many shallow experiences.

- The MCAC does not count the raw number of activities you are involved in. Rather, we consider the duration of involvement in any given activity, depth of participation, leadership roles, and any measurable outcomes.
- Arrests, academic integrity violations, or student code of conduct violations make it unlikely that you will be supported by the MCAC.
- Repeated courses, low grades in required courses (biology, chemistry, math, physics), and poor performance in STEM courses will reduce your chances of getting a composite letter.
 - Repeating a single course does not automatically eliminate an applicant from consideration for a composite letter. Repeating multiple courses and/or consistently low grades in STEM/preparatory courses makes it unlikely that you will receive MCAC support.
- Research is NOT required but is considered when appropriate.
- A minor is NOT required but is considered part of the academic profile.

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