

Should I retake the MCAT?

Many of you have just received your April MCAT scores and are wondering whether or not to retake the test in August. Several students are seeking advice on this. The answer is not just a matter of what you scored on the test – it is a much more complex question. While nobody can tell you whether or not to retake the test, there are several things you should be considering. Read through the following considerations and think about each one. Then make the decision that seems right FOR YOU.

- 1) Can I do better?** Some students feel like they were as prepared as they could have been the first time they took the test, and that even with more studying, they feel like they could not do better. If you know you can not do better, is it worth retaking? However, other students feel like they had too much going on in the Spring semester and did not put enough time and effort into studying. If you feel like you can be much more prepared for the August test, AND you are not satisfied with your current score, then it may be worth the time and effort (and money) you'd spend over the next two months.
- 2) How was my score?** This is a tough question to answer. The national average MCAT score of applicants admitted to the 2003 entering class was 29.3. Because of this, most students seem to feel they want at least a 30. However, each school has its own average. You should check the average score for each school to which you plan to apply. However, AVERAGES ARE ONLY GUIDELINES! Just because you scored higher than average DOES NOT mean you will be accepted, and just because you scored below average DOES NOT mean you won't.
- 3) How are my grades?** What is your GPA – overall and BCPM (science GPA calculated by AMCAS)? You can get a printout of how AMCAS calculates your GPA. If your GPA is lower than the averages of the schools to which you are applying, then IDEALLY you would want an MCAT score higher than their averages. If your GPA is higher than the averages, then you MAY get away with an MCAT score SLIGHTLY lower than their averages, although a higher MCAT score would of course be better. The average undergraduate GPA of applicants accepted to the 2003 entering class was 3.62, and the average BCPM was 3.55. HOWEVER, the average undergraduate GPA of applicants WHO HAVE ATTENDED UF and were accepted was a 3.68, and the average BCPM was a 3.61. This is most likely because Florida schools are very competitive and have high average GPA's.
A note about grades: THERE IS NO FORMULA. You cannot ask, "If I have an X.YZ GPA, what MCAT score would I need to get in?" Everything in your application should be as strong as possible.
- 4) How is the rest of my application?** If you've got a lot of extracurricular activities, and you think your letters of evaluation are really strong, then these factors will add to the quality of your application (but again, a higher MCAT score would help that). If you think these areas are weak, then you would want other factors (GPA, MCAT) to be as strong as possible.
- 5) How important is it to get in THIS year?** This seems like a stupid question. Obviously, if you are applying to medical school right now, you want to get in this time and not have to deal with reapplying next year, taking a year off of school, etc. However, students do have different perspectives on this. Some students are extremely focused on getting into medical school as soon as possible and doing absolutely everything that is humanly possible to make this first application as close to perfect as it can be. On the other hand, some students, while they of course want this application to be the best it can be, are willing to "risk" applying "as-is" (with a good-but-could-be-better application) and worry about retaking the MCAT next April if they have not yet been accepted.