Post-Baccalaureate Programs

Post-Baccalaureate Programs (most often referred to as post-bacs) are essentially graduate level bridge programs for students who need to work on their academic credentials before attending a professional healthcare program. Some students choose these programs before applying to a professional program. Others decide to apply after not being accepted to a professional program. While the websites of many programs are directed at students applying for medical school, they typically are appropriate for students improving their applications for dental, optometry, veterinary, PA and other healthcare programs.

Types of Programs

- Academic record-enhancement
- Specialized programs directed at underrepresented* students
- Those for people changing careers (offering undergraduate prerequisite courses)

Degree Offerings

- Certificates
- Traditional master’s degree
  - Generally 2 years
  - Usually requiring a thesis
  - Academic focus on “hard” science
- Special master’s programs
  - 1-2 years
  - No thesis
  - Focused on either applied or medical science

Things to Consider

- Think critically about the gaps in your application record. Is your science GPA at least a 3.3? If not, one of these programs may work for you. If your overall GPA is the problem, you may need some additional undergraduate non-science credits to help your GPA (which might be more economical than one of these programs).
- Would your record and your knowledge base benefit from a year or two of intensive science study?
- What can you do with this degree if you don’t get accepted to a professional program following the completion of the degree?
- Think about the timing issues. If you are applying to professional school during your first year of post-bac study, you will not have grades in time to show the professional school any improvement (generally only 1 semester of grades is available). A two year post-bac may go further in illustrating your academic improvement.
- Talk to the admissions offices at professional schools if you were not accepted. They are generally willing to have a frank discussion about your application and advise you about what they would like you to improve.

Applying

For many schools you will apply directly to that school’s program. Most schools use an online application system that you will fill out and ask your letter writers to send your letters directly to the system online.

Some schools are now joining a common application known as PostBacCAS which allows you to apply to multiple schools with one application. https://postbaccas.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login

Programs

- Searchable Database of Programs https://apps.aamc.org/postbac/#/index
- IUPUI Program (not on database) https://biology.iupui.edu/biology-ms-pre-professional-non-thesis
- Marian University Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences https://www.marian.edu/osteopathic-medical-school/curriculum/master-of-science-in-biomedical-sciences

*How is underrepresented defined?

Programs define this differently, but they often base it on the student coming from a medically underserved community. Being medically underserved is often based on socioeconomic level and/or ethnicity. Medical and dental schools also use the concept of a disadvantaged status which they define as being from a medically underserved population and/or being on state and/or federal assistance. Schools may also consider students who are educationally or economically disadvantaged.