
Pathways to Medicine Scholarship Application Manual

2019- 2020 Admissions Cycle
Updated September 30, 2018



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
CUMMING SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



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Section 1: General Information

1.1 General Information

The Pathways to Medicine Scholarship is an initiative of the Cumming School of Medicine at the University of Calgary. The goal of this scholarship is to facilitate the career development of promising high school graduates who come from a low-income background and who have a career goal of becoming a physician. Up to five scholarships will be offered per year.

In order to hold receive a Pathways to Medicine scholarship, students must independently be accepted to an undergraduate program at the University of Calgary, where they will complete their pre-medical studies. As part of the scholarship, recipients are guaranteed admission to the MD program upon completion of their undergraduate degree, provided certain conditions are met during the pre-MD years of the program. These conditions consist of the following:

- Renewal of the scholarship for each of the 4 years of the undergraduate degree, which requires annual GPA > 3.2 in each of the second and third years
- Completion of a minimum of 24 credits in each academic year. This requirement may be waived at the committee's discretion in the event of significant extenuating circumstances
- Maintenance of a minimum GPA of >3.2 during the final year of undergraduate studies
- Achievement of an overall GPA of 3.4 throughout the undergraduate degree, as calculated by the MD Admissions Office
- Continued involvement in community or campus activities as would be expected of traditional MD applicants
- Completion of the MCAT examination during the undergraduate degree
- Completion of the usual MD application process, including participation in the interview process
- Achievement of a score > 20th percentile on the MD applicant file review process
- Achievement of a score > 20th percentile on the MD interview
- No "areas of concern" have been identified during the course of the recipient's undergraduate studies. Areas of concern are defined in section 5.3

1.2 Scholarship Program Details

The Pathways Scholarship Program will consist of the following elements, in addition to the guaranteed admission to medical school described above:

- Tuition support of \$5000 per year, to a maximum of four years (contingent upon successful progress within the program)
- Identification of a Cumming School of Medicine (CSM) clinical faculty member to act in a mentorship role
- Identification of a MD student from a similar background to act as a “peer mentor”
- Formal clinical shadowing experiences within the CSM
- Access to a sponsored MCAT preparatory course and MCAT exam
- A paid summer, student research experience within the CSM during the summer typically after third year
- Assistance from program staff in securing external tuition support
- Participation in an enrichment program for pipeline students throughout the duration of the undergraduate degree

1.3 Scholarship Eligibility

The Pathways to Medicine Scholarship Program is open to any individual graduating from a high school in Alberta who has not yet begun a post-secondary degree program. In order to hold a Pathways Scholarship, recipients must be accepted to, and subsequently enroll in, an undergraduate degree program at the University of Calgary.

Although the scholarship is exclusively reserved for low-income students, there is also a particular interest in applicants of rural and indigenous backgrounds.

1.4 Eligibility based on Citizenship

You must be a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant (permanent resident) in order to apply. We do not accept applications from individual international applicants or visa students. If you are accepted, you must provide proof that you had this status by March 1st, 2019.

1.5 Application Timelines

March 1st, 2019

- Deadline for applying to the University of Calgary

March 1st, 2019

- Deadline to apply for the Pathways to Medicine Scholarship on My U of C portal/ student centre/ high school awards

March 31st, 2019

- Applicants selected to submit a Preliminary Application will be notified



April 15th, 2019

- Submission of Preliminary Application form and one page essay

April 2019

- Pathways to Medicine Scholarship Committee reviews preliminary applications and determines short list of applicants

May 1st, 2019 (approximately)

- Shortlisted applicants notified and requested to submit secondary application

Late May 2019

- On site interviews and deadline for receipt of secondary application materials

Mid to Late June 2019

- Pathways Scholarship recipients notified

Mid July 2019

- Submission of final high school transcripts

1.6 Contacting the Program

You may contact the Pathways to Medicine Scholarship Program either by email (preferably) at pathways@ucalgary.ca or by phone at 403-220-8331 with any questions about the program or for clarification regarding how to complete the application.

Mailing Address:

Office of Admissions
Faculty of Medicine
University of Calgary
G212 - 3330 Hospital Drive NW
Calgary AB T2N 4N1



Important Note: As the Pathways to Medicine Scholarship is a new program, this Applicant Manual is subject to frequent revision. Applicants should ensure prior to completing the Secondary Application that they are working from the most up to date version, downloadable on our website at: <http://cumming.ucalgary.ca/pathways>

Section 2: Submitting a Preliminary Application

2.1 Applying for a Pathways to Medicine Scholarship

Application to the Cumming School of Medicine Pathway to Medicine Scholarship is made through the high school awards application once the student has applied to the University of Calgary. When applying for student awards, applicants must indicate the desire to be considered for a Pathway to Medicine Scholarship. The deadline for application is March 1.

The registrar's office will forward a list of applicants who have indicated interest in the Pathways to Medicine Scholarship to the Pathways program. That list will then be vetted by the Pathways to Medicine Scholarship committee. Those applicants who are successful at the screening stage will be contacted and asked to submit a preliminary application. Note: Not all applicants who meet program eligibility criteria will be offered the opportunity to complete a preliminary application.

Applicants selected to submit a Preliminary Application will be asked to provide the following information:

- Basic demographics
- Basis for qualifying as low income / low SES
- Parental occupation and education information
- Full transcripts, including first semester grades for grade 12
- Basis for Indigenous or rural self-identification, if any
- A brief essay describing their community connection, the reason they think they are an ideal candidate for the program, or other topics at the discretion of the Pathways Committee

The deadline for receipt of preliminary applications is April 15

2.2 Submitting Preliminary Application Materials

Materials may be submitted physically to the Office of Admissions at the Cumming School of Medicine (G212 HSC, 3330 Hospital Dr NW, T2N 4N1) to the attention of the Director of Admissions but we prefer that they be submitted electronically to pathways@ucalgary.ca.

2.3 Evaluation of Preliminary Application Materials

Preliminary Application materials will be reviewed by members of the Pathways to Medicine Scholarship committee who will develop a shortlist of applicants from whom they will request completion of a full, secondary application. The secondary application very closely follows the materials required of regular applicants to the MD program. Applicants not invited to submit a secondary application will be notified of the committee's decision as soon as possible.



Section 3: Defining “Low-Income”

3.1 How does the program define “Low Income”?

The Pathways to Medicine Program relies on the determination of financial need conducted by the Admissions Office at the University of Calgary as an initial assessment of low-income status. Students who are not identified as having significant financial need by the Admissions Office will generally not be invited to submit a preliminary application. At the preliminary application stage, we require applicants to report the average familial income for the past two years as reflected in parental tax returns. The committee will then use that information, taking into consideration both the size of the community in which an applicant lives, and the size of their family.

3.2 Is There a Rigid Cutoff?

While there is no rigid cutoff regarding familial income, and we recognize that socio-economic disadvantage encompasses more than simply financial resources, the greater an applicant’s familial income, the less likely they are to be seriously considered for a Pathways to Medicine scholarship.

Section 4: Submitting a Secondary Application

4.1 Completing a Secondary Application

When you come to your interview, you must submit the following supplemental materials:

- Three letters of reference
- A list of all your previous employment experiences
- A list of all your previous awards
- A description of the “Top 10” activities or events in your life
- These items are described in more detail below, and the letters of reference forms will be provided to you when you are notified that you have been shortlisted for a scholarship

4.2 Letters of Reference

Applicants are required to submit references from three referees in support of their applications. The forms to be used for these references should have been received with this manual.

Although many of the questions asked of referees are common to all three forms, **each of the three forms is unique**, and attempts specifically to obtain information helpful to the assessment of one particular attribute of the applicant (See section 3.1 below). Therefore, applicants should choose referees carefully, keeping in mind the ability of the referee to comment specifically on the attribute in question.

The three different forms focus on the following attributes, and are identified as such on the form:

- Organizational, Management and Leadership Skills
- Commitment to Communities and Advocacy
- Interpersonal Behaviours and Collaboration

Applicants are advised to choose referees who have substantial knowledge of the applicant and are able to give an unbiased assessment. Family members, family friends and peers are not appropriate referees, regardless of their position or knowledge of the applicant. Applicants should also be aware that some volunteer organizations with large numbers of pre-medical volunteers have in the past submitted standardized form letters. Given the specific nature of our letter of reference forms, applicants should confirm with their referees, the referee’s willingness to write a personal letter of reference.

4.3 Employment History

Applicants are required to provide a complete list of all their paid employment experiences to date. The opinion of the Admissions Committee is that all experiences are potentially valuable, and therefore applicants should resist the temptation to consider early or short-term jobs as trivial. For each job, applicants are asked to provide a descriptive title (e.g. Short Order Cook, Tree-Planter, Lifeguard, Farm Hand), duration and approximate number of hours per week, but are not expected to provide a detailed description. If the job in question was significantly important in your life, you will have the opportunity to describe it in further detail in your "Top 10" (see below). Of note, even if a job is included in your "Top 10" it must still be included in your Employment History section. For each job, the applicant must provide the name and contact information of a verifier who can attest to the duration and extent of the employment. This is usually either the employer or direct supervisor. A co-worker is not considered an appropriate verifier.

4.4 Awards

Applicants are required to enter a list of all their awards that they consider significant. They should be listed by name, and the applicant should be prepared to provide proof of the award upon request.

4.5 Top 10 Experiences

Applicants are given the opportunity to identify up to 10 activities or experiences that they feel are sufficiently important as to define them as individuals. These may be employment or volunteer experiences, life experiences, awards, educational or research experiences. For each experience or activity, the applicant must identify a title (e.g. "Summer Camp", "Working at McDonald's", "Competitive Hockey", etc.) as well as a more detailed description of the activity and a statement regarding the impact that the experience has had upon them. For each of the "Top 10" experiences, applicants must identify a verifier who is able to attest to the nature of the experience as well as the duration.

If no such person is available, applicants should indicate that fact and the Pathways coordinator will contact the applicant directly if more detail is required.

It is from these Top 10 Experiences that file reviewers develop a sense for who the applicant is as a person and what they will bring to the practice of medicine. These figure prominently in the assignment of attribute scores by the file reviewers (see below). This is also the area of the application that is most under the control of the applicants themselves. Applicants are encouraged to reflect carefully about what they choose to highlight in this section and what it says about them.

Please note that a Top 10 Experience may be something that has already been entered under Awards or Employment. If so, it will appear in the application twice, and this is expected. Conversely, if a job, award or publication is entered in the Top 10 Experiences section, they must still also be entered in their appropriate "other" part of the application.

In choosing their top 10, applicants are encouraged to highlight the adversities that they have overcome or continue to struggle with in their personal and academic journeys to date. Similarly, the committee is very keen to hear about applicant's involvement in and connection to their community, whether that community be physical, cultural, religious or defined in some other way.

The Top 10 Experiences should not exceed three typed pages, using standard fonts and margins (12pt, Times New Roman, 0.75" margins).

Section 5: Secondary Application Scoring

5.1 Scoring System

At the secondary application stage, each file is independently evaluated by 4 individuals, including at least one faculty member, one MD student and one community member. The entire file is reviewed in a holistic manner, with scores assigned for evidence of attributes that the MD program has previously identified as consistent with the terminal objectives of the program. As such, there are no discrete scores assigned for extra-curricular activities or letters of reference, although these items inform the scoring in multiple areas.

Scores are assigned in the following areas: Academic ability 40% (consisting of HS grades and subjective assessment of academics)

- Degree of “fit” with the goals of the Pathways to Medicine Scholarship Program 30%
- 30% for the following:
 - Evidence of Communication Skills
 - Evidence of Excellent Interpersonal Skills and Collaboration
 - Evidence of Maturity, Insight and Resilience
 - Evidence of Commitment to Communities and Advocacy on Behalf of Others
 - Evidence of Organizational/Management Skills and Leadership

Each of these subjective assessments is done by the assessors looking at the totality of the application file, including extra-curricular activities, employment, letters of reference, academic history and any other information contained in the file.

This process very closely aligns with the process used in assessing individuals applying to the MD program through the traditional route during or after their undergraduate degrees.

5.1.1 Academic Ability (30%)

Grades are calculated using the applicant’s grade 11 average, or grade 12 grades, where available.

5.1.2 Global Assessment of Academic Ability (10%)

Each applicant is assigned a score based on the global assessment of the academic strength of the entire academic record. This includes, but is not limited to, such things as the types of courses taken, trends in grades over time, extenuating circumstances and consistency. The overarching question that the

reviewer is asked to answer is, “To what extent does this applicant demonstrate evidence of the academic skill necessary to master the material within the MD curriculum?”

5.1.3 Degree of Fit (30%)

Applicants will be assessed based on the extent to which their personal background and individual characteristics fit with the goals of the Pathways Scholarship - specifically the desire to increase the numbers of MD students coming from low income and other under-represented backgrounds. This will include a subjective assessment on the part of the committee regarding the ability of the scholarship program to benefit the student.

5.1.4 Evidence of Specified Non-Cognitive Attributes (30%)

The question posed to assessors is, “To what degree does this applicant demonstrate evidence of [attribute X]?” In order to answer that question, assessors draw information from the application itself as well as from the letters of reference. Assessors will consider the life history, activities and experiences of an applicant insofar as they demonstrate either openness towards or proficiency in the skills and attributes in question. It is important for applicants to note that one of the reasons for adopting an attributes-based assessment tool was the recognition that the same attributes can be manifested in many different ways, some of which appear superficially more impressive, but may not actually provide evidence of greater likelihood of success within medical school. Using “Ability to work in teams” as an example, this might be manifest just as much by having worked as a part-time short order cook as by having been on a sports team while in high school. Applicants are therefore encouraged to think carefully and critically about their own experiences and to highlight those things that demonstrate those abilities essential to the practice of medicine, rather than to simply compile a list of their greatest accomplishments.

5.2 Standardized Scoring

All scoring of application components will be done using standardized scoring. What this means is that the raw scores assigned by the assessors (or grades calculated from transcripts) are converted to standardized scores based on the distribution of scores obtained by all applicants within a given year’s applicant pool. Under this system, the mean score for a given application component will be designated as a score of 100, with a standard deviation of 15. If an applicant’s score is one standard deviation above the mean score in a particular area, his or her score will therefore be 115. If it is one standard deviation below, it will be 85. For example, if the mean grade 11 average for all applicants is 89%, with a standard deviation of 5%, then an applicant with an average of 94% will have a standardized score of 115. An applicant with an average of 79% would have a score of 70. It is important to keep in mind that standardized scores are based upon a mean score, and are not therefore “out of” any particular number.

5.3 Application Irregularities / Areas of Concern

Applicants should be aware that although scholarship offers are generally made based solely on the composite scores achieved in each of the different areas of the assessment (file review, interview, grades, etc.), there is one exception to this rule. At any time in the application process an applicant may be flagged by an interviewer, file reviewer or member of the admissions office staff as possibly demonstrating evidence of characteristics inconsistent with the practice of medicine at the University of Calgary. In some cases, Admissions Office staff may contact third parties in order to explore the area of concern that has been brought forward. Once sufficient information has been gathered, the application will be reviewed by a sub-committee of the admissions committee, where the concern will be reviewed

and considered. Notwithstanding any scores achieved by that application, the admissions committee reserves the right to terminate any application pursuant to this “area of concern” process. Common reasons for review at the sub-committee level include academic misconduct, misrepresentation on the application, prior criminal behaviour and unprofessional behaviour exhibited at the time of the interview or elsewhere. Of note, any attempts on the part of an applicant to misrepresent familial income or parental occupation and education history will result in loss of the scholarship. Further, such incidents may be reported, at the committee’s discretion, to the Admissions Committee of the MD program, and may adversely affect subsequent MD application outcomes.

Section 6: Other Considerations

6.1 Disabled Applicants

The Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calgary is committed to supporting applicants and students with disabilities through the use of appropriate accommodations. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility Services (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) with any questions regarding accommodation for their disabilities while enrolled in the medical program.

All applicants offered interviews will be asked to attest to their ability to meet the technical standards of the MD program at that time. If an applicant will require accommodation in order to meet those technical standards, he or she will be asked to indicate that in the final year of their undergraduate program. Any applicant who indicates a need for accommodation will be referred to the Accommodations Committee who will review the applicant's specific needs and abilities and will determine whether appropriate accommodation can be offered. This information will not form part of the application file and no individuals involved in the application process will be made aware of the applicant's request for accommodation. A more detailed description of this process is available in the Cumming School of Medicine's policy on Accommodation for Applicants with Disabilities This is available from the Office of Admissions upon request.

Applicants with a learning disability that is expected to impact their educational course of study are encouraged to identify themselves to the Director as soon as they feel comfortable doing so, such that appropriate arrangements may be made to accommodate their disability while in the MD program.

The declaration of a need for accommodation on the part of applicants is voluntary but as a significant period of time is generally required to process accommodation requests, early declaration is strongly advised. In the event that an applicant does not indicate the need for accommodation until such time as an offer of admission is made, the Cumming School of Medicine reserves the right to defer matriculation for one year pending review of the request by the Accommodations Committee.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to pursue their studies as long as their continued involvement does not pose a health or safety hazard to themselves or others, and as long as they are able to meet core requirements for a medical degree.

Section 7: Interviews

7.1 Interviews

Interviews will take place mid to late May in the Medical Skills Centre at the Cumming School of Medicine. This centre is located in the Health Sciences Centre at the University of Calgary. The address is 3330 Hospital Drive NW, Calgary AB T2N 4N1.

The interviews will take the form of several brief semi-structured interviews done in rapid succession. This is consistent with the Multiple Mini Interview (MMI) format used for regular applicants to the MD program. Each interview will last 8 minutes, and will be focused on a particular theme or topic. Each interview will be scored by the interviewer, and the final score will reflect the average of these mini-interviews.

Applicants will be interviewed by a variety of people, including clinical and basic science faculty, students, and community members of the MD admissions committee.

The Pathways to Medicine Scholarship Program will cover the cost of economy travel and one night's accommodation in Calgary for all out-of-town applicants invited to interview.

7.2 Final Ranking

The final application score will be calculated as follows:

Pre-Interview Score 70%

Interview Score 30%

The aggregate scores are ranked in order and the scholarship offers made accordingly.

Check List for Secondary Applications

- Identified three referees, one for each type of reference
- References completed in sealed envelopes with referee's signature across the seal
- Completed list of all employment activities
- Completed list of all awards
- Completed list of Top Ten Activities / experiences, keeping to three pages typed
- Made arrangements to attend on-site interview
- Sent RSVP to pathways@ucalgary.ca