

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE RMA FORM Fall '20- Spring '21

Below are instructions and tips for using the RMA form. It serves as a draft of your AMCAS/AACOMAS application and is important for two reasons:

- It will help you gather information, evaluate your experiences and achievements and reflect on what you have learned. These are critically important for your application, personal statement, secondary application, and interviews.
- When you are finished with your RMA form in the spring, we will ask you to schedule an appointment with us, and we will review this draft with you. We can answer any questions you have on which experiences to include, schools to select, and other details.

Your RMA does not need to be perfect. We will help you refine and edit your content as part of your RMA appointment. We do ask that you complete a full draft and write your reflections in paragraph form (do not use bullets) as this gives us a solid foundation in understanding your strengths and achievements.

We suggest that you work on your RMA over a period of weeks or months, whenever you have free time. If you are unsure of whether you are ready to apply this year, the RMA can help you make that decision.

The RMA is a Word document, so you can write, edit, and save it.

SECTION 2: DISCLOSURES

COVID-19. What impact has Covid-19 had on your pre-med journey? Here is a place to discuss any activities that may have been cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic, as well as, its effects on your academics.

Disadvantaged Status. You might consider yourself disadvantaged if you grew up in an area that was medically underserved or if you had insufficient access to healthcare, education, food and/or housing. A SES (Socioeconomic) Disadvantaged Status refers to your parents' or guardians' occupational classification and educational levels, based on information that you provide to AMCAS. For guidelines, see Appendix 1 in [2020 AMCAS Application Manual](#). If you feel that your background falls into one or more of these categories and these experiences have influenced your commitment, motivation, and ability to be a physician, then disclosing this information should be part of your application. Talk with us about this during your RMA. In your application, you will be limited to 1325 characters, but you can go beyond this limit in your RMA.

Institutional Actions. The instructions on AMCAS are: "You must answer YES to this question if you were the recipient of any institutional action for unacceptable academic performance or conduct violation EVEN if the action does not appear or has been deleted or expunged from your official transcript. Even if your record has been expunged or sealed by a court, you should list it. If it is discovered in the AAMC-facilitated Criminal Background check after you have been conditionally accepted, you risk having your acceptance withdrawn."

Felonies. The instructions on AMCAS are: "You must answer YES to this question if you been convicted of, or pleaded guilty or no contest to, a felony crime, excluding (1) any offense for which you were adjudicated as a juvenile or (2) convictions that have been expunged or sealed by a court (in states where applicable)."

Misdemeanors. The instructions on AMCAS are: " You must indicate if you have ever been convicted of, or pleaded guilty or no contest to, a misdemeanor crime, excluding (1) any offense for which you were adjudicated as a juvenile, (2) any convictions that have been expunged or sealed by a court, or (3) any misdemeanor convictions for which you completed any probation and for which the court dismissed the case (in states where applicable)." *Note: Many traffic violations in GA are considered Misdemeanors, so you will need to include that in this section (i.e. speeding tickets).*

You do not need to report academic warnings and letters of academic concern about midterm or final grades or disciplinary warnings. However, you do need to report an academic dismissal, conduct sanctions that result in disciplinary probation, required education or community service. Explain the circumstances on the RMA form and how you have learned from your experience. Then talk with us during your RMA appointment so we can advise you on how to deal with this issue.

SECTION 3: WORK AND ACTIVITIES (15 EXPERIENCES or ACHIEVEMENTS)

- You can list and describe 15 experiences and activities that have been pivotal in your development and desire to be a physician. *As you describe these experiences, reflect carefully on what you have learned and gained... what did you do, what did you learn, how has this experience made you a better person or will make you a better physician.* It can be helpful to reflect on the core competencies. <https://www.aamc.org/admissions/admissionslifecycle/409090/competencies.html>
- For the RMA, you can add more than 15 experiences if you wish, and then select which ones to use later. You do not need to strategize about the order of your list. On this form, we ask for the three most meaningful at the beginning, but on AMCAS all experiences will be listed in reverse chronological order with your most meaningful experiences mixed into the timeline.
- There will be space limitations on the application; you are limited to 700 characters (including spaces) for the description of each experience, and you can add an additional 1325 characters (including spaces) for three experiences you consider most meaningful. However, for this RMA, we do not restrict you to these character limits. It is better to put down your thoughts and reflections completely. Later, you can work on wording and make your descriptions more concise so you meet the character limit. *If applying to DO schools, you will have 600 characters to describe each experience.*
 - **Each entry must have the 700-character limit description. This is separate from a most meaningful entry.**
- **Examples of experiences are below:**

(1) Example of Contact Information:

Experience Type: Research/lab <--- select the Experience Type from the list
Experience Name: Cancer Genetics Project <--- you can use a project name if you need to
Contact Name, Title: John Lee MD, Professor of Pediatrics <--- give a full title; don't list a student (unless it is for a student organization with no faculty or staff advisor)
Contact Email: john.x.lee@uga.edu
Organization Name: Department of Pediatrics, UGA University Health Center
City, State, Country: Athens GA, United States
Contact Phone: 9195555555 <--- if there's no phone, leave this blank
Dates: 8/2016-5/2017, 8/2017-5/2018 <--- give beginning and ending dates
Total Hours: 200 <--- give total hours or expected total hours

(2) Example for a Research Description

Experience Description: I obtained DNA from melanoma cell lines, amplified ten genes that were thought to affect growth control, and sequenced them. Two genes showed a high correlation with proliferation. I then looked at the sequence of these genes in families where there were high rates of cancer. This project required me to learn new molecular techniques. I gave two lab talks about my project, presented my work in a poster session at Visible Thinking, and am now helping assemble a manuscript for publication next year. [511-word count with spaces; you are allowed 700 spaces]

Most Meaningful Experience Remarks: This was my first experience at independent research and I learned so much. At first, most of my experiments wouldn't work. I learned not to be discouraged, but to consult with others, and how to logically test reagents and conditions. It was eventually a reagent that caused all my problems. I discovered how challenging it was to problem-solve, and also how rewarding when I found answers. I had to read widely about melanoma, looking at the interplay of genetics and environmental factors, in order to understand the hypothesis, we were testing. I also discovered how statistical methods are used to interpret our findings. Presenting a poster on my work forced me to present my research to a broader audience, and I learned that being able to communicate about my research is as important as doing the research. One of the most important things I learned was how basic research can translate into benefits for patients. [931-word count with spaces; you are allowed 1325 characters]

(2) Example for Shadowing:

Experience Description: I observed Dr. Lee in the oncology clinic where they treat patients for melanoma. I saw him perform surgery for small lesions and refer some for radiation therapy. Dr. Lee was kind and compassionate to all, taking the time to explain the treatment and side effects. One patient was a grandfather whose cancer continued to spread, but Dr. Lee took extra time to ask about his grandchildren. It taught me that being an effective physician was more than just diagnosis and treatment and that the psychological needs of patients and families made a huge difference. Patients always smiled when they saw Dr. Lee. He was similarly caring of the nurses and staff, making a calm and supportive environment even when many patients were critically ill. This is the kind of physician I'd like to be.

[795-word count with spaces; this will need to be shortened, you have 700 spaces]. If you shadow multiple physicians in one Department, list one physician as the contact and then mention the others in the description. If you shadow physicians in different hospitals, you can also combine them into one experience, or make them each a separate experience. **If you have shadowed over multiple periods, list all dates (e.g. 5/2017-6/2017; 5/2018-6/2018; 11/2019)**

(4) Example of Community Service

Community service will document the time you have taken to serve others, as well as demonstrate your people skills, and your understanding of individual and community needs. For instance, you might see how difficult it is for children who cannot read, have parents don't speak English, or lack food and housing. You might observe how organizations address these issues, how communities work to improve education or health care, or even how policy decisions have wide ramifications. If you have tutored, you may have learned how to describe complex information to individuals with different needs, and to support and encourage learners.

(5) Example of Leadership

If you have participated on a team, played a role in student government, served a role in a fraternity, organized activities, or had other experiences that have been important to you, describe what you did and what you learned. For instance, leadership can require you to time manage, motivate others, and take responsibility when others don't, use creativity, develop a strong work effort, or you may like the challenge of setting goals and making a difference.

(6) Example of Extra-Curricular Activity, Hobby, Artistic Endeavor or Other

You can include significant personal or non-academic interests. This can include athletic participation, music, art, wilderness training, religious groups and others. Explain why this activity has been meaningful, what you have learned, or skills or attitudes you will take into medicine. If this is an activity that you began early and continued at UGA then you can indicate the full-time frame of participation.

(7) Example of Academic Achievement

You can include Dean's List, Dean's List with Distinction, Graduation with Distinction, or other honors. For Dean's List, you can list your academic dean's name as the contact. Indicate which semesters you were on the Dean's List, what it is, and then a brief statement about why this is important to you.

SECTION 4: LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

You might include:

- one individual who has taught you in a science course (some medical schools ask for 2 individuals)
- one individual who has taught you in a humanities or social science course
- your research mentor if this is a strength of yours, or if you are applying to MD/PhD programs
- your advisor in your major
- a supervisor in an internship, work-related experience, summer job in a relevant field, or significant extracurricular activity
- a physician with whom you have worked

Be sure to check the websites and the MSAR to see the requirements of the schools you are applying to. 3 letters are common, but some applicants will have 4 to 6. It is better if each writer knows you in a different way, so each can address different competencies. Too many letters or weak letters are not a strength.

SECTION 5: WHICH SCHOOLS TO APPLY TO

List 25-30 schools; you may change this list later but this allows you to start examining schools and how they fit with your background and experience. You should include all medical schools in your home state. When considering other schools, look at the size of school/class, student demographics, GPA and MCAT scores of accepted students (aim to be in the 25th-75th percentile of metrics), curriculum, research opportunities (if that is an interest), opportunities for early clinical exposure, special health opportunities, and location. *Be careful to check residency requirements - do not include state schools that accept only in-state residents or accept very few out-of-state students unless you are a resident of that state.*

Look at each school's public website and also pay for a year's subscription to the [Medical School Admissions Requirements \(MSAR\)](#) database, created by AAMC. The MSAR data is more comprehensive than what is on public websites. A year's subscription is currently \$28.

SECTION 6: PERSONAL ESSAYS, THOUGHTS

These questions are not on the primary application, but will be useful. They can help you choose and reflect on your experiences and organize your personal statement. Some may appear on secondary applications and be asked during interviews. Please keep your answers brief.

1. We all are shaped by our experiences. How has your family and/or community influenced your life? *You might mention a family member who works in health care, or who has been affected by a chronic or serious illness. You may be the first in your family to go to college in the US, have grown up in a rural area with few educational opportunities, or dealt with obstacles that you've had to work through. These circumstances can shape you, make you more resourceful and independent and/or provide motivation for a life as a physician. Sometimes family members are role models. Sometimes your classes and activities at UGA have focused on their heritage.*
2. What personal qualities and interests will you bring to the practice of medicine? *What do you think are your strengths ... is it problem-solving and research, leadership, a desire to work with underserved populations, development of new technology...what are you most passionate about and why? Do you have a story?*
3. Have you had a situation where you failed or faced adversity? What did you learn? How have you overcome obstacles? *For example, you may have struggled with coursework and grades, faced challenges as a leader of a student organization, dealt with a personal illness or family issue, or had an experience where life didn't go as you expected. How did you cope? Have you learned to be resilient?*
4. Have you worked to help someone or had to advocate for someone who is different from yourself? *This question addresses your cultural competency. Have you volunteered or worked with individuals from different cultures, ethnic groups, socioeconomic statuses, and educational or religious backgrounds? Have you traveled to or lived in a country other than the US? What did you learn about people from your experiences?*
5. What role have your health care experiences had in your decision to be a physician? *This question addresses your patient engagement and shadowing experiences. If you have personal experiences with healthcare such as your own illness or a family member you can include that here in addition to patient engagement and shadowing.*
6. What role has research had in your preparation for medicine? *For instance, you may have gained an ability to assess data, read and evaluate journal articles, understand the repetition and variability of science experiments, found ways to test hypotheses, present your work in oral and written form, work on a team, see the applications of research in medicine, feel great accomplishment in finding answers or are perhaps drawn to the challenge of problem-solving. Explain how you plan to use these lessons in medicine.*