

Surviving your med school applications

With Kira, Becky and Alex

Territorial Acknowledgement

The University of Waterloo acknowledges that our work takes place on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. Our main campus is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land cared for, stewarded by, and stolen from Six Nations, which includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place across our campuses through research, learning, teaching, and community building, and is coordinated within the Office of Indigenous Relations.



Take action



THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2026 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM EDT (GMT -04:00)

Writing Our Stories: Indigenous Authors & Publishers Panel



In celebration of Indigenous Heritage Month, the University of Waterloo's Office of Indigenous Relations and The University of Waterloo Libraries invite you to an Indigenous Authors & Publishers Reading, Panel, and Q&A.

Date: June 11, 2026

Time: 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Location: Dana Porter Library, Main Floor (in front of the Indigenous mural), University of Waterloo



**WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HOPE TO
HAVE ANSWERED TODAY?**



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What's on the agenda for today?

Key application components

Writing strategies for essays and ABS

Casper prep resources and tips

What's involved in an ON/Can MD application?

Prereqs

- Program dependent

Grades

- Cumulative, best 2 years, last 2 years

MCAT and CASPer

- Program dependent

School submissions/essays

- Between 0 and 4-ish?

Work history/Autobiographical Sketch

- Structured resume with strict formatting / limitations

Verifiers

- People who verify sketch activity(ies)

References

- Academic, Professional

Identity-based pathways

- Indigenous folks, Black folks, equity-deserving folks

Regional connection

- Connection to geographic area and/or specific quota

Submission deadline

- Once per year



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What's involved in the US MD application?

Prereqs

- Program-dependent

Grades

- Cumulative and BCPM (bio, chem, physics, math)

Transcripts

- Snail mail? Maybe digital?

MCAT, CASPer, AAMC PREview

- Program-dependent

Personal Comments Essay

- 5300 characters, including spaces

Secondaries

- Amount and length vary by program

Work/Activities

- Very structured resume with 15 entries

References

- Academic, Professional, Prehealth Advisor/Committee

Submission deadline

- Rolling until a certain date



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What is the purpose of “essay” writing?

- One part of an application to a medical school program
- Used by admissions committees to adjudicate applications
- A chance for you to communicate directly with the admissions committee
- A chance for you to say things in human words



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Some conventions of this genre:



Length variations



Addressing and submitting the document



Required parts



Essay-style, sometimes



First-person narrative, sharing experiences



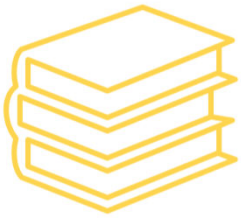
This is hard!



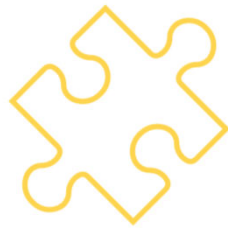
Asking for clarification is ok!



What can I include in the essay:



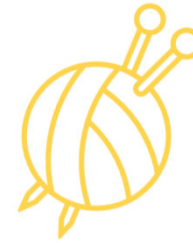
Academics



Lived Experience



Work and
volunteer
experiences



Extracurriculars
and hobbies



Connections to
program's
mission / values



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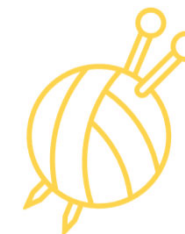
What can I include in the ABS / sketch / work history?



Employment



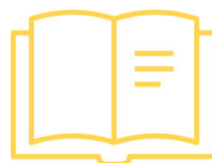
Volunteer activities



Extracurricular activities



Awards and honours



Research



Other



Strategically leveraging space in the ABS

Description*	Start date	End date	Location	Hours	Summer/academic yr, before/after graduation*	Responsibilities/type of activity*	Connection to CanMEDS framework
Career Leader Team Lead (23)	Jan 2024	Present	Waterloo ON	5hrs/wk	Summer and academic (19)	Lead monthly mtgs, take & organize meeting mins, debrief complex cases, iterate resources, create work schedules & submit payroll, answer questions (147)	Communicator
Supervisor for university-wide peer support program (46)	Jan 2024	Present	Waterloo ON	5hrs/wk; 780hrs total	Summer: lead training/Academic yr: mentor & admin (49)	Lead meeting w/ check-in & check-out to centre staff needs . Document, organize & share mins to support program evaluation & enhance service delivery (148)	Professional (orange) Communicator (blue) Scholar (purple)

Casper format (at least for this app cycle...)

What?

- Assesses social intelligence & professionalism via questions on ethical dilemmas, interpersonal conflicts, professional boundaries, social issues, situational judgment

Length?

- 65 to 85 minutes with optional breaks

Format?

- Scenario-based format assessed by humans / “raters”
- Mixture of video response and typed response with a set amount of time to respond



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HOW ARE YOU PREPARING FOR CASPER?



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What are the casper tips and resources?

- No right or wrong answers
- Reflect on personal values and experiences while preparing
- Practice sample scenarios
- Time yourself during practice
- Get feedback from peers/mentors/Career Advisors
- Acuity Insights and program-specific website
 - Recorded and upcoming Casper webinar
- CareerHub
- Free CASPer resources, including CASPer Booster blog, Accepted Together, CASPer Practice, PrepMatch
- HealthyDebate
- CMA's Healthcare for real



**HOW ARE YOU TAKING CARE OF
YOURSELF DURING THIS PROCESS?**



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Further education support

01



Career advising

One-on-one appointment for:

- Applying to further education
- Interviewing for further education
- Career planning

Book via [WaterlooWorks](#)

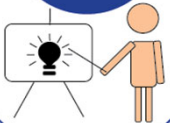
03



Additional resources

- [Online resources](#); Information on applications and career planning for law, medicine, optometry, teaching and other fields with specific educational requirements
- [CareerHub](#) for career planning

02



Workshops and events

Topics include but not limited to:

- Writing for grad and professional school applications
- Funding your further education
- Selecting prerequisites and navigating transcript notations
- Further Education Fair - once a year in fall term

Register via [WaterlooWorks](#) or [Portal](#)





WHAT QUESTIONS ARE LINGERING?



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