
Pharmacy

Getting started

Please see the "Further Education" handout, which includes important information on professional/graduate school planning, personal statement/letter of intent and lifelong learning.

Be sure to review the "Professional/graduate school" section, which contains information pertinent to your application.

General information

A Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy (B.Sc.Pharm.) is a four-year degree offered by numerous post-secondary institutions in Canada. In Quebec and the U.S. an Entry-to-Practice Level PharmD (ELPD) degree is awarded. It is anticipated that in the future other provinces in Canada will award the ELPD degree.

In Canada, after obtaining a pharmacy degree, a pharmacist must complete an internship working under the supervision of a licensed pharmacist. After this internship, the pharmacist must pass the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada exam to practise anywhere in Canada (except Quebec).

Admission requirements vary. In Canada, completion of an undergraduate degree is not required to apply to pharmacy school. The main criterion for most schools is completion of at least one full year of undergraduate study, including prerequisites. Some institutions require applicants to take the Pharmacy College Admissions Test (PCAT) or a test specific to their school. The courses to be completed prior to applying are specific to each institution. In general, you need to complete courses in biology, chemistry, math, physics, English, and one of the social sciences. Because the program is so demanding, the admission committee will want to see that you can handle a heavy academic workload, so it is better to apply when you are a full-time student taking at least five courses a term.

Applying to the University of Waterloo

The University of Waterloo provides Canada's only co-op Pharmacy program. At the University of Waterloo, you are assessed on academic and non-academic factors (i.e., Pharmacy Admission Profile, references, an interview, and the reading comprehension/writing test).

To apply to this program, submit an application through the Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC) between mid-October and the end of January. After your application has been received you will be sent information on completing your on-line Pharmacy Admission Profile and references. Check UW's School of Pharmacy website for deadline dates and, application instructions.

Applying to Other Schools

Apply to each school of pharmacy individually. Each school has different application requirements, which may consist of one or more of the following: an application form, a personal statement or letter of intent, reference letters, a PCAT or other admission test, and interviews. Check each school's requirements and the number of out-of-province students accepted.

Volunteer work

Volunteering will provide you with new skills and experience that may enhance your application. Admission committees are looking for well-rounded students, in particular, those who combine academic excellence with extra-curricular activities, including community and public service. Although volunteer experience is not mandatory, most pharmacy school admission committees look upon community involvement positively.

Also consider job shadowing so that you have a clear understanding of the profession. This will be helpful at the application stage.

Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT)

The PCAT is a specialized test designed to measure general academic ability and scientific knowledge in order to identify qualified applicants to pharmacy colleges. The test is required for admission to *some* Canadian and American pharmacy schools, and is offered four times a year at selected colleges and universities. The University of Waterloo's School of Pharmacy does not require the PCAT. Writing the PCAT takes four and a half hours. The test consists of approximately 280 multiple-choice questions and an essay.

The PCAT is divided into six subtests:

- **Biology:** knowledge of principles and concepts of basic biology, including general biology, microbiology, human anatomy, and human physiology
- **Chemistry:** knowledge of principles and concepts of inorganic and elementary organic chemistry
- **Quantitative ability:** skills in mathematical processes and the ability to understand quantitative concepts and relationships, including applications of algebra, geometry, probability and statistics, pre-calculus, and calculus
- **Reading comprehension:** the ability to comprehend, analyze, and interpret readings on science-related topics
- **Verbal ability:** general, non-scientific word knowledge and usage using analogies and sentence-completion tasks
- **Writing:** quality of writing, as well as conventions of language through an essay response to a statement that either expresses an opinion on an issue or presents a problem that requires a solution

References

Information on references is contained in the "Professional/graduate school" section. A reference letter reflecting your desire to be a pharmacist is most beneficial if it includes specific and substantial information (i.e., demonstrates knowledge about you) rather than general praise. It is ideal if your referee is a pharmacist (UW has a strong preference for this).

Interviews

Be sure to review the interview information contained in the "Professional/graduate school" section and the "Interview skills" module.

Consider these additional tips:

- Your interpersonal skills are important because the profession requires you to be approachable and to work closely with patients
- If asked a hypothetical question about a delicate situation concerning a patient, be professional and maintain a neutral expression as would be required when giving patients advice
- Include in your responses your ethical approach, your knowledge of pharmacy and world issues
- Be prepared to give examples about teamwork, leadership, and problem solving

UW Pre-Pharmacy Club

The UW Pre-Pharmacy Club, a student-run organization, meets in the fall and winter terms. The club organizes talks by guest speakers and they have a Facebook group.