

The Core Competencies and What They Mean

The 15 Core Competencies for Entering Medical Students, endorsed by the AAMC Group on Student Affairs (GSA) Committee on Admissions (COA), help communicate the standards expected of all applicants accepted to medical school. The competency list was developed after an extensive search of the medical education and employment literature and with the guidance of several blue-ribbon and advisory panels, including Scientific Foundations for Future Physicians (SFFP), Behavioral and Social Sciences Foundations for Future Physicians (BSSFFP), Institute of Medicine (IOM), 5th Comprehensive Review of the MCAT Review Committee (MR5), the [Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education \(ACGME\) Outcome Project](#), the MR5 Innovation Lab, and others.

Preprofessional Competencies



Service Orientation. Demonstrates a desire to help others and sensitivity to others' needs and feelings; demonstrates a desire to alleviate others' distress; recognizes and acts on his/her responsibilities to society—locally, nationally, and globally.



Social Skills. Demonstrates an awareness of others' needs, goals, feelings, and the ways that social and behavioral cues affect peoples' interactions and behaviors; adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues; treats others with respect.



Cultural Competence. Demonstrates knowledge of sociocultural factors that affect interactions and behaviors; shows an appreciation and respect for multiple dimensions of diversity; recognizes and acts on the obligation to inform one's own judgment; engages diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work; recognizes and appropriately addresses bias in oneself and others; interacts effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.



Teamwork. Works collaboratively with others to achieve shared goals; shares information and knowledge with others and provides feedback; puts team goals ahead of individual goals.



Oral Communication. Effectively conveys information to others by using spoken words and sentences; listens effectively; recognizes potential communication barriers and adjusts approach or clarifies information as needed.



Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others. Behaves in an honest and ethical manner; cultivates personal and academic integrity; adheres to ethical principles and follows rules and procedures; resists peer pressure to engage in unethical behavior and encourages others to behave in honest and ethical ways; develops and demonstrates ethical and moral reasoning.



Reliability and Dependability. Consistently fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner; takes responsibility for personal actions and performance.



Resilience and Adaptability. Demonstrates tolerance of stressful or changing environments or situations and adapts effectively to them; is persistent, even under difficult situations; recovers from setbacks.



Capacity for Improvement. Sets goals for continuous improvement and for learning new concepts and skills; engages in reflective practice for improvement; solicits and responds appropriately to feedback.

Thinking and Reasoning Competencies



Critical Thinking. Uses logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems.



Quantitative Reasoning. Applies quantitative reasoning and appropriate mathematics to describe or explain phenomena in the natural world.



Scientific Inquiry. Applies knowledge of the scientific process to integrate and synthesize information, solve problems, and formulate research questions and hypotheses; is facile in the language of the sciences and uses it to participate in the discourse of science and explain how scientific knowledge is discovered and validated.



Written Communication. Effectively conveys information to others by using written words and sentences.

Science Competencies



Living Systems. Applies knowledge and skill in the natural sciences to solve problems related to molecular and macro systems, including biomolecules, molecules, cells, and organs.



Human Behavior. Applies knowledge of the self, others, and social systems to solve problems related to the psychological, sociocultural, and biological factors that influence health and well-being.

Developmental Planning Worksheets

The developmental planning worksheets are designed to help you gauge your performance in each of the core competency areas. Remember, medical schools do not expect that you will have fully mastered each competency or mastered each one to the same extent. The purpose is to gauge where you are now, identify opportunities for growth, and help you articulate how and why you are proficient in the core areas.

Performance Reflection and Assessment: A Six-Step Process

Step 1. Read the definition of the competency at the top of each worksheet.

Step 2. In the top right corner of each page, select one of the options from the list that best describes your current level of proficiency:

Planning: Preparing to gain experience or exploring options

Progressing: Currently gaining experience, somewhat familiar

Demonstrating: Experienced, significant familiarity

Step 3. If you selected “**Planning**,” complete the first five sections of the worksheet (see Step 4). Next, use the “**My plan(s) to develop this competency**” section to draft a strategy to gain experience or mastery in this area. Include next steps, a timeline, and any additional notes for yourself, such as whether you need to speak to a faculty member, attend a meeting, or join a club.

Step 4. If you selected “**Progressing**” or “**Demonstrating**”:

- Describe the knowledge or skills you gained from the experience and enter the information in the section “**How I demonstrate(d) this competency.**”
- Reflect on what you think the experience says about you as a unique individual and enter the information in the sections “**Why it’s important**” and “**What this says about me.**”
- Explain why the experience was important and how it allowed you to grow as a person and enter the information in the section “**What I learned or how I grew from this experience.**”
- Describe ways in which you believe your experience influenced your pursuit of a career in medicine and enter the information in the section “**How this prepared me or influenced my interest.**”
- Use the “**My plan(s) to develop this competency**” section to draft a strategy for building on your experience in this area.

Step 5. After you have completed the worksheets, share them with your prehealth or academic advisor or mentor. Your advisor or mentor may be able to help assess your performance and perhaps help you plan future opportunities to improve your skills.

Step 6. Update the worksheets regularly to reflect your current level of performance. The worksheets will be extremely useful when you complete your primary and secondary applications and prepare for interviews.



Preprofessional Competency: **Service Orientation**

Definition: Demonstrates a desire to help others and sensitivity to others' needs and feelings; demonstrates a desire to alleviate others' distress; recognizes and acts on his/her responsibilities to society—locally, nationally, and globally.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Preprofessional Competency: **Social Skills**

Definition: Demonstrates an awareness of others' needs, goals, feelings, and the ways that social and behavioral cues affect peoples' interactions and behaviors; adjusts behaviors appropriately in response to these cues; treats others with respect.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Preprofessional Competency: **Cultural Competence**

Definition: Demonstrates knowledge of sociocultural factors that affect interactions and behaviors; shows an appreciation and respect for multiple dimensions of diversity; recognizes and acts on the obligation to inform one's own judgment; engages diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work; recognizes and appropriately addresses bias in oneself and others; interacts effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Preprofessional Competency: **Teamwork**

Definition: Works collaboratively with others to achieve shared goals; shares information and knowledge with others and provides feedback; puts team goals ahead of individual goals.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Preprofessional Competency: **Oral Communication**

Definition: Effectively conveys information to others by using spoken words and sentences; listens effectively; recognizes potential communication barriers and adjusts approach or clarifies information as needed.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Preprofessional Competency: **Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others**

Definition: Behaves in an honest and ethical manner; cultivates personal and academic integrity; adheres to ethical principles and follows rules and procedures; resists peer pressure to engage in unethical behavior and encourages others to behave in honest and ethical ways; develops and demonstrates ethical and moral reasoning.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Preprofessional Competency: **Reliability and Dependability**

Definition: Consistently fulfills obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner; takes responsibility for personal actions and performance.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Preprofessional Competency: **Resilience and Adaptability**

Definition: Demonstrates tolerance of stressful or changing environments or situations and adapts effectively to them; is persistent, even under difficult situations; recovers from setbacks.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Preprofessional Competency: **Capacity for Improvement**

Definition: Sets goals for continuous improvement and for learning new concepts and skills; engages in reflective practice for improvement; solicits and responds appropriately to feedback.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Thinking and Reasoning Competency: **Critical Thinking**

Definition: Uses logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Thinking and Reasoning Competency: **Quantitative Reasoning**

Definition: Applies quantitative reasoning and appropriate mathematics to describe or explain phenomena in the natural world.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Thinking and Reasoning Competency: **Scientific Inquiry**

Definition: Applies knowledge of the scientific process to integrate and synthesize information, solve problems, and formulate research questions and hypotheses; is facile in the language of the sciences and uses it to participate in the discourse of science and explain how scientific knowledge is discovered and validated.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Thinking and Reasoning Competency: **Written Communication**

Definition: Effectively conveys information to others by using written words and sentences.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Scientific Competency: **Living Systems**

Definition: Applies knowledge and skill in the natural sciences to solve problems related to molecular and macro systems, including biomolecules, molecules, cells, and organs.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

Next steps:

Timeline:

Notes:



Scientific Competency: **Human Behavior**

Definition: Applies knowledge of the self, others, and social systems to solve problems related to the psychological, sociocultural, and biological factors that influence health and well-being.

CURRENT COMPETENCY LEVEL: PLANNING PROGRESSING DEMONSTRATING

How I demonstrate(d) this competency:

Why it's important:

What this says about me:

What I learned or how I grew from this experience:

How this prepared me or influenced my interest:

MY PLAN(S) TO DEVELOP THIS COMPETENCY

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