FAQs about Course Requirements

What's different about Smith's chemistry sequence? In Smith's 2-year chemistry sequence the first and fourth semesters make up "general" or "inorganic" chemistry, and organic chemistry is taken in semesters 2 & 3. It is to your advantage to take all four semesters in sequence. Therefore, although you may not stick to the plan you make right now, it is still useful to think – in general terms – of your 4-year timetable and how you will fit in the four semesters of chemistry.

Is it true that some health professions schools require biochemistry? Yes. All veterinary schools require a semester of biochemistry, some with lab. Many medical schools require or "highly recommend" the course, but may not require a lab. Biochemistry topics are on the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test), so all pre-med students are advised to take this course. For other health professions, check individual program websites or meet with a Prehealth advisor.

What should I know about physics? Unless you arrive with a strong physics preparation, you should start with PHY 117: Physics I. PHY 117 is offered fall and spring. Physics I and Physics II (PHY 118) require one semester of college-level calculus (MTH 111) or the equivalent as a prerequisite. In both courses, the lecture and lab components are fused into a single course.

What about psychology and social science courses? Many professional schools require or recommend one or more courses in psychology and/or the social sciences. The MCAT includes a social and behavioral science section. Students preparing for this test by taking Smith courses may consider PSY 100 and, perhaps SOC 101. Taking relevant courses abroad, or during the summers, in addition to preparing through self-study are options too. Discuss your plans with a Prehealth advisor.

What timetable should I follow to apply to health professions programs? This depends on your chosen profession. Individual interests and goals vary widely, so we strongly recommend planning your timetable with an adviser.

Students headed for some health professions - such as nurse practitioner, physical or occupational therapist, optometrist and pharmacist - may find that entering a professional school directly after graduation fits well. If this is your plan, you would complete most or all prerequisite courses by the end of your junior year, and would have accrued at least some shadowing and experiential hours with providers in your field. You might use the summer before your senior year to study for and take the entrance exam for your professional program, and then submit your applications just before, or in the early part of your senior year.

For other professional schools - such as for human and veterinary medicine and dentistry, and sometime public health and physician assistant - we find that most Smith applicants are best prepared to apply and enter their programs 1-2 years after graduating from Smith. These health professions expect successful completion of many prerequisite courses along with significant related experience. Many schools place a high value on the experiences applicants gain between their undergraduate education and professional school application. The resources and advising provided by members of the Board of Prehealth Advisors remain available to you whether you apply to your chosen professional program during your time as an undergraduate, or afterward as an alumnae.

The Board of Prehealth Advisors looks forward to working with you as you explore options for careers in the health professions. Key points for the start of your journey can be found in this brochure.

Visit the Prehealth Program website: https://www.smith.edu/prehealth/

Prehealth Professions Advising Program
Smith College
Lazarus Center for Career Development
Drew Hall, 84 Elm Street
Northampton, MA 01063
The Board of Prehealth Advisors
We work with you to explore your career interests, discuss course selections, plan for academic and extracurricular work, and develop a timetable to achieve goals. We also guide you throughout the application process from start to finish. All conversations are confidential. Contact us at: http://www.smith.edu/prehealth/advisers.php or email prehealth@smith.edu to be directed to the most appropriate faculty/staff adviser.

Prehealth Mailing List
Receive weekly postings about events and research or internship opportunities on and off campus, online happenings (presentations, virtual fairs, etc.) and other news. Subscribe at: http://div3lists.smith.edu/mailman/listinfo/prehealth

Lazarus Center for Career Development
Offers a wide variety of resources, programming, and individualized advising support to help students explore and identify career paths that fit their individual interests and skills. The Prehealth Program Office is also located there. https://www.smith.edu/about-smith/lazarus-center

Handshake
Handshake, the leading career platform, is used by over 500 colleges and more than 250,000 employers. Find jobs and internships, and receive recommendations based on your interests, skills, major, location preferences and search history. Use Handshake to schedule appointments with Lazarus Center advisors, including the Prehealth Program Director. Access Handshake via Quick Links to get started: https://www.smith.edu/about-smith/lazarus-center

Health & STEM Professions Friday Lunchbag Series.
We cover a wide variety of topics during these interactive presentations about careers, socio-cultural issues, and research-related topics. Smith Alumnae, other professionals, and faculty, staff, and students are featured as speakers: http://www.smith.edu/prehealth/events_lunchbags.php

Common Smith College Prehealth Courses
NO health profession school requires all of these courses, nor do prerequisite courses have to be selected from this list exclusively. To plan your individualized academic course of study, work with your Liberal Arts Adviser (LAA) and a Prehealth advisor.

Biology Courses
BIO 132/133 Cells, Physiology, and Development
BIO 200/201 Animal Physiology
BIO 202/203 Cell Biology
BIO 204/205 Microbiology
BIO 230/231 Genomes & Genetic Analysis

Chemistry Courses
CHM 111 Chem I: General Chemistry
CHM 222 Chem II: Organic Chemistry
CHM 223 Chem III: Organic Chemistry
CHM 224 Chem IV: Introduction to Inorganic and Physical Chemistry
CHM 118 Advanced General Chemistry*
*If you will take CHM 118 and intend to apply to a health profession school that requires more than one semester of general chemistry, please speak with a Prehealth advisor about options.

Biochemistry Courses
BCH 252: Biochemistry I: Biochemical Structure and Function (Prerequisites are BIO 202 and CHM 223)

Physics Courses
PHY 117 General Physics I
PHY 118 General Physics II

Mathematics & Statistics Courses
MTH 111 Calculus 1
MTH 220 Introduction to Probability and Statistics

Psychology Courses
PSY 100 Introduction to Psychology
PSY 264 Lifespan Development

Sociology Courses
SOC 101 Introduction to Sociology

Exercise and Sport Studies Courses
ESS 250 Nutrition and Health

FAQs about Course Requirements
Where do I start? Still unsure of your plans – academic, career or otherwise – but wish to begin taking courses that will prepare you to enter a health profession school? Start with CHM 111/118 or BIO 132. These are foundational to almost every health profession and are prerequisites for other Smith courses. Discuss your degree plan with your advisor to identify the right starting point for you.

In what order should I take the required courses? This depends, in part, on the major you are considering. For example, a prospective biology or biochemistry major could take chemistry in the fall and biology in either the spring or fall; a prospective neuroscience major could take PSY 130 (Clinical Neuroscience) and chemistry in the fall; a prospective physics major could take general physics and calculus in the fall. Balance the lab courses with English and other classes depending on your major requirements and other course commitments. Someone majoring outside the sciences can complete the courses in any order, apart from prerequisite restrictions. Studying abroad? Consider language courses. Meet with your LAA and Prehealth advisor to discuss and design your timetable.

Will Advanced Placement courses count for prehealth requirements? AP and IB credits are sometimes accepted as prerequisites, but most of the time, professional schools will expect you to complete higher-level courses at Smith to fulfill professional school prerequisites.

Do some schools explicitly require calculus? Schools of human medicine, dentistry, optometry, pharmacy, and veterinary medicine may require a semester of calculus. Many schools require or strongly recommend statistics.

Will any course with a lot of reading/writing fulfill the English requirement? NO. Courses with ENG, CLT, or LIT prefixes - taught in English - are generally acceptable to schools with stated English requirements. Writing-intensive First-year seminars may or may not be acceptable. Discuss your course selections first with an Advisor.