

Your completed Background Information Form (BIF) provides the HCEC a comprehensive summary of your preparation for medical school beyond your academic training. The HCEC relies heavily on the content of the BIF in preparing the Letter of Evaluation (LOE). It is important that the information provided be accurate, detailed, and concise.

In addition to academic competencies, a candidate's personal development and possession of personal competencies has been deemed by medical school admissions committees as critical to admission decisions. These "core competencies" are important to all schools of human medicine, not just allopathic schools. Because the HCEC does not know you personally, your BIF plays a significant role in our understanding of how you have progressed along your pre-health path. Use the BIF to inform the HCEC of what you have learned and how you have grown during your time at Cornell and, for alumni, after graduation as well. Portray yourself in a professional way by providing evidence of how you have grown and developed personally, and illustrate the qualitative factors that have informed your life experiences. Consider how you have grown as a person and scholar in your post-secondary years.

Preparing to complete the BIF

The questions below, as well as completion of the Health Careers Reflection Journal (HCRJ), can guide your thinking as you determine which activities to list in your BIF. Remember that your HCRJ is not sent to the HCEC, rather it can be a tool to help you complete the BIF for the HCEC. **You do not need** to address each of these questions specifically.

- How would you assess the depth of your commitment, including leadership, lasting contributions, and plans to continue with this activity? If no longer involved, why?
- Have you received any honors or awards for this activity?
- How did this work help to solidify your post-college career goals/aspirations? How would you assess the impact of this work on you and others?
- If you have not had any experience in this category, explain why not.

The BIF is divided into four sections:

The **General Information** section consists of biographical information that you provided during initial registration with the HCEC, additional demographic information, and a listing of the languages you speak and your fluency with them.

The next area, **Section 1**, asks for narrative responses to questions that inform the HCEC about who you are, your family background, your motivation for a career in a health profession, your academic preparation, characteristics about yourself that demonstrate your readiness for advanced study, and your preparedness for a career in medicine. Some of these questions were addressed in the HCRJ and some responses may be copied directly from the HCRJ. Note that there is a word limit on the length of your responses, so while it is important to be comprehensive, it is equally important to be concise.

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The third area, **Section 2**, asks you to list and describe activities and experiences that have significantly contributed or influenced your personal and professional development. There are five major categories of interest to admissions committees:

- Clinical Exposure
- Research Experience
- Teaching
- Service to College, Community, Individuals
- Other

In each category, you may list as many relevant Experiences/Activities as you wish. For each Experience/Activity briefly complete the fields described below. Enter each Experience/Activity only once, in the most relevant subject area. Do not duplicate an Experience/Activity in another subject area. If multiple subject areas apply to an activity, enter the activity in the most relevant subject area, and simply reference the secondary subject area in the “Brief Description” field of the primary subject area. (e.g. if you participated in research in a clinical setting, list the experience in either field, but not both, unless they are two distinct experiences)

At the end of each category, write a summary of your experiences for that category. Use this space to contextualize the experiences and elaborate on your personal development. Use your Reflection Journal to inform your responses in the BIF. Edit and distill the Reflection Journal answers down to more succinct information about the category providing specific details and examples as may be helpful.

Information Required for Each Experience/Activity

For each experience/activity in the five categories, provide the information in the appropriate fields. **Name of Activity:** Assign a short name for the experience/activity. This may include the title of a position you held, or a descriptive phrase.

Brief Description: Provide a brief description of the experience/activity, no more than one sentence in length.

Paid or Volunteer, or Academic Credit: Indicate whether you were paid an hourly rate, a salary, or received a stipend for this activity. If you received academic credit for this experience/activity, please indicate the course number and the semester.

Start Date: Enter the date you began your participation with this experience/activity.

End Date: Enter the date you ended your involvement with this experience/activity.

- If your participation is ongoing, with no future end date, leave this field blank and indicate this by checking the adjacent “Ongoing” checkbox. Explain this in the narrative Brief Report for that experience/activity.
- If you anticipate a future end date, enter this date, and check the adjacent “Ongoing” checkbox. Again, explain this in the narrative Brief Report section.
- If there are multiple dates for an experience or activity, or the experience/activity is episodic, describe this in the narrative Brief Report section.

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Total Hours: Estimate the total number of hours you have devoted to this experience/activity. Do not leave this field blank. Make a good faith effort to estimate your time involvement. Refer to the Time Equivalent Charts below if necessary. In describing your time commitment, honesty and accuracy in reporting your time are essential. Be realistic and review your responses before submitting. An overstatement of hours, specifically for work that requires more than 24 hours in a day, could lead to questions about the veracity of your participation. A claim of inability to estimate your hours may raise doubts regarding your involvement.

Location: Enter the location of the experience/activity, including both the name of the institution, if applicable, and the name of the actual town/city, and state. If outside the US, provide the country name. Avoid abbreviations in naming hospitals and schools.

Supervisor/Other Contact: Enter the name and title of the person you were most closely associated with for this experience/activity.

Contact Information: Enter the contact information for this individual. We may need to contact the organization or individual to clarify your role. If you are unable to include a specific contact name for a personally significant experience, simply indicate why on the form (e.g., personal contact left the position). If it is an activity you conduct by yourself, no contact information is required.

For research activities, please include the name and contact information of the Principal Investigator in addition to your direct supervisor, if different. If you may be asking for a Letter of Recommendation from someone associated with this experience/activity, please inform us of this in the Brief Report section below.

Brief Report of what you learned or gained: Provide a short narrative explanation of what you got out of each experience/activity. Be honest and concise, and briefly explain why this activity was important to you. Describe how you developed personally and professionally from the experience(s).

- If any of your research has been published, be sure to list these in the respective research activity.
- For teaching experiences, indicate all the semesters in which you were involved. Be sure to enter the course name and the course number in the corresponding fields.
- For ongoing activities/experiences, explain the anticipated end date, if known.
- Indicate if a Letter of Recommendation will be associated with this experience/activity.

Optional Supplements

The fourth area of the BIF, **Optional Supplements**, contains two optional supplements regarding your academic record and your underrepresented or disadvantaged status. In Optional Supplement A, use the space provided to elaborate and inform the HCEC of any aspects of your academic record that will help your evaluator understand your academic record better. In Optional Supplement B, use the space provided to inform the HCEC of your intent to identify yourself as underrepresented in medicine or coming from a disadvantaged background.

IMPORTANT: After completion, save a .pdf of your BIF for your records by clicking on the appropriate link in the HCEC Online Checklist.

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Core Competencies

The AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) has compiled a list of 15 Core Competencies for Entering Medical Students (defined below). The competencies fall into four categories: Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Thinking and Reasoning, and Science. In completing the BIF keep these competencies in mind as you reflect on your participation with the listed activities.

Interpersonal 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 socio-cultural 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 themselves 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 using spoken words and sentences; listens effectively; recognizes potential communication barriers and adjusts approach or clarifies information as needed.

Intrapersonal Competencies

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.

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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 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, socio-cultural, and biological factors that influence health and well-being.

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Time Equivalent Charts

Hour & Week equivalents

1 day	= 24 hours
1 week	= 168 hours (24x7)
1 month	= 720 hours (30 days)
1 year	= 8760 hours (365 days)
1 Full-time work week	= 40 hours (8hr/day)
1 Full-time work year	= 2080 hours (52 weeks)

Fall semester	= 15 weeks of classes
Winter break	= 4.5 weeks
Spring semester	= 15 weeks of classes (14 w/ Spring Break)
Summer break	= 15 weeks
1 semester	= 15 weeks
1 semester	= 105 days
1 semester	= 2520 total hours

A 15-week Semester	
5 classes/week (2.5 hr/class + poss. labs)	= 185 hours to 240 hours
Time to Eat (2hr/day)	= 210 hours
Sleep (8hr/day)	= 840 hours
Total hours for Eat/Sleep and Classes	= 1235 to 1290 hours