

Psychological Science Coming Soon to an MCAT Near You

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Students applying to medical school in the US in the fall of 2016 will soon have to add psychological science to the topics they study in preparation for taking the Medical College Admissions Test, or MCAT®.



The new MCAT2015 will be rolled out in April 2015 and one of the most prominent additions to the exam is a new section on behavioral and social science, entitled “Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior.”

According to the , the organization that designs and oversees the exam, the changes reflected in the MCAT2015 are “designed to help better prepare tomorrow’s doctors for the rapidly advancing and transforming health care system.”

APS Charter Member Richard Lewis of Pomona College served on the committee tasked with undertaking the comprehensive review of the MCAT that led to these changes. In an [Observer article](#) highlighting the impending additions, Lewis emphasized the important role that psychological science has to play in providing the best possible care for patients:

“Understanding the complex relationships among social, behavioral, and biological factors will become increasingly important in order to most efficiently and effectively practice medicine in the future,” Lewis said.

Students taking the MCAT2015 will have 95 minutes to complete the 59 items included in the new section, which cover material similar to that which is covered in an undergraduate introductory psychology course.

The section will explore a wide array of foundational topics in psychological science – including sensation and perception, cognition, learning and memory, language and communication, emotion,

stress, temperament and personality, decision making, motivation, behavior change, identity, and relationships. And the topics will be addressed using a multi-level approach, including perspectives from domains as diverse as developmental, biological, social, cultural, environmental, and clinical psychology.

The MCAT2015 will also test students' knowledge of concepts related to basic research methods and statistics and their ability to demonstrate scientific inquiry and reasoning.

As the [AAMC notes](#) in information provided about the MCAT2015, an understanding of these foundational concepts from behavioral and social science is essential to the promotion of health and prevention of disease:

“The Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior section emphasizes concepts that tomorrow’s doctors need to know in order to serve an increasingly diverse population and have a clear understanding of the impact of behavior on health. Further, it communicates the need for future physicians to be prepared to deal with the human and social issues of medicine.”