

The Evolution of the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT Exam)

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This Last Page describes the 87-year evolution of the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT exam), the nationally administered standardized examination used as one part of the application process at the majority of U.S. and Canadian medical schools. Periodic reviews of this exam help ensure that aspiring doctors have the necessary foundations for learning in the ever-changing field of medicine.

The MCAT exam has undergone five revisions resulting in six versions; the sixth will launch in April 2015. The early MCAT exam focused on memory and scientific vocabulary, while the newest version tests scientific problem solving and adds concepts in the behavioral and social sciences. The 2015 version is scheduled for a content update in approximately seven years and a new version in 2030. The timeline below, which follows in part from McGaghie,¹ highlights the major changes that characterized each version of the MCAT exam.



Throughout the years, the MCAT exam has emphasized different types of knowledge and skills reflecting contemporary thought on what is necessary to demonstrate readiness to learn in medical school.

Reference

1. McGaghie W. Assessing readiness for medical education: Evolution of the Medical College Admission Test. *JAMA*. 2002;288:1085–1090.

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