

Minority Medical Student Award Program Application Guidance

The following guidance is provided to assist individuals who are considering submitting an application for the Minority Medical Student Award Program (MMSAP).

General Principles for the Student Applicant

It is important to understand the various components of the application process so that you can build a strong application. Your application should address your specific interest in hematology in your personal statement, and reflect a good understanding of your proposed project in your project description. Reviewers will consider these and the other items listed below when scoring your application.

A. Program Overview

The American Society of Hematology (ASH) created the Minority Recruitment Initiative in 2003 to increase the number of underrepresented minorities in hematology. MMSAP is a part of this initiative, and is designed to introduce minority medical students to both hematology and hematology research. The program has grown since its inception as a summer research experience typically between the first and second years of medical school to a more flexible program with three options:

MMSAP Summer (8–12–week summer research experience)

The summer research experience is an opportunity for medical students completing their first or second year of medical school to conduct an 8–12–week hematology research project under the guidance of an ASH member. Most applicants for MMSAP summer are first year medical students. This is because the summer between the first and second years of medical school is typically the last significant opportunity to dedicate a summer break to a research experience.

MMSAP Flex (8–12–week research experience over 12 months)

The flexible research experience provides an opportunity for students in their first, second, or third year of medical school to take up to a year to complete an 8–12–week hematology research experience (approximately 320-480 hours) under the guidance of an ASH member. Flex option applicants are strongly encouraged to conduct research at their home institution. Applicants for this option must include a plan in their application that outlines how they will integrate their research project with their course work and/or clinical rotations.

MMSAP Year-long (Full-time year-long research experience)

The yearlong research experience provides an opportunity for students to take a year off from medical school during what would otherwise be their second, third, or fourth year of medical school to engage in hematology research full-time under the guidance of an ASH member. Applicants for this program typically have prior research experience, although this is not a requirement.

Program participants will have the opportunity to present the results of their project in person at the ASH annual meeting in December. Attendance at the ASH Annual Meeting & Exposition provides students with outstanding opportunities for networking with national and international leaders in the field of hematology.

Connecting with a Potential Mentor

The first step in the application process is to identify a research mentor. You can do this on your own as long as the individual you identify is an ASH member, or you can request assistance from ASH staff by completing the Request a Mentor form available on the [ASH website](#). ASH staff maintains a list of mentors associated with MMSAP. You can choose a research mentor at your own medical school or request a mentor in another geographical location within the United States or Canada. If you have a particular area of interest in hematology such as sickle cell disease or leukemia, ASH staff can also help connect you with a mentor who is an expert in that area.

Developing your Proposal

The proposal is an important component of the application, and requires meeting your mentor in person if they are at your medical school or phone conversations if they are at an outside institution. Your mentor will help you identify a specific project. It is critical that you have a good understanding of your proposed project, and that the project can be completed within the allotted research time, eight-to-12 weeks for summer/flex recipients and one (1) year for yearlong applicants. The research proposal should be hypothesis-based, and MUST be written in your own words.

B. The Review Process – what criteria do the reviewers use to score applications?

Make sure you specifically address each item below!

1. Research (Academic Potential)
 - a. Does the student have a track record of performing well academically as evidenced by their GPA, publications, and/or presentation experience?
 - b. Does the student have a history of previous research experience?
2. Leadership/Service
 - a. Does the student have evidence of leadership or service experience as evidenced by leadership roles in organizations or volunteering?
3. Proposed Project
 - a. Is the project clearly described, including the hypothesis to be tested, the experiments to be performed if laboratory-based, the expected outcomes, and the methods of data analysis?
 - b. Does the student have a clear role on the proposed project?
 - c. Can the project be completed within the allotted time for the research experience? (8-12 weeks for summer/flex applicants or within one year for year-long applicants.)
 - d. Is IRB approval (approval to conduct research on human subjects) required, and, if so, has this been obtained yet? It is important to indicate the date of IRB approval.
 - e. Is the proposal well-written and edited for typographical, grammatical, and spelling errors?

4. Mentor/ Mentor's letter

- a. Does the mentor's letter indicate interactions with the student on the research plan and the student's role on the project?
- b. Is there clear evidence the student will be meeting regularly with the research mentor (i.e., weekly meetings etc.)? Will the student have the opportunity to attend journal clubs, Hematology/Oncology grand rounds, etc.?
- c. Does the mentor provide information on their prior mentoring experience?
- d. Is the mentor's biosketch included? If both a junior and senior mentor will be supervising the student, are biosketches for both mentors included?

5. Interest in Hematology

- a. Does the student have an interest in hematology clearly articulated in their personal statement?
- b. Does the student indicate an interest in a potential career as a hematologist or in a hematology-related field?

6. Timeline/Research Schedule (**For flexible MMSAP applicants only**)

- a. How does the student plan to integrate their research project with their course work/clinical rotations over the course of the year?

7. Strong letters of recommendation

- a. Choose letter writers who know you and who can speak to your strengths as an applicant

C. Making the Most of Your Research Experience

As with any successful research project, planning is essential to optimize the time you will spend working with your mentor during your experience. We highly encourage MMSAP awardees to have active discussions prior to the start of their experience with their research mentors. It is important that you connect with your mentor as soon as possible after they receive word of their award, especially given the limited eight-to-12-week time frame for summer/flex recipients. You should discuss the sequence and timing of planned research activities, suggested reading relevant to the research project, and any required training. If your research project requires IRB approval, it is essential that this be obtained before the research experience begins.

D. Role of Career Development Mentor

In addition to a research mentor, MMSAP awardees will also be paired by ASH staff with a career development mentor. This is a benefit as you move through medical school to graduation and beyond. The career development mentor will help guide you along in medical school, provide you with advice on pursuing additional hematology-related experiences, including residency and fellowship training. This individual will also serve as a sounding board and a conduit to other initiatives supported by ASH.

Once matched with a career development mentor, MMSAP awardees are encouraged to contact their mentor as soon as possible, particularly summer and flex recipients, given the shorter, 8-12-week research experience. Career development mentors and MMSAP recipients are required to meet at least once prior to attending the ASH annual meeting; however, we strongly encourage students to communicate with their career development mentor at least once a month. Regular check-ins can be done via the best mode of communication as determined between mentor and mentee. This includes email, teleconference or Skype calls, and/or in-person meetings.

E. Preparing for the ASH Annual Meeting

During the ASH annual meeting, held the first week of December, MMSAP awardees will give brief scientific presentations of the results obtained from their research projects. A travel stipend related to the meeting will be provided by ASH to help offset the cost of travel and housing. Attending and presenting at the ASH meeting provides awardees with a rich and unique educational experience, and is a key requirement of the program. You will gain valuable skills in delivering a scientific/medical presentation in a national forum, and have the opportunity to meet prominent leaders in the field of hematology. This is an opportunity to showcase yourself. You may also consider submitting a formal abstract to the ASH Annual Meeting & Exposition for an oral or poster presentation at one of the specialized simultaneous sessions held during the ASH annual meeting.

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G. ASH Annual Meeting

In addition to brief, oral presentations at the Promoting Minorities in Hematology Presentations and Reception, MMSAP awardees will be invited to a special luncheon attended by past MRI participants, committee members, and other interested ASH members. The highlight of the luncheon is a presentation by a keynote speaker who is a prominent underrepresented minority hematologist or a discussion by a panel of prior MRI awardees, including prominent hematologists, who typically provide their perspective on succeeding in a career in hematology. MMSAP awardees will also have the opportunity to hear the latest breaking news in hematology and interact with the more

than 25,000 individuals from all over the world who attend the ASH annual meeting. It is an outstanding educational experience for medical students.

H. Opportunity for a Second MMSAP Experience

You will have the opportunity to extend your hematology research experience to a second research experience. This will require submission of another application. ASH is very supportive of applicants applying for a second or subsequent research experience, and encourages all students with an interest in hematology to do this.

