

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM

Overview

The Penn State Physician Assistant (PA) Program, located at the Penn State College of Medicine campus in Hershey, PA, is a 24-month, full-time graduate program enrolling 30 students each May.

Our first class graduated in May 2016.

Consistent with the goals of the entire College of Medicine, the PA Program emphasizes humanism in medicine, which takes into account the dedication required for individualized and personalized medicine.

Mission & Goals

The Physician Assistant Program's mission is to prepare graduates to be academically, clinically, professionally and culturally competent in the delivery of health care services, to develop critical thinking and application skills, and to provide compassionate and comprehensive care to the patients they will serve. Our graduates will improve the health of their patients and the populations they serve in an efficient and cost-conscious manner.

We believe that the Penn State PA program will prepare its graduates for modern medical practice and that these graduates will be supremely prepared for their role as clinicians. The goals of our program are:

- To attract an academically qualified, diverse student body with special consideration for veterans and those from economically or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds (see progress toward this goal (<http://med.psu.edu/physician-assistant/goals/#goal1>))
- To promote application of learning and development of critical thinking skills (see progress toward this goal (<http://med.psu.edu/physician-assistant/goals/#goal2>))
- To enable graduates to practice competent and compassionate health care with emphasis in primary care (see progress toward this goal (<http://med.psu.edu/physician-assistant/goals/#goal3>))
- To prepare students for their role as clinicians, professionals, educators, and leaders in the physician assistant profession (see progress toward this goal (<http://med.psu.edu/physician-assistant/goals/#goal3>))
- To treat the entire patient with cultural competency, addressing physical, medical, psychosocial, and emotional dimensions of the patient (see progress toward this goal (<http://med.psu.edu/physician-assistant/goals/#goal4>))

Prerequisites

PA Program Prerequisites

Applicants will need to complete an undergraduate bachelor's degree (or equivalent) prior to matriculation into the PA Program.

We prefer that your major be in the health sciences, but this is not a mandatory requirement for application or admission. For admissions consideration, an applicant should ordinarily have:

- A CASPA-calculated overall cumulative GPA of at least 3.0
- A CASPA-calculated overall science GPA of at least 3.0

Detailed Prerequisites

We require several course prerequisites for admission consideration, although completion of this coursework is not required until the time of matriculation. Applicants can submit their CASPA and secondary applications with courses in progress or planned.

A minimum of one semester is required and science labs are strongly encouraged to supplement any science course lecture component.

Prerequisite courses are:

- General biology
- Anatomy and physiology – two semesters (or one semester each)
- Microbiology
- General or principles of chemistry
- Biochemistry or organic chemistry
- General psychology
- Statistics or bio statistics
- Two semesters of English composition (or two courses listed as writing intensive courses)

We offer conditional admission in the event that a course(s) or hours are outstanding at the time a candidate interviews with the program.

AP and CLEP Credit

AP credit that was accepted by your undergraduate institution can satisfy a number of our prerequisites including general biology, general chemistry, psychology, statistics, and English composition courses. You can also use CLEP credit to satisfy course prerequisites.

Hours

Each prerequisite can be satisfied by one full semester, typically 3 to 4 semester-hours. For applicants on a trimester schedule, five-to-six quarter hours at minimum satisfy a prerequisite.

Keep in mind that requirements to graduate with a bachelor's degree versus requirements for admission to Penn State's PA program will undoubtedly vary. For instance, completion of General Chemistry I can satisfy our prerequisite but often General Chemistry I and II are required to enroll in Organic Chemistry I at most institutions.

Online Courses

We accept online courses from regionally accredited institutions.

Currency and Exceptions

Three prerequisites have a five-year currency. They are:

- Anatomy (or A&P I)
- Physiology (or A&P II)
- Microbiology

This currency requirement will be waived for any applicant who has been working full time and continuously in the healthcare field since completing the coursework.

English Composition Courses

Any course that the institution deems as having satisfied a "writing intensive" will suffice. The course can be in any major and does not need to be an English-major based course. Additionally, if completion of a bachelor's degree incorporates writing across the curriculum, please share this information with the admissions committee.

Healthcare Experience

For admission consideration, a candidate should have 500 hours of health care experience (paid or volunteer). These hours can be in progress or planned during the application cycle, and you can update the program directly to add hours accrued after initial submission of the CASPA and secondary application. Hours must be completed by the time a candidate would matriculate into the program.

While our program is flexible in accepting a wide variety of hours to help satisfy the 500-hour requirement, hours as a personal trainer or lifeguard are unacceptable.

Technical Standards

The technical standards for Penn State College of Medicine's Physician Assistant Program have been established to ensure that students have the ability to demonstrate academic mastery, competence when performing clinical skills, and ability to communicate clinical information.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR TECHNICAL STANDARDS (<https://students.med.psu.edu/physician-assistant-student-information/technical-standards/>)

Curriculum

Graduation Requirements

Graduation requirements for PA students include:

- Satisfactorily completing all requirements in the specified curriculum and in good academic standing
- Attainment of good professional standing
- Enrollment in the program for the time period specified by the professional accrediting body, if applicable
- Successful passage of a summative experience and final evaluation
- Recommendation for graduation by the faculty of the specific program and the general faculty
- Satisfaction of all financial obligations to Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine
- Follow the approved course of study, satisfactorily completing all courses within the professional component
- Complete all courses with a cumulative 3.00 average, with no course or rotation below a "C"; a "C-" grade in any course or rotation does not meet this standard. For courses that are administered on a pass/fail basis, the student must achieve a "pass" for the course
- Repeat, as approved, and earn a minimum grade of "C" for any required course or rotation in the professional phase for which a grade of "C-" or below was earned

The PA Program requires 101 credits for successful program completion. The program curriculum contains a senior summative, one-credit course that also must be successfully completed in order to meet the program requirements for graduation eligibility.

All courses offered in the curriculum are required, and all of these courses must be successfully completed (as detailed above) to meet this eligibility for graduation.

Advanced Placement Policy

The program will not count coursework completed at a previous institution as fulfilling any of the requirements to graduate. If a student requests special exemption to this policy, it will be denied.

Work & Attendance Policy

The Penn State PA Program will not prohibit students in the program from working. The program believes each student is the correct person to make personal decisions regarding his or her life outside the program. The program is cognizant that students have made a number of personal sacrifices to matriculate into a PA program and are aware of the challenges of succeeding in a PA program. To this end, the program respects the student's personal decision regarding work. The program generally does not have mandatory attendance policy for classes – we would like you to attend class because we feel the teachers will be excellent classroom facilitators and instructors, but we respect different learning styles and the student's decision on how to best assure their success. Each course will provide information regarding attendance policy, though students are required to attend all scheduled tests. Though the program does not prohibit outside employment during the pre-clinical or clinical training, we do not encourage working because of the demands and dedication required for PA training. Students attending clinical rotations will have a minimum of 40 hours a week at the clinical site, which may involve different shifts and weekends – which would make employment very difficult. Students are expected to conform to the schedule that individual preceptor makes, as preceptors will not alter the schedule to accommodate a student's work schedule.

Course Timeline

You'll need 101 credits total to complete our program: 55 credits in the pre-clinical year and 46 credits in the clinical year, as described below.

All courses in the curriculum are graded on a letter grade basis with the exception of the Advanced Cardiac Life Support Course, the Health Care Ethics Course, and the Evidence-Based Medicine Course in the pre-clinical curriculum. These are Pass/Fail courses.

Pre-Clinical Year: Summer

Code	Title	Credits
PAS 701	Applied Human Structure and Function I	2
PAS 702	Applied Human Structure and Function II	2
PAS 704	Clinical Medicine I	5
PAS 707	Pathophysiology I	2
PAS 710	Pharmacology I	2
PAS 713	Pharmacotherapeutics I	1
PAS 716	History and Physical Examination I	2
PAS 721	US Health Care System/Legal Medicine	1
PAS 724	Laboratory Interpretive Methods	1
Total Credits		18

Pre-Clinical Year: Fall

Code	Title	Credits
PAS 703	Applied Human Structure and Function III	2
PAS 705	Clinical Medicine II	5
PAS 708	Pathophysiology II	2
PAS 711	Pharmacology II	2
PAS 714	Pharmacotherapeutics II	1
PAS 717	History and Physical Examination II	2
PAS 719	Evidence-Based Medicine	1
PAS 723	Principles of Behavioral Medicine	1
PAS 725	Physician Assistant Professional Practice	1
PAS 728	EKG Interpretive Methods	1
PAS 730	PA Fundamentals of Health Humanities	1

PAS 731	Radiology Interpretive Methods	1
Total Credits		20

Pre-Clinical Year: Spring

Code	Title	Credits
PAS 706	Clinical Medicine III	5
PAS 709	Pathophysiology III	2
PAS 712	Pharmacology III	2
PAS 715	Pharmacotherapeutics III	1
PAS 718	History and Physical Examination III	2
PAS 720	Pediatric Studies	1
PAS 722	Principles of Human Sexuality and Reproductive Health	1
PAS 726	Advanced Cardiac Life Support	1
PAS 727	Clinical Skills	1
PAS 729	Principles of Emergency Medicine	1

Total Credits		17
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Clinical Year

During the clinical year, students will take three mandatory primary-care rotations in the area of family practice and internal medicine. Each rotation lasts five weeks.

Mandatory Rotations

Code	Title	Credits
PAS 732	Emergency Medicine Rotation I	5
PAS 734	Family Medicine Rotation I	5
PAS 737	General Surgery Rotation I	5
PAS 739	Inpatient Internal Medicine Rotation I	5
PAS 741	Behavioral Health Rotation I	5
PAS 743	Pediatrics I	5
PAS 745	Reproductive Health I	5
PAS 747/748	Internal Medicine III Rotation	5
One Elective Rotation (See Below)		5
PAS 756	Summative Experience ¹	1

Total Credits		46
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¹ Upon completion of the clinical training, students will participate in a one-credit Summative Experience. In addition to taking the PACKRAT examination (which does not impact student placement in the PA Program), students will participate in assessments for knowledge, technical skills, interpretation, and performance of diagnostic evaluations. The Summative Experience must be successfully completed as one of the final requirements for program completion.

Elective Rotations

Choices for the elective rotation are:

Code	Title	Credits
PAS 733	Emergency Medicine II Elective	5
PAS 735	Ambulatory Care Selective	5
PAS 738	General Surgery Rotation II	5
PAS 740	Internal Medicine Rotation II	5
PAS 742	Mental and Behavioral Health Rotation II Elective	5
PAS 744	Pediatrics II Elective	5
PAS 746	Women's Health II Elective	5

PAS 749	Endocrinology I Elective	5
PAS 750	Gastroenterology I Elective	5
PAS 751	Ear, Nose and Throat Elective Rotation	5
PAS 752	Hematology & Oncology Elective Rotation	5
PAS 753	Orthopedics & Sports Medicine I Elective	5
PAS 754	Trauma I Elective	5
PAS 755	Dermatology Elective	5
PAS 760	Cardiothoracic Surgery I Elective	5
PAS 762	Critical Care Medicine I Elective	5

Accreditation

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) (<http://www.arc-pa.org/>) has granted Accreditation - Continued status to the Penn State College of Medicine Physician Assistant Program sponsored by The Pennsylvania State University.

Accreditation-Continued is an accreditation status granted when a currently accredited program is in compliance with the ARC-PA Standards.

Accreditation remains in effect until the program closes or withdraws from the accreditation process or until accreditation is withdrawn for failure to comply with the Standards. The approximate date for the next validation review of the program by ARC-PA will be September 2027. The review date is contingent upon continued compliance with the Accreditation Standards and ARC-PA policy.

Professional Licensure/Certification

Many U.S. states and territories require professional licensure/certification to be employed. If you plan to pursue employment in a licensed profession after completing this program, please visit the Professional Licensure/Certification Disclosures by State (<https://www.psu.edu/state-licensure-disclosures/>) interactive map.

Contact

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