

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>)

How to Apply

Penn State College of Medicine's Physician Assistant Program uses Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) (<https://caspa.liasoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>) and adheres to CASPA's Admissions Code of Conduct.

Before beginning your CASPA application, please review the program admissions requirements. All verified CASPA applicants will receive, and must submit, a Penn State Physician Assistant secondary application to receive full admissions consideration. There is no application fee to complete your PSU PA secondary application.

What are the Application Requirements?

A number of prerequisites apply to students seeking to join the PA Program. Be sure to read the detailed prerequisites before beginning your application. (<http://med.psu.edu/physician-assistant/prerequisites>)

CASPA applications must include the following items to be eligible for consideration. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

- **Completed online application**
- **Official transcripts** from all post-secondary institutions attended
- **Standardized Exam Scores:** GRE school code 0900
- **Personal/biographic information**
- **Academic history**
- **Three letters of recommendation**
- **Experiences** (see details on CASPA (<https://portal.caspaonline.org/caspaHelpPages/frequently-asked-questions/additional-information/work-and-volunteer-experience>))
- **Achievements and certifications** (see details on CASPA (<https://portal.caspaonline.org/caspaHelpPages/frequently-asked-questions/additional-information/health-related-training>))
- **Essay** (see details on CASPA (<https://portal.caspaonline.org/caspaHelpPages/frequently-asked-questions/additional-information/narrative-personal-statement-information>))
- **Release statement** (see details on CASPA (<https://portal.caspaonline.org/caspaHelpPages/frequently-asked-questions/additional-information/release-statement>))
- **Professional Code of Conduct** (see details on CASPA (<https://portal.caspaonline.org/caspaHelpPages/professional-code-of-conduct>))
- **Admissions Code of Cooperation** (see details on CASPA (<https://portal.caspaonline.org/caspaHelpPages/applicant-responsibilities>))

Secondary Applications

Penn State requires each applicant to submit a secondary application to receive full consideration by the admissions committee. The secondary application primarily consists of short essay responses.

All CASPA-verified applicants will receive the request to complete the secondary application. You'll receive this request via email. There is no application fee to submit the secondary application.

Preference Factors

In accordance with the PA Program's mission and goals, special consideration for admission is given to applicants who are veterans, who are from underrepresented populations or who are from economically or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

Additionally, special consideration for admission is given to those applicants who have graduated from or will be graduating from Penn State University.

Early Assurance

The Penn State PA Program has early assurance programs with the following institutions:

- Elizabethtown College
- Franklin and Marshall College
- Lebanon Valley College

Students at these institutions should speak directly with their pre-med pre-health advisor to discuss requirements and eligibility. The Early Assurance program allows students to apply to the PA Program during the junior year of undergraduate. Early Assurance applicants have the opportunity to be granted admission at the completion of the Early Assurance process, forgoing the entire CASPA application process as a senior. Information regarding this program is available on request.

Key Dates

- **Dec. 18:** Date by which you are strongly encouraged to complete your CASPA application, which allows sufficient time for CASPA processing.
- **Jan. 15:** Firm deadline by which your primary application must be CASPA-verified to be considered for a May start in the program
- **Jan. 30:** Firm deadline by which your secondary application must be completed.
- **End of May:** Start of two-year PA Program.

Standardized Testing Requirements

We require completion of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) for admission to our PA Program.

Alternately, if you have previously tested on any exam listed, you may provide these scores in lieu of completing the GRE:

- MCAT total score of at least 29 or higher (old version) or 505 (new version)

- PCAT total score 75th percentile rank or higher
- DAT total score of 18 or higher

Penn State's PA Program GRE Code is **0900**. Official GRE scores are uploaded directly to CASPA.

If it has been more than five years since you took the GRE, and the Educational Testing Service no longer has record of your score, we will accept a student copy of your GRE results. You must upload this document into the CASPA-Penn State Program Materials-Document tab. If you no longer have a student copy, you will need to retake the GRE.

International students for whom English is not the native language must also submit TOEFL/IELTS scores with their application. The Penn State University School Code is **2660**. International applicants are exempt from the TOEFL/IELTS requirement if they have received a baccalaureate or graduate degree in one of the following countries: Australia, Belize, British Caribbean and British West Indies, Canada (excluding Quebec), England, Guyana, Republic of Ireland, Liberia, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland, the United States or Wales.

Minimum acceptable scores for the TOEFL are 550 (paper-based), 213 (computer-based) or 80 (internet-based, with at least a 19 on speaking section). The IELTS exam minimum accepted composite score is 6.5.

Interview

We will invite the most qualified applicants to the Penn State College of Medicine campus in Hershey, PA, for an in-person interview so we can get to know you better, and you can learn more about our PA Program. Penn State hosts more than 20 interview days throughout the entire admissions cycle.

The Candidate Interview Day consists of the following activities:

- Faculty one-on-one interviews
- Real (not standardized) patient interview
- Timed writing sample
- Program presentation
- Lunch with current students
- Campus tour
- Participation in Team-Based Learning class

Equal Opportunity, Non-Discrimination and Campus Safety

Penn State College of Medicine is an equal-opportunity employer and accepts all qualified applications regardless of their gender, ethnic origin or religious background.

The College of Medicine is also committed to fostering an environment free from discrimination and harassment. Learn more about non-discrimination (<http://med.psu.edu/non-discrimination>).

The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act and Pennsylvania Act of 1988 require that crime statistics for Pennsylvania colleges and universities be made available to applicants upon request. Learn more about campus safety and security (<http://med.psu.edu/safety>).

Contact Us

If you have questions about the PA Program, please contact us at 717-531-0003, ext. 285595 or PSUPAProgram@pennstatehealth.psu.edu (psupaprogram@pennstatehealth.psu.edu).

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	Behavioral Medicine	1
PAS 725	Physician Assistant Professional Practice	1
PAS 728	EKG Interpretive Methods	1
PAS 730	Medical Ethics	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	Women's Studies	1
PAS 726	Advanced Cardiac Life Support	1
PAS 727	Clinical Skills	1

PAS 729	Emergency Studies	1
Total Credits		17

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	Internal Medicine Rotation I	5
PAS 741	Mental Health Rotation I	5
PAS 743	Pediatrics I	5
PAS 745	Women's Health I	5
PAS 747/748	Internal Medicine Rotation III	5
One Elective Rotation (See Below)		5
PAS 756	Summative Experience ¹	1
Total Credits		46

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 Rotation II	5
PAS 735	Family Medicine Rotation II	5
PAS 738		5
PAS 740	Internal Medicine Rotation II	5
PAS 742		5
PAS 744	Pediatrics II	5
PAS 746	Women's Health II	5
PAS 749	Endocrinology I	5
PAS 750	Gastroenterology I	5
PAS 751	Ear, Nose and Throat Elective	5
PAS 752	Hematology/Oncology Elective	5
PAS 753	Orthopedics & Sports Medicine Elective	5
PAS 754	Trauma Elective Rotation	5
PAS 755	Dermatology Elective Rotation	5
PAS 760	Cardiothoracic (CT) Surgery I Elective Rotation	5
PAS 762	Critical Care Medicine I Elective Rotation	5

Tuition and Financial Aid

PA Program Tuition & Financial Aid

Tuition rates for the PA Program are established by the Penn State University Board of Trustees in early July of each year, and are the same for residents and non-residents of Pennsylvania.

Cost of attendance includes tuition, fees, book/supplies and a standard student budget for room and board, transportation and personal expenses.

Tuition

This website provides cost of attendance information for the current academic year. When necessary, this information will be updated after tuition charges are established each July. In our continued commitment to enroll students from disadvantaged backgrounds, **a tuition freeze has been in place since 2015.**

Tuition Refund Policy

The Physician Assistant Program follows Penn State University's tuition refund policy (<http://www.bursar.psu.edu/refund.cfm>) in the event of student withdrawal from the program.

Criminal Background Check

All students enrolled in the PA Program will be required to complete the necessary background checks to participate in clinical year. The total cost to complete this process is \$59.

Books/Medical Equipment

Because of the extensive full-text electronic books and databases available through our medical library and the utilization of Penn State's state-of-the-art Simulation Center, our required textbook and equipment costs are considerably lower than many programs.

Health Insurance

All PA students are required to have health insurance coverage. Documentation of coverage is required in order to waive the Penn State student health insurance plan. Penn State offers a health insurance plan for students and their dependents through Aetna. The annual rate for the period from August 2017 through July 2018 is \$3,418 for the student.

Financial Aid

The Penn State College of Medicine Office of Student Aid is committed to assisting physician assistant students in making informed choices about paying for their graduate education. Although the primary financial responsibility for physician assistant education belongs to the student, there are financial sources that can be explored if financial assistance is necessary. The student aid office provides assistance and counseling to help students understand the financial resources available to them and how to obtain such resources.

The primary application for obtaining financial assistance at the Penn State College of Medicine is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>). Our federal student code is **003329**.

Primary Aid Sources

- **University Aid:** This includes scholarships and university loans and are almost exclusively need-based.
- **Federal Aid:** This includes the Direct Stafford Loan and Direct GradPlus Loan. These are non-need based.

Contact Us

If you have questions about financial aid for the Physician Assistant program, please contact the Office of Student Aid at 717-531-7052 or StudentAid@pennstatehealth.psu.edu.

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.

Contact

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