



PREPHYSICIAN ASSISTANT INFORMATION SUMMARY

Academic Preparation

Academic preparation for PA school requires a Bachelor’s degree and completion of a set of prerequisite classes, usually science, which vary from school to school. Common classes are listed on the last page of this summary but you need to research schools to ensure you are meeting requirements. For your major, there is no preference in this regard, so study something you love! Competitive applicants have very high grades so pace yourself in order to succeed, and **remember that all grades will count when you apply even if you repeat classes.**

Shadowing Physician Assistants

This should be one of your first experiences. Observing Physician Assistants in action across different environments will help you understand the profession and decide if it is the right fit for you. Shadowing also allows you get to know PAs, as many PA programs require at least one recommendation letter from a PA that you have worked with or shadowed. Many students find shadow opportunities through jobs or volunteer experiences at medical facilities.

Why Physician Assistant?

Patient Care Experience

Interacting well with sick people is one of the key indicators of a successful healthcare provider. Your experience can take a variety of form—MA, CNA, EMT, or another role that provides direct “hands-on” care to patients. Requirements vary widely between schools. Minimums of 250-1000 are common. The average hours for accepted applicants nationwide is around 3500 and the median is around 1400.

Extracurricular Activities

Service to the Community

Interaction with people coming from different backgrounds than your own will strengthen your interpersonal and communication skills.

Leadership Experiences

Examples includes offices held in organizations, committee work; leadership in church activities; coordinating a project; managing, training, supervising at work or in other activities; teaching experience of any kind; peer counseling or mentoring, etc.

Things to Remember

- What you do outside of class is important so don’t neglect activities. However, remember that activities *complement* your coursework, but *they will not compensate for low grades.*
- Make sure you have contact information for supervisors and health professionals you shadow or work with, in case you need to have them write recommendation letters. Even if you discontinue an activity, try to keep an open relationship with them.
- Keep a record of all hours of service and experiences. Writing your reflections in a journal will be helpful when you write a personal statement.

TIMELINE

TIMELINE	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	
GRE	Register & Study					Take exam												
Recommendation Letters	Request letters & get contact info. from letter writers																	
Application	Prep - Write draft of Personal Statement - Research Schools				CASPA Available Online in mid-April till early March. However, program deadlines range from July – March. UPAP's deadline is on August 1.													
	Secondary Applications, UPAP's deadline is on Sept.3																	
	Interviews																	
	Acceptance Notifications																	
Financial Aid											Priority filing for federal financial aid							

❖ GRE

Some PA programs require the GRE. **The GRE is administered throughout the year.** The exam may be repeated, but the best strategy is to prepare thoroughly and take the GRE once. Taking the exam by spring the year before you wish to enter PA school will enable you to apply earlier. More information on the GRE, including sample questions, can be found here <https://www.ets.org/gre/>.

- August is the last GRE accepted by most schools for their following Summer or Fall entering class.
- The GRE is divided into three multiple choice sections which are scored on a scale of 130-170: Verbal Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning, and Analytical Writing.

❖ APPLICATION PROCESS

Your application process can begin as early as spring or summer at the end of your junior year if you have completed the necessary requirements. Most PA programs admit students once a year, most commonly for Summer or Fall matriculation, but start dates range from May-January of the following year. You'll take the GRE (Graduate Record Exam) and submit an application at least 12 months in advance of the year for which you are applying.

❖ CASPA (Central Application Service for Physician Assistants)

Most US PA programs are part of **CASPA**, which is available at <https://caspa.liasoncas.com>. (The University of Texas system has a separate online system, TMDSAS, <https://www.tmdsas.com/>.) For additional resources, visit PA Focus (<http://pafocus.org/>)

- Application requirements include transcripts, personal background information, extracurricular experiences, personal statement, and fees.
- Because many schools use a rolling admission process (they begin reviewing applications and admitting before deadlines), it will enhance your chances if you **submit your application early** regardless of when you take the GRE.
- Completing the application will take at least 1 week; most students take several weeks. Make sure you will have plenty of time to fill out the application, and to have somebody **review** your entire application before you submit. PPA advisors are happy to help with this process.
- To help us advise other students, we would appreciate it if you would release your information to the Health Professions Advisor. This information will always be kept confidential.

❖ ALTUS SUITE (CASPer)

Altus Suite contains 3 non-cognitive assessment adopted by many professional schools. It has 3 parts, but PA schools that use it only require CASPer and sometimes Snapshot. CASPer is a newer situational judgement test that assesses for 10 characteristics: Collaboration, Communication, Empathy, Equity, Ethics, Motivation, Problem Solving, Professionalism, Resilience, and Self Awareness. Snapshot is a short one way virtual interview that highlights communication skills and motivation for your chosen profession. For more information go to the Altus website <https://takealtus.com/suite/>.

❖ LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Once a PA program receives your initial application, they will usually request supplementary material, including **Letters of Recommendation**. To facilitate this, most students should use the free CASPA Letter Service.

- CASPA limits applicants to 3 letters:
- **3 letters**, preferably from clinicians who have supervised you in clinical settings.
- The number and types of letters varies depending on the program, but generally you will need the following types of letters.
 1. **Patient Experience Supervisor**
 2. **Professor (usually Science)**
 3. **Physician Assistant you shadowed**

❖ PA GENERAL POLICIES REGARDING COURSEWORK

AP Credits	Depends on program. Check each school's requirements section online.
Online Courses	Accepted by most schools as long as they are not independent study courses
Repeats	All grades for repeated courses will be counted in your GPA on your CASPA application for PA schools
Withdrawals	W's should be used only for emergencies, although W's will not affect your GPA.
GPA	Minimum requirements for Total GPA range from 2.5 - 3.0. However, competitive applicants admitted to PA programs usually have a Total GPA of 3.5 or higher. Some schools may also look separately at Prerequisite GPA and Total GPA.

❖ USEFUL WEBSITES

- Physician Assistant Education Association (<http://www.paeaonline.org>). Look under RESOURCES, the PA STUDENTS.
- Searchable list of PA schools is available here: <http://paeaonline.org/our-programs>.
- Resources for PrePA and PA students: PA Focus (<http://pafocus.org/>)

Prerequisite Course Guide

This guide is designed for applying to a range of PA schools. It is not a comprehensive list. Requirements will vary by school.

- **English 1100:** *First-Year Writing*
- **English 3100 or 3160:** *Junior-Level Writing or Writing in the Sciences*
- **Biol 1831:** *Introductory Biology: From Molecules to Organisms*
- **Biol 2402:** *Vertebrate Anatomy*
- **Biol 2482:** *Microbiology*
- **Biol 2483:** *Microbiology Lab*
- **Biol 3622:** *Cell Biology*
- **Biol 3802:** *Vertebrate Physiology*
- **Biol 4842:** *Immunobiology*
- **Chem 1111:** *Introductory Chemistry I*
- **Chem 1121:** *Introductory Chemistry II*
- **Chem 2612:** *Organic Chemistry I*
- **Chem 2622:** *Organic Chemistry II*
- **Chem 2633:** *Organic Chemistry Laboratory*
- **Physics 1011&L:** *Basic Physics I and Lab*
- **Physics 1012&L:** *Basic Physics II and Lab*

The following aren't usually required, but are highly recommended for the entrance exams:

- **Psych 1003:** *General Psychology*
- **Soc 1010:** *Introduction to Sociology*
- **Econ 1001:** *Microeconomics*
- **Econ 1002:** *Macroeconomics*

The following may be required by some schools:

- **Math 1800:** *Analytic Geometry and Calculus I*
- **Math 1320:** *Introduction to Probability and Statistics*