

Physician Assistant

Advising Sheet

A physician assistant (PA) is a licensed health professional who practices medicine under the supervision of a physician. A PA has many responsibilities that depend on the medical setting, the physician they work under, the laws of the state, and their own experience. The role of a physician assistant includes the development of treatment plans, performance of physical exams, evaluation of laboratory test, diagnosis and treatment of certain illnesses, preventative healthcare counseling, assistance in surgery, and writing prescriptions. PAs study general medicine and are educated with a primary care foundation, and may therefore be employed in numerous areas of medicine. PAs must have a license and supervising physician in order to work.

A PA program generally lasts two and a half years, as students work towards a Master's Degree. PAs are required to complete more than 400 hours in basic sciences, 75 hours in pharmacology, 175 hours in behavioral sciences and around 580 hours of clinical medicine. 2,000 hours of clinical rotations are also necessary with an emphasis in primary care. PAs must graduate from an accredited PA program, pass the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE), and be certified by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA).

Common Physician Assistant Prerequisite Courses		
Course	CSUF Course	Notes
Biology	BIOL 151 & BIOL 152	One Year of Coursework with Lab
Chemistry	CHEM 120A & CHEM 120B	One Year of Coursework with Lab. Prerequisite: CHEM 115 or Chemistry Placement Exam (CPE).
Genetics	BIOL 251	Prerequisite: BIOL 151, 152 and CHEM 120A
Organic Chemistry	CHEM 301A AND 306A	There are a few schools that may require one semester of organic chemistry. Prerequisite: CHEM 120B
Anatomy	ONE of two options: (1) KNES 191A & KNES 191B (2) BIOL 361	One semester w/lab KNES 191A prerequisite: 3.0 GPA and 30 units BIOL 362 prerequisite: BIOL 251 and CHEM 120B
Physiology	ONE of three options: (1) KNES 191A & KNES 191B (2) BIOL 362 (3) BIOL 310 and 310L	One semester required, w/lab KNES 191A prerequisite: 3.0 GPA and 30 units BIOL 310 prerequisite: BIOL 151 or 152 BIOL 362 prerequisite: BIOL 251 and CHEM 120B
Microbiology	ONE of two options: (1) BIOL 202 (2) BIOL 302	BIOL 202 Prerequisites: BIOL 101 and KNES 191A or BIOL 151. BIOL 302 Prerequisites: BIOL 251 and CHEM 120B
Mathematics	<u>Statistics</u> : MATH 120, MATH 338, OR Most major specific statistics courses will meet this requirement (ie. PUBH 349, KNES 349, SOCI 303, etc.)	Statistics is commonly required. Some schools may require Calculus or Precalculus Contact individual schools for specific requirements.
English	ENGL 101 AND 301	One year required. Included in GE and graduation requirements
Humanities/Social Sciences	PSYC 101 AND SOCI 101	Meets social science GE units

Application Timeline

Prior to Applying:

- Take prerequisite courses and meet with advisors
- Open a Letter Collection/Chair Letter folder with the HPAO on campus
- Begin researching PA programs
- Get involved in extracurricular activities to acquire the skills and experience to stand out as an applicant
- Consider taking additional vocational coursework to earn a certificate so you can work as a paraprofessional (i.e., paramedic) and start accumulating patient contact hours.
- Prepare for and take the GRE – Register and choose a date.
- Order and collect official transcripts from ALL colleges and universities that you have attended.
- Gather Letters of Recommendation.

During the Application Cycle:

- Should be taking the GRE or waiting for your score
- Confirm deadline dates for individual PA programs.
- Begin to fill out and submit applications for PA programs.
- Work with HPAO to get chair letter sent via CASPA
- CASPA verifies primary application & begins releasing application to schools within four weeks of receipt
- Continue to work, volunteer, etc.

Last Stage of Cycle:

- Several PA programs interview candidates.
- Schedule an appointment with the HPAO and the Career Center for a mock interview.
- When interviews are completed, schools inform applicants of admission status. Admissions decision processes and timelines vary between PA programs.

Intent to Apply

The HPAO at CSUF offers this service to all PA applicants each cycle. This service helps the student obtain a Chair/Committee letter from the Health Professions Committee on campus and proof reads all letters of recommendation before writers upload to professional PA schools. The HPAO will also assist you in filling out your application. The Intent to Apply cycle always starts in February. Please contact the HPAO for more information.

Resources:

On Campus: PACT, SHPA

CSUF Career Center- <http://www.fullerton.edu/career/>

Off Campus: American Academy for Physicians Assistants (AAPA)- <https://www.aapa.org/>

Physician Assistant Education Association- <http://www.paeonline.org/>

CASPA- <https://portal.caspaonline.org/caspaHelpPages/about-caspaoverview/>

National Commission of Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA)-

<http://www.nccpa.net/>

Graduate Record Examination (GRE)- <http://www.ets.org/gre/>

Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)- <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/taking-mcat-exam/>



Your best resource on campus!

California State University, Fullerton
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