



PREPHYSICIAN ASSISTANT INFORMATION SUMMARY

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ACADEMICS + ACTIVITIES = PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PREPARATION

These classes and activities help you answer “Why Physician Assistant?” and develop the competencies outlined by [PAEA](#).

Patient advocacy & agency • Self-advocacy & agency • Active community engagement • Resourcefulness • Relationship development • Self-awareness • Interpersonal skills including influence, empathy, and humility • Information gathering • Discernment • Prioritization • Awareness of biases and attitudes towards others • Empathetic listening

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. **The U of U PA school (UPAP) does not require, but highly recommends, students shadow Physician Assistants.** 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. **The UPAP School requires minimum of 2000 hours of “direct” patient care experience.** 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. Find various opportunities at the Bennion Community Service Center <https://bennioncenter.org>.

▪ 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.
- You can download the **PreHealth Planner Spread Sheet** from [our website](#); you will find it under Available Downloads.

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.

❖ ALTUIS SUITE (CASPer)

Altius 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 Altius website <https://takealtius.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:
- **UPAP requires 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

CLEP Credit & Correspondence Study	May not be acceptable as part of the prerequisite courses
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	<p>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.</p> <p>UPAP—Minimum Total GPA is 3.0, and they will not review applications with a Total GPA lower than 2.7 (based on CASPA with all repeats counting). Average GPA for accepted applicants is 3.5</p>

❖ 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/>)
- The University of Utah Physician Assistant Program (UPAP) (<http://medicine.utah.edu/dfpm/physician-assistant-studies/program/>)
 - Monthly **UPAP Info Sessions**: From above URL choose ADMISSIONS then Information Sessions
- Pre-Physician Assistant Student Organization (PrePASO) E-mail: prepaso@gmail.com

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. **Shading** indicates the classes most commonly required by PA schools. See a PPA advisor for more information.

[Classes with * may be taken at SLCC. However, not all PA schools accept prerequisites from 2 year schools]

BIOLOGY	CHEMISTRY	MATH	Non-Science
<p>*1610 (4) Fundamentals of Bio I (prereq: MATH 1010) Prereq for most Bio courses</p> <p>Formerly BIOL 1210</p>	<p>OPTIONAL preparatory courses for Chemistry and Math:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MATH 10 Math Boot Camp for Intermediate Algebra</i> • <i>MATH 15 Math Boot Camp for Pre-Calculus</i> • <i>CHEM 10 Chemistry Boot Camp for General Chemistry</i> • <i>CHEM 1200 (3) Prep for College Chemistry</i> • <i>CHEM 1208 (1) Intro to Periodic Table</i> • <i>CHEM 2308 (1) Intro to O-Chem</i> <p>OPTIONAL Exploration Courses:</p> <p>UGS 1020 (1): Introduction to PreMed/PrePA LEAP 1100+1101 (3+3): Health Professions LEAP H EDU 2010 (3): Introduction to Health Professions</p>		<p>*WRTG 2010 (3) Intermediate Writing = ENGL 2010 at SLCC (Prereq: WRTG 1010)</p>
<p>2325 (4) Human Anatomy (Recom. Prereq: BIOL 1610)</p> <p>Required by UPAP</p>	<p>*1210 (4) General Chemistry 1 *1215 (1) Lab (Prereq: MATH 1050)</p>	<p>*1050 (4) College Algebra (Prereq: Math 1010)</p>	<p>Any Upper Division Writing (CW) (Prereq (WRTG 2010)</p>
<p>2420 (4) Human Physiology (Prereq: BIOL 1610 & CHEM 1210)</p> <p>Required by UPAP</p>	<p>1220 (4) General Chemistry 2 1225 (1) Lab (Prereq: CHEM 1210)</p>	<p>1070 (3) Stats (Prereq: B or higher in MATH 0980, C or higher in Math 1010 or 1030)</p> <p>PSYC 3000 or FCS 3210 or any other stats can be accepted.</p>	<p>Any Psychology course (BF)</p>
<p>3210 (3) Microbiology 3205 (1) Microbiology Lab (Prereq: BIOL 1610, BIOL 2020, & CHEM 1210)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>PATH 3100 (3) Medical Microbiology</p>	<p>2310 (4) Organic Chemistry 1 (Prereq: CHEM 1220)</p>		<p>1 Sociology or Anthropology (BF) (Required by some PA programs)</p>
<p>^One of these courses is recommended by UPAP & many PA programs, but lab may not be required.</p>	<p>U of U PA School (UPAP) requires any 8 credit hours of chemistry courses.</p>		
<p>Genetics</p>	<p>Biochemistry</p>	<p>Physics</p>	
<p>^ One or more of these may be required or recommended by some PA programs.^</p>			