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.

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**

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<td>Register &amp; Study</td>
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<td>Recommendation Letters</td>
<td>Request letters &amp; get contact info. from letter writers</td>
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<td>Application Prep</td>
<td>CASPA Available Online in mid-April till early March. However, program deadlines range from July – March. UPAP’s deadline is on August 1.</td>
<td>Secondary Applications, UPAP’s deadline is on Sept.3</td>
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<td>Financial Aid</td>
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**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/](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.liaisoncas.com/](https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/). (The University of Texas system has a separate online system, TMDSAS, [https://www.tmdsas.com/](https://www.tmdsas.com/).) For additional resources, visit PA Focus ([http://pafocus.org/](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 Altius website [https://takealtus.com/suite/](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:
- **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**

<table>
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<th>AP Credits</th>
<th>Depends on program. Check each school’s requirements section online.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Online Courses</td>
<td>Accepted by most schools as long as they are not independent study courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repeats</td>
<td>All grades for repeated courses will be counted in your GPA on your CASPA application for PA schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Withdrawals</td>
<td>W’s should be used only for emergencies, although W’s will not affect your GPA.</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>Minimum requirements for Total GPA range from 2.5 - 3.0. However, <em>competitive applicants</em> 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. <strong>UPAP</strong>—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</td>
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**USEFUL WEBSITES**

- Physician Assistant Education Association ([http://www.paeaonline.org](http://www.paeaonline.org)). Look under RESOURCES, the PA STUDENTS.
- Searchable list of PA schools is available here: [http://paeaonline.org/our-programs](http://paeaonline.org/our-programs).
- Resources for PrePA and PA students: PA Focus ([http://pafocus.org/](http://pafocus.org/))
- The University of Utah Physician Assistant Program (UPAP) ([http://medicine.utah.edu/dfpm/physician-assistant-studies/program/](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]

| BIOL 1610 (4) Fundamentals of Bio I  
(Prereq: MATH 1010)  
(Formerly BIOL 1210) | *CHEM 1210 (4) General Chemistry 1  
*CHEM 1215 (1) Lab  
(Prereq: MATH 1050) | *MATH 1050 (4) College Algebra  
(Prereq: Math 1010) | PHIL 1001 Intro to Philosophy |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| *CHEM 1210 (4) General Chemistry 1  
*CHEM 1215 (1) Lab  
(Prereq: MATH 1050) | MATH 1070 (3) Stats  
(Prereq: B or higher in MATH 0980, C or higher in MATH 1010 or 1030)  
PSYC 3000 or FCS 3210 or any other stats can be accepted. | PSY 2300 Abnormal Behavior  
OR  
PSY 3260 Social Developmental  
(Prereq: PSY 1010)  
Course needed depends on school | SOC 1010 Intro to Sociology |
| CHEM 2310 (4) Organic Chemistry 1  
(Prereq: CHEM 1220) | PATH 3100 (3) Medical Microbiology  
(Prereq: BIOL 1610, BIOL 2020, & CHEM 1210) | U of U PA School (UPAP) requires any 8 credit hours of chemistry courses. | H EDU 3030 Medical Terminology |

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<tr>
<th>Genetics</th>
<th>Biochemistry</th>
<th>Physics</th>
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<tr>
<td>Immunology</td>
<td>Pathophysiology</td>
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One or more of these may be required or recommended by some PA programs.