

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

Master's Degree in Physician Assistant (MSPA)



PROFESSION OVERVIEW

Physician Assistants (PAs) are licensed medical professionals who work under the supervision of physicians. They examine, diagnose, and treat patients, and can prescribe medication.



LENGTH OF PROGRAM (depending on specialty)

- **School:** 2-3 year Master's-level PA program
- **Residency:** Optional; available in select specialties
- **Licensure:** PANCE exam + state requirements

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Most physician assistant (PA) programs have similar prerequisite courses, which are listed below. However, requirements vary by school. Check each program's website and refer to the Physician Assistant Program Directory at www.paeonline.org for the most current information.

*It is the applicant's responsibility to verify all prerequisite courses, requirements, and application deadlines for each school they plan to apply to.

One year of general biology*	BIOL 101/BIOL 102 or BIOL 107/108
One year of general chemistry	CHEM 201/CHEM 202
Organic chemistry	CHEM 311/312
One year of physics	PHYS 101/102 or PHYS 105
Statistics	MATH 141

Schools may require English, cell biology, genetics, math and/or other courses such as Medical Terminology

*ALL first year Biology students are required to complete Biol 101/102 instead of Biol 107/108

KEY COMPONENTS OF A COMPETITIVE PA SCHOOL APPLICATION

Physician Assistant admissions programs are looking for well-rounded applicants. The following list identifies criteria considered during the application process. Average grade point average (GPA) and Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores can be found in The Physician Assistant Programs Directory; www.paeonline.com.

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|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Overall and science GPA | • GRE scores |
| • Extracurricular activities | • Health-related experiences* |
| • Research experiences | • Community service |
| • Leadership experiences | • Letters of evaluation |
| • Interview | • Personal statement |

*Many PA programs will require a minimum of 1000-2000 hours of direct patient care to apply. Positions like CNA, EMT, medical assistant, ER tech or phlebotomist will help to acquire a range of experiences and accumulate the required hours for hands-on care.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

Your timeline for applying to Physician Assistants school should reflect your readiness: academically, personally, and professionally. While some students apply in the summer before their senior year to start OT school right after graduation, others benefit from a more flexible timeline.

Students today are often waiting a year or more after graduation before applying to a health professions school. Taking a gap year and applying in their senior year does not put students at a disadvantage. Applicants may use that time to gain clinical exposure, direct patient hours, develop professional skills, clarify their goals, and shore up weaker areas on their application.

For more information, visit [Make the Most of Your Gap Year](#).

APPLICATION SERVICE

The Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) is the centralized application service for most U.S. physician assistant programs. Applicants submit one primary application through CASPA, which is then distributed to participating schools.

Please note that some PA programs do not participate in CASPA and require applications to be submitted directly to the school. Visit www.caspaonline.org for more information.

STANDARDIZED TEST

The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is commonly required for admission to many physician assistant (PA) programs, though some have removed or made it optional. Students typically take the GRE after completing a bachelor's degree and key prerequisite courses. The exam is offered year-round at computer-based testing centers and takes approximately 4 hours to complete. Official scores are typically available 10-15 days after the exam date.

For test dates, registration, and preparation resources, visit www.ets.org/gre.

The GRE consists of the following three sections:

- **VERBAL REASONING (130-170)**
- **QUANTITATIVE REASONING (130-170)**
- **ANALYTICAL WRITING (0-6)**

The following resources can provide you with more information regarding the GRE

- **Educational Testing Service (ETS):** Official test information, registration, and preparation materials - www.ets.org/gre
- **Magoosh GRE:** Free and paid video lessons, practice questions, and study schedules - www.magoosh.com/gre
- **Khan Academy (non-GRE-specific):** Helpful for reviewing math, reading, and analytical writing concepts - www.khanacademy.org
- **Manhattan Prep & Kaplan:** Full-length practice tests and paid prep books/courses
- **ETS POWERPREP Practice Tests:** Official fee-based practice tests that simulate the real exam environment

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Physician Assistant Education Association (www.paeaonline.org)
- American Academy of Physician Assistants (www.aapa.org)
- PA Shadow Online (www.pashadowonline.com)



Don't forget to check out **Handshake**!

Handshake is your one-stop source for internship and job postings, campus recruiting, career fairs, and career center resources. Once you're on the login page, enter your iwu.edu email address and click next. If you are already in the system, then you can just select "IWU Single Sign-on" and enter your IWU net-ID and password.

Please visit www.iwu.edu/career-center/handshake for more information on Handshake