

**Pre-Physician Assistant
Education at the
University of Oregon
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What is a physician assistant?

Physician Assistants are trained health care practitioners who work under the supervision of physicians to provide a wide range of health care services in a variety of settings.

How did the profession begin?

Physician Assistant (PA) programs began to license workers in the late 1960's when the profession was created to compensate for the shortage of physicians in the U.S. The early role of PAs were limited to provide primary care to patients, but the importance of the PA in health care was soon realized. Many specialized fields employ PAs: pediatrics, general surgery, cardiothoracic surgery, orthopedic surgery, neurology and oncology.

What are the academic admission requirements?

The structure of the education program for PA students is similar to that for medical students although shorter in length. The typical PA program is about 26 months long. Admission requirements vary with each PA program. For a complete list of schools, see <http://www.aapa.org/>, under "education and certification. Most programs require a minimum of two years of college work that include prerequisite courses such as general chemistry, biology, physiology, anatomy, microbiology, and psychology. In addition, all PA schools require applicants to maintain minimum GPAs. All prerequisite courses should be taken for letter grades. It is advisable for applicants to investigate individual PA programs for the school's specific requirements for admission. An increasing number of programs require a bachelor's degree. The GRE is typically required by many schools for admissions. Table 1 outlines a four-year program to complete the pre PA program. Other course plans may be more suitable for you. See the PA advisor early in your degree to plan your academic schedule. Students apply for PA programs online through the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) <<http://www.caspaonline.org>>. Check the CASPA website and websites for individual program application deadlines.

What are the clinical experience requirements?

All PA programs stress the importance of clinical experience prior to admission. Most programs require applicants to have a specified number of hours of clinical experience for admission. The minimum number of hours required varies with each program. For instance, University of Detroit Mercy PA program requires all applicants to have a minimum of one year of full-time health care experience. On the other hand, Duke University requires a minimum of six months (1000 hours) of patient care experience. Although OHSU requires one year (2000 hours), students admitted to the program over the past five admit terms had an average of 2.0 to 2.5 years of health care experience.

Are there preferred experiences?

Preference is given to those with health care experience involving direct patient care: medical assistant, nursing assistant, EMT/paramedic, surgery/OR tech, emergency room tech, medical technologist, health educator, social worker, hospital corpsman, medic, peace corps volunteer, radiation technologist, phlebotomist, athletic trainer, exercise physiologist, physical therapist, researcher, and other positions involving direct patient care.

The Competitive Candidate?

The selection process is quite competitive; there are always more applicants than positions. In general, the selection criteria are based on the science GPA, the cumulative GPA, clinical experience, letters of recommendation, and the interview. In 2008, admitted students nationwide had an average GPA of 3.43.

What is the job outlook for PAs?

Employment opportunities are expected to be good, particularly in areas or settings that have difficulty attracting physicians. In 2006, the average income of clinically-practicing PA's working full time was \$84,396 per year.

Where do I find more information about PA programs?

The best information comes from the American Academy of Physician Assistants <<http://www.aapa.org/>>. Additional information and assistance with academic planning can be obtained by contacting Academic Advising, 364 Oregon Hall, phone: 541-346-3211.

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This publication will be made available in accessible formats upon request. (541) 346-3211.

Table 1: Pre-Physician Assistant Sample Program

Freshman Year:		
Fall Term	Winter Term	Spring Term
MATH 111	BI 211	BI 212
CH 221 ¹ + 227 lab	MATH 112	MATH (continuation) ³
WR 121	CH 222 + 228 lab	CH 223 + 229 lab
Consider:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin health-related experience as soon as possible • English Composition (<i>graded</i>) • Arts & Letters, Social Science or Multicultural classes • Major requirements (<i>if a major has been chosen</i>) 	
Sophomore Year:		
CH 331 ⁴	PSY 201 OR PSY 202	PSY 376 (<i>recommended</i>)
MATH 243		BI 320 (<i>recommended</i>)
BI 214		BI 330 + 331 lab
Consider:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue health-related experience • Arts & Letters, Social Science or Multicultural classes • Major requirements (<i>if a major has been chosen</i>) 	
Junior Year:		
ANAT 311 + 314 lab	ANAT 312 + 315 lab	GRE
HPHY 313 + 316 lab	HPHY 314 + 317 lab	submit CASPA by September
Consider:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue health-related experience • Arts & Letters, Social Science or Multicultural classes • Major requirements 	
Senior Year⁵:		
<p>Completion of all University and department requirements. Complete supplemental applications and interviews.</p>		

1. General Chemistry (CH221) requires prior experience in high school chemistry. MATH 111 is required as a pre- or co-requisite for general chemistry.
2. Some PA programs may require additional writing or English classes
3. Additional course work in math may be required for your major, the B.S., and for some PA programs.
4. Additional course work in organic chemistry is recommended and may be required for your major and some PA programs.
5. General physics is required for some majors and may be required by some PA programs.