

Pre-Physician Assistant

at the University of Oregon



Prepared by:

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Academic Advising and Pre-Physician Assistant Objective

Each student has an opportunity to be advised by a Pre-Health Advisor in the Office of Academic Advising. Call (541) 346-3211 to schedule an appointment. Please see your academic advisor on a regular basis to confirm you are on track for your degree and physician assistant school admission.

In order for the Pre-Health Advisors to communicate directly to you and your interests, it is highly recommended to declare a Pre-Physician Assistant Professional Objective. To do so, email health@uoregon.edu with your name and UO ID number, or fill out a form in the OAA.

You are also encouraged to sign up for the Pre-Health mailing list, which provides students with timely announcements and a monthly newsletter. OAA also has a facebook page, located at www.facebook.com/uo.prehealthadvising, which is where more health information can be found.

What is a Physician Assistant (PA)?

Physician Assistants are licensed health professionals who practice medicine as members of a team with their supervising physicians. PAs exercise autonomy in medical decision making and provide a broad range of medical and therapeutic services to diverse populations in rural and urban settings.

General Requirements

Most physician assistant schools require previous health care experience and some college education. The typical applicant has a bachelor's degree and an average of four years of health care experience. All students are urged to plan an academic program leading toward a baccalaureate degree.

Specific Course Requirements

Admission requirements vary widely between PA schools. It is highly recommended to consult the particular PA program in which you are interested. Generally, most PA schools have the following areas as prerequisite courses:

- General (or Inorganic) Chemistry
- Biology
- Anatomy and Physiology
- Microbiology
- Psychology
- Highly Recommended is Physics & Organic Chemistry

OHSU and Pacific University are Oregon's only physician assistant schools.

Recommended University of Oregon Curriculum:

The minimum course requirements for admission to OHSU's and Pacific University's PA school can be met with the following classes:

- English Composition – WR 122, 122 or 123
- General Chemistry – CH 221, 222, 223 with labs CH 227, 228, 229
OR Honors Chemistry – CH 224H, 225H, 226H with labs CH 237, 238, 239
- General Biology – BI 211, 212, 213 or 214
OR Foundations Biology (H) – BI 251, 252, 253
 A Pre-Health Advisor can assist you in determining which biology sequence you should take.
- Anatomy & Physiology – HPHY 321, 322, 323, 324, 325
- Microbiology – BI 330 with lab BI 331
- Statistics – MATH 243
- Psychology – PSY 201 or 202

In order to be competitive, the following courses are Highly Recommended and should be considered:

- Physics – PHYS 201, 202, 203 with labs 204, 205, 206
- Organic Chemistry – CH 331, 335, 336 with labs CH 337, 338
- Biochemistry – CH 360
- Genetics – BI 320

Advanced Placement credits are accepted for science prerequisite courses only, and they should appear as such on the UO transcript. Consult with a Pre-Health Advisor for clarification. All of the courses listed above must be taken for a grade.

Pre-Physician Assistant Sample Curriculum

First Year

Fall Term	Winter Term	Spring Term
	BI 211	BI 212
MATH 111	MATH 112	MATH 243
CH 221 + 227 lab	CH 222 + 228 lab	CH 223 + 229 lab
WR 121	WR 122	

Consider:

- Begin health-related experience as soon as possible
- English Composition
- Arts & Letters, Social Science or Multicultural classes
- Major requirements (*if a major has been chosen*)
- Meet with an Academic Advisor

Second Year

CH 331 + 337	CH 335 + 338	CH 336
BI 214	PSY 201 or PSY 202	PSY 376 (recommended)
		BI 330 + 331 lab

Consider:

- Continue health-related experience
- Arts & Letters, Social Science or Multicultural classes
- Major requirements (*if a major has been chosen*)

Third Year

HPHY 321	HPHY 323	HPHY 325
HPHY 322	HPHY 324	BI 320 (recommended)
		GRE

Consider:

- Continue health-related experience
- Arts & Letters, Social Science or Multicultural classes
- Major requirements

Fourth Year

Consider:

- Completion of all University and department requirements
- April - earliest possible time for submitting PA school applications

Comment:

Some PA programs may require additional writing or English classes
 Additional course work in math may be required for your major, the BS, and for some PA programs.

Organic chemistry and Physics are HIGHLY recommended and may be required for your major and some PA programs.

**This curriculum is not set in stone. Talk to an Advisor
 for course plans that are right for you.**

The Undergraduate Major

Science Majors

Given the pre-PA curriculum, the obvious and ready major is someplace in the sciences; chemistry, biology, human physiology and general science dovetail efficiently with the recommended classes. Many of the requirements of those majors are satisfied with the pre-PA offering. Since major requirements do vary considerably, you should plan your second year in college very carefully in anticipation of a major choice if you have not already committed yourself.

Non-Science Majors

Most PA schools make a point of welcoming non-science majors. Successful PA students come from a wide variety of educational backgrounds, including those who major in English, business, communications, among others. Advisors encourage non-science majors to plan carefully, as many of the PA prerequisites can be taken as electives around a student's major and General Education requirements.

The Major as an Alternative Career

As a pre-PA student, you should face realistically the possibility of not gaining admission to PA school. What will you do if you are not accepted? Another health career? Reapply? Follow other pathways within your major? Don't be surprised if you are asked this often by friends, advisors, and interviewers. It isn't intended to discourage you but to remind you of the realities of PA school application.

Non-Curricular Requirements for Physician Assistant School Admission

The General Record Exam (GRE)

Some schools require the GRE. More information about the test can be found at www.ets.org/gre. You are encouraged to research PA schools to determine whether you need to submit a GRE score to apply.

Letters of Recommendation

All PA schools require letters of recommendation, submitted from a practicing PA, professor, advisor or supervisor. You are encouraged to find individuals who can speak to your maturity, dependability, dedication, compassion, communication skills, leadership and any experience you may have in the field. Check the admission requirements school by school for instructions.

Official Transcripts

All PA schools require official transcripts from every college you have attended. Although few PA schools publicly list mandatory GPAs for admission, accumulated statistics illustrate that only applicants with averages at 3.23 and above stand a good chance of admission. The recent national mean for accepted applicants was 3.46 in all college work and 3.39 in sciences.

Take all required courses graded.

In general, you should avoid dropping below a full academic load of 15 or 16 credit hours.

Health Related Experience

PA schools require, students to have varying hours of experience or clinical hours. The experience requirements vary considerably from school to school. As an example, OHSU requires 2000+ hours of health care experience while Pacific requires a minimum of 1000 hours of direct patient care. To accumulate this type of experience and hours, applicants have jobs as a certified nurse assistant, emergency medical technician, and paramedics. On average students have 4-years worth of health care experience.

The Application Process

Of the 156 PA programs nationwide, 140 of them currently participate in the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA). On the Physician Assistant Education Association's website (www.paeonline.org), there is an extensive manual on the CASPA policies and procedures manual, designed to provide a step-by-step description on how to apply using this service.

Students applying to non-participating schools should contact the individual programs for application materials.

Chances for Admission: Self Evaluation

The best way to assess your chances for gaining admission to PA school begins with a review of selection features.

Early planning and preparation is virtually essential for improving your chances for successful admission. Do not fall into the “trap of the minimums,” as virtually no one with just the minimums gets into dental school. Going above and beyond the minimum admission requirements is a very good thing! Over and over again, admission websites and committees stress the importance of the “whole candidate,” representing your academics, extra-curricular activities, leadership, motivation, experience and character. Above all, there is no guarantee of being accepted. Even the most qualified candidates may have to apply more than once.

Residence

The likelihood of acceptance is greatest at the public institutions in the state of which you are a resident. OHSU does accept non-residents. Private schools do not preference residents and therefore all applicants are considered.

Academic Record

The GPA is critical in selection. Good grades, by themselves, guarantee nothing. They do indicate a solid performance in the past and can be used to predict a high probability of repeated success in the first two years of the PA school curriculum. It is clear that students with a 3.2 GPA and below are in a high-risk category.

Experience

Grades prove scientific competence; medically allied experience can demonstrate both your commitment and your understanding of health careers. Pick up or download the handout on local medically related experiences at the Office of Academic Advising. Use the Office of Academic Advising's website, *advising.uoregon.edu/AA_Pages/AA_PreHealth_Opps.html*, to locate health related opportunities in the area. Don't ignore this important part of your preparation. Health-related experiences are required at most schools.

Minority Students

All U.S. public and private schools are seeking underrepresented minority and other non-traditional applicants. Be sure to contact a Pre-Health Advisor for information.

International Students

When applying to public schools, foreign students are considered non-residents. Students with permanent residence (green card) status are considered U.S. residents. Be sure to contact a Pre-Health Advisor for information.

Of Special Interest

National Statistics for students accepted to physician assistant school for Fall 2009 can be found online at the PAEA website www.paeonline.org.

- Average cum GPA: 3.25
- Average science GPA: 3.13
- Average age of applicants: 27
- Average health care experience: 3.7 years
- Average salary: \$81,230

Websites for more information and which provided material for this handout include:

Physician Assistant Education Association
www.paeonline.org

Oregon Health and Science University Physician Assistant Program
www.ohsu.edu

Pacific University School of Physician Assistant Studies
www.pacificu.edu/pa

The Bureau of Labor Statistics
www.bls.gov

American Academy of Physician Assistants
www.aapa.org

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