

PRE-PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

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PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

Physician assistants (PA's) are health care professionals licensed to practice medicine with physician supervision. PA's conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, counsel on preventive health care, assist in surgery, and in virtually all states can write prescriptions. Within the physician-PA relationship, physician assistants exercise autonomy in medical decision making and provide a broad range of diagnostic and therapeutic services. A PA's practice may also include education, research, and administrative services. Physician assistants are found in all areas of medicine. They practice in the areas of primary care medicine - that is family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, and obstetrics and gynecology - as well in surgery and the surgical subspecialties.

The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov) projects a 50 percent increase in the number of PA jobs between 2004 and 2014, making it the third fastest-growing profession in the country.

Prerequisite Courses Required by Most Physician Assistant Programs:

- One year of General Biology
- One year of Human Anatomy & Physiology
- One year of General (Inorganic) Chemistry
- One term of Microbiology

NOTE: Science courses should be those designed for science majors

Additional Prerequisite Courses Required by Some Physician Assistant Programs:

- College math and/or calculus and/or statistics
- College English
- Biochemistry
- Genetics
- Behavioral Sciences such as Psychology
- Minimum credit requirements in the humanities and/or social sciences

The above lists are not exhaustive. Check individual schools for requirements. Note that most professional schools require that an **A, B, or C** be earned in all required preparatory courses. **Admission to physician assistant programs is limited and competitive.**

- In 2007, matriculated students to **Pacific University** had an average science GPA of 3.24 and an average last 45 semester hour GPA of 3.46. For the 2007-08 application year, matriculated **OHSU** students had an average overall GPA of 3.48 and a science GPA of 3.41.

Health Care Experience:

Most physician assistant programs require applicants to have previous health care experience. **One to two years** of responsible, health care experience working directly (hands on) with patients, such as, nurse, EMT, medic, social worker, athletic trainer, medical technologist, or a number of other health care fields, is required.

GRE:

Some PA programs require students to take the GRE. The **GRE General Test** measures verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and analytical writing skills that have been acquired over a long period of time and that are not related to any specific field of study. The General Test is offered year-round at computer-based test centers. For more information and to locate a test center visit: www.ets.org.

Requirements for Admission to OHSU Physician Assistant Program

The following is an outline of Oregon Health & Science University prerequisite courses and other admissions requirements (subject to change at any time).

Prerequisite Coursework

OHSU Prerequisite Courses	Equivalent PSU Courses
<p>Statistics: Offered through Math, Stats, Bio, Psy/Soc departments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAT 243 (4) – Intro to Probability & Statistics (recommended prerequisite is second year high school algebra or equivalent)
<p>Chemistry: Full sequence with lab.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CH 221/227, CH 222/228, CH 223/229 (15) – General Chemistry (MTH 111 is a pre- or co-requisite for this course)
<p>Biology: General biology: full sequence with lab. One term of microbiology with lab. Human anatomy & physiology sequence with lab. Note: Human anatomy & physiology sequence needs to be completed within seven years of planned PA program matriculation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BI 251, 252, 253 w/ Lab (15) – Principles of Biology (recommend CH 221 be complete prior to or concurrent w/ BI 251) • BI 234/235 w/Lab (6) – Microbiology with Lab • BI 301, 302, 303 (12) – Human Anatomy & Physiology w/Lab (recommended prerequisite of one year of college level biology and a previous course in chemistry)
<p>Upper division natural science course work: Which might include <i>recommended</i> 300 and 400 level courses in organic chemistry, biochemistry, genetics, pathophysiology, pharmacology, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CH 331/327, 332/328 (12) – Elements of Organic Chemistry I and II w/ Lab *only offered summer OR the year long sequence – discuss with adviser • CH 350 (4) - Biochemistry (recommend prerequisite: a sequence in General Chemistry CH 221, 222, & 223 with lab and Organic Chemistry CH 331, 332 with lab OR CH 334, 335, & 336 with lab) • BI 341 (4) - Genetics
<p>Psychology: One course in general or developmental psychology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSY 200 (4) – Psychology as a Natural Science <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSY 204 (4) – Psychology as a Social Science <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSY 311 (4) – Human Development (recommended prerequisite PSY 200 & 204)

Additional OHSU PA Program Admissions Requirements:

- **BS or BA** (must be earned prior to matriculation). No particular major is preferred, but a broad educational background is encouraged.
- **Minimum cumulative** undergraduate GPA of 2.8.
- **GRE General Test Required** (scores older than 5 years will not be considered) – no minimum score required.
- **Graduates of non-U.S. Colleges and Universities** - all non-Canadian international graduates must provide transcripts reflecting one year of full-time study (30 semester hours, 45 quarter hours) in an accredited U.S. college or university. The year of study must include a minimum of 15 semester hours or 20 quarter hours of natural sciences (biology, chemistry), a 100 level course in math and 6 semester hours or 9 quarter hours of English. International students must provide an evaluation of their academic credentials prepared by an international credentialing agency. Please see OHSU website for list of qualifying agencies. In addition, a minimum score of 550 on the TOEFL exam must be submitted to complete your application.
- **Application deadlines:** CASPA deadline is November 1, 2008 for OHSU, but you can submit your application as early as April 17, 2008. In addition to the CASPA application, the OHSU PA Program also requires submission of a supplemental application. The supplemental application must be received by OHSU on or before November 30, 2008.
- **Required Health Care Experience:** A minimum of one year (about 2000 hours) of health care experience in a position of responsibility is expected of all applicants. Preference is given to candidates with health care experience that involves direct (hands-on) patient care. Shadowing experience, although highly valued, does not count towards the total number of hours. Applicants should enter any shadowing or intern types of opportunities under the health care related area of their CASPA application. For more detailed information, please visit OHSU's PA program website: <http://www.ohsu.edu/pa/>

OHSU PA Program Contact:

Division of Physician Assistant Education
School of Medicine – OHSU
3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Road, GH 219
Portland, OR 97239
Web: www.ohsu.edu/pa

Phone: 503-494-1484
Fax: 503-494-1409
Colleen Schierholtz, Director of Admissions
Email: schierhc@ohsu.edu

Requirements for Admission to Pacific University Physician Assistant Program

The following is an outline of Pacific University's prerequisite courses and other admissions requirements (subject to change at any time).

Prerequisite Coursework

Pacific Prerequisite Courses	Equivalent PSU Courses
<p>Statistics: 3 semester hours – one course from one of the following departments: PSY, SOC, STAT, or MATH</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAT 243 (4) – Intro to Probability & Statistics (recommended prerequisite is second year high school algebra or equivalent)
<p>Chemistry: 11 semester hours (16.5 quarter credits) General chemistry with lab.</p> <p>One Organic or Biochemistry course – lab not required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CH 221/227, CH 222/228, CH 223/229 (15) – General Chemistry (MTH 111 is a pre- or co-requisite for this course) <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CH 334 (4) – Organic Chemistry I (CH 221-223 with lab is the recommended prerequisite) <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CH 331 (4) – Elements of Organic Chemistry (CH 221-223 with lab is the recommended prerequisite) *Only offered summer <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CH 350 (4) – Biochemistry (recommend prerequisite: a sequence in General Chemistry CH 221, 222, & 223 with lab and Organic Chemistry CH 331, 332 with lab OR CH 334, 335, & 336 with lab)
<p>Biology: 11 semester hours (16.5 quarter credits)</p> <p>One term of microbiology – lab not required.</p> <p>One full year of human anatomy & physiology with lab.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BI 234 (4) – Microbiology • BI 235 (2) – Microbiology Lab (recommended) • BI 301, 302, 303 (12) – Human Anatomy & Physiology w/Lab (recommended one year of college level biology BI 251, 252, & 253 and a previous course in chemistry) <p>Note: PSU does recommend that students complete a full year of college level biology before taking Human Anatomy & Physiology)</p>
<p>English and Writing: 6 semester hours (9 quarter credits) One or two lower division courses (depending on how many credits each course is worth)</p> <p>One upper division writing course</p> <p>Note: A combination of writing intensive coursework offered outside of an English or Writing department may be considered.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WR 121 – College Writing • WR 227 – Introductory Technical Writing • WR 323 – Writing as Critical Inquiry <p>Note: Completion of the University Studies Freshman Inquiry sequence will satisfy the WR 121 requirement and is worth 3 credits.</p>
<p>General Psychology or Sociology: 3 semester hours (4.5 quarter credits)</p> <p>One course from psychology or sociology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSY 200 (4) – Psychology as a Natural Science <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSY 204 (4) – Psychology as a Social Science <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOC 200 (4) – Introduction to Sociology
<p>Additional Recommended Coursework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSY 311 (4) – Human Development (recommended) • PSY 434 (4) – Introduction to Psychopathology (recommended) • Medical Terminology – not offered at PSU – check with area community colleges • Spanish Language courses • Communication courses • CPR Certification – not offered at PSU – check with the Red Cross

(Over)

Additional Pacific University PA Program Admissions Requirements:

- **Prerequisite course work & science/statistics GPA:** must be a 2.5 or higher to apply.
- **GRE** – not required
- **International applicants:** For those applicants whose first language is other than English you may be required to take the TOEFL. You will need to submit your official TOEFL scores. (The required minimum score for the paper exam is 600, the minimum score on the internet based exam is 105.)
- **Application deadlines:** Applications can be submitted beginning August 1st. To be considered for Early Admission, both the CASPA and supplemental applications must be ***received*** by Pacific on or before October 1st. To be considered for regular admission, the CASPA application must be ***submitted*** online by October 1st and the supplemental application must be submitted by November 1st.
- **Professional Evaluations:** two professional evaluations; one evaluation must be obtained from a (non-relative/personal) Physician (MD or DO), a Physician Assistant (PA-C), a Nurse Practitioner (NP) or a Certified Nurse Mid-wife (CNM) with whom you have worked or shadowed with.
- **Required Health Care Experience:** Applicants must demonstrate a minimum of 1,000 hours of direct clinical patient care experience within a health care setting. The method to document this experience is through the CASPA online application (www.caspaonline.org). Please note: The Admissions Committee will consider the total number of hours accumulated; "at the time" you submit your CASPA application. No consideration will be given to hours projected for the future.

A wide range of experiences will be considered such as: Nurse, RN/LPN, Paramedic, EMT, Corpsman, Medical Assistant, Nurses' Aide, Medical Technologist/Technician, Respiratory Therapist, Physical Therapist/Assistant, Occupational Therapist/Assistant, Speech Therapist/Assistant, Psychologist/Therapist/Counselor, Medical Office Manager, Hospital/Clinic/Nursing Home Facility Volunteer, Home- Health Aide, Outreach Worker, Social Worker, Acupuncturist, Chiropractor, Naturopath, Massage Therapist In Health Care Setting, Patient Educator, Dental Assistant and others. Shadow experience with a Physician Assistant will count towards the requirement, but will not fulfill the requirement completely.

Bachelors Degree Option: Reserved for applicants who have a significant amount of health care experience who have not had the opportunity to complete their degree. Applicants who are in the process of completing their bachelor degree or who will complete their bachelor degree before the start of the program are not eligible. For this option a student must meet the above requirements and complete all of the prerequisites for the PA program (must have a minimum of 86 semester hours – total). In addition to the prerequisites a student must complete: **Arts** – 3 semester hours in Art, Music or Theatre – **Humanities** – 6 semester hours, two courses from two different disciplines in literature, philosophy or humanities – **Foreign Language** – 6 semester hours. Upon completion of the first year of the professional program and the above requirements the student will receive 40 semester hours of upper division credit to be awarded towards a Bachelor in Science in Health Studies degree. The student will continue the program to complete the Masters of Science in Physician Assistant Studies degree at the conclusion of the program.

Program begins: June

Pacific University PA Program Contact:

School of Physician Assistant Studies – Pacific University

2043 College Way

Forest Grove, OR 97116

Darilis García-McMillan, Assistant Director of Graduate and Professional Admissions

Email: darilis@pacific.edu

Phone: 503-352-7225

Web: www.pacificu.edu

Applying to Physician Assistant Programs

Application Process:

Students typically apply to physician assistant programs about a year before they expect to matriculate to the PA programs (e.g. in the summer before their last academic year in college). Some students wait until their final year of college to apply to PA programs, to ensure that all prerequisites have been completed and that the required health care experience has been fulfilled. If students wish to have a year between completing the undergraduate program and beginning a PA program, this is commonly referred to as a "glide year" or "gap year"; many students spend it gaining relevant experience in health care and/or taking additional recommended coursework.

Students apply to PA school by completing and submitting a **primary application** through a central application service. The Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA). CASPA will verify your application for accuracy, calculate your G.P.A., and send your materials to the physician assistant programs you designate. Individual deadlines are determined by the Physician Assistant programs, NOT by CASPA. Each PA program determines what is required by their deadline date. Reference forms are available electronically or in paper form. Electronic references are easier to track. Be aware the some PA programs require supplemental applications.

Central Application Service:

The Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA)

Web: <https://portal.caspaonline.org/>

Application Tips:

- **Apply Early.** If you wait until the night before a program deadline to submit your application, your application may not be received by CASPA in time. You should apply at least four weeks before the earliest deadline of the program(s) that you are applying to. This will allow the necessary time to verify and process your application and send it to your designated programs in a timely manner.
- **Enter all Institutions Attended.** Enter all undergraduate, graduate, professional and foreign institutions that you have attended even if it was only for a single course or college credit awarded while you were in high school. Official transcripts will be necessary for all undergraduate, graduate and professional coursework (taken toward a bachelor's degree). Foreign coursework will need to be evaluated for U.S. equivalency if it is not in English.
- **Enter all Coursework.** You must enter all coursework including courses in which you received a grade of "W" or "Inc." Enter all in-progress and planned coursework. This will help programs decide if you are planning to take required courses in the future.
- **Be careful of duplication.** Do not duplicate your hours of experience in the Patient Contact Experience and Health Related Experience. Only report experience in one section or the other. If your position included both health related and patient contact experience, split the hours between the two sections.

Additional Recommendations:

- **Personally read the admission brochure and Web site** of each of the PA programs to which you plan to apply to obtain information on admissions requirements and deadlines and to determine if the school is a good fit for you.
- **Participate in volunteer, and/or shadowing experience** in the health care field and in the community at large early on in your college experience. It is important that you understand the realities of the medical field and illustrate through action your commitment to serving the community.
- **Get involved with other pre-health students on campus** – joining the Portland Pre-Health Society (<http://www.pps.pdx.edu/>) is a great way to start.
- **Check periodically with the adviser** for recent changes, remaining requirements to meet and application procedures.
- **Begin the application process early** in the spring before your last academic year at PSU. Submit your application as early as possible without compromising the quality of your application. Visit the pre-PA adviser at PSU to discuss the application process.
- **Utilize free university resources** such as the pre-PA adviser, Writing Center, and Career Center for help with your personal narrative and interview preparation.
- **Begin completing financial aid forms in January; the priority filing deadline is March 1.**

Additional Resources:

American Academy of Physician Assistants – www.aapa.org

Physician Assistant Education Association – www.paeaonline.org