
What is Physician Assistant School?

Physician Assistant (PA) school is a two- or three-year training program in which students learn the science of medicine and patient care. After completing their program, graduates of a PA program can expect to work closely under a licensed physician able to deliver both specialized (eg. dermatology, pediatrics, geriatrics, OBGYN etc.) and general primary care to patients.

What should I know about PA School?

Currently there are numerous routes that lead to a PA student becoming a licensed PA. There are certification, associate, bachelor, and even master-level programs that may qualify students to sit for the licensing examine. However, most students interested in pursuing a career as a PA should plan earning a bachelor's degree first and then pursuing a master's level program. This is because a master's level degree will be the working standard for this profession as of 2020. Unlike Medical School, upon completion of PA school there is no residency requirement for graduates.

Related Fields

Nursing	Advance Practice Nursing
Naturopathy	Medicine (Medical Doctor)
Physical Therapy	Emergency Medicine Tech.
Chiropractic Medicine	Radiological Technology
Diagnostic Ultrasound	Clinical Psychology
Podiatry	Social Work

Where can I study to become a Physician Assistant ?

In the Pacific Northwest, there are four programs that students can consider: MEDEX at the University of Washington, Heritage University, Pacific University in Oregon, and Oregon Health Science University. Nationally there are nearly 200 PA programs.

How do I get started?

While considering preparing for and attending Physician Assistant school, you should seriously and truthfully consider these questions and others. Is being a PA the only profession you could ever see yourself doing? Are you willing to go into substantial debt in order to pursue this dream? Are you willing to accept that you might need to give up a significant portion of your social life, especially while in PA School? While answering these questions, students pursuing PA school can remember the acronym "S-T-A-R-T".

Shadow

Shadowing is the act of working with, and observing a current Physician Assistant practicing in a clinical setting. Often this can occur in a private practice, hospital, or possibly experiential trip. Shadowing is a huge part of becoming an well-rounded and competitive applicant to PA school. One of the main purposes of shadowing is to help you, the student, become more aware of what it means to be a Physician Assistant. Furthermore, it is a great way to learn why, above all the other options in health care, being PA is the best path for you. Students will often work with physicians in a variety of settings and specialties in order to gain a better sense of the day to day life of a physician. Shadowing opportunities are out there but they can be hard to find, often students may find the most success with contacting their own physician to begin with or through programs run through pre health clubs or internships.

Talk

Talk to someone! Being a student interested in going to graduate school means that a large part of your time should be spent learning as much about the opportunities available to you that will help to develop you as a student. Working with your adviser, instructors, and classmates can all be incredibly helpful in helping connect you with the resources you will need. A large part of being a Physician Assistant is being able to work as part of an intricate medical team. Communication is key, therefore get started developing these skills early by consulting with friends, attending campus info sessions, and being involved in our pre health community here on campus. Consider joining BC's Docs and Dents club (<http://studentweb.bellevuecollege.edu/docsanddents/>).

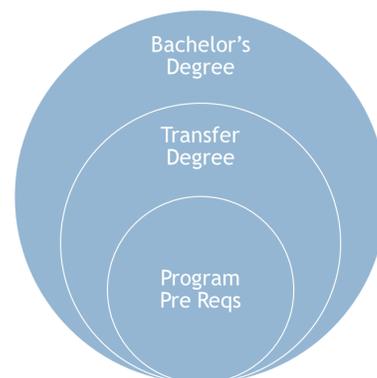
Academics

Applying to a PA program sometimes requires that you have a bachelor's degree and have completed all of the prerequisites necessary. **Every program will have different prerequisite requirements** but in general you will at least complete:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Prerequisites are subject to differ depending on desired school/program.◆ Science and Math classes usually expire within 7–10 years.	<p><u>Common Physician Assistant School prerequisites:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ General Chemistry◆ Organic/Bio Chemistry◆ General OR Cell Biology with lab◆ Anatomy and Physiology◆ Microbiology◆ Statistics (some accept Algebra/Calculus/Physics)◆ English composition◆ Psychology and/or Sociology◆ <i>Recommend: Genetics, Biochemistry, Immunology, Medical term, Communications, etc</i> <p><small>* prerequisites are subject to differ depending on desired school/program.</small></p>	<p><u>BC Courses:</u></p> <p>CHEM 121 CHEM 131 BIOL 160 OR BIOL 211 (<i>requires CHEM 161, BIOL 160</i>) BIOL 241 and 242 BIOL 260 MATH 130 or BA 240 ENGL 101 PSYC 100, SOC 101 <i>BIOL 275 or MBS 330; CHEM 131 or CHEM 405, AHE 110, CMST 210/220, etc</i></p>
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In addition to the above prerequisite courses, there are two major things to note if you are a student pursuing a PA program:

1. Most PA programs require applicants have a significant amount (2000 - 4000 hours) of clinical experience prior to applying and some (such as MEDEX) require that experience be paid. Other programs may require fewer hours, but more academic requirements.
2. There is no particular major that “looks good” to admissions; you can major in whatever you would like and still be a competitive applicant for a PA program. However, most students try and fit the majority if not all of their prerequisites within their initial bachelor degree (see diagram) and thus biology, nursing, public health, and environmental health tend to be popular major choices.



Research

It is extremely important that students thoroughly research Physician Assistant programs around the country. Remember, nationally there are almost two-hundred PA programs. Most importantly though, amongst these programs there is significant variation in the prerequisites. Generally speaking, students may apply to anywhere between 10-12 schools per application cycle, and the start/due dates for each school can vary greatly. Therefore, it is important that you have a clear vision of the timeline you need to follow for completing your undergraduate and clinical requirements. To get this information, consider attending info sessions presented by your intended schools early, talking with alumni, and reaching out to PA schools directly.

Test

All students wishing to apply to a PA school should first complete a bachelor's degree, but also they should complete an admissions test. Depending on the school they are wishing to attend, they may need to complete either the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT).

What should I do now?

Students interested in getting started with the road toward Physician Assistant school can use a variety of resources here on campus. The Docs and Dents Club here on campus is an excellent resource, as well as attending one of our quarterly Pre-Professional Health info sessions. Lastly you may consider meeting with an adviser, you can do so by calling 425-564-2212 or by stopping by the advising front desk located on the second floor of the B building.

This is an unofficial guide only. It is the student's responsibility to research and communicate with all community college and university programs to which he/she intends to apply to establish prerequisites and admission requirements, as they vary and are subject to change without notice.

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