

PRE-PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT

Pathway Information



Preparation for a career as a physician's assistant (PA) should involve building your credentials in scholarship, healthcare, leadership, and community involvement, as well as gaining patient-care and internship/shadowing experience in various settings.

There is no single required major for pre-PA students, however some majors will better align with the prerequisites for PA schools than others. Recommended GSW majors include biology, chemistry, and exercise science.

ADMISSIONS: GPA, EXAMS, & REQUIRED COURSES

Typical PA Pre-Requisites:

- 2 semesters of anatomy and physiology
- 2 semesters of general chemistry
- 1 semester organic chemistry
- 2 semesters of biology
- 1 semester microbiology
- 1 semester of statistics
- 1 semester of psychology
- 1 semester genetics

Note: This is not a definitive list of the classes you will need for every school. Always check with the individual schools to see their specific requirements.

You should maintain at least a B in all pre-requisite courses. Successful applicants are likely to maintain approximately a 3.5 GPA or higher overall. Admissions committees look not only at raw numbers, but also at grade trends on your transcript. All is not lost if you stumble in your first semester or two, but then show substantial improvement each subsequent year. However, they will also notice negative trends such as if you are consistently withdrawing from or performing poorly in hard sciences, or are completing courses away from your home institution.

Most PA schools require that you take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The GRE consists of three sections: Quantitative, Verbal, and Essay. While there are no specific courses that you need to take prior to the GRE, you should plan to spend a couple months working on exam preparation. Students usually sit for the exam in January-May as they head into the application cycle in June.

AVERAGE MATRICULANT NUMBERS

- Overall GPA: 3.5
- Sciences GPA: 3.5
- GRE: 300+ combined and 4.0+ writing (50th percentile or higher)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Master's degree

Most programs are 2 years

Institutions in Georgia:

- Brenau University
- Emory University
- Mercer University
- Augusta University
- Morehouse School of Medicine
- Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine's Georgia campus
- South College
- South University

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION/EVALUATION

Most PA schools will require three letters of evaluation. Typically, programs expect students to provide one letter from a PA, one from a faculty member, and one other of the student's choosing. This last letter could come from another PA, a research mentor, volunteer coordinator, employer, etc.

PATIENT-CARE EXPERIENCE & SHADOWING

PA programs typically have extensive requirements for both patient-care experience and for shadowing. Expectations for patient care vary widely, from a hundred hours to thousands of hours. These hours are expected to be direct, hands-on patient care experience (e.g. EMT or paramedic, RN, patient care attendant or nurse's aide, clinic assistant, medical Peace Corps volunteer, medical technologist, therapist, clinical research assistant), and this requirement will not be met by typical shadowing experiences where patient contact may be minimal.

Additionally, most programs require that you have experience observing or shadowing physician's assistants in the field. The hours requirements vary between schools, but it is recommended to gain at least 100-200 hours total of shadowing hours. It is also suggested that you shadow in multiple environments—e.g. both inpatient and outpatient experiences. The diversity of shadowing experiences is important and may consist of different types of therapies or of different populations, such as pediatrics or geriatrics. You must record your hours in a log and have the PA that you are shadowing sign off on those hours. GSW programs such as Exercise Science have these shadowing requirements built into the degree curriculum.

CENTRALIZED APPLICATION SERVICE FOR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS (CASPA)

To apply to most PA programs, you will utilize the Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA). Official transcripts, GRE scores, essays, and letters of recommendation are all submitted to CASPA. Most of the PA programs in Georgia use this application service.

Programs differ in terms of their application deadlines, as well as variations in which requirements must be met by the deadline.