

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES (MHS)

Degree Requirements

The Program

- Degree Earned: Master of Health Science
- Length of Program: 27 months
- Matriculation Date: Annually in mid-May
- Class Type: On-site, no online classes
- Curriculum: 121 Credit Hours

Advanced Placement

The program does not offer advanced placement. Transfer credits or credit for experiential learning cannot be substituted for any course in the program, and no transfer credit is accepted from other PA programs.

Academic Dismissal/Withdrawal

Students who receive more than 8 credit hours of "C" grade(s) in courses will be dismissed from the program. In addition, any final grade below a C will result in academic dismissal from the program. If for any reason a student must withdraw from courses in the program, the student should first discuss this withdrawal with the program director/department chair. Re-admission following withdrawal from any course(s) in the program will require the approval of the Department Chair and the Dean of the Pat Capps Covey College of Allied Health Professions.

Dismissal from the program may occur with noncompliance or violation of additional policies detailed in the PA Student Handbook.

The USA PA Program policy is more stringent than the Graduate School dismissal policy.

Employment

Program policies strictly prohibit the program, its academic and clinical affiliates, and preceptors from employing any PA students, or utilizing them as instructional faculty, administrative staff, or clinical staff while attending the program. PA students are also strongly discouraged from accepting any other employment while attending the program. Employment while in the program has the potential to negatively impact the student's rigorous PA training curriculum. The USA PA program strongly discourages any type of outside employment during our consecutive 27-month course of studies. Employment during the program may result in academic difficulties and may prevent the student from acquiring the level of knowledge needed to perform adequately as a physician assistant student during the didactic and clinical phases of the program. The program course of studies will not be altered due to student work obligations.

Accreditation

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA) has granted **Accreditation-Continued** status to the **University of South Alabama Physician Assistant Program** sponsored by the **University of South Alabama**. Accreditation-Continued is an accreditation status granted when a currently accredited program is in compliance with the ARC-PA *Standards*.

Accreditation remains in effect until the program closes or withdraws from the accreditation process or until accreditation is withdrawn for

failure to comply with the Standards. The approximate date for the next validation review of the program by the ARC-PA will be **September 2024**. The review date is contingent upon continued compliance with the Accreditation Standards and ARC-PA policy.

Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE) Pass Rates

Please visit our website at <https://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa/accreditation.html>.

Goals of the Program

1. Emphasize in rural and medically underserved communities.
2. Promote excellence in healthcare by preparing competent physician assistants to practice evidence-based medicine in all clinical settings.
3. To recruit, select, and educate a highly qualified student body.
4. Prepare physician assistant students to provide patient-centered healthcare services as part of an inter-professional, collaborative team in a variety of clinical settings.
5. Charge physician assistant students to become graduates who reflect high standards of professionalism.
6. Foster the growth and development of PA education by preparing physician assistant graduates who possess depth of knowledge and clinical skills for excellence in practice.
7. Promote in our physician assistant students the importance of ongoing professional development to meet and/or exceed contemporary performance standards within their area(s) of clinical practice.

Measures of Success

Please visit our website for information about the program's success at <http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa/mission.html>.

Competencies (Learning Outcomes) for the University of South Alabama Physician Assistant Studies Program

1. **Medical Knowledge:** Demonstrate knowledge and application of evidence-based practices related to biologic and clinical sciences.
 - a. Apply principles of biologic and clinical sciences to patient care.
 - b. Identify etiology, risk factors, and epidemiology to create differential diagnoses.
 - c. Select diagnostic studies to guide therapeutic decision-making.
 - d. Differentiate therapeutic and non-therapeutic interventions to include patient education and preventative guidance in caring for patients with acute, chronic, and emergent disease states.
2. **Clinical and Technical Skills:** Demonstrate proficiency in clinical techniques and procedural skills.
 - a. Obtain and document essential information regarding patient history, physical examination, and diagnostic data.
 - b. Interpret laboratory and radiological data and apply to patients with acute, chronic, and emergent disease states.
 - c. Perform medical and diagnostic procedures expected of an entry-level PA in primary care practice.
 - d. Infer patient preferences, evidence-based practice, and clinical expertise to create treatment plans including counseling,

education, referral to other disciplines, follow-up, and preventative maintenance.

3. **Interpersonal and Communication Skills:** Collaborate as a member of an interprofessional team to coordinate patient care.
 - a. Communicate effectively and respectfully to the healthcare team, patient, and families.
 - b. Demonstrate effective ability in establishing alliance with patients that reflects the social circumstances, finances, and culture.
 - c. Document legible clinical encounter.
 - d. Demonstrate ability to collaborate with other specialties within the healthcare team.
4. **Professionalism:** Demonstrate professional behavior and respect for the dignity and privacy of patients.
 - a. Exhibit compassionate care and maintain honesty, respect, integrity, and maturity.
 - b. Maintain confidentiality and ethical provider practices which meet the regulatory standards for physician assistants in clinical practice.
 - c. Demonstrates the practice of culturally responsive care to diverse populations.
 - d. Instill responsible management to avoid burnout and mitigate stress recognizing personal limitations and accepting constructive feedback.
5. **Community Consciousness and Societal Health:** Demonstrate cultural and social awareness to effectively engage resources within the system to improve patient outcomes.
 - a. Develop individualized care plans by integrating knowledge of cultural, societal, environmental, economic, and population health impacts into medical decision-making.
 - b. Demonstrate an understanding of the collaborative nature of the profession.
6. **Clinical Reasoning and Problem-Solving:** Utilize self-evaluation skills to proactively improve medical practice and knowledge.
 - a. Incorporate evidence-based medical practice by analyzing and synthesizing peer-reviewed information to investigate clinical queries.
 - b. Develop clinical decisions utilizing evidence-based research and self-reflection to address gaps in medical knowledge and adjust behaviors that can negatively impact patient care.

Minimum Requirements for Admission

Applicants who wish to apply to the USA PA program must meet the following minimum requirements. Please note that admission to the USA PA program is very competitive and accepted students typically exceed the minimum requirements.

1. **Completion of a Baccalaureate degree in any field** from a U.S. regionally accredited institution prior to the starting date of the program is required.
2. **A Minimum overall GPA, science GPA and last 60 hours GPA of 3.0** on a 4.0 scale as calculated by CASPA (includes post-baccalaureate

undergraduate work and graduate work from U.S. regionally accredited institutions). Higher GPAs improve the application.

3. **Completion of prerequisite course work completed with a grade of "C" or higher** from a U.S. regionally accredited institution. These courses must be completed successfully one semester prior to matriculation, failure to do so will result in the student losing their seat in the program. Unless specified, prerequisite courses should be one semester of at least 3 credit hours. Higher course grades improve the application. Prerequisite required courses are: General Biology plus lab (4 credits). General Chemistry I and II plus lab (8 credits). Human Anatomy and Human Physiology OR Anatomy and Physiology I and II. Microbiology. Organic Chemistry. Mathematics (College Algebra minimum). Statistics. General Psychology. Medical Terminology (1 credit). For guidelines on courses accepted, please visit <http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa/admissions.html>
4. **Completion of the General Graduate Record Examination (GRE)** within the past five (5) years. We require a minimum score of 145 in both the Verbal and Quantitative sections and completion of the Analytical Writing section in one test date. Higher GRE scores improve the application.
5. **Completion of at least 100 hours direct patient care experience is required.** Applicants will document these hours on their CASPA application. Please see the website (<http://southalabama.edu/alliedhealth/pa/>) for definitions, details, and examples. Higher numbers of direct patient care hours improve the application.
6. **Submission of at least three (3) reference letters, one of which must be from a Physician Assistant (PA), Medical Doctor (MD), or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO)** submitted to CASPA by the **October 1st** deadline. Reference letters sent directly to our office will not be accepted.
7. Submission of completed and verified application materials by **October 1st**. The program will not review applications that are incomplete, received after the deadline, or do not meet the minimum standards. Please see the website for details <http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa/applications.html>.

Application and Admission Information

Applicants are selected based on a holistic evaluation. Many factors are taken into consideration but preference is given to applicants with the following:

- Higher GPAs (overall GPA, science GPA, last 60-hour GPA, both undergraduate and graduate level work).
- Higher GRE scores (quantitative and verbal sections)
- Possessing an additional degree (Master's or Doctorate) **or a 2nd bachelor degree**
- Completion of upper-level science coursework (Biochemistry, Genetics, Immunology, Pathophysiology, and Pharmacology) with higher grades
- Alabama residents and service area residents
- Military Service: includes all branches of service.
- Leadership activities
- Disadvantaged Background: Economically and/or environmentally disadvantaged, as defined by HRSA and detailed on the CASPA application.
- Community Service/Volunteerism
- Being from a Rural/Underserved area (Childhood residence in rural county as defined by HRSA rural grant Qualifier)

- Higher hours of Direct Patient Care
- Higher hours of PA Shadowing Experience
- Current Health Training Certifications or Registration

Please see our website: <https://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa/admissions.html>

Matriculation Requirements

1. Acknowledgment of acceptance by deadline on notification by submission of a signed Statement of Intent Form and a nonrefundable \$500 matriculation deposit which will be applied toward the first semester's tuition to guarantee a seat in the class, to be received no later than the deadline stated in acceptance letter.
2. Completion of outstanding required prerequisite coursework with a grade of "C" or higher one semester prior to matriculation into the program. Failure to make a grade of "C" or higher in any required prerequisite course, or failure to complete all prerequisite courses one semester prior to matriculation into the program, will result in nullification of acceptance into the PA program. Updated transcripts will be required.
3. Submission to criminal background checks and urine drug screens before matriculation and prior to beginning clinical rotations. The fees are the student's responsibility. Failure to submit to and satisfactorily pass both screenings can result in dismissal from the program.
4. Completion of immunizations, titers, and a physical exam upon acceptance and prior to entering clinical rotations. The fees are the student's responsibility.
5. Maintenance of the American Heart Association Healthcare Providers BLS Certification throughout the program. The fees are the student's responsibility.
6. Maintenance of approved health insurance throughout the program. The fees are the student's responsibility.
7. Understanding of and the ability to adhere to the Technical Standards for Physician Assistants as stated. (See below.)

Technical Standards

Students in the USA Physician Assistant program must be able to fulfill the program's Technical Standards, which include General, Observational, Communication, Motor, Critical Thinking, and Interpersonal abilities as well as possessing certain Behavioral and Social Attributes. To evaluate whether you meet the criteria, please visit our website at <http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa/technical.html> for details.

Graduation Requirements

The following requirements must be satisfied to earn the degree of Master of Health Science in Physician Assistant Studies.

1. The candidate must complete all required courses of the professional curriculum with a minimum grade point average of 3.0 and successfully complete the senior summative evaluation.
2. The candidate must demonstrate professionalism expected of a student in the PA profession which is acceptable to the faculty according to the Program's professional policy.

Amended 3/11/2024

Graduation Plan

(121 Total Hours)

Course	Title	Hours
First Year		
Summer		
PA 510	Clinical Medicine I	4
PA 510L	CM I Lab	1
PA 511	Human Gross Anatomy	5
PA 512	Physiology	6
PA 514	Intro to Infectious Disease	1
Hours		17
Fall		
PA 516	Physician Assistant Issues I	2
PA 520	Clinical Medicine II	6
PA 520L	CM II Lab	1
PA 521	Pathophysiology I	4
PA 522	Pharmacology I	4
PA 523	Diag Data and Interp I	2
Hours		19
Spring		
PA 526	Physician Assistant Issues II	2
PA 530	Clinical Medicine III	6
PA 530L	CM III Lab	1
PA 531	Pathophysiology II	4
PA 532	Pharmacology II	4
PA 533	Diag Data & Interp II	2
Hours		19
Second Year		
Summer		
PA 536	Physician Assistant Issues III	2
PA 540	Clinical Medicine IV	7
PA 540L	CM IV Lab	1
PA 541	Pathophysiology III	3
PA 542	Pharmacology III	3
PA 544	Diagn Data and Interp III	2
Hours		18
Fall		
PA 501	Clinical Preceptorship I	4
PA 502	Clinical Preceptorship II	4
PA 503	Clinical Preceptorship III	4
PA 504	Clinical Preceptorship IV	4
Hours		16
Spring		
PA 505	Clinical Preceptorship V	4
PA 506	Clinical Preceptorship VI	4
PA 507	Clinical Preceptorship VII	4
PA 508	Clinical Preceptorship VIII	4
Hours		16
Third Year		
Summer		
PA 509	Clinical Preceptorship IX	4
PA 517	Clinical Preceptorship X	4
PA 518	Clinical Preceptorship XI	4
PA 595	Summative Evaluation	4
Hours		16
Total Hours		121