PREPA INFORMATION SUMMARY

PreProfessional Advising Information

Email: ppa@advising.utah.edu (For Quick Questions)

Office Location: Building 44 (Second Floor)

Website: ppa.utah.edu

Make an appt!

Physician Assistant School Basics

PA School
- Year 1: Didactic Years (Class Instruction)
- Year 2: Clinical Rotations

Degree Conferred:
MPAS Master of Physician Assistant Studies

Get involved in activities (inside and outside the classroom) to help you develop the competencies outlined by the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA):

Patient Advocacy & Agency • Self-advocacy & Agency • Active Community Engagement • Resourcefulness • Relationship Development Resilience & Adaptability • Self-Awareness • Interpersonal Skills, including Influence, Empathy, & Humility Information Gathering • Discernment • Prioritization • Awareness of Biases and Attitudes Towards Others • Empathetic Listening

Patient Care Experience

*Interacting well with sick/injured people is a key indicator of success in the medical profession. Your experience can take a variety of forms (eg: MA, CNA, EMT,or another role that provides **direct, hands-on** care to patients).*

University of Utah PA Program (UPAP) Requires 2000 hours minimum of direct patient experience:
- Requirements vary widely by PA program. Minimums of 250-1000 hours are common
- Average hours for accepted applicants nationwide is 3500; median is around 1400
- Should be paid employment

Service to the Community

Demonstrate a commitment to humanity by selflessly serving others.

Interacting with people from different backgrounds and experiences than your own will strengthen your interpersonal and communication skills. *No specific hours or number of activities required.*

Bennion Center
bennioncenter.utah.edu

Demonstrate your knowledge, skills and preparation

Leadership & Teamwork

PAs are both leaders and team members with patients, colleagues, etc.

Demonstrate your leadership skills by participating in a variety of experiences leading different people in different situations. *No specific hours or number of activities required.*

(Eg: coach, teacher, tutor, mentor, TA/LA, supervisor, officer role in a club, student advisory board, and many more.)

PA Shadowing

Observing a PA helps you commit to the profession while learning various specialties. Don't wait! Start shadowing now!

UPAP does not require shadowing but highly recommends it.

Many students find shadowing though jobs or volunteering experiences at medical facilities.

Academic Preparation

Ensure you're academically prepared for the intensity of PA school

- Complete a bachelor's degree and prerequisites
- Competitive applicants have high GPAs, so build and strengthen your time management skills
- Any major is appropriate; make sure to pick the right fit for you, and study what you love!

APPLICATION PROCESS AND INFORMATION

Start Saving NOW!

Applying to PA school is expensive. The application fee for CASPA is over $175, which includes applying to one school; each additional school is $56. These fees will increase annually. Supplemental applications carry their own fees, commonly ranging between $50-$100 each. Factoring in application fees, Test registration and prep, travel expenses for in-person interviews, and more, we recommend students to prepare to spend about $3,000 for the application process. CASPA offers a limited number of fee waivers through their Fee Assistance Program for those who qualify.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Most PA programs admit students once a year, most commonly for summer or fall matriculation, although start dates range from May-January of the following year. Plan on taking the GRE and submitting your application at least 12 months in advance of the year for which you are applying.

Do your research!

It is your responsibility to ensure you are meeting all requirements for the schools you are interested in. When selecting PA programs, we recommend that you look at schools that align with your interests: location, size, student/faculty ratio, representation, etc. You can search for PA schools on the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) website.

CASPA (Central Application Service for Physician Assistants)

Most US PA programs utilize CASPA, which is available at caspa.liaisoncas.com. For additional resources, visit PA Focus (pafocus.org)

- Application requirements include transcripts, extracurricular experiences, personal statement, and fees
- Many schools use a rolling admissions process (meaning they begin reviewing applications and admitting before the deadlines). It will benefit you greatly to *submit your application early,* regardless of when you take the GRE.
- The application will take most students several weeks to complete. Ensure you have plenty of time to fill out the application.

GRE

Some programs require the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). The GRE is offered throughout the year, and taking the exam by the spring of the year before you wish to enter PA school will enable you to apply earlier. The exam may be repeated, but it's always best to prepare thoroughly and take the GRE once. It has three sections: Verbal Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning, and Analytical Writing. Additional information, including registration, can be found at ets.org/gre.

CASPER

Casper is a situational judgement test that assesses 10 characteristics, including empathy, equity, professionalism, and more. These exams may be taken prior to interviewing or on an applicant's interview day. Additional information on Casper can be found on the Acuity Insights website https://acuityinsights.com/.

PA-CAT

The PA-CAT is a new test that is not commonly required, but a few schools have started to adopt it as either a recommendation or requirement. It was developed to assess basic science subjects and statistics consistent with what is required at a majority of PA programs. It is a 4.5-hour exam that includes 240 multiple-choice test items covering 9 science subjects presented randomly. Subjects included are Anatomy, Physiology, General Biology, Biochemistry, General and Organic Chemistry, Microbiology, Behavioral Sciences, Genetics, and Statistics. Additional information, including registration, can be found at https://www.pa-cat.com/about-the-pa-cat/

APPLICATION TIMELINE

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
Register & Study				**Take the GRE**											
Request & Get LORs															
Prep Application															
			Submit CASPA	UPAP's deadline is August 1											
					Supplemental		UPAP's deadline is early September								
								Interviews							
	Ideal							**Admissions Decisions**							
	Possible														

Letters of Recommendation (LORs)

PLAN AHEAD: PA schools require LORs as part of your application. Get to know the people you interact with (professors, supervisors, etc.) You're not looking for good letters; you need excellent letters. Get these by building and maintaining your relationships. Letters must be current, signed, dated, and on letterhead. To facilitate this process, most students should use the free CASPA Letter Service.

LETTER TYPES: CASPA allows students to submit a maximum of three letters. The following are common types of letters required by most PA programs. However, requirements vary by program, so *do your research*.

- **Patient Experience Supervisor**
- **Professor (usually science)**
- **Physician Assistant you shadowed**

Helpful Resources

- **Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA):**
  PrePA Resources, including a PA Program Directory paeaonline.org/how-we-can-help/advisors
- University of Utah PA Program (UPAP)
- UPAP PreRecorded Information Session
- **University of Utah PrePA Student Organization (PrePASO):** Email: prepaso@gmail.com

POLICIES and CONSIDERATIONS

AP/IB CREDIT	Depends on program. **UPAP will not accept AP/IB/CLEP.** Check each school's requirements
REPEATS	All grades will be counted in your CASPA calculated GPA
WITHDRAWALS	Although W's will not affect your GPA, W's should be used sparingly. Work with your advisor.
GPA	Minimum requirements for total GPA range from 2.5-3.0. However, **competitive applicants** usually have a total GPA of 3.5 or higher. Some programs may also look separately at prerequisite or science GPA. **UPAP**: Minimum total GPA is 3.0, although they recommend a GPA above 3.0 to be competitive. Strong science GPA is emphasized and preferred. **Competitive applicants** will have higher total and science GPAs.

PrePA Prerequisite Course Guide

Requirements vary by school. It is your responsibility to do your own research on each PA school you wish to apply to. AP coursework may or not be accepted. If accepted, coursework beyond AP is often required.

Shaded boxes indicate the classes most commonly required by PA schools.

Bolded classes may be taken at a community college. However, not all PA schools will accept community college prereqs.

MATH		
MATH 1050 (4) **College Algebra**	**MATH 1070 (3)** **Statistics** May be substituted for PSY 3000, FCS 3210 or other statistics	*NOTE: MATH 1050 can be substituted with higher math*

Please note: Consult both your advisor to determine appropriate placement and course selection.

BIOLOGY						
BIOL 1610 (4) **Fundamentals of Biology I** *PreReq: MATH 1010*	**BIOL 2325 (4)** **Human Anatomy** *PreReq: BIOL 1610*	**BIOL 2420 (4) +** **BIOL 2425* (1)** Human Physiology and Lab* *PreReq: BIOL 1610 and CHEM 1210*	BIOL 2020 (3) Cellular Biology *PreReq: BIOL 1610 and CHEM 1210*	**BIOL 3210 (3)** **BIOL 3205 (1)** **Microbiology and Lab** *PreReq: CHEM 1210 and BIOL 2020*	OR**	**PATH 3100 (3)** **Medical Microbiology**

*Physiology lab may not be required. **One microbiology course is recommended by UPAP & many PA programs. The microbiology lab may or may not be required and can be taken with either BIOL 3210 or PATH 3100.

CHEMISTRY			
CHEM 1210 (4) **CHEM 1215 (1)** **General Chemistry I and Lab** *Recommended Prereq: MATH 1050*	**CHEM 1220 (4)** **CHEM 1225 (1)** **General Chemistry II and Lab** *PreReq: CHEM 1210*	**CHEM 2310 (4)** **CHEM 2315 (2)** **Organic Chemistry I and Lab** *PreReq: CHEM 1220*	UPAP requires any 8 credit hours of chemistry.
Optional Chemistry Prep Course: CHEM 1200: Prep for College Chemistry			

NON-SCIENCE REQUIREMENTS				
WRTG 1010 **Intro to Writing** Prereq: Placement essay **AND** **WRTG 2010 (3)** **Intermediate Writing** *PreReq: WRTG 1010*	Any Upper Division Writing (CW) *PreReq: WRTG 2010* **If WRTG 1010 not taken**	PSY 2300 (3) Adult Clinical Psychology *OR**** PSY 2500 (3) Social Psychology *OR**** PSY 2200 - Childhood and Adolescent Development	**H EDU 3030 (3)** **Medical Terminology**	**PHIL 1000 (3)** **Intro to Philosophy**

****Check each PA program you wish to apply to determine the psychology course needed****

OPTIONAL SUGGESTED COURSES
• Biochemistry • Physics • Immunology • Pathophysiology *One or more of these may be required or recommended by some PA programs*

Updated: April 2025