

## PRE-PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

### Competency Development: The Guiding Principle

*Physician assistant (PA) schools are looking for well-rounded individuals who can demonstrate professional competencies!*

Many of the experiences listed below will give you opportunities for growth in the areas discussed on the AAMC website:

<https://www.aamc.org/services/admissions-lifecycle/competencies-entering-medical-students>

Note that although this list is specific to pre-med, growing in these competencies will serve you well in your pre-PA journey.

### High-Value Experiences

Your pre-health advisor will be happy to discuss service & leadership opportunities that would connect well with your particular passions and values!

#### 1. **Get involved**

- a. Involvement in Recognized Student Organizations (RSOs) or work as a teaching assistant, a lab / learning assistant, or a supplemental instructor can provide you with **leadership and communication** experience that PA schools are looking for.
- b. Developing quality relationships with off-campus, non-profit organizations and the people they serve will give you invaluable **community service** experience. PA schools are looking for people with a service orientation, so it is much better to establish longer, qualitative service relationships with a few non-profits than to focus merely on one-off service events or fundraisers with multiple organizations.

#### 2. **Understand what this career entails**

- a. **Shadowing** is a crucial component in your discernment process regarding whether you should pursue this career. PA schools want to see that you have demonstrated sustained interest in this career and that you know what you are getting into. Shadow several PAs (and some nurse practitioners, if necessary) in multiple settings or specialties. Talk to your pre-health advisor for more info!
- b. **Paid patient-contact hours** can take a variety of forms, but the most common are working as a CNA, an EMT, or a patient care technician. Although some PA schools are starting to decrease or remove their required number of paid patient-contact hours, *even they still strongly recommend them*. Many PA schools require that their applicants will have already accrued between 500 and 2000 paid patient-contact hours before they apply. To optimize your chances with the most schools, therefore, it would be best to meet this requirement before applying. Talk to a pre-health advisor about strategies!
- c. PAs need to stay up-to-date about issues related to health care in the US and the world, including the way the media is discussing their profession. They also need to know what is going on in the world in general. Although pre-PA students are not expected to have all the answers, you can begin to **read and stay informed in the field** in order to maintain essential knowledge as you move forward in your journey.

3. **Develop a strong academic record.** Most individuals who are accepted to PA school have a GPA in the 3.3 to 3.5 range. PA schools also place high value on applicants' math and science grades, so pay attention to this during your time here at UW. Talk to a pre-health advisor about how to keep track of your various GPAs. Typical prerequisite courses for PA school and GRE prep are listed on the next page.

4. **Develop relationships with professionals.** Physician assistants, faculty, and work/volunteer supervisors can help you open doors to exciting new experiences, but they will also hopefully get to know you well enough to speak to your competencies in letters of evaluation for your PA school application.

### Meet Early and Often with a Pre-Health Advisor!

Pre-Health Advising Office

[hsadvise@uwyo.edu](mailto:hsadvise@uwyo.edu)

307-766-3878

Health Sciences Room 110

To schedule an appointment: <http://www.uwyo.edu/preprof/schedule-an-appointment/index.html>

**Stay Informed!** Sign up to join our Pre-Professional Health ListServ, so you can stay informed about various opportunities, workshops, and information that our office sends out! <https://lists.uwyo.edu/mailman/listinfo/pre-prof>

**USEFUL TIP:** Create an e-mail inbox rule to send our ListServ messages into a "pre-health" folder to read at regular intervals.

## Academic Preparation

### WHICH MAJOR SHOULD I CHOOSE?

You can major in ANYTHING! PA schools do not care what you major in as long as you take their prerequisite courses. Most schools require completion of a bachelor's degree before matriculation into their school.

### WHAT COURSES ARE TYPICALLY REQUIRED or RECOMMENDED?

**Note:** Specific PA schools may or may not require all of these courses before application or matriculation. Schools may also require additional courses as entry requirements. **You are responsible for making sure that you are on track to fulfill any specific school's requirements prior to application.** Talk to a pre-health advisor about things to keep in mind for school selection.

#### MATH

**MATH 1400** (College Algebra)

**STAT 2050 OR STAT 2070** (Statistics)

#### SCIENCE

*Biological Science courses*

**LIFE 1010** (General Biology)

**MICR 2021** (Microbiology)\*

**KIN 2040 & 2041** (Human Anatomy)

**ZOO 3115** (Human Systems Physiology)

\* Some programs require both microbiology AND one year of general biology. If so, LIFE 2022 (Animal Biology) would be a good option for the additional course.

*Chemical Science courses*

Inorganic Chemistry: **CHEM 1020 & CHEM 1030** (or CHEM 1050 & CHEM 1060)

Organic Chemistry\*\*: **CHEM 2420**

\*\* Since PA schools are starting to require one organic chemistry course *with a lab*, CHEM 2420 is the preferred course. Taking CHEM 2300 instead would limit the number of possible schools to which you could apply. Check specific schools' requirements.

Biochemistry: **MOLB 3610** (or **CHEM 4400**)

#### PSYCHOLOGY

**PSYC 1000** (General Psychology)

Additional psychology recommended (PA schools often require 6 to 9 credits of psychology, including one/both below):

**PSYC 2300** (Psychology of Child Development)

**PSYC 2340** (Psychopathology)

**UW Course Prerequisites:** To understand the prerequisites for any UW courses listed on this page, consult [the University Catalog](#). You can find prerequisites either by clicking on a specific course on your "Degree Programs" page or using the search box on the "Course Offerings" page.

#### **LAB REQUIREMENT (Biology and Chemistry)**

PA schools require on-campus, lab-based courses for all science courses listed here (except MOLB 3610 / CHEM 4400, which PA schools allow to be taken online). PA schools DO NOT usually accept AP credit for these sciences!

#### **How do I prepare for the GRE?**

High-level reading: Regularly read a variety of challenging material (beyond the material required in your courses).

Take any additional courses that require problem-solving or math.

*Talk to a pre-health advisor for other ideas!*

#### **How do I prepare for the CASPer situational judgment test?**

No heavy preparation needed. You can learn more and see practice questions at: <https://takecasper.com/>

### ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK TO PREPARE WELL FOR PA SCHOOL

Some schools require additional coursework, which may include:

Medical Terminology (available through community colleges, not at UW)

PHYS 1050 (Concepts of Physics)

SOC 1000 (Sociological Principles)

LIFE 3050 (Genetics)

LIFE 3600 (Cell Biology)

Students who take coursework in upper-division sciences tend to do better in the rigorous coursework they encounter at physician assistant school. Examples include the genetics and cell biology listed above and:

**Intro to Molecular Biology** (MOLB 3000)

**Immunology** (MOLB 4400)

**Clinical Biochemistry** (MOLB 4100)

Physician Assistant Education Association

About the profession: <http://pafocus.org/what-is-a-pa/>

Application service: <https://paeonline.org/how-we-can-help/advisors/applying-to-a-physician-assistant-program>

School information: <http://directory.paeonline.org/>

#### **Questions about funding PA school?**

Find more information at our website:

<http://www.uwyo.edu/preprof/funding-your-education/>

**Wyoming Resident?** Check out WICHE PSEP at:

<http://www.uwyo.edu/certwy>