

PRE-PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

Physician assistants work under the supervision of a physician or surgeon to provide direct patient care. They may perform exams, order diagnostic tests, prescribe medication, make diagnoses, provide treatments and assist with surgery. Like physicians, depending on the specialty, evening, weekend, and on-call hours may be a job expectation.

The job outlook for physician assistants is extremely favorable with expected growth in the profession of 27 percent from 2022 through 2032. The shortage of all types of healthcare professionals and the aging population will create more opportunities for physician assistants.

UWM offers all of the prerequisite coursework necessary for application to physician assistant (PA) programs throughout the country. The coursework is very similar to a pre-med program with coursework in sciences and math. Since this coursework is very sequential and each class builds upon a previous class, students should plan their schedules beginning in freshman year to ensure they can complete all of the requirements in a timely manner.

The graduate level schooling to become a PA (master's degree) takes two to three years after completion of four years of college (bachelor's degree).

Pre-PA is not a major at UWM, and students must still choose a major. Since most of the prerequisites necessary for application to physician assistant programs are in the sciences, many students choose a science major, though it is not required. The most common college majors for students planning a career as a physician assistant are biology, biochemistry, chemistry, or neuroscience. Our specialized pre-PA advisor works with students to ensure they understand all of the milestones that must be met in college in order to be a competitive applicant to a physician assistant program.

Many individuals feel a calling to a healthcare profession after they have graduated and been working in another profession. Individuals in this situation who did not major in a science field while in college or who have low grades in previous science education will maximize their opportunity to become an admissible PA school candidate by re-taking science courses or by returning to school for a full major in a related science.

A significant number of volunteer or healthcare-related work hours is also often a requirement for application to PA school so it is important to work with the Pre-PA advisor beginning in freshman year or upon entry to the certificate program in order to plan all needed activities into your college career.

Requirements

Requirements for admission to PA programs vary widely. However, many PA programs consider the following as minimal preparation for admission:

- One year of English;
- Mathematics through pre-calculus and statistics;
- Two to three years of chemistry, including general, organic chemistry, and biochemistry; and
- Several biology courses (see below).

Physics is rarely required.

Many PA schools specify additional courses as part of the minimal preparation for admission. Therefore, pre-PA students should ascertain the specific requirements of the schools to which they intend to apply and plan their undergraduate programs accordingly.

Courses That Typically Satisfy PA School Admission Requirements

Code	Title	Credits
BIO SCI 150	Foundations of Biological Sciences I	4
BIO SCI 152	Foundations of Biological Sciences II	4
BIO SCI 202	Anatomy and Physiology I ¹	4
BIO SCI 203	Anatomy and Physiology II ¹	4
BIO SCI 101 or BIO SCI 383	General Survey of Microbiology General Microbiology	4
CHEM 102	General Chemistry	5
CHEM 104	General Chemistry and Qualitative Analysis	5
CHEM 343	Organic Chemistry	3
CHEM 344	Organic Chemistry Laboratory	2
CHEM 345	Organic Chemistry	3
CHEM 501	Introduction to Biochemistry	3
PSYCH 101	Introduction to Psychology	3
CHPS 222	Language of Medicine ²	3
Math – one semester of pre-calculus or calculus		4
Statistics – any statistics course		3

¹ Some PA schools may have a three- to five-year expiration date on anatomy and physiology coursework. Please consult with the pre-PA advisor and PA schools of choice regarding your individual circumstances.

² Some PA schools may have a five-year expiration date on medical terminology coursework. Please consult with the pre-PA advisor and PA schools of choice regarding your individual circumstances.

Although the courses listed above are often required for admission to almost all PA schools, the rest of the program can be whatever the student wishes. Students are not required to major in Biological Sciences or Chemistry in order to gain admission to PA school.