PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT RESOURCES

This handout is designed to provide students a general guide to applying to physician assistant programs. For further assistance, please schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor.

CAREER CENTER
GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY

110 Lanier Hall | 478-445-5384 | career.center@gcsu.edu
gcsu.joinhandshake.com

QUICK FACTS

Physician assistants (PA) are medical professionals that are required to complete years of study, hands-on clinical experience, earn a **Master of PA Studies**, and obtain their PA licensure before they are fully prepared to enter into professional practice. Through this training, **PAs develop a robust set of skills** – from diagnosing and treating illnesses, ordering and interpreting tests, and assisting in surgery – which make them a valuable member of any healthcare setting.

Here are things to keep in mind as you begin **navigating the application process:**
- Applications usually require some combination of these materials: **minimum GPA, healthcare or patient care experience hours, letters of recommendation, standardized test scores, and an interview.** Thoroughly read through the requirements each school/program has for admission.
- These materials will be submitted through the **Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA - caspa.cas.myliaison.com)**, an application system maintained by the **Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA - paeaonline.org)**.
- PA programs may require students to complete the **Graduate Record Exam (GRE - www.ets.org/gre)**, the **Physician Assistant College Admissions Test (PA-CAT - www.pa-cat.com)**, the **Computer-Based Assessment for Sampling Personal Characteristics (CASPer - acuityinsights.app)** test, or a combination of these tests before they apply to a program.
  - Testing and score requirements vary between schools, so it's important to carefully review any testing requirements beforehand.
- In addition to standardized testing requirements, PA programs may require significant **healthcare or patient care experience**.

COMMON APPLICATION SERVICES (CASPA)

Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA)
- In order to apply to a PA program, you will need to use the **Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA)**.
  - An account has to be made to utilize this application service. You can create your account here: caspa.cas.myliaison.com
- **Familiarize yourself with the site, the applications themselves, and what materials are necessary for each application.**

EXPERIENCE HOURS

Programs are often looking for two types of experience: **healthcare experience (HCE)** and **patient care experience (PCE)**
- **Healthcare experience** includes experiences that are not directly related to patient care but are still in the healthcare field
- **Patient care experience** focuses on experiences that are directly related to working with patients in some sort of clinical environment
- The required healthcare hours for PA programs can vary greatly, but most require somewhere between 100 – 1000 hours of experience.
- Programs may have a preference for between HCE and PCE, or other requirements for the experience to count, so it's important to be thorough while reviewing application requirements

Many students take a gap year in order to gain meaningful experience before applying to a PA program.
Certain positions, such as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA), and medical scribes, and healthcare related volunteer work, can increase the competitiveness of your applications.

COMMON PREREQUISITES

Principles of Biology I
Principles of Biology II
Human Anatomy & Physiology I
Human Anatomy & Physiology II
Microbiology
Principles of Chemistry I

Principles of Chemistry II
Biochemistry
Organic Chemistry I
Organic Chemistry II
Intro to General Psychology
Probability & Statistics

**This list is not exhaustive. Please consult your academic advisor prior to registering for classes.

KEY NUMBERS

- Median Minimum GPA: **3.0**
- Minimum Experience Hours Range: **100-1000**

*Check with each school for their key numbers

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PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TEST (PA-CAT)

The Physician Assistant College Admissions Test (PA-CAT) is a specialized discipline-specific exam consisting of 240 questions that cover 9 science subject areas and is designed to assess PA applicants' knowledge and academic ability.
- Subjects covered are: anatomy, behavioral sciences, biochemistry, general biology, general and organic chemistry, genetics, microbiology, physiology, and statistics
- You can register for the PA-CAT at www.pa-cat.com.

GRADUATE RECORD EXAM (GRE)

Graduate Record Examination (GRE)
- Applicants are required to take the GRE only by some programs, but **required minimum scores vary**.
- You can register for the GRE using this link: www.ets.org/gre. The exam is composed of 3 sections including: **Verbal Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning, and Analytical Writing.**
- Be sure to take the test in enough time to make the application deadlines.

Prepare in advance!
- Spend time prior to your test date familiarizing yourself with the types of questions in each section.
- You can sign up for a study course through **Kaplan (www.kaptest.com)** or **The Princeton Review (www.princetonreview.com)**, or you can purchase study books online that contain practice tests and examples.

COMPUTER-BASED ASSESSMENT FOR SAMPLING PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS (CASPER)

In addition to the GRE or PA-CAT, some programs may also require you to take the **Computer-based Assessment for Sampling Personal Characteristics (CASPer)** test. The CASPer is a fully online situational judgement test. During the test, which is divided into two sections (one video response and one typed response), you will be tasked with answering open ended questions about each scenario presented to you.
- You can register for the CASPer at acuityinsights.app/casper/

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

PA programs may hold interviews as part of the admission process, and a lot of the same rules apply as with most job interviews.
- Visit **Handshake** to view the Career Center's interview resources and handouts.
- **Practice ahead of time.** "Why do you want to be a physician assistant?" or "Why our program?" are common types of questions that you want to be sure and prepare for.
- There are different types of interviews for physician assistant programs such as **traditional interviews, group interviews, multiple mini interviews (MMI)**; with MMI's becoming more popular.

PRE-PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT AT GCSU

Georgia College offers a B.S. in Exercise Science with a Pre-Professional concentration for students planning to continue their education in professional schools such as physician assistant programs, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and more. This concentration provides a strong scientific foundation and includes coursework needed for PA school prerequisites. Visit our School of Health and Human Performances to learn more about the B.S. in Exercise Science, www.gcsu.edu/health.

Students interested in becoming physician assistants can also get involved through the **Pre-Physician Assistant Association** or the **Exercise Science Club**, which offers opportunities for networking, exploring healthcare careers, and participating in service activities.

RESOURCES

CASPer Homepage
https://acuityinsights.app/
Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants
https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/
GRE Registration
https://www.ets.org/gre.html
Kaplan Resources
https://www.kaptest.com/gre

Physician Assistant College Admissions Test
https://www.pa-cat.com/
Physician Assistant Education Association
https://paeaonline.org/
Princeton Review Resources
https://www.princetonreview.com/grad/gre-test-prep

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