Physician Assistant Studies (MHS)

Department Information

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<thead>
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Department of Physician Assistant Studies web site
http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa

Physician Assistant Program Master Of Health Science Degree

What Is A Physician Assistant?
Physician Assistants (PAs) are highly skilled nationally certified and state-licensed medical professionals who practice medicine on healthcare teams with physicians and other members of the health professions. The quality and value of the services they provide is well recognized in virtually all medical and surgical specialties and subspecialties to include: physicians practices (private and group, institutional settings, correctional institutions, rural and urban community health centers, the uniformed services and other federal government agencies, nursing homes, schools and other university-based facilities and retail clinics.

Physician Assistants take medical histories, perform physical examinations, order and analyze diagnostic data (i.e. laboratory and imaging studies), and perform major and minor therapeutic procedures. The Physician Assistant develops and implements a patient-centered treatment plan, to include appropriate decisions regarding referral and interprofessional collaborative with other members of the healthcare team. Physician Assistants prescribe medications in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories, with the exception of Puerto Rico; to include scheduled pharmaceuticals per State law.

Culturally appropriate patient education and counseling are important aspects of a physician assistant’s daily activities. Physician Assistants advise patients concerning health promotion and disease prevention, with special emphasis on social determinants of health, health screenings, health disparities and health risk behaviors.

To perform at this level of responsibility, the education of Physician Assistants is provided by physicians and highly skilled physician assistants to assure patient-care functions provided by the Physician Assistant are equivalent in quality to those of the physician who delegates them.

Mission, Vision, And Goals

Mission
The mission of the University of South Alabama Physician Assistant Program is to educate compassionate and competent individuals from diverse backgrounds to become highly qualified physician assistants in accordance with the highest professional standards to provide a broad spectrum of preventative and curative health care to patients in various communities and clinical settings with physician supervision including underserved populations in Alabama both rural and urban. The emphasis of the program is one of primary care, including a broad foundation in the medical and surgical specialties.

Vision
The Physician Assistant Studies program curriculum is closely related to the goals of the University of South Alabama as well as to the degree. The program fosters an environment that promotes the acquisition and application of culturally sensitive, patient-oriented clinical knowledge and skills to produce a diverse workforce of primary care physician assistants who practice medicine with competence, professionalism, and compassion, driven by academic excellence and a spirit of service to the community.
Goals

The goals of the program are to:

1. Emphasize primary care and a desire among physician assistants toward service in rural and medically underserved communities; especially in Alabama
2. Promote excellence in health care by preparing competent physician assistants to practice evidence-based medicine in all clinical settings; especially in Alabama
3. Ensure opportunities for placement of qualified military veterans through participation as a PAEA Member Program offering assistance for veteran entry into physician assistant programs;
4. To recruit, select, and educate a highly qualified diverse student body, (to include underrepresented minorities, environmentally or economically disadvantaged, rural, racially, ethnically, culturally, etc), and provide fair and equitable admission criteria;
5. Prepare physician assistant students to provide patient-centered health care services as part of an inter-professional, collaborative team in a variety of clinical settings;
6. Charge physician assistant students to become graduates who reflect high standards of legal, ethical, and moral conduct;
7. Foster the growth and development of PA education by preparing physician assistant graduates who possess depth of knowledge, clinical skills and abilities for excellence in practice;
8. Promote in our physician assistant students the importance of lifelong learning skills and ongoing professional development to meet and/or exceed contemporary standards within their area(s) of clinical practice.

Areas Of Study

Physician Assistant Studies (MHS)

Courses

Physician Assistant Studies (PA)

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<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
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<th>Credits</th>
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<tr>
<td>PA 510L CM I Lab</td>
<td>Clinical Medicine I</td>
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<td>PA 520L CM II Lab</td>
<td>Clinical Medicine I</td>
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<td>PA 530L CM II Lab</td>
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<td>PA 540L CM IV Lab</td>
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PA 510 Clinical Medicine I 3 cr
Clinical Medicine I (PA 510) is the introductory course in a four part series covering primary care clinical medicine. It is designed to incorporate and integrate topics and content both horizontally and vertically throughout the didactic and clinical curricula. The course is divided into lecture and lab sections that will be graded separately and will provide opportunities for the student to develop critical thinking skills essential to patient evaluation and management. The use of patient simulations is included. Introductory subject matter covered during this first course will include physical examination skills and use of medical instruments, patient history taking, patient counseling, patient education, interpersonal and communication skills, and epidemiology. Additional topics will include an introduction to behavioral medicine, professionalism, interprofessional education, medical research methods, introduction to medical literature, introduction to laboratory diagnosis and introduction to nutrition. Finally, medical and social topics addressed will include the primary care medical home, rural and medically underserved populations, social determinants of health, healthy people 2020, public health issues and community health.
PA 511  Human Gross Anatomy  4 cr
This is a course in gross anatomy of the human body systems utilizing human cadavers and prosections. Emphasis is placed on the relationships between structure and function.

PA 512  Physiology  6 cr
Physiology (PA 512) is the scientific basis of medicine. This course will provide the PA student with sufficient in-depth knowledge of cellular and organ physiology necessary for understanding of normal and abnormal human body function and for advancement to courses in pathophysiology, pharmacology, and clinical medicine. This course is divided into six sections which present the basic scientific concepts of human physiology with applications and relevance to disease states: 1) cellular, neuromuscular, autonomic, and cardiac physiology; 2) circulatory physiology; 3) respiratory physiology; 4) renal, electrolyte, and acid-base physiology; 5) gastrointestinal and metabolic physiology; 6) endocrinology.

PA 513  Iss Hlthcare & Pop Hlth I  2 cr
Physician Assistant (PA) Issues I (PA 513) is the introductory course in a four part series covering commonly encountered issues and their impact on physician assistant practice. This series is designed to incorporate and integrate topics and content both horizontally and vertically throughout the didactic and clinical curricula. The course will utilize a variety of teaching strategies. Introductory subject matter covered during this first course will include factors affecting the development of the profession and the role of the PA in today’s health care system, physician-PA team relationship, credentialing, political issues, policies and regulations governing the scope of PA practice; PA and other pertinent professional organizations; Introduction to evidence-based medicine (EBM), introduction to the health insurance portability and accountability act (HIPPA); introduction to primary care medicine with a focus on rural and medically underserved areas (MUAs); introduction to interprofessional education and collaboration; introduction to principles and practice of medical ethics; introduction to blood borne pathogens and tuberculosis; and policies and procedures governing sexual harassment and harassment in the workplace.

PA 514 Intro to Infectious Disease  1 cr
This course is designed to provide PA students a solid foundation in basic immunology, microbial genetics, structure, nutrition and basic host-parasite relationships. The course will place particular emphasis on the role and application of these subject matters in disease manifestations as well as use/development of diagnostic and treatment modalities. Vulnerability of special populations and interactions between various environmental, social and behavioral factors with the human host in relationship to infection control and treatment will also be emphasized.

PA 520  Clinical Medicine II  6 cr
Clinical Medicine II (PA 520) is the second course in a four part series covering primary care clinical medicine and surgery topics. It is designed to incorporate and integrate topics and content both horizontally and vertically throughout the didactic and clinical curricula. The course is divided into lecture and lab sections that will be graded separately and will provide opportunities for the student to develop critical thinking skills essential to patient evaluation and management. The use of standardized patients, patient simulations and clinical experiences are included. Topics will include a continuation of physical examination skills, patient history taking, patient counseling, patient education, epidemiology, history of the PA Profession, professionalism, interpersonal and communication skills, interprofessional education, medical research methods, and researching medical literature, the primary care medical home, rural and medically underserved populations, social determinants of health, healthy people 2020, public health issues, and community health care. Specific topics covered in PA 520 include dermatology, ophthalmology, ENT, cardiovascular medicine, EKG, pulmonary medicine, nephrology, and GU medicine. Imbedded in this course will be topics in infectious disease and diagnostic data that will align with the subject matter covered during this semester.

PA 521  Pathophysiology I  4 cr
Pathophysiology I (PA 521) is the first course in a three-part series that covers the alterations in normal physiology that occur in human disease states. This course will provide the PA student with sufficient in-depth knowledge of pathophysiology necessary for understanding of abnormal human body function and for advancement to subsequent courses in pathophysiology, pharmacology, and clinical medicine. Topics will include an overview of cellular pathophysiology, followed by specific topics that align with the organization of the clinical medicine series: cardiovascular pathophysiology, EKG, pulmonary pathophysiology, and renal/GU pathophysiology.

PA 522  Pharmacology I  4 cr
Pharmacology I (PA 522) is the first course in a three-part series that covers the basic scientific concepts of drug classification, mechanism of action, toxicity, and clinical use of drugs. Introductory topics will include the laws and regulations governing the use of pharmaceuticals, prescriptive practices, basic science and properties of drug molecules, drug interactions, and clinical pharmacology of the autonomic nervous system. Specific topics will align with the organization of the clinical medicine series: cardiovascular drugs, pulmonary drugs, drug therapy of renal and genitourinary disease.
PA 523  Diag Data and Interp I  2 cr
(Previously PA 524) Interpretation of Diagnostic Data and Studies I, will introduce students to basic concepts of laboratory medicine including different methods of sample gathering and transport, basic phlebotomy, interpretation of blood counts and analysis of the differential blood counts, coagulation studies and anticoagulant monitoring, interpretation of metabolic panels, evaluating electrolyte abnormalities, and ordering and interpreting bacterial culture and susceptibilities. The course will focus on and correlate with laboratory assays and procedures taught during Clinical Medicine II. Syllabi and tentative schedules of lectures for the course are attached.

PA 525  Iss in Hlthcare & Pop Hlth II  2 cr
Physician Assistant (PA) Issues II (PA 525) is the second in a four part series covering commonly encountered issues and their impact on physician assistant practice. This series is designed to incorporate and integrate topics and content both horizontally and vertically throughout the didactic and clinical curricula. The course will utilize a variety of teaching strategies. Subject matter covered during this second course will include factors affecting diversity and inclusion; cultural competence; health care delivery systems; workforce shortage; health disparities; health literacy; public health, primary care medicine with a focus on veterans, rural and medically underserved medicine, evidence-based medicine, professionalism, social determinants of health, health promotion, disease prevention, health beliefs and patient expectations.

PA 530  Clinical Medicine III  6 cr
Clinical Medicine III (PA 530) is the third course in a four part series covering primary care clinical medicine and surgery topics. It is designed to incorporate and integrate topics and content both horizontally and vertically throughout the didactic and clinical curricula. The course is divided into lecture and lab sections that will be graded separately and will provide opportunities for the student to develop critical thinking skills essential to patient evaluation and management. The use of standardized patients, patient simulations and clinical experiences are included. Topics will include a continuation of complete and focused physical examination skills, patient history taking, patient counseling, patient education, epidemiology, normal and abnormal development, history of the PA Profession, professionalism, interpersonal and communication skills, interprofessional education, medical research methods, and researching medical literature, the primary care medical home, rural and medically underserved populations, social determinants of health, healthy people 2020, public health issues, and community health care. Specific topics covered in PA 530 include neurology, rheumatology, hematology/oncology, orthopedic medicine, gastrointestinal medicine, and psychiatric/behavioral medicine. Included in this course will be topics in infectious disease and diagnostic data that will align with the subject matter covered during this semester.

PA 531  Pathophysiology II  4 cr
Pathophysiology II (PA 531) is the second course in a three-part series that covers the alterations in normal physiology that occur in human disease states. This course will provide the PA student with sufficient in-depth knowledge of pathophysiology necessary for the understanding of abnormal human body function and for advancement to subsequent courses in pathophysiology, pharmacology, and clinical medicine. Topics will align with the subject matter in Clinical Medicine II (PA 530): neurology, rheumatology, endocrinology, hematology, oncology, gastrointestinal, and psychiatric disorders.

PA 532  Pharmacology II  4 cr
This course is the second of a proposed three part pharmacology series that used to be taught in two sections during the spring and summer semesters as PA 532 and PA 542. The course will continue to cover the basic scientific concepts of drug classification, mechanism of action, toxicity, and clinical use of drugs. Other topics will include drug interaction and the properties of drug molecules. Specific topics will align with the organization of the clinical medicine series.

PA 533  Diag Data & Interp II  2 cr
Interpretation of Diagnostic Data and Studies II, will focus on ordering and interpretation of laboratory tests and imaging studies associated with diseases of the urinary tract system including basic and advanced urinalysis and the interpretation, laboratory tests and imaging studies associated with diseases of the gastrointestinal tract to include liver, pancreas, small intestine and colorectal regions, basic and advanced immunohematology and imaging to investigate autoimmune disorders, and advanced genetic testing and procedures. This course will advance the students knowledge of laboratory medicine and will focus on those laboratory assays relevant to the topic covered in Clinical Medicine III.

PA 534  Iss Hlthcare & Pop Hlth III  2 cr
Physician Assistant (PA) Issues III (PA 534) is the third in a four part series covering commonly encountered issues and their impact on physician assistant practice. This series is designed to incorporate and integrate topics and content both horizontally and vertically throughout the didactic and clinical curricula. The course will utilize a variety of teaching strategies. Introductory subject matter covered during this third course will include topics on coding and billing, medical documentation, spirituality and health, epidemiology, transition from didactic to clinical year, health care cost, Advanced Directives End of Life Issues, interprofessional team-based patient-centered care, healthcare in various clinical settings (homelessness, migrant, correctional, inner city), and primary care medicine with a focus on veterans, rural and medically underserved medicine, evidence-based medicine, medical documentation and professionalism.
PA 540 Clinical Medicine IV 6 cr
Clinical Medicine IV (PA 540) is the final course in a four part series covering primary care clinical medicine and surgery topics. It is designed to incorporate and integrate topics and content both horizontally and vertically throughout the didactic and clinical curricula. The course is divided into lecture and lab sections that will be graded separately and will provide opportunities for the student to develop critical thinking skills essential to patient evaluation and management. The use of standardized patients, patient simulations and clinical experiences are included. Topics will include a continuation of complete and focused physical examination skills, patient history taking, patient counseling, patient education, interpersonal and communication skills, epidemiology, normal and abnormal development, history of the PA Profession, professionalism, interprofessional education, medical research methods, and researching medical literature, the primary care medical home, rural and medically underserved populations, social determinants of health, healthy people 2020, public health issues, and community health care. Specific topics covered in PA 540 include geriatric medicine, pediatric medicine, surgery, OB/GYN medicine, emergency medicine, ACLS, and clinical year transition. Included in this course will be topics in infectious disease and diagnostic data that will align with the subject matter covered during this semester.

PA 541 Pathophysiology III 2 cr
This course is the third of three sections of pathophysiology that used to be taught during the fall semester as a single course PA 523. The course will provide students with an understanding of abnormal body functions including an overview of cellular pathophysiology followed by specific topics that align with the organization of the clinical medicine series.

PA 542 Pharmacology III 2 cr
This course is the third of a proposed three part pharmacology series that used to be taught in two sections during the spring and summer semesters as PA 532 and PA 542. The course will continue to cover the basic scientific concepts of drug classification, mechanism of action, toxicity, clinical use of drugs, drug interaction and the properties of drug molecules. Specific topics will align with the organization of the clinical medicine series.

PA 543 Iss Hlthcare & Pop Hlth IV 2 cr
Physician Assistant (PA) Issues IV (PA 543) is the final course in a four part series covering commonly encountered issues and their impact on physician assistant practice. This series is designed to incorporate and integrate topics and content both horizontally and vertically throughout the didactic and clinical curricula. The course will utilize a variety of teaching strategies. Introductory subject matter covered during this final course series will introduce new topics and re-visit prior topics of discussion in other PA Issues courses. Topics will include interpersonal and communication skills, personal bias and stereotyping, patient compliance and health outcomes, violence identification and prevention, response to illness, injury and stress, patient safety, prevention of medical errors, palliative and rehabilitative care/death/dying and loss, patient education and counseling, and primary care medicine with a focus on veterans, rural and medically underserved medicine, evidence-based medicine, medical documentation and professionalism.

PA 544 Diagn Data and Interp III 2 cr
(Previously PA 541) Interpretation of Diagnostic Data and Studies III, will introduce students to basic radiology concepts by teaching fundamentals of radiology, basic imaging techniques (ultrasound, vascular imaging, advanced imaging techniques (CT Scan and MRI with and without contrast), and PET scan. The course will hone student knowledge of all diagnostic modalities through intensive case-based approach to the interpretation of laboratory assays.

PA 550 Internal Medicine Preceptorship 4 cr
The student is assigned to a clinical setting, often in the inpatient setting, to obtain knowledge, skills and attitudinal/behavioral professional components pertaining to general internal medicine. These competencies are to be obtained while engaging in all aspects of patient care through: the medical interview, history and physical exam, critical thinking, knowledge base, diagnosis and treatment plan, patient education, as well as appropriate health maintenance and disease prevention measures.

PA 555 Psychiatry Preceptorship 4 cr
The student is assigned to a clinical setting, often in the inpatient setting, to obtain knowledge, skills and attitudinal/behavioral professional components pertaining to general internal medicine. These competencies are to be obtained while engaging in all aspects of patient care through: the medical interview, history and physical exam, critical thinking, knowledge base, diagnosis and treatment plan, patient education. Students will also be expected to interact on an interdisciplinary team to provide care to patients with Psychiatric needs, including awareness of social and community services.
PA 560  Pediatrics Preceptorship  8 cr
The student is assigned to a pediatric setting in order to obtain knowledge, skills and attitudinal/behavioral professional components pertaining to general pediatric medicine. These competencies are to be obtained while engaging in all aspects of patient care through: the medical interview, history and physical exam, critical thinking, knowledge base, diagnosis and treatment plan, patient and family education, anticipatory-guidance, as well as appropriate health maintenance and disease prevention measures.

PA 570  Primary Care-Family Pract Preceptor  8 cr
The student is assigned to a primary care setting in order to obtain knowledge, skills and attitudinal/behavioral professional components pertaining to general family practice medicine across the life span. These competencies are to be obtained while engaging in all aspects of patient care through: the medical interview, history and physical exam, critical thinking, knowledge base, diagnosis and treatment plan, patient education, appropriate health maintenance and disease prevention measures.

PA 580  General Surgery Preceptorship  4 cr
The student is assigned to a hospital-surgical setting in order to gain exposure to all realms of the general surgery experience. These experiences are to include: pre-operative, intra-operative, and post-operative care. Furthermore, students are expected to further develop patient care skills through: the medical interview, history and physical examination, critical thinking, enhancement of medical knowledge, patient and family counseling, and understanding the role of a PA within the hospital team.

PA 590  OB-GYN Preceptorship  4 cr
The student is assigned to hospital in-patient and out-patient ambulatory care settings in order to gain exposure to all realms of the women's health across the life span. These experiences are to include: pre-natal, post-natal, pre-operative, intra-operative, post-operative care, annual wellness exam, and emergent care exams. Furthermore, students are expected to further develop patient care skills through: the medical interview, history and physical examination, critical thinking, enhancement of medical knowledge, patient and family counseling, and understanding the role of a PA within the hospital team.

PA 591  Emergency Medicine Preceptor  4 cr
The student is assigned to an emergency department setting in order to gain exposure to patients requiring critical, emergent and non-emergent care. Furthermore, students are expected to further develop patient care skills through: the medical interview, history and physical examination, critical thinking, enhancement of medical knowledge, patient and family counseling, and understanding the role of a PA within the emergency department team.

PA 592  Elective Clinical Preceptor I  4 cr
The student will choose from a variety of available elective rotations in order to engage in all aspects of patient care including: the medical interview, history and physical exam, critical thinking, knowledge base, diagnosis and treatment plan, patient education, appropriate health maintenance and disease prevention measures. The goal of elective rotations is to provide the student the opportunity to explore areas of interest for further employment or increase knowledge in areas of weakness.

PA 593  Elective Preceptorship II  8 cr
The student will choose from a variety of available elective rotations in order to engage in all aspects of patient care including: the medical interview, history and physical exam, critical thinking, knowledge base, diagnosis and treatment plan, patient education, appropriate health maintenance and disease prevention measures. The goal of elective rotations is to provide the student the opportunity to explore areas of interest for further employment or increase knowledge in areas of weakness.

PA 595  Summative Evaluation  3 cr
PA 595 is designed to evaluate student learning at the end of the 27 month PA training program. The assessments used in this course will help determine the level at which students achieved the expectations for their learning as prescribed and to identify instructional areas that may need additional attention. The summative assessments include: 1) comprehensive examination, 2) OSCE with standardized patient, 3) on-line board review and 4) Capstone Project. A comprehensive written examination will be administered as a final evaluation of the student's progress. This test is also designed to prepare the graduate for the NCCPA exam.

Faculty

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