

Physician Assistant Studies (MHS)

Degree Requirements

The Program

Physician Assistant Studies (MHS)

Degree Earned: Master of Health Science

Length of Program: 27 months

Matriculation Date: Annually in mid-May

Class Type: On site, no on-line classes

Curriculum: 121 Credit Hours

Advanced Placement, Deceleration, Dismissal

The program does not offer advanced placement. Students can request a deceleration period after acceptance and matriculation into a cohort. Transfer credits or credit for experiential learning cannot be substituted for any course in the program, and no transfer credit is accepted from other PA programs. In addition, any grade below a C will result in academic dismissal from the program, and withdrawal from any course will automatically result in dismissal from the program.

Clinical Rotations

The program attempts for every student to have a well-rounded clinical experience, as best achieved through a variety of clinical sites. To maximize one's learning, students will rotate through academic health centers, military institutions and rural facilities in Mobile, Pensacola, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Rural rotations in Primary Care and Pediatrics are required. The program considers any rotation within 75 miles as commutable.

Employment

Program policies strictly prohibit the program, its academic and clinical affiliates and preceptors from employing any PA students, or utilizing them in lieu of administrative office or clinical staff while attending the program. PA students are also strongly discouraged from accepting any other employment while attending the program. Employment while in the program has the potential to negatively impact the student's rigorous PA training curriculum.

Measures Of Success

Please visit our website for information about the program's success at <http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa/mission.html>

Mandatory

Mandatory remediation will be required of any student who is in danger of not meeting the educational goals of the program as stated in student handbooks. The criteria for remediation are set in the "Goal" section below. The student's progress will be subsequently monitored to assure improvement in deficient areas, and future remediation will be arranged as needed.

The goal of the didactic remediation policy of the Department of Physician Assistant Studies is to remediate students who are not performing at the optimal level which is defined below:

1. An average of <80% on two consecutive examinations
2. A single score of <75%
3. A student cited for lack of professionalism
4. A score of <80% on an end of term grade
5. A failing score on a Clinical Skills Practicum

The goal of the clinical remediation policy is to remediate any student who is not performing at the optimal level during the clinical year. These are defined below:

1. An individual "Average" score or less on mid-rotation evaluation
2. End-of-Rotation exam scores < 65%
3. A grade of "C" on the final clinical rotation grade
4. A student cited for lack of professionalism

Accreditation

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) has granted **Accreditation-Continued** status to the **University of South Alabama Physician Assistant Program** sponsored by the **University of South Alabama**. Accreditation-Continued is an accreditation status granted when a currently accredited program is in compliance with the ARC-PA *Standards*.

Accreditation remains in effect until the program closes or withdraws from the accreditation process or until accreditation is withdrawn for failure to comply with the Standards. The approximate date for the next validation review of the program by the ARC-PA will be **September 2024**. The review date is contingent upon continued compliance with the Accreditation Standards and ARC-PA policy.

Competencies For The Physician Assistant Profession

Graduates are expected to demonstrate the highest level of professionalism, be able to provide excellent comprehensive patient care and have the highest level of medical knowledge and communication skills as outlined at <http://www.nccpa.net/uploads/docs/PACompetencies.pdf>

Matriculation Requirements

1. Acknowledgement of acceptance by deadline on notification by submission of a signed Statement of Intent Form and a nonrefundable \$500 matriculation deposit which will be applied toward the first semester's tuition to guarantee a seat in the class, to be received no later than the deadline stated in acceptance letter.
2. Completion of outstanding required prerequisite course work with a grade of "C" or higher one semester prior to matriculation into the program. Failure to make a grade of "C" or higher in any required prerequisite course will result in nullification of acceptance into the PA program. Updated transcripts will be required.
3. Submission to criminal background checks and urine drug screens before matriculation and prior to beginning clinical rotations. The fees are the student's responsibility. Failure to submit to and satisfactorily pass both screenings can result in dismissal from the program.
4. Completion of immunizations, titers, and a physical exam upon acceptance and prior to entering clinical rotations. The fees are the student's responsibility.
5. Maintenance of the American Heart Association Healthcare Providers BLS Certification throughout the program. The fees are the student's responsibility.
6. Maintenance of approved health insurance throughout the program. The fees are the student's responsibility.
7. Understanding of and the abilities to adhere to the **Technical Standards for Physician Assistants as stated**. (See below.)

Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE) Pass Rates

Please visit our website at

<http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa/accreditation.html>

Program Completion Requirements

The program consists of preclinical and clinical components. The preclinical component is designed to provide a solid foundation for the clinical component. During the clinical component the student refines the medical knowledge and clinical skills needed for professional practice.

Successful completion of the program requires that the student be able to:

1. Complete 121 hours of graduate course work consisting of 73 credit hours of didactic course work and 48 credit hours of clinical course work.
2. Obtain an accurate and detailed patient history.
3. Perform complete and focused physical examinations
4. Establish working and differential diagnosis

5. Order and interpret diagnostic evaluations to include: laboratory tests (blood, urine, spinal fluids, cultures), imaging studies (plain film radiography, radiographic contrast studies, ultrasound studies, computerized tomography studies, MRI studies & electrocardiogram).
6. Develop and manage a treatment plan.
7. Record patient data: (a) Written notes and charting, and (b) Electronic medical record.
8. Order and/or administer therapeutic medications (a) in hospitals and clinics and (b) via written or electronic prescription.
9. Perform therapeutic medical interventions and procedures.
10. Counsel and educate patients regarding medical, therapeutic, and behavioral problems.
11. Interact with patients and the medical community in a professional manner.
12. Make appropriate referrals.

Technical Standards

Students in the USA Physician Assistant program must be able to fulfill the program's Technical Standards, which include General, Observational, Communication, Motor, Critical Thinking, and Interpersonal abilities as well as possessing certain Behavioral and Social Attributes. To evaluate whether you meet the criteria, please visit our website at <http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa/technical.html> for details.

Minimum Requirements For Admission

Applicants who wish to apply to the USA PA program must meet the following minimum requirements. Please note that admission to the USA PA program is very competitive and accepted students typically exceed the minimum requirements.

1. **Completion of a Baccalaureate degree in any field** from a U.S. regionally accredited institution prior to the starting date of the program is required.
2. **A Minimum overall GPA, science GPA and last 60 hours GPA of 3.0** on a 4.0 scale as calculated by CASPA (includes post-baccalaureate undergraduate work and graduate work from U.S. regionally accredited institutions).
3. **Completion of prerequisite course work completed with a grade of "C" or higher** from a U.S. regionally accredited institution. These courses must be completed successfully one semester prior to matriculation, failure to do so will result in the student losing their seat in the program. Unless specified, prerequisite courses should be one semester of at least 3 credit hours. Prerequisite required courses are:
General Biology plus lab (4 credits). General Chemistry I and II plus lab (8 credits). Human Anatomy and Human Physiology OR Anatomy and Physiology I and II. Microbiology. Organic Chemistry. Mathematics (College Algebra minimum). Statistics. General Psychology. Medical Terminology (1 credits). For guidelines on courses accepted, please visit <http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa/admissions.html>
4. **Completion of the General Graduate Record Examination (GRE)** within the past five (5) years. We require a minimum score of 145 in both the Verbal and Quantitative sections and completion of the Analytical Writing section in one test date.
5. **Completion of at least 100 hours direct patient care experience is required.** Applicants will document these hours on their CASPA application. Please see website (<http://southalabama.edu/alliedhealth/pa/>) for definition, details and examples.
6. **Submission of at least three (3) reference letters, one of which must be from a Physician Assistant (PA), Medical Doctor (MD), or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO)** submitted to CASPA by the **October 1st** deadline. Reference letters sent directly to our office will not be accepted.
7. Submission of completed and verified application materials by **October 1st**. The program will not review applications that are incomplete, received after the deadline, or do not meet the minimum standards. Please see the website for details <http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa/applications.html>.

Application And Admission Information

Please see our website for more detailed information: <http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa>

Applicants are selected based on a holistic evaluation. Many factors are taken into consideration:

- **GPA's (overall GPA, science GPA, last 60 hour GPA, both undergraduate and graduate level work).**
- **GRE scores (quantitative, verbal, and analytical writing sections)**
- **Direct Patient Care/Health Care/PA Shadowing Experience**
- **Community Service/Volunteerism**
- **Additional completion of upper level science coursework** completed with a grade of "C" or higher in Immunology, Genetics, Biochemistry, Pathophysiology, and Pharmacology.

- **Background and Experience**
- **Rural/Underserved (Childhood residence in rural county as defined by HRSA rural grant Qualifier)**
- **Additional Degree or Training:** additional degree (Master's or Doctorate), current health training certifications or registrations, e.g., EMT, CNA, CMA.
- **Military Service:** includes all branches of service.
- **Disadvantaged Background:**
 - Economically and/or environmentally disadvantaged, as defined by HRSA and detailed on the CASPA application.
- Please see website for more details, <http://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/alliedhealth/pa>.

Residency Preference

Preference is shown to Alabama residents; however, highly qualified Service Area and out-of-state applicants whose academics and experiences indicate that they may be a success in both the program and the PA profession will be given consideration. Non-residents will be required to pay the non-resident tuition and fees as set by the University. For information on residency please contact the Office of the Registrar at <http://www.southalabama.edu/departments/registrar/residency.html>.

Interviews

The applicant will attend one interview session to be held in the fall prior to matriculation. Notification of applicant status may be e-mailed at any time during the interview cycle until the class positions are filled.

Graduation Plan

Physician Assistant Studies (MHS) : (121 Total Hours)

First Year - Summer Semester

Course ID	Course Description	Hours
PA 510	Clinical Medicine I	4
PA 510L	Clinical Medicine I Lab	1
PA 511	Human Gross Anatomy	5
PA 512	Physiology	6
PA 514	Introduction to Infectious Disease	1
Total Hours		17

First Year - Fall Semester

Course ID	Course Description	Hours
PA 516	Physician Assistant Issues I	2
PA 520	Clinical Medicine II	6
PA 520L	Clinical Medicine II Lab	1
PA 521	Pathophysiology I	4
PA 522	Pharmacology I	4
PA 523	Diagnostic Data and Interpretation I	2

Total Hours 19

First Year - Spring Semester

Course ID	Course Description	Hours
PA 526	Physician Assistant Issues II	2
PA 530	Clinical Medicine III	6
PA 530L	Clinical Medicine III Lab	1
PA 531	Pathophysiology II	4
PA 532	Pharmacology II	4
PA 533	Diagnostic Data and Interpretation II	2
Total Hours		19

Second Year - Summer Semester

Course ID	Course Description	Hours
PA 536	Physician Assistant Issues III	2
PA 540	Clinical Medicine IV	7
PA 540L	Clinical Medicine IV Lab	1
PA 541	Pathophysiology III	3
PA 542	Pharmacology III	3
PA 544	Diagnostic Data and interpretation III	2
Total Hours		19

Second Year - Fall Semester

Course ID	Course Description	Hours
PA 501	Clinical Preceptorship I	4
PA 502	Clinical Preceptorship II	4
PA 503	Clinical Preceptorship III	4
PA 504	Clinical Preceptorship IV	4
Total Hours		16

Second Year - Spring Semester

Course ID	Course Description	Hours
PA 505	Clinical Preceptorship V	4
PA 506	Clinical Preceptorship VI	4
PA 507	Clinical Preceptorship VII	4

PA 508	Clinical Preceptorship VIII	4
Total Hours		16

Third Year - Summer Semester

Course ID	Course Description	Hours
PA 509	Clinical Preceptorship IX	4
PA 517	Clinical Preceptorship X	4
PA 518	Clinical Preceptorship XI	4
PA 595	Summative Evaluation	4
Total Hours		16

Fourth Year - Spring Semester

Course ID	Course Description	Hours
Total Hours		

Notes

Department Information

Physician Assistant Studies Administrative Staff		(251) 445-9334
Chair	Stephanie McGilvray, PA-C, MMSC	
Medical Director	Shannon Tyler, M.D.	
Associate Professor		
Assistant Professor	Largue, Lunn, McGilvray, Minton, Pelekanos, Kersey, Frizell	

Department of Physician Assistant Studies website
<https://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 collaboration with other members of the healthcare team. Physician Assistants prescribe medications in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories, 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. Promote and support to provide PA education, emphasizing primary care to the residents of the State of Alabama, as well as those with a desire to serve rural and medically underserved communities within the State of 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), 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.