

Physician Assistant

Degree Type

Master of Science (MS)

Admission Requirements

Procedure for Admission to the Master in Science Physician Assistant Program

Entrance to the Physician Assistant (PA) program is gained through a formal application review and interview. Application to the program is made through the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA).

Applicants must specifically designate the South University campus(es) to which their application should be submitted within the CASPA system. Additional, campus-specific information regarding the application process can be obtained through the PA program web site or by calling the respective campus:

- (512) 516-8800 (Austin)
- (804) 727-6894 (Richmond)
- (912) 201-8025 (Savannah)
- (813) 393-3720 (Tampa)
- (561) 273-6520 (West Palm Beach)

Individuals whose applications are deemed competitive will be invited for a required interview. All programs utilize a rolling admissions process in which applicants are notified of their admission decision within 2 weeks after interviewing. Not all qualified applicants will receive an interview.

The application process requires submission of scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE).

Applicants must specifically designate the South University code for each campus to which their GRE scores should be submitted electronically to CASPA directly from ETS (Educational Testing Service):

- 0174(Austin)
- 7147 (Richmond)
- 0467 (Savannah)
- 0454 (Tampa)
- 7108 (West Palm Beach)

For South University, Richmond, South University, Savannah, South University, Tampa, and South University, West Palm Beach applications must be completed and verified in the CASPA application portal. Submission deadlines vary by campus. Please refer to the individual program's website for further details.

Applicants who are offered a seat into the Physician Assistant program are only permitted to reserve a seat at one campus. Within 14 calendar days of the applicant signing and submitting the acceptance form, it is the responsibility of the applicant to notify any other South University Physician Assistant program(s) of his/her intent to withdraw. Seat acceptance fees are non-transferable to other South University programs.

Note: Applicants should refer to the Physician Assistant Program policy on Acceptance Fee for more details.

Admission Criteria

Selection for the Physician Assistant program is highly competitive. Meeting the minimum requirements does not guarantee an interview or admission. Successful applicants will generally exceed the minimum criteria. The following criteria represent the minimum conditions established for applicants interested in applying to the South University Physician Assistant Master of Science degree programs:

- Applicants must have an earned bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited U.S. institution by August 1st of the admissions cycle.
- Applicants must have an overall GPA as calculated by the CASPA service of 3.0 or greater (on a 4.0 scale) (including undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, and graduate coursework)
- Applicants should have a Biology-Chemistry-Physics (BCP) science GPA of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) as calculated by the CASPA service. Applicants must submit scores from the GRE general exam directly to the CASPA service using the designated South University code for each campus to which their GRE scores should be submitted:
 - 3090 (Austin)
 - 7147 (Richmond)
 - 0467 (Savannah)
 - 0454 (Tampa)
 - 7108 (West Palm Beach)
- At least three (3) letters of reference as part of the CASPA application must be submitted. At least one letter must be from a physician (MD/DO), Physician Assistant, or Nurse Practitioner with whom the applicant has worked or shadowed and to whom the applicant is not related. Impressive, well-articulated, and unequivocal letters attesting to the applicant's motivation, communication and interpersonal skills, professionalism, and future contribution towards health care are considered competitive. Applicants with letters of reference from licensed medical providers (e.g., MD, DO, NP, PA) are considered to be more competitive.

Pre-requisite Courses

Applicants must complete all prerequisite courses listed below with a grade of C or better at a regionally accredited U.S. college or university prior to submission of their application. The PA program accepts prerequisite coursework completed in an online, virtual, or campus-based format from a regionally accredited U.S. college or university.

Required	Pre-Requisite	Duration
	Anatomy and Physiology	2 courses (sequenced) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Anatomy & Physiology I and II with Lab OR • Human Anatomy with Lab and Human Physiology with Lab No course substitutions are accepted for this requirement
	General Biology	2 courses Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Biology I (Lab recommended) • General Biology II (Lab recommended) Alternative Substitution for Biology II only: Cell Biology, Genetics, Molecular Biology, Immunology
	General Chemistry and Labs	2 courses Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Chemistry I with Lab • General Chemistry II with Lab

Required	Pre-Requisite	Duration
	Microbiology with Lab	1 course No course substitutions are accepted for this requirement
	Organic Chemistry or Biochemistry	1 course Lab recommended, not required

Coursework which is designed for science majors is generally considered more competitive. In general, prerequisite coursework with titles that include “Essentials of,” “Survey of,” or “Introduction to,” unless specifically designed for science majors, are considered less competitive.

Basic science courses should be those for science majors. The General Biology and Biochemistry courses are recommended to include a lab, but it is not required.

Only courses (excluding General Biology, Biochemistry, and Organic Chemistry) with an associated lab will be given credit for fulfilling prerequisite requirements. In the event that a laboratory is not offered with a prerequisite course, applicants may request the lab requirement for that course be waived by contacting the program. Lab waivers and/or course substitutions are granted at the discretion of the Admissions Committee. Applicants requesting such should be prepared to submit supporting documents, including, but not limited to, course descriptions.

The South University Physician Assistant program accepts credit for Advanced Placement (AP) courses. AP courses taken and successfully completed will be counted as one course credit towards completion of the respective prerequisite subject. Grades earned in AP courses are not used in the calculation of the applicant’s overall or prerequisite GPA.

The South University Physician Assistant program does not accept College Level Examination Program (CLEP) credit for any prerequisite requirements.

South University Physician Assistant programs do not accept a transfer of credits from other physician assistant programs or provide enrolled students with a waiver of credit (i.e., advanced placement) for any component of the required curricular coursework. All students must complete each course in the South University Physician Assistant curriculum.

Master of Science Physician Assistant Technical Standards

In order to ensure that patients receive the best medical care possible, the faculty of the South University Physician Assistant program has identified certain skills and professional behaviors that are essential for successful progression of physician assistant students in the program. A student must possess skills and behaviors at a level of capability to perform a variety of duties required of a physician assistant as a health care professional.

Students with disabilities who can perform these skills and successfully execute professional behavior either unassisted, with dependable use of assistive devices, or by employing other reasonable accommodations are eligible to apply for enrollment in the program. Minimum performance standards include critical thinking, communication skills, observation skills, motor skills, and interpersonal abilities. Interested parties may contact the Physician Assistant program office for additional information about South University performance standards. These skills and behaviors include, but are not limited to:

Critical Thinking: A student must possess the intellectual, ethical, physical and emotional capabilities required to undertake the full curriculum and to achieve the levels of competence required by the faculty. The ability to solve problems, a skill that is critical to the practice of medicine, requires the intellectual abilities of measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis and synthesis. Students must be able to perform demonstrations and experiments in the basic sciences.

Communication Skills: A student should also be able to speak, to hear, and to observe patients in order to elicit information, describe changes in mood, activity and posture, and to perceive nonverbal communications. The student must be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in oral and written forms.

Observation Skills: A student must be able to observe a patient accurately, both at a distance and in close proximity. This ability requires the functional use of vision and somatic sensation.

Motor Skills: A student should have sufficient motor function to elicit information from patients by palpation, auscultation, percussion and other diagnostic techniques. A student should be able to execute movements reasonably required to move from area to area, maneuver in small places, calibrate and use large and small equipment, position and move patients, and provide patients with general care and emergency treatment.

Interpersonal Abilities: A student must possess the emotional health required for full utilization of his or her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities required for the diagnosis and care of patients and the development of professionalism through mature, sensitive and effective relationships with patients, families, and colleagues.

Clinical Experience

Clinical experiences should provide the applicant with a knowledge of and orientation to the presentation, signs, and symptoms of a variety of ill or injured patients. Although clinical experience is not required, preference is given to applicants who have direct patient care experience (i.e., care that involves personal interaction with patients such as: physical therapist, respiratory therapist, emergency medical technician/paramedic, nurse, or certified nursing assistant, or other similar professions). However, there is no requirement for a predetermined number of hours (or months) of health care experience to be earned by an applicant.

Admissions Committee Selection Factors

Applicants for admission are considered using multiple selection factors. Applicants are awarded preference based upon the following:

- Academic achievement (overall GPA, BCP, GRE)
 - For overall GPA, BCP, and GRE preferences, please refer to the respective program's website.
- Quality of letters of reference from medical providers (e.g., MD, DO, NP, PA)
- Clinical experience that requires direct patient care
- Personal statement/essay.
- Healthcare provider mentorship/shadowing experiences.
- Community service
- Interview performance

Evidence of an applicant's interpersonal skills, problem-solving ability, professionalism, motivation, academic potential, communication, knowledge of the PA profession and the health care system with an alignment to the mission and vision of the program are assessed by the Admissions Committee.

Post-Acceptance Requirements

Accepted applicants will be required to complete the following items in order to obtain approval for matriculation in January:

- Satisfactory Criminal Background and Drug Screen Report

- Health/ Immunization Requirements
- Personal Health Insurance Documentation
- Baccalaureate Diploma Verification
- FAFSA application (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) submission for those applying for financial aid
- There is a \$1000 acceptance fee, which is non-refundable, for those applicants accepted into the Physician Assistant program at South University, Austin, South University, Savannah, South University, Tampa and South University, West Palm Beach. There is a \$1000 acceptance fee, \$900 of which is refundable, for those applicants accepted into the Physician Assistant program at South University, Richmond. Acceptance fees are applied towards tuition.

Applicants seeking admissions to the Physician Assistant program must abide by the College of Health Professions Background Check Policy and Substance Abuse and Screening Policy. Acceptance into a South University program or its completion does not guarantee that a student will be able to obtain subsequent licensure or certification.

All Physician Assistant program students are responsible for meeting matriculation deadlines and requirements as published within the campus-specific Enrollment Guide.

For additional admissions information please see the admissions section [here](#).

Program Overview and Outcomes

Offered at Austin, Richmond, Savannah, Tampa and West Palm Beach.

Note: All Physician Assistant program policies apply to all students, principal faculty, and the program director regardless of location. (i.e., didactic or clinical)

Physician assistants perform many medical functions under the supervision of a licensed physician, including, but not limited to, evaluation, monitoring, diagnostics, therapeutics, counseling, and referral. The scope of the practice varies according to state laws, the medical setting, and the training of the physician assistant.

Vision Statement

The South University Master of Science in Physician Assistant (MSPA) degree program strives to provide an educational environment that empowers students to practice evidence-based, patient-centered medical care. With an emphasis on increasing access to care, reducing health disparities, and engaging in community outreach, we aim to provide inclusive educational experiences for students, faculty, and staff. As future clinical leaders, the program's focus is to graduate physician assistants who will promote cultural humility and patient advocacy.

Mission Statement

The mission of the South University Physician Assistant (MSPA) is to educate a diverse student population and prepare graduates to practice the art and science of medicine while providing high-quality, equitable, and inclusive patient-centered healthcare.

Program Goals

The following are program goals for the South University Physician Assistant program:

- The program aims to foster a culture of inclusivity and equity for students, faculty, and staff by means of education and resources.
- The program will strive to adequately prepare graduating students to achieve a first-time pass rate that exceeds the national average upon completion of the Physician Assistant National Certification Examination (PANCE).
- The program will provide opportunities for local community service and outreach that foster commitment to reducing health disparities.

Physician Assistant Learning Outcomes (Graduate Competencies)

The following are the program learning outcomes (Graduate Competencies) for the South University Physician Assistant program.

Prior to graduation from the program, students will:

- PLO-1. Integrate behavioral, social, and medical knowledge established from the evolving biomedical and clinical sciences in recognizing, evaluating, and managing patient disease states across the lifespan during acute, chronic, preventative, and emergent encounters.
- PLO-2. Demonstrate the interpersonal and communication skills required to sustain effective, multi-directional information exchange within a diverse population of patients, their caregivers, and members of the healthcare team.
- PLO-3. Demonstrate the ability to elicit an accurate patient history, perform an appropriate physical examination, and perform appropriate clinical procedures using essential clinical and technical skills to provide quality patient care.
- PLO-4. Collaborate effectively as part of an interdisciplinary healthcare team through clinical reasoning and problem-solving skills to formulate a logical differential diagnosis, select and interpret appropriate diagnostic studies, and synthesize a comprehensive, patient-centered management plan for the promotion of wellness and disease prevention.
- PLO-5. Demonstrate the ability to interpret and integrate an evidence-based approach to clinical and professional practice through clinical reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making processes to improve patient care practices.
- PLO-6. Demonstrate professionalism through personal behaviors, sensitivity, and accountability essential to patients, society, and the profession.

Comprehensive Exams

Completion of the didactic phase of the curriculum requires completion of a formative evaluation. The formative evaluation consists of written, skills performance and professionalism components, is administered at the end of the didactic training period. This evaluation is used to identify individual and collective weaknesses within the cohort that should be remediated and strengthened during the clinical phase of the program.

Successful completion of the program requires satisfactory completion of a comprehensive summative evaluation. The comprehensive summative evaluation consisting of written, skills performance and professionalism evaluation components is administered up to four (4) months before the completion of the clinical training period.

The test is designed to evaluate student's mastery of multiple student learning outcomes in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains. This evaluation is used to identify competence for entry into the Physician Assistant profession and thus eligibility for graduation.

There are three (3) distinct components of the graduate candidate's summative evaluation; written exam, clinical performance and final professional evaluation. Each must be successfully completed in order to earn a passing grade for the senior seminar.

PA Certification

Graduation from an accredited physician assistant program permits students to sit for the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE), administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, Inc. (NCCPA). The PANCE is designed to assess essential medical and surgical knowledge of graduate Physician Assistants in conducting a variety of healthcare functions normally encountered in practice.

South University does not guarantee third-party certification/ licensure. Outside agencies control the requirements for taking and passing certification/licensing exams and are subject to change without notice to South University.

Master of Science in Physician Assistant (MSPA) Degree: 174 Credits

Didactic Phase (Physician Assistant Course Sequence)

1st Quarter: 17 Credits

Course Code	Title	Credits
PAS5100	Physical Diagnosis I	3.0
PAS5102	Medical Interviewing and Documentation	3.0
PAS5125	Medical Anatomy and Physiology I	4.0
PAS5135	Laboratory Diagnostics	3.0
PAS5173	Professional Seminar I	2.0
PAS5200	Physical Diagnosis Lab I	1.0
PAS5225	Medical Anatomy and Physiology I Lab	1.0

2nd Quarter: 21 Credits

Course Code	Title	Credits
PAS5115	Physical Diagnosis II	3.0
PAS5126	Medical Anatomy and Physiology II	4.0
PAS5370	Medical Ethics	2.0
PAS5180	Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics I	8.0
PAS5215	Physical Diagnosis Lab II	1.0
PAS5226	Medical Anatomy and Physiology II Lab	1.0
PAS5295	Applied Learning Experience I	1.0
PAS5480	Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics I Lab	1.0

3rd Quarter: 18 Credits

Course Code	Title	Credits
PAS5124	Essentials of Behavioral Medicine	3.0
PAS5130	Diagnostic Methods	4.0
PAS5181	Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics II	8.0
PAS5296	Applied Learning Experience II	2.0
PAS5481	Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics II Lab	1.0

4th Quarter: 21 Credits

Course Code	Title	Credits
PAS5143	Special Populations in Primary Care I	3.0
PAS5160	Public Health and Evidence Based Medicine	4.0
PAS5365	Surgery and Procedures I	4.0
PAS5182	Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics III	8.0
PAS5297	Applied Learning Experience III	1.0
PAS5482	Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics III Lab	1.0

5th Quarter: 23 Credits

Course Code	Title	Credits
PAS5144	Special Populations in Primary Care II	4.0
PAS5366	Surgery and Procedures II	2.0
PAS5174	Professional Seminar II	3.0
PAS5183	Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics IV	8.0
PAS5190	Essentials of Emergency Medicine	4.0
PAS5298	Applied Learning Experience IV	1.0
PAS5483	Clinical Medicine and Pharmacotherapeutics IV Lab	1.0

Didactic Phase Total: 100 Credits

Clinical Phase

Course Code	Title	Credits
PAS6200	Clinical Rotation I	8.0
PAS6205	Clinical Rotation II	8.0
PAS6210	Clinical Rotation III	8.0
PAS6215	Clinical Rotation IV	8.0
PAS6220	Clinical Rotation V	8.0
PAS6225	Clinical Rotation VI	8.0
PAS6230	Clinical Rotation VII	8.0
PAS6235	Clinical Rotation VIII	8.0
PAS6320	Special Topics in Clinical Practice I	2.0
PAS6330	Special Topics in Clinical Practice II	2.0
PAS6340	Special Topics in Clinical Practice III	2.0
PAS6350	Physician Assistant Senior Seminar	4.0

Clinical Phase Total: 74

The courses below are offered on an as needed basis:

Course Code	Title	Credits
PAS5499	Independent Study I	8.0
PAS5599	Independent Study II	8.0

Note(s):

No physician assistant credits from another institution may transfer into the didactic or clinical phase. Master of Science in Physician Assistant students must complete the entire 27-month program (174 credit hours) at South University.

Total Credits	174
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