

Physician Assistant

Degree Type

Master of Science (MS)

Admission Requirements

For information regarding Conditional Acceptance, click [here](#).

Procedure for Admission to the Master of 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 includes submission of scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE).

Applicants must specifically designate the South University code for each applicable 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)

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 the applicant's 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 submit scores from the GRE general exam directly to the CASPA service for the designated South University campus(es) to which they are applying.
- 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 <p>No course substitutions are accepted for this requirement</p>
	General Biology	2 courses Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Biology I (Lab recommended) • General Biology II (Lab recommended) <p>Alternative Substitution for Biology II only: Cell Biology, Genetics, Molecular Biology, Immunology</p>
	General Chemistry and Labs	2 courses Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Chemistry I with Lab • General Chemistry II with Lab
	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 and syllabi.

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.

Please refer to the Transfer of Credit Policy for additional information. All students must complete each course in the South University Physician Assistant curriculum.

Master of Science in Physician Assistant Program Technical Standards

To ensure that patients receive the best possible care, the faculty of the South University Physician Assistant (PA) program has identified essential skills and professional behaviors required for successful progression in the program and future practice as a physician assistant.

Students with physical, mental, or emotional disabilities who can perform these skills and behaviors, either independently, with dependable use of assistive devices, or by employing other reasonable accommodations, are eligible to apply for enrollment in the program. The program is committed to providing reasonable accommodation in accordance with applicable laws and professional standards while ensuring that all students are able to meet the required competencies for safe and effective patient care.

These technical standards require that each student possess the physical, mental, and emotional health necessary to fully engage in both the academic and clinical training environment. Minimum performance expectations include the ability to demonstrate accurate observation, effective communication, sufficient motor and physical function, intellectual and cognitive abilities, and appropriate behavioral and social attributes.

Students must meet the following technical standards:

1. Observation

- Accurately perceive information through vision, hearing, touch, and other somatic senses.
- Gather information from demonstrations, patient encounters, diagnostic tests, and clinical instruments.
- Detect nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, body language, and affect, both at a distance and close range.

2. Communication

- Communicate clearly and effectively in oral and written form with compassion and sensitivity.
- Engage in professional interactions with patients, families, faculty, peers, and healthcare teams.
- Document, interpret, and convey medical information accurately and efficiently.
- Recognize and appropriately respond to nonverbal communication and feedback

3. Motor and Physical Function

- Perform physical examination techniques such as palpation, auscultation, percussion, and diagnostic maneuvers.
- Execute essential motor tasks required for medical practice, including performing physical examinations, assisting with patient positioning for procedures, carrying out clinical and emergency interventions, and delivering routine patient care safely and effectively.
- Manipulate medical equipment, instruments, and technology with both fine and gross motor skills.
- Maintain physical stamina to meet the rigors of classroom, laboratory, and clinical settings (including long hours, varied shifts, and high patient care demands).

4. Intellectual and Cognitive Abilities

- Demonstrate skills in measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis, and synthesis.
- Integrate and apply information from lectures, simulations, patient encounters, and medical literature.
- Problem-solve efficiently in complex and dynamic clinical situations.
- Comprehend spatial and three-dimensional relationships essential for anatomy, imaging, and procedures.

5. Behavioral and Social Attributes

- Possess the emotional health and stability required for sound judgment, safe clinical decision-making, and effective patient care.
- Demonstrate integrity, compassion, professionalism, and ethical conduct in all academic, clinical, and community settings.
- Develop professional, respectful, and collaborative relationships maintaining appropriate boundaries with all patients, families, faculty, staff, and colleagues.
- Meet all professional and academic responsibilities in a timely and reliable manner, including attendance, preparation, participation, and follow-through on assignments and clinical duties.
- Exercise good judgment and self-control in both routine and stressful situations, avoiding behaviors that are disruptive, unsafe, or unprofessional.
- Adapt to stressful, changing, or uncertain environments while maintaining appropriate coping skills and a professional demeanor.
- Accept, integrate, and act upon constructive feedback to promote ongoing personal and professional growth.

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, medical assistant, 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 in awarding preference.

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
- American Heart Association (AHA) Approved Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification
- 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.

Clinical Experiential Learning and Travel Policy:

All students may be required to travel/commute and/or relocate for any given clinical rotation. While many rotations are located within a commutable distance from the program, students may be assigned to clinical rotation sites outside the local campus geographical area and should anticipate the need to travel or temporarily relocate for those assigned rotations. Students are responsible for all costs associated with travel, transportation, housing, credentialing, and living expenses during the clinical year. These expenses will vary based on the location of each clinical rotation site. [Please](#) refer to the program website for further details on clinical travel.

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

Program Overview

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 provide a broad range of medical services including 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, addressing barriers in healthcare delivery, and engaging in community outreach, we aim to offer meaningful connection and experiences for students, faculty, and staff. As future clinical leaders, the program's focus is to graduate physician assistants who will champion compassionate care and patient advocacy.

Mission Statement

The mission of the South University Physician Assistant (MSPA) program is to educate a diverse student population and prepare graduates to practice the art and science of medicine who provide high-quality, compassionate, patient-centered healthcare that is responsive to the needs of all individuals.

Program Goals

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

- The program will promote advocacy, and leadership within the PA profession.
- The program will prepare graduates to achieve a first-time pass rate on the Physician Assistant National Certification Exam (PANCE) that equals or exceeds the national average.
- The program will offer community service and outreach opportunities that promote a commitment to improving access to quality healthcare.

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 consists of three (3) distinct components: written examination, clinical skills performance, and professionalism evaluation. The summative evaluation is administered up to four (4) months before the completion of the clinical training period.

The summative is designed to evaluate student's mastery of multiple student program learning outcomes (graduate competencies) 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. Students who do not successfully pass any component of the summative evaluation are required to participate in a remediation plan devised by the Student Progress and Promotions Committee. Failure to successfully remediate any component of

the summative evaluation will require the student to decelerate to further demonstrate mastery of the required graduate competencies. Deceleration results in a student having a delay of graduation and assuming responsibility for additional tuition and fees. Students who are successful in their remediation and complete all program requirements for graduation will graduate at the end of the term in which all requirements are completed.

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.

Program Student Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate comprehensive medical knowledge to promote health, evaluate a broad range of patient presentations, and manage clinical conditions across the lifespan.
- Demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills to exchange information clearly and provide counseling and education to improve patient outcomes.
- Perform essential clinical skills in eliciting patient histories and conducting physical examinations.
- Perform essential procedures and technical skills common to clinical practice.
- Apply clinical reasoning and problem-solving in formulating differential diagnoses and developing patient-centered management plans.
- Exhibit essential professional behaviors in all interactions.
- Demonstrate appropriate use of healthcare resources in order to advocate for quality patient-centered care.

Student Progression Policy

[Master of Science in Physician Assistant Program Progression Policy](#)

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

The South University Physician Assistant Program, located in Austin, Richmond, Savannah, Tampa, and West Palm Beach, delivers the didactic curriculum as a full-time, primarily on-campus experience with some blended instruction that may include virtual, synchronous modalities. As a complement to the on-campus didactic curriculum, clinical subject matter experts are included to ensure students are provided with current standards of medical practice. The clinical curriculum and clinical rotations are primarily direct patient care experiences with blended telehealth/telemedicine opportunities.

Didactic Phase (Physician Assistant Course Sequence)

1st Quarter: 17 Credits

Course Code	Title	Quarter 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	Quarter 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	Quarter 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	Quarter 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	Quarter 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	Quarter 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	Quarter 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