



Physician Assistant Admission Timeline

HELPFUL LINKS

- [CASPA](#)
- [CASPA Program Directory](#)
- [Types of Physician Specialties](#)
- [Occupational Outlook Handbook- Physician Assistant](#)
- [Physician Assistant Education Association](#)

LOCAL PROGRAMS

- [UAMS PA Program](#)
- [Northeastern State \(OK\) PA Program](#)
- [Harding University PA Program](#)
- [Missouri State PA Program](#)
- [Drury University PA Program](#)

FRESHMAN YEAR

Fall:

- This is a time we encourage students to focus on academics, adjust to college curriculum, and explore multiple occupations.
- Investigate career information to identify what it means to be an occupational therapist and the admission requirements for physician assistant programs.

Spring:

- Join Pre-PA Club on HogSync and attend monthly meetings.
- Look for meaningful opportunities to become involved in research, job shadowing, volunteering, clubs, and mentoring. Note that direct patient care hours are incredibly important for your PA application.

Summer:

- Shadow at least one physician assistant. This is important timing because it can give you the reassurance you need to pursue the occupation but still gives you time to re-evaluate alternate career paths.
- Work, volunteer, research, or intern in the health field. **It is very important to get direct patient care early on.**

SOPHOMORE YEAR

Fall:

- Continue taking the core courses that are required by the PA programs. Focus on coursework and achieving a high GPA.
- Begin to research programs and program requirements using CAPSA's program directory. Identify 6-8 initial schools in which you will want to attend.
- Create a comprehensive list of pre-requisite courses indicated by all programs of interest. Work with your academic advisor to create a plan of how/when to complete all courses.

Spring:

- Continue to work, volunteer, research, job shadow or intern in the health field to gain direct patient care.
- Begin to familiarize yourself with CASPA (Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistant).
- Learn more about the GRE and research GRE prep courses opportunities or identify study materials.

Summer:

- Continue to work, volunteer, research, or intern in the health field to gain direct patient care hours.

JUNIOR YEAR

Fall:

- Make sure you have established well maintained relationships with your staff advisors, professors, and healthcare professionals. Start to consider from whom you can receive letters of recommendations. Will need 3-5 recommendation letters for application.
- Make sure ALL OBSERVATION HOURS have been completed. Double check number of required observation hours per PA program.
- Register for and take GRE (Graduate Record Examination).
- Begin writing personal statement draft, if required by PA programs.
- Continue to work, volunteer, research, or intern in the health field to gain direct patient care hours.

Spring:

- Prepare a "Plan B" if not admitted.
- Make sure to have all but 1 or 2 direct pre-requisite courses **COMPLETED** by end of spring, before application process begins.
- Make sure personal statement and resume has been reviewed by University Career Development Center and either faculty member or physician assistant.
- Continue to work, volunteer, research, or intern in the health field to gain direct patient care hours.

SUMMER:

- If you are intending to start your chosen program immediately following graduation, you should begin the application process, including requesting letters of recommendation from your professors. **CASPA will open at the end of April**
- Double check dates and deadlines and review, edit, and **SUBMIT CASPA APPLICATION EARLY.**
 - Determine how programs admit (rolling admissions, early decision, firm/soft deadlines)
- Submit transcripts, complete supplemental applications, and contact those who will be submitting LORs for you to check on progress.
- Continue to work, volunteer, research, or intern in the health field to gain direct patient care hours.

SENIOR YEAR

Fall:

- Submit CASPA applications **4-6 weeks prior to listed program deadline.**
- Prepare for interviews by participating in a mock interview.
- Continue to maintain a strong GPA.
- Continue to work, volunteer, research, or intern in the health field to gain direct patient care hours.

Spring: *this may need to be done earlier in the fall semester if admission decisions are made sooner.

- If admitted, make final decisions about your choice of school and notify schools you will not be attending.
- If admitted, pay seat deposit for the institution of your choice.
- If admitted to PA schools, apply for financial aid (FAFSA) by March 1st.

OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

DO NOT WAIT UNTIL FALL SEMESTER OF SENIOR YEAR TO BEGIN APPLICATIONS!!! Best practice is to have application completely submitted prior to fall semester beginning senior year.

RESEARCH: The Physician Assistants programs you are interested in. The first step in preparing for PA schools is finding out what programs you are interested in. A good place to start is the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA). CASPA provides you with information about several physician assistants programs and their timelines.

GPA: The higher the GPA, the more competitive you will be. Plan on applying to at least 6-8 programs at minimum. The national average is a cumulative 3.6 GPA and a science GPA of a 3.5.

CASPA FEES: The fees are \$179 to apply to the first program and \$55 for each additional program. There may also be supplemental fees for programs. Make sure to be aware of this and to have a financial plan.

GRE: Register for the GRE 2-3 months prior to taking it and take the GRE 6-8 weeks prior to the application start date. Start studying 3 months prior to taking the GRE. A score in the 50th percentile is Verbal 151, and Quantitative: 150, and Analytical: 40. Competitive score range is 300-310.

PREREQUISITES: Each school requires different prerequisites. Research each school carefully to make sure you have met all the requirements for the application.

REQUIRED/HIGHLY RECOMMENDED COURSES*

Human Anatomy/Lab (4 hours)	General Psychology (3 hours)	Medical Terminology (3 hours)
Human Physiology/Lab (4 hours)	Microbiology/Lab (4 hours)	Organic Chemistry/Lab (4-8 hours)
General Biology/Lab (8 hours)	Statistics (3 hours)	Cell Biology/Lab (4 hours)
General Chemistry/Lab (8 hours)	General Physics/Lab (8 hours)	Genetics (3 hours)
Philosophy/Ethics (3 hours)	3000/4000 level Biology courses (4-8 hours)	

*This is a typical example of what an PA school may require – make sure you check each school for their specific requirements.

Special Notes about Prerequisites:

Double check each program's AP/IB credit policy. Some programs may NOT accept AP or other test credit for direct pre-requisite courses. Or, some programs may only accept a certain percentage of AP credit.

DIRECT PATIENT CARE: Start volunteering and working with patients early on. Physician Assistants schools may require anywhere from **250-1400 direct patient care hours**. Double check prerequisites on CASPA to make sure you are getting the amount of direct patient care/observation hours you need.

Commonly Accepted Direct Patient Care:

- Athletic Trainer
- Dietitian
- Emergency Room Technician
- Home Health Aide
- Nurse Assistant/Aide
- Medical Assistant
- LPN/RN
- Occupational/Physical Therapy Technician or Aide
- Paramedic/EMT
- Phlebotomist

MEDICAL CERTIFICATIONS: Although medical certifications are not required for admission into PA programs, they can be a strong way to enhance your application and find paid opportunities to gain direct patient care hours. Common certifications are CPR/1st Aid, Medical Assistant, Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA), or Phlebotomist. Local NWA organizations to offer these certifications are UA Global, Petra Allied Health, or PRN Medical Services.

GAP YEAR: It is important to note that due to the amount the healthcare experience and direct patient care hours that are required/recommended by most PA programs, the average age of students entering PA programs is 24-27 years old. Do not be discouraged to consider a gap year after graduation. Most students can become a very competitive applicant if they are productive during that time to obtain direct patient care hours.