



# PRE-PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT FACT SHEET

## PREREQUISITE & RECOMMENDED COURSES

There is some variability among prerequisite courses required by PA schools. Students should research potential schools carefully to be aware of all prerequisite courses and admissions policies. Pre-PA students who complete the following courses should be well-prepared to apply to many PA programs. Some Pre-PA students will plan to complete academic prerequisites and additional patient care experience during the senior year and apply after graduation.

### PREREQUISITES MOST OFTEN REQUIRED BY PA PROGRAMS:

- General Biology I & II w/ Labs - 8 hours - BIO 201/205 & BIO 202/206
- General Chemistry I & II w/ Labs - 8 hours - CHM 203/204 & CHM 205/206
- Organic Chemistry I & II w/ Labs - 8 hours - CHM 321/322 & CHM 323/324
- Biochemistry - 3 hours - CHM 371 (non-CHM majors), or CHM 383 (CHM majors)
- Microbiology - 3 hours - BIO 350 or BIO 452/453
- Human Anatomy w/ Lab - 4 hours - EXS 331 or PHA 310/311
- Physiology w/ Lab - 3-4 hours - BIO 449/450 or EXS 320
- Statistics - 3 hours - Many options for courses developing competency
- Psychology - 6 hours - required courses vary; typically General, Abnormal and/or Lifespan
- English - 6 hours - must include one composition course
- Medical Terminology - 1 hour - OTD 215

### ADDITIONAL NOTES

- Some PA programs recommend (or may require) the following courses: College Math, Genetics, Immunology, Social Sciences, Languages, and/or Public Speaking.
- Applicants should research individual schools to be certain of their admissions policies regarding accepting AP/CLEP/IB, dual-enrollment, and community college courses to satisfy prerequisites.

## CO-CURRICULAR EXPECTATIONS

### PATIENT CARE EXPERIENCE

Most PA programs have requirements for direct patient care experience that range from 100-4000 hours. Even programs without a stated number of required hours expect competitive applicants to have patient care experience. Students can gain some of this experience through volunteering in healthcare settings, however, it is typically best gained through employment. Students can seek jobs as CNAs, EMTs, phlebotomists, and similar positions.

### VOLUNTEER & SERVICE

It is important to demonstrate sustained commitment over time. Students should have service experiences in healthcare and non-healthcare settings. Check out the Schlegel Center for Service and Justice for opportunities: [blogs.creighton.edu/ccsj](https://blogs.creighton.edu/ccsj)

### LEADERSHIP & TEAMWORK

Students must demonstrate leadership and interpersonal skills. Consider initiating group projects, serving as an officer in a student organization, or working as a teaching assistant. Students must also demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively.

### SHADOWING

Students must gain knowledge of the profession by shadowing professionals in their field. It is recommended that students shadow both primary care PAs and PAs in specialty areas, if possible, to gain a better understanding of the different settings in which PAs practice.

### RESEARCH

Research experience is not a requirement for admission to PA programs, but may add an extra layer to an application if the student is particularly interested in research. See the Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship for opportunities at: [www.creighton.edu/curas](http://www.creighton.edu/curas).

## BECOMING A COMPETITIVE APPLICANT

Competitive applicants to PA programs must complete a bachelor's degree along with the pre-PA course prerequisites. Competitive applicants have solid academic records, well-rounded co-curricular experiences, robust experience working directly with patients, supportive letters of recommendation, and can clearly articulate their reasons for choosing the PA profession.

## SELECTING A MAJOR

Students are encouraged to choose a major where they can demonstrate strong overall academic performance, while also focusing on developing a solid foundation in the sciences. Ideally, a major should be based on student interests and should support an alternate career. PA programs look for students who demonstrate the academic ability to handle rigorous course loads.

## GRADES & GPA

C is an honorable grade. However, grades below B, especially within the two academic years leading up to PA school application, could interfere with admission. Faced with a likely grade below C, some students should withdraw (W) and later try for a higher grade. Students should consult with advisors as they decide. More than two W's could indicate a lack of judgment or an inability to handle challenges in PA school.

GPA's calculated on PA school applications include coursework done at all colleges attended and all attempts at a course.

**Aim for GPA's of 3.5 or above.**

## CREIGHTON PRE-HEALTH RESOURCES

Pre-Health Advisors in the Center for Advising Resources & Support are available to meet with students individually about their pre-health goals and path.

The Pre-Professional Communities assist students in exploring the medical profession, gaining experience in healthcare, and preparing for the application process. Students should participate in PHLC 200 in their sophomore year and in PPA 300 in their junior or senior year (depending on the student's application timeline).

## COURSE SCHEDULING CONSIDERATIONS

Freshmen and sophomores usually take only two natural science or math subjects each semester.

**Chemistry:** General Chemistry I (CHM 203/204) and General Chemistry II (CHM 205/206) are typical choices for freshman fall and spring. To be eligible to take General Chemistry in the freshman year, students must achieve a sufficient score on the Quantitative Assessment for New Students (QANS). Students who do not achieve a sufficient QANS score will need to complete an introductory chemistry course, CHM 105, with a grade of "C" or better to progress to CHM 203.

**Biology:** General Biology I (BIO 201/205) and General Biology II (BIO 202/206) are typical choices for freshman fall and spring. Completion of either General Chemistry I (CHM 203) with a grade of "C" or better or Introductory Chemistry (CHM 105) with a grade of "B" or better is required in order to take General Biology II.

**Math:** Pre-PA students will take a Mathematical Reasoning course for the Magis Core. The math course they choose will depend on their preparation and major of choice.

**Summer:** Science courses may be taken in the summer, but only when there are good reasons for doing so (not just a vague desire to "catch up") and not at community colleges. Speak with a Pre-Health Advisor about timelines.

### Sample First Semester Schedule

\*Course sequencing may vary depending on a student's readiness\*

- General Biology I w/ Lab (4 hours)
- General Chemistry I w/ Lab (4 hours)
- Magis Core Class (3 or 4 hours) - ENG or Critical Issues & COM 101
- Magis Core Class (3 hours) - PHL or THL
- Maybe another Magis Core Class (3 hours) - PSY, SOC or Foreign Language
- RSP Class (.5 hours)

## PA SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS

### ADMISSION TESTS

Many PA programs require the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). Students typically take the GRE 12-15 months before they intend to start PA school. There are no specific courses students must take prior to the exam, but students should spend time preparing for the exam to ensure they earn a score that meets minimum admissions requirements for programs of interest.

### CENTRALIZED APPLICATION SERVICE FOR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS (CASPA)

Students apply to PA programs using CASPA. Students submit information that is transmitted to all schools they are applying to, as well as program-specific materials that go to individual programs. CASPA opens annually on the last Thursday in April for the new application cycle.

### LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Students must submit at least three, and up to five, letters of recommendation with their application. PA programs vary in their requirements for letters. Students should obtain at least one letter from a professor who taught the student in a science course. Some schools may require a letter from a PA. Research individual schools for letter requirements.

### INTERVIEWS

Many PA programs interview promising applicants. Creighton undergraduate applicants to Creighton's MPAS are not guaranteed an interview, but all applicants benefit from the holistic review done by admissions. The John P. Fahey Career Center offers interview preparation assistance, including mock interviews.

## PRE-PA GROUPS & RESOURCES

### PRE-PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT CLUB

All pre-PA students should participate in the Pre-PA Cub. This student organization provides leadership opportunities to further explore and gain experience in the PA profession. Learn more on CU Involved: <https://cuinvolved.creighton.edu/organization/pre-pa>

### CU MASTER'S OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES (MPAS)

Make an appointment with the admissions office personnel in the spring of the year applying to personalize the application process.

### HELPFUL LINKS

- CU MPAS | [medschool.creighton.edu/program/physician-assistant-mpas](https://medschool.creighton.edu/program/physician-assistant-mpas)
- Physician Assistant Education Association | [paeonline.org](https://paeonline.org)