

# Physician Assistant Programs Preparation Guidelines

Each path to PA school is different. This guide is intended to help you navigate your own path.

## Every Semester you should plan to:

1. Successfully complete pre-professional coursework
2. Maintain excellent grades (3.5 and above to be competitive). Math and science coursework is especially critical.
3. Keep your legal and student behavior records clean! These records can impact both admissions and professional licensure
4. Explore and participate in meaningful activities and experience.
5. Get to know your faculty and instructors and meet with a Pre-Health Advisor

## Freshman Year – Year 1

### School Year

- Focus on your academics; practice time management; seek help early if needed
- Research PA Programs of interest; pre-requisites and healthcare experience requirements vary by each PA School – early research will help you plan courses and experiences - <https://paeonline.org/our-programs>
- Start a resume - track activities and experiences; journal observations
- Be active; go to fairs and events and join the Pre-PA Club student organization
- Explore service opportunities in the Fall and participate in the Spring
- Explore majors based on interests; all majors are equal to PA school admissions
- Explore healthcare employment opportunities for summer (Spring)
- Register for PHLC 200 for your sophomore year (Spring)

**TIP: Volunteer in your Freshman year – start with medically-related opportunities!**

### Summer

*If listed, choose what works for you*

- Seek healthcare employment if possible – direct patient care experience is vital for PA programs
- Participate in medically-related volunteering
- Work at a Summer camp with a healthcare focus
- Seek shadowing opportunities
- Find experiences for next year

## Sophomore Year – Year 2

### School Year

- Choose a major based on your interests
- Continue participation in meaningful activities and experiences; especially direct patient care experience whether paid or volunteer
- Calculate completed Biology, Chemistry, Physics courses GPA
- Continue to research PA school requirements and deadlines for pre-reqs and healthcare experience hours; if required
- Register for PPA 300 for your Junior year if planning to apply after Junior year (Spring)
- If you want to apply after Senior year, request Guest status in PPA 300

**TIP: Focus on non-medical volunteering, shadowing, and healthcare employment.**

### Summer

- Look into Summer Health Professions Exploration Program (SHPEP) if interested
- Begin or continue experience(s) in: healthcare employment, medically-related service, non-medical service, PA shadowing
- Consider Study Abroad / Service Abroad if interested

## Junior Year - Year 3 - IF Applying to Start PA School after Senior Year

### School Year

- Talk to a Pre-Health Advisor, review readiness and timeline to apply
- Participate in PPA 300 Pre-PA Seminar
- In the fall decide when to take the GRE; allow some time for preparation
- Research selection factors: GPA, Letters of Rec, healthcare experience hours, deadlines
- Identify who to ask for Letters of Recommendation (Fall)
- Brainstorm your personal statement and write draft by Spring
- By February, ask letter writers; follow-up with email and letter requirements
- Review Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistant (CASPA) (Spring)
- If eligible, apply for Fee Assistance Program for CASPA fees (early Spring)
- Maintain high grades and keep participating in meaningful activities
- In April/May begin entering information into your CASPA application

**TIP: Focus on patient experiences, shadowing experiences and non-medical service experiences.**

### Summer

- Submit Primary Application by early June!
- Order transcripts to submit with Primary Application
- Take the GRE by early July; sooner if possible
- Be prepared for programs requiring a secondary application; sometimes an additional essay
- Check Letters of Rec received
- Contact schools to check your file is complete – most schools will not interview until it is
- Consider your options if a PA school application is not successful the first time - explore Gap Year options to be prepared
- Follow up on your application status: Transcripts sent? Letters received? Academic Update?

### Senior Year – Year 4 – IF Applying to Start PA School after Graduation

Fall Semester	Spring Semester
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete any program-specific application requirements; secondary apps and essays</li> <li>Check your status in the application/admission process</li> <li>Continue to get good grades, pursue meaningful co-curricular, and experiential activities</li> <li>Update individual schools on experiences completed after submitting primary application</li> <li>Research financial options for PA school</li> <li>Interview at PA schools; schedule a practice Interview with the Career Center once you have interviews scheduled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow rules of application and acceptances</li> <li>Make interim and final decisions about PA school choice</li> <li>Notify schools not attending before deadline given</li> <li>Complete and submit IRS and financial aid forms</li> </ul>

### Junior Year - Year 3 - IF APPLYING AFTER SENIOR YEAR –(OR TAKING A GAP YEAR)

School Year	Summer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review your timeline with a Pre-Health Advisor; Identify areas of your application that can be strengthened over the next four semesters (Fall)</li> <li>Enroll as a Guest Participant in PPA 300</li> <li>Maintain high academic performance; figure your science GPA again</li> <li>Continue participation in meaningful activities and experiences</li> <li>Explore Gap Year options: healthcare employment, volunteer, academic, etc. and apply</li> <li>Continue to build faculty relationships and seek mentoring from PA students and PAs</li> <li>Register for full participation in PPA 300 in your Senior Year (Spring)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take the GRE exam anytime in Summer or plan to take in Senior year</li> <li>Continue participation in meaningful activities and experiences</li> <li><b>TIP: By Year 4 - have experience with patients, at least two shadowing experiences, be active in non-medical service experience, If interested explore research opportunities</b></li> </ul>

### Senior Year - Year 4 - IF APPLYING AFTER GRADUATION – (GAP YEAR)

School Year	Summer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk to a Pre-Health Advisor, review readiness and timeline to apply</li> <li>Participate in PPA 300</li> <li>If not taken, schedule to take GRE no later than June or July</li> <li>Research selection factors: GPA, Letters of Rec, healthcare experience hours, deadlines</li> <li>Decide who to ask to write a Letter of Recommendation for you (Fall)</li> <li>Brainstorm your personal statement and write draft by Spring</li> <li>By February, ask letter writers; follow-up with email and letter requirements</li> <li>Review CASPA requirements (Spring)</li> <li>If eligible, apply for Fee Assistance for CASPA fees (Early spring)</li> <li>Continue participating in meaningful activities, especially direct patient care experience and PA shadowing if needed</li> <li>In April/May begin entering information into your CASPA application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit Primary Application by June</li> <li>Order transcripts for Primary Application</li> <li>Take the GRE by July (if not completed yet)</li> <li>Follow up on application status: Transcripts sent? Letters received?</li> <li>Complete program-specific requirements in order to submit a complete application</li> <li>Follow up with PA schools to ensure your file is complete – most schools will not interview until it is</li> <li>Potentially, begin Gap Year experience after graduation, or prepare for a program in Fall</li> </ul>

### GAP YEAR Following Graduation

Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin healthcare employment for patient care experience or begin post-baccalaureate or Special Master's program immediately following graduation, if academic enhancement necessary</li> <li>Check your file is complete at each PA school</li> <li>Check your status in the application/admission process</li> <li>If you are in an academic program, get good grades</li> <li>Continue meaningful experiential activities; you can often UPDATE individual PA schools on additional experience after submitting your primary application</li> <li>Interview at PA schools; schedule a practice interview with the Career Center once your interviews are scheduled at PA schools</li> <li>Research financial options for PA school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow rules of application and acceptances</li> <li>Make interim and final decisions about PA school choice</li> <li>Notify schools not attending before deadline given</li> <li>Complete and submit IRS and financial aid forms</li> </ul>

### Summer before PA school matriculation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare for PA school enrollment – purchase books, make living arrangements, and attend orientation programs</li> <li>Follow-up on all financial aid forms and deadlines</li> <li>Take time to Relax. Congratulations!</li> </ul>
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