

# PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES (GRAD)

The Division of Physician Assistant Studies in the Department of Health Sciences offers a rigorous and comprehensive 100+ credit hour master of health science in physician assistant studies degree with a focus on a generalist curriculum.

The curriculum is divided into a preclinical and a clinical phase. The preclinical phase functions to lay the foundation for students in their achievement of all program-defined competencies: Medical Knowledge, Patient Care, Professionalism and Cultural Sensitivity and Humility, Interpersonal and Communication Skills, Systems-Based Practice and Self-Assessment and Ongoing Professional Development. This is done through multiple teaching and educational modalities, including lecture-based and experiential learning and ultimately prepares students to progress to the clinical phase.

The clinical phase of the curriculum enables students to build upon the knowledge acquired in the preclinical phase and develop skills to apply that knowledge in a variety of real-world healthcare environments and experiences. To achieve this, students rotate through core and elective Structured Clinical Professional Experiences (SCPEs). During these experiences and under the supervision of a qualified preceptor, students assess patients, establish diagnoses, present patient information to healthcare team members and work within the team to develop and enact a plan of care. The primary goal of the clinical phase is for the student to gain practical experience, further develop skills as a healthcare practitioner and learn the role of the physician assistant, as well as other members of the healthcare team.

## Mission

The UNC Physician Assistant Program is honored to serve the mission of the UNC School of Medicine. We are dedicated to promoting high-quality, accessible, patient-centered health care for the people of North Carolina and the nation through excellence in education, scholarship and clinical service. The UNC PA Program is committed to the healthcare and workforce needs of North Carolinians and will use an interprofessional approach to prepare skilled and compassionate health care practitioners across the continuum of life.

## Competencies

Graduates of the program must possess the knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgements to function in a broad variety of clinical situations and to render a wide spectrum of patient care. They must demonstrate the capacity to develop academic and emotional maturity and leadership skills to function in a medical team. These are reflected in the program's competencies, which are adapted from the AAPA and PAEA competencies:

### Medical Knowledge

- MK1: Demonstrate comprehension of basic sciences as it pertains to the human body and overall health, from conception to death, including anatomy, physiology and genetics.
- MK2: Apply understanding of human physiology and the pathophysiology of commonly presenting disorders to identify signs and symptoms of these disease states across the lifespan.
- MK3: Apply clinical reasoning and critical thinking to develop both a differential diagnosis and most likely diagnosis by discerning

between normal and abnormal features of commonly presenting disorders.

- MK4: Formulate and recommend an appropriate, efficient, and cost-conscious diagnostic workup.
- MK5: Formulate and recommend an appropriate pharmacologic and/or non-pharmacologic management strategy in caring for healthy and ill patients across the lifespan.
- MK6: Formulate and recommend appropriate health maintenance, care and screening strategies for patients across the life span.

### Patient Care

- PC1: Apply comprehension of human anatomy, physiology and pathophysiology to obtain complete and focused medical histories and perform comprehensive and focused physical examinations.
- PC2: Employ clinical knowledge in patient care settings to develop differential and most likely diagnoses and appropriately utilize clinical findings and/or diagnostics to promote medical decision-making.
- PC3: Formulate and recommend patient-centered plans with consideration of each individual patient and their circumstances.
- PC4: Provide effective patient education and counseling emphasizing the promotion of personal and public health in accordance with the patient's circumstances and values.

### Professionalism & Cultural Humility

- PCH1: Consistently exhibit respect in interactions with peers, faculty, staff, patients, families and members of the healthcare team.
- PCH2: Foster collaboration with team members to enhance learning and optimize patient care.
- PCH3: Display personal accountability and engage in self-reflection, recognizing limitations and embracing constructive feedback.
- PCH4: Consistently practice cultural humility with peers, faculty, staff, patients, families and healthcare team members.
- PCH5: Apply ethical principles and adhere to state and federal laws in both educational and clinical settings, adhering to professional standards in the physician assistant profession.

### Interpersonal & Communication Skills

- ICS1: Effectively communicate information and ideas with peers, faculty, staff, patients, families and healthcare team members.
- ICS2: Deliver concise and accurate patient information in the form of an oral presentation.
- ICS3: Compose concise and accurate medical documentation that demonstrates clear clinical reasoning and promotes comprehension by peers.

### Systems-Based Practice

- SBP1: Appreciate and navigate the influences that affect patients' access to and utilization of healthcare, including payor systems, health literacy and cultural, societal, environmental, socioeconomic and legal factors.
- SBP2: Effectively collaborate with healthcare team members within various practice environments to deliver high quality, patient-centered care.

### Self-Assessment & Ongoing Professional Development

- SAPD1: Engage in practice-based and self-directed learning using peer-reviewed and evidence-based resources.

- SAPD2: Demonstrate a systematic approach to develop clinical questions, interpret novel medical literature and promote evidence-based clinical practice in both academic and healthcare settings.

## Master of Health Sciences in Physician Assistant Studies (M.H.S.)

### Requirements for Admission

Applicants must meet the following minimum requirements:

1. Application submitted through the Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA).
2. Minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 OR a GPA of at least 3.0 for the last 60 credit hours of coursework.
3. Bachelor's degree conferred from a regionally accredited institution in the US.
4. Minimum cumulative prerequisite GPA of 3.2. Please see the program's Admissions Requirements (<https://www.med.unc.edu/healthsciences/unc-pa/admissions/>) for more detail regarding prerequisite coursework.
5. A minimum of 1,000 of paid, direct, hands-on patient care.
6. Three letters of recommendation with at least one letter from a practicing physician assistant.
7. Prospective students should also review the technical standards (<https://www.med.unc.edu/healthsciences/unc-pa/technical-standards/>) for the program prior to applying.

IMPORTANT: Not all courses are offered every year/every term. Students should check with the DGS or SSM before registering for classes.

### Graduate-level Courses

#### PASC 701. Human Anatomy. 4 Credits.

This one semester clinical anatomy unit prepares the student for clinical practice with an understanding of functional and applied anatomy stressing the normal surface landmarks and common clinical findings. Cadaver gross dissections and prosections, anatomical models, lectures, and electronic resources are utilized in this course.

##### Rules & Requirements

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

#### PASC 702. Physiology. 2 Credits.

Physiology is presented to the student to reinforce the importance of physiology and pathophysiology to the study of clinical medicine. The course is structured into units in an organ system approach, correlating the basic sciences with clinical applications.

##### Rules & Requirements

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

#### PASC 703. Foundations of Medical Science. 2 Credits.

This one semester course is an introduction to the genetic and molecular mechanisms of disease; biochemistry; microbiology.

##### Rules & Requirements

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

#### PASC 704. History & Physical Examination. 4 Credits.

This semester long course introduces the student to the art of acquiring a patient history and performing the physical examination. Instruction in interpersonal and communication skills resulting in effective acquiring of patient history and collaboration with a diverse population of patients, families, and other health professionals will be incorporated.

##### Rules & Requirements

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

#### PASC 705. Professional Practice and Health Systems I. 1 Credits.

This two part course provides an introduction and more in depth understanding of the social, regulatory, ethical, and professional aspects of the PA profession.

##### Rules & Requirements

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

#### PASC 710. Clinical Medicine I. 4 Credits.

This is the first of three didactic Clinical Medicine courses presented in the first year and will cover infectious diseases, cardiology including EKG, hematology/oncology, and pulmonology.

##### Rules & Requirements

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

#### PASC 711. Pharmacology and Therapeutics I. 3 Credits.

This course is the introductory course in a three semester pharmacotherapeutics curriculum. This first section will introduce the student to the basic principles of pharmacodynamics, pharmacokinetics, drug metabolism, drug interactions, and adverse reactions.

##### Rules & Requirements

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

#### PASC 713. Diagnostic Methods I. 2 Credits.

This course provides instruction in the essentials of ordering, interpreting and performing diagnostic studies used in the screening, diagnosis, management and monitoring of disease.

##### Rules & Requirements

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

#### PASC 720. Clinical Medicine II. 8 Credits.

The course will concentrate on the etiology, pathophysiology, clinical presentation, diagnosis, treatment, management and prevention of disease across the human life span; organized into an organ system approach.

##### Rules & Requirements

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

#### PASC 721. Pharmacology and Therapeutics II. 2 Credits.

The course will concentrate on therapeutic applications of drugs for various organ systems integrated with the clinical medicine units being taught during this semester.

##### Rules & Requirements

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 722. Patient Assessment I. 3 Credits.**

Patient Assessment I & II are designed to develop the knowledge and skills required to obtain and record the complete medical history, use the appropriate equipment, techniques, and medical terminology to document findings; develop a differential diagnosis and diagnostic work-up and suggest a treatment plan.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 723. Diagnostic Methods II. 1 Credits.**

The essentials of ordering, interpreting and performing diagnostic studies used in the screening, diagnosis, management and monitoring of disease. Topics for this course are congruent with Clinical Medicine II.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 727. Behavioral Medicine. 2 Credits.**

This course is an introduction to psychiatric disorders and behavioral medicine. Presented in lecture and seminar format the major psychiatric disorders are studied.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 728. Medical Spanish. 1 Credits.**

This course will teach students the basics of the Spanish language as it applies to the medical field, including use of Spanish in collection of a medical history and physical examination, emergency settings, evaluation of common disease states within the Latinx and Hispanic populations, and presenting a care plan. This course will enable students to apply their concurrent learning in clinical medicine to participate in communication with the Latinx patient population.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Requisites:** Prerequisite, PASC 704, PASC 710; Corequisite, PASC 722, PASC 720.

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 730. Clinical Medicine III. 5 Credits.**

This is the third of three didactic Clinical Medicine courses presented in the first year and will cover genito-urology, orthopedic, HEENT, pediatrics, geriatrics, and dermatology topics.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 731. Pharmacology and Therapeutics III. 3 Credits.**

This course builds on the previous two courses and concentrates on the clinical pharmacotherapeutics.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 732. Patient Assessment II. 3 Credits.**

Patient Assessment I & II are designed to develop the knowledge and skills required to obtain and record the complete medical history, use the appropriate equipment, techniques, and medical terminology to document findings; develop a differential diagnosis and diagnostic work-up and suggest a treatment plan.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 733. Diagnostic Methods III. 2 Credits.**

The essentials of ordering, interpreting and performing diagnostic studies used in the screening, diagnosis, management and monitoring of disease. Topics for this course are congruent with Clinical Medicine III.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 734. Fundamentals of Surgery. 3 Credits.**

This course is designed to orient the student to the fundamentals of surgical practice including basic clinical procedures, sterile procedure, anesthesia, suturing, and common office procedures.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 735. Professional Practice and Health Systems II. 1 Credits.**

This two-part course provides an introduction and more in-depth understanding of the social, regulatory, ethical, and professional aspects of the PA profession. In the second part of the course, students will be introduced to providing medical care to racial, ethnic, and socioeconomically diverse patients in a fluid and changing health care system.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 736. Evidence-Based Medicine I. 2 Credits.**

This one semester course is an introduction to Evidence-based Medicine (EBM), and prepares the student for EBM II which culminates in the senior year capstone project. Evidence based-medicine provides tools to assist clinicians to make accurate diagnoses and select optimal treatment for their patients.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 800. Supervised Clinical Experience: Family Medicine. 4 Credits.**

This four-week clinical course provides students with the opportunity to learn, understand, and gain supervised experience in practicing principles of ambulatory care medicine in a Family Medicine setting. Students will have exposure to the spectrum of ambulatory practice, to include care of adults and geriatrics in routine preventive medicine and care of acute and chronic disease, as well as pediatrics.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 801. Supervised Clinical Experience: Internal Medicine. 4 Credits.**

This four-week clinical course provides students with the opportunity to learn, understand, and gain supervised experience in practicing principles of inpatient medicine. This rotations focus is for the student to learn the indications for admission to the hospital and the care of hospitalized patients. Students are expected to complete a minimum of 160 clinical hours (40 hours per week) in a clinical setting and anticipated 28 hours of studying, case documentation, and other course activities/requirements.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 802. Surgical Medicine Supervised Clinical Experience. 4 Credits.**

This rotation provides experience in the management of patients with surgical

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 803. Pediatric Medicine Supervised Clinical Experience. 4 Credits.**

This rotation provides the student exposure to the care of neonates, infants, children and adolescents. The student will further refine the skills of history taking and physical examination specific to the pediatric population.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 804. OB GYN Medicine Supervised Clinical Experience. 4 Credits.**

This course provides the student an opportunity to gain experience in common gynecological conditions. The student learns about screening for breast and gynecologic cancers, normal and abnormal menstrual patterns, infectious diseases, and family planning.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 805. Behavioral Medicine Supervised Clinical Experience. 4 Credits.**

The student will be exposed to and participate in the care of patients with psychiatric illnesses and psychosocial disorders. The student will develop skills counseling patients, communicating with family members of patients living with these conditions, and managing common out-patient illnesses.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 807. Emergency Medicine Supervised Clinical Experience. 4 Credits.**

This rotation provides in-depth exposure to the illnesses and injuries that necessitate emergency care across the life continuum. Students will interview, evaluate, and examine patients presenting to the Emergency Department and present patients cared for to the precepting clinician. Emergency procedures and treatment will be guided by the clinical preceptor.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 808. Supervised Clinical Experience: Medicine Core Elective I. 4 Credits.**

In addition to the above required core rotations the student is given the option of electing 2 rotations of their choice. For example subjects can include: Cardiology, ENT, ID, Trauma/Burns, Psychiatry, Orthopedics.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 809. Supervised Clinical Experience: Medicine Core Elective II. 4 Credits.**

In addition to the above required core rotations the student is given the option of electing 2 rotations of their choice. For example subjects can include: Cardiology, ENT, ID, Trauma/Burns, Psychiatry, Orthopedics.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 810. Supervised Clinical Experience: Elective 3. 4 Credits.**

This four-week clinical course provides the UNC Chapel Hill MHSPAS physician assistant student with additional opportunities to learn, understand, and gain supervised experience in practicing principles of primary and/or specialty care medicine. The focus of the primary care learning experience is to educate the UNC Chapel Hill MHSPAS physician assistant student in the diagnosis, management, and treatment of patients in ambulatory primary and/or specialty care.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Requisites:** Pre- or corequisite, PASC 800.

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 811. Supervised Clinical Experience: Elective I. 2 Credits.**

This two-week clinical course provides students with the opportunity to learn, understand, and gain supervised experience in an area of special interest in but was unable to experience during other rotations. Students are expected to complete a minimum of 80 clinical hours on rotation (40 hours per week) in a clinical setting. In addition, students are expected to complete at least 14 hours (1 hour per day) studying, patient encounter logging and additional course activities/requirements.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Requisites:** Pre- or corequisites, PASC 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 807, 808, 809, 810, and 812.

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 812. Supervised Clinical Experience: Elective II. 2 Credits.**

This two-week clinical course provides students with the opportunity to learn, understand, and gain supervised experience in an area of special interest in but was unable to experience during other rotations. Students are expected to complete a minimum of 80 clinical hours on rotation (40 hours per week) in a clinical setting. In addition, students are expected to complete at least 14 hours (1 hour per day) studying, patient encounter logging and additional course activities/requirements.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Requisites:** Pre- or corequisites, PASC 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 807, 808, 809, 810, and 811.

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 820. Clinical Seminar I. 1 Credits.**

This course will augment students clinical experiences by reinforcing acquisition of medical knowledge, supporting development of interpersonal communication skills, distinguishing traits that promote professional excellence, implementing improvements in practice performance by applying critically appraised medical literature, and recognizing the impact of systems-based processes on individual patient care. Topics will be presented in a sequence that prepares students to transition from student role to that of an autonomous member of a physician/physician assistant team.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 821. Clinical Seminar II. 1 Credits.**

This course is designed to augment students clinical experiences by reinforcing acquisition of medical knowledge, supporting development of interpersonal communication skills, distinguishing traits that promote professional excellence, implementing improvements in practice performance by applying critically appraised medical literature, and recognizing the impact of systems-based processes on individual patient care. Topics will be presented in a sequence that prepares students to transition from student role to that of an autonomous member of a physician/physician assistant team.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Requisites:** Prerequisite, PASC 820.

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

**PASC 822. Clinical Seminar III. 1 Credits.**

This course is designed to augment students clinical experiences by reinforcing acquisition of medical knowledge, supporting development of interpersonal communication skills, distinguishing traits that promote professional excellence, implementing improvements in practice performance by applying critically appraised medical literature, and recognizing the impact of systems-based processes on individual patient care. Topics will be presented in a sequence that prepares students to transition from student role to that of an autonomous member of a physician/physician assistant team.

**Rules & Requirements**

**Requisites:** Pre- or corequisite, PASC 821.

**Grading Status:** Letter grade.

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Visit Program Website (<https://www.med.unc.edu/healthsciences/unc-pa/>)

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