



Physician Assistant Program Prerequisites

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Both academic work and hands-on patient care experience must be completed prior to applying to the program. Admissions requirements and procedures are reviewed and revised annually. Updates are generally made on our web page in mid-March. It is the applicant's responsibility to review the most current information prior to applying.

The Program reserves the right on a case-by-case basis to interview and accept individuals whose GPAs and patient care experience hours are outside the defined ranges of those stated as prerequisites if the Admissions Committee considers that these individuals demonstrate potential. See [FAQ section](#) regarding Application Evaluation.

Individuals who hold a prior doctoral degree from an accredited US institution in a health or science field (MD, PhD, DrPH, DVM, ScD) may have individual prerequisite course requirements waived at the sole discretion of the Program Director.

PA shadowing is not a prerequisite. However, we highly recommend it in order to acquire a solid understanding of the PA role.

Due to the high volume of requests, we are **unable to pre-review transcripts** prior to your actually applying to the program. However, we can answer general questions about the program that are not addressed on our website. You can call us at 617.373.3195 or email us at paprogram@neu.edu. **Please note that during the height of the application cycle (August through December), we may not be able to respond to your emails until after the start of the new year.**

The GRE is not required.

Academics

The following academic work must be completed prior to applying by the August 1 deadline. Please review the [FAQ section](#) on course prerequisites for additional guidelines and explanations.

Bachelor's degree in any major from a regionally accredited institution

- * Overall GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale as calculated on the CASPA application.
- * Science GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale as calculated on the CASPA application.

2 semesters of biology lecture (basic or upper level) plus 1 biology lab

- * Lectures and labs must be taken at a regionally accredited **4-year institution only**.
- * Courses taken at a 2-year community college will **not** fulfill biology prerequisites, even if they were accepted to fulfill requirements for your bachelor's degree.
- * Biology **lecture** courses may be taken **in-class or online**.
- * Biology **lab** course must be taken **in-class only**.
- * Combined biology lecture and lab courses must be 4-credit courses. Courses with only 3 credits generally do not include a lab component.
- * Must be taken within 10 years of applying to the program.
- * Grades of solid B or better are required in both lecture and lab components.
- * A solid B or better in **any combination** of basic and upper level biology lecture courses including, but not limited to, general biology, genetics, microbiology, immunology, pathophysiology, infectious disease, cell biology, etc. Upper level biology courses will satisfy this requirement. You need not re-take basic biology courses.

2 semesters of chemistry lecture (basic or upper level) plus 1 chemistry lab

- * Lectures and labs must be taken at a regionally accredited **4-year institution only**.
- * Courses taken at a 2-year community college will **not** fulfill chemistry prerequisites, even if they were accepted to fulfill requirements for your bachelor's degree.
- * Chemistry **lecture** courses may be taken **in-class or online**.
- * Chemistry **lab** course must be taken **in-class only**.
- * Combined chemistry lecture and lab courses must be 4-credit courses. Courses

with only 3 credits generally do not include a lab component.

- * Must be taken within 10 years of applying to the program.
- * Grades of solid B or better in both lecture and lab components.
- * A solid B or better in **any combination** of basic and upper level chemistry lecture courses including, but not limited to, general chemistry, organic chemistry, inorganic chemistry, and biochemistry. Upper level chemistry courses will satisfy this requirement. You need not re-take basic chemistry courses.

Additional biology and chemistry prerequisite information

- * Biology and chemistry courses need to be the "hard core" science courses that are considered by the school offering them to be pre-med or science major courses. Courses labeled "for non-science majors" are not appropriate.
- * For applicants who have taken introductory **biology** and introductory **chemistry lecture and lab** courses more than 10 years ago, upper level courses may be substituted rather than repeating those basic level courses. The upper level courses must have been taken at a regionally-accredited 4-year institution within 10 years of applying to the program. Any combination (basic or upper level) of 2 semesters of biology lecture and lab plus 2 semesters of chemistry lectures and lab will fulfill the prerequisites. Examples of upper level biology-related courses include, but are not limited to: genetics, immunology, infectious disease, pathophysiology, cell biology, microbiology, etc. Examples of upper level chemistry-related courses include biochemistry, organic chemistry, and inorganic chemistry. See [Summary](#) of academic requirements.

Anatomy and physiology that covers the entire body from head to toe including all body systems

- * May be taken in-class or online at either a regionally-accredited **2-year or 4-year institution**. See [FAQ section](#) on Prerequisites for additional information.
- * Must be taken within 10 years of applying to the program.
- * Grades of solid B or better required in **both** courses.
- * Most commonly offered as A&P 1 plus A&P 2 or 1 semester of anatomy plus 1 semester of physiology. Course content must be covered in sufficient depth in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the body. A 1-semester A&P course is not adequate.

- * A lab is not required.
- * Human, vertebrate, and animal A&P are all acceptable.
- * There are no substitutes for anatomy and physiology. If your A&P courses are more than 10 years old at the time of application, you would need to repeat them and ensure that the entire body and all systems are covered.

1 course in statistics

- * May be taken in-class or online at either a regionally-accredited **2-year or 4-year institution**.
- * Statistics must be taken in college even if college credit was given for high school statistics.
- * Statistics must be taken within 10 years off applying to the program.
- * Grade of solid B or better.
- * Statistics courses offered by various departments (math, biology, chemistry, psychology, etc.) are acceptable.
- * Calculus cannot be used to satisfy the statistics prerequisite.
- * Topics covered should include hypothesis testing, probability theory, chi square, multiple regression, T tests, Z tests, ANOVA, correlations, means, medians, modes, etc., as well as how to select and apply the appropriate statistical test, analyze the data, and interpret the results.

Other general prerequisite information

- * A laptop computer is required in order to take online exams in class.
- * BLS certification for the entirety of the program.
- * Grades of solid B or better are required in all prerequisite courses. "B-minus" grades or Pass/Fail grades do not fulfill any of the prerequisites.
- * Advanced placement (AP) or international baccalaureate (IB) credits from high school do not fulfill any of our course prerequisites.
- * For applicants who received college credits for high school biology and chemistry AP courses, upper level biology and chemistry taken in college may be substituted.
- * Non-credit college courses are not accepted to fulfill any prerequisites.
- * Advanced placement will not be awarded to any applicant to the Physician Assistant Program, regardless of prior education or experience.

Hands-On Patient Care Experience

Hands-on patient care experience should be completed prior to applying by the August 1 deadline. Please review the [FAQ section](#) on hands-on patient care experience for additional guidelines and explanations.

- * Evidence of significant hands-on patient care experience is required in order for applicants to have a basic understanding of and comfort with patient care as well as a minimum level of clinical maturity. Strongest preference will be given to applicants who have approximately 2000 hours of hands-on patient care experience prior to applying to the program. Applicants with less than 2000 hours may also be given consideration depending upon the strength of their entire application.
- * Hands-on patient care involves working one-on-one with patients and doing procedures that require you to touch

patients yourself. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- * Taking vital signs
- * Drawing blood
- * Doing EKGs
- * Changing bandages and dressings
- * Casting and splinting
- * Removing sutures
- * Bathing and toileting
- * Partial list of hands-on patient care positions includes, but is not limited to (please see a more [comprehensive list](#) of both acceptable and unacceptable positions):
 - * Certified nursing assistant
 - * Medical/clinical assistant
 - * ER tech
 - * EMT doing more than patient transfer
 - * Physical therapy assistant

- * Paramedic
- * Nurse
- * Physical therapist
- * Respiratory therapist
- * Medical corpsman
- * Full-time paid employment done after completing your bachelor's degree is most competitive, although part-time equivalencies will be considered if they total approximately 2000 hours.
- * All students accepted into the program are required to document their immunizations (i.e., measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, varicella, Td, and PPD) prior to the start of the program.
- * Massachusetts CORI checks are required for all students. Some rotation sites require additional criminal background checks.
- * Access to a car or alternate transportation is necessary in order to travel to clinical sites.

Required Technical Standards

A candidate for the Physician Assistant Program must have abilities and skills in:

- * observation
- * communication
- * sensory and motor coordination and function
- * intellectual-conceptual, integrative, and quantitative abilities
- * behavioral and social attributes

Observation—Candidates and students must be able to observe demonstrations and participate in experiments in the basic sciences, and must observe a patient accurately at a distance and close at hand, noting nonverbal and verbal signals. Observation necessitates the functional use of the sense of vision and other sensory modalities.

Communication—Candidates and students must be able to speak intelligibly, hear sufficiently, and observe patients closely in order to elicit and transmit information; describe changes in mood, activity, and posture; perceive nonverbal communications; and communicate effectively and sensitively with patients. Communication includes not only speech, but also reading and writing skills. Candidates and students must be able to communicate effectively

and efficiently in oral and written English with all members of the health care team. Students must demonstrate reading skills at a level sufficient to accomplish curricular requirements, provide clinical care for patients, and complete appropriate medical records, documents, and plans according to protocol in a thorough and timely manner.

Sensory and Motor Coordination and Function—Candidates and students are required to possess motor skills sufficient to directly perform palpation, percussion, auscultation, and other basic diagnostic procedures; and execute motor movements reasonably required to provide basic medical care, such as airway management, placement of catheters, application of sufficient pressure to control bleeding, simple obstetrical maneuvers, etc. These actions require coordination of gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, and functional use of the senses of touch and vision.

Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative Abilities—These abilities include measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis, and synthesis. Problem solving, the critical skill demanded of physician assistants, requires all of these intellectual abilities. Candidates and students must be able to independently access and interpret medical histories or files, identify significant findings from history, physical examination,

and laboratory data; provide a reasoned explanation for likely diagnoses and prescribed medications and therapy; recall and retain information in an efficient and timely manner. The ability to incorporate new information from peers, teachers, and the medical literature in formulating diagnoses and plans is essential. Good judgment in patient assessment and diagnostic and therapeutic planning is essential. Students must be able to communicate their knowledge to others when appropriate.

Behavioral and Social Attributes—Candidates and students must possess the ability to use their intellectual capacity, exercise good judgment, and promptly complete all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients under potentially stressful and/or emergency circumstances; develop empathic, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients; adapt to changing environments and learn in the face of uncertainties that are inherent in the practice of medicine; use supervision appropriately and act independently when indicated. Compassion, integrity, ethical standards, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest, and motivation are all personal qualities that will be assessed during the admissions and educational process.

International Applicants

For applicants who have earned degrees outside of the United States, the following prerequisites must be completed prior to applying:

- * Completion of all the required science courses (see list of specific courses under “Academics” above) at a regionally-accredited institution. All prerequisite courses must be taken within 10 years of applying to the program.
- * TOEFL score within the previous 2 years of at least 100 (internet-based) to demon-

strate proficiency in English.

- * A certified degree and course-by-course evaluation of foreign transcripts to ascertain equivalencies to United States educational standards. We will only accept evaluations done by World Education Services (WES), Bowling Green Station, PO Box 5087, New York, NY 10274 (212-966-6311, www.wes.org). Evaluations performed by other companies will **not** be accepted. The report should be submitted to CASPA.
- * Successful completion of the ECFMG or USMLE **cannot be submitted** in lieu of

taking all of the prerequisite courses. All students accepted into the program must successfully complete the entire 2-year curriculum regardless of previous education and degrees. Current and ongoing hands-on patient care experience is needed in order to be a competitive applicant. While the Admissions Committee may consider experience you gained in your home country, hands-on patient care experience in the United States is also recommended.

Prerequisite Frequently Asked Questions, Click for [Complete List](#)

Can I apply if I still need to complete a course prerequisite?

Technically, all course prerequisites need to be completed prior to applying in order to be competitive. Depending upon the completeness and competitiveness of your entire application, the Admissions Committee will consider an applicant who is completing one and only one course prerequisite during the fall semester. If you are completing one final course during the fall, be sure it is listed under “Courses in Progress” on the CASPA application. It is your responsibility to send an official transcript directly to the PA Program as soon as the final grade is available so we can include it in the review of your application.

What should I do if I submit my CASPA application in the spring and still plan to take courses during the summer?

Be sure to list all “in progress” and “planned” courses in the CASPA application. As soon as final grades are available, it is **your responsibility** to notify the program and promptly send an official transcript directly to the program office so we can update your file. We do not have early decision or rolling admissions, so there is no advantage to submitting your application early. If you are still taking courses in the spring and summer semesters, you might consider waiting to submit your CASPA application so that the grades appear on your application. Otherwise, it is **your responsibility** to send official transcripts directly to the program once the final grades are available. All applications will be considered as long as they are complete and submitted prior to the August 1 deadline and are verified by CASPA by August 30.

How do I calculate time limits on course prerequisites?

The time limits apply to when you actually took the course and not when you graduated.

Will courses taken during the summer term fulfill prerequisites?

Yes, as long as these courses are considered equivalent courses by the school offering them and adhere to our guidelines regarding the type and content of the course and where they are taken.

What does hands-on patient care experience mean?

The Admissions Committee defines hands-on patient care experience as working one-on-one with patients and involving skills that require touching patients yourself. Verbal interaction (counseling, recruiting, consenting, etc.) alone is not adequate. Examples of hands-on skills include, but are not limited to: taking vital signs, doing EKGs, drawing blood, changing bandages and dressings, splinting, casting, removing sutures, bathing and toileting. Counseling patients, consenting and enrolling patients in studies, and dispensing medication are only a few examples of duties that do not require any “hands-on” activity and are therefore not considered “hands-on” patient care experience. The job title is not as important as the specific duties performed. See our [list](#) of acceptable and unacceptable positions.

Does volunteer work count as hands-on patient care experience?

Because of liability concerns, volunteers are

usually unable to provide the type of hands-on patient care we require. However, there may be some circumstances in which volunteer situations may provide an opportunity for hands-on patient care, most notably that of a volunteer EMT. Volunteer experience will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Will taking care of a family member be considered sufficient to fulfill the hands-on patient care prerequisite?

While you may be performing hands-on patient care procedures, caring for a relative will not fulfill the hands-on patient care prerequisite. The Admissions Committee considers full-time paid employment in a medical setting to be the most appropriate type of experience.

What if I have not completed the necessary hours of hands-on patient care experience by the application deadline?

The Admissions Committee will consider fewer hours depending upon the type and intensity of your experience. For example, having 1600 hours of hands-on patient care experience as an EMT doing only patient transfer would not be as competitive as an applicant who has 1200 hours of hands-on patient care experience working as an ER tech. The latter provides a greater opportunity for a variety and intensity of patient care experience.

Does patient care experience done in the past count?

The Admissions Committee will consider hands-on patient care experience done in the recent past. However, in order to be a competitive applicant, you also need to have current and