

Pre-Physician Assistant Fact Sheet

Creighton
UNIVERSITY

Student Success
Advising Resources and Support

Prerequisite and 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 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 or 6 hours - CHM 371 or CHM 383 & CHM 384 (Biochemistry majors)
- Microbiology w/ Lab - 4 hours - BIO 350 (non-BIO majors) or BIO 452/453 (BIO majors)
- 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
- Psychology - 6 hours- required courses vary; typically General, Abnormal and/or Lifespan/Developmental
- 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.

PRE-PA GROUPS AND RESOURCES

Pre-Physician Assistant Club: All pre-PA students should participate in the Pre-PA Club. 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>

Creighton University 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.

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, Grades, and GPA

Students are encouraged to choose a major in which 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 play a crucial role in physician assistant school admissions, reflecting a student's ability to handle challenges. Maintaining grades above a "B" is important, especially in the two years prior to applying. Grades below a "B" or having more than two withdrawals (W) may raise concerns about academic readiness or judgment.

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**.

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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 Introductory General Chemistry 1 (CHM 102) with a grade of "B-" or better to progress to CHM 202/204.

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 CHM 102 with a grade of "B-" or better is required to take BIO 202.

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 Classes:

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-PA 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)

CO-CURRICULAR EXPECTATIONS

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: <https://www.creighton.edu/scsj>.

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 in order 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: www.creighton.edu/curas.

Leadership and 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.

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 significant, hands-on 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, PT/OT aides and similar positions.