

Pre-Physician Assistant Quick Facts

General Information

- Average GPA: 3.5
- GRE: ~300 combined/ 4.0 writing
- Master's Degree
- Program Length: 2-3 years
- Nine PA programs in Texas

A Physician Assistant (PA) is a healthcare professional who practices medicine as part of a healthcare team with supervising physicians. The median annual salary is \$98,180. PA programs are highly competitive and admission committees greatly value direct patient care experience, often requiring a substantial number of hours for acceptance. There is no "best" major for pre-PA students nor are there majors that will make a student "stand out." Students are encouraged to pursue majors in which they are most interested and in which they believe they will excel.

Required Courses

Anatomy & Physiology: BIOL 2301/2101 & BIOL 2302/2102

Biology: BIOL 1306/1106 & BIOL 1307/1107

Chemistry: CHEM 1311/1111 & CHEM 1312/1112

English: ENGL 1301 & 1302

Genetics: BIOL 3301

Immunology: BIOL 4323 (*only for UTMB*)

Medical Terminology: HLT 3325

Microbiology: BIOL 2321/2121

Organic Chemistry: CHEM 2323/2123

Psychology: PSYC 2301

Sociology: SOCI 1301

Statistics: MATH 3339 or PSYC 3301 (*MATH 1342 is not universally accepted by PA programs due to absence of ANOVA*)

DISCLAIMER: This list provides an overview of common requirements for PA programs within Texas. It is not meant to be definitive. Additionally, many PA programs do not accept AP/IB credit for pre-requisites. Refer to PA program websites to confirm specific coursework requirements.

****NOTE:** If you encounter issues with your application to a Texas PA program due to the Anatomy & Physiology requirements, please contact our office: prehealth@uh.edu.

CASPA

To apply to most PA programs, applicants will utilize the **CASPA application service**. Official transcripts, test scores, a personal statement, and letters of recommendation are all submitted to CASPA. CASPA opens each year in April, but programs will differ in terms of their application deadlines. Most deadlines are in the Fall for a summer start; however, some may have Spring deadlines for a winter start. You are responsible for checking the application deadlines for the programs in which you are interested.

Letters of Evaluation

Most PA schools require 2-3 letters of evaluation. Requirements can vary between schools, and it is the student's responsibility to ensure that they have collected the correct letters for their program of interest. Generally, programs expect students to provide one letter from a PA, one from a science faculty member, and one other of the student's choosing. This can come from another PA, a physician, a research mentor, volunteer coordinator, employer, etc. While students should select what they believe will be the most compelling letter, it is often best if that letter can speak to the student's work with patients.

Admissions Exam (GRE & PA-CAT)

PA schools require that applicants complete either the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or Physician Assistant College Admission Test (PA-CAT). Applicants usually take the GRE/PA-CAT in their junior or senior year depending on their individual application timeline.

The GRE is 3-hours and 45-minutes in length and currently costs \$205. It consists of Quantitative, Verbal, and an Analytical Writing (Essay) sections. Scoring: 260-340 (score is valid for 5-years).

The PA-CAT is 4.5 hours in length and currently costs \$228. It consists of 240 multiple-choice questions covering the following topics: Anatomy, Physiology, General Biology, Biochemistry, General and Organic Chemistry, Microbiology, Behavioral Sciences, Genetics, Statistics. Scoring: 200-800 (score is valid for 2-years).

Direct Patient Care

Students interested in becoming physician assistants must spend a significant amount of time working or volunteering in clinical settings where they are able to **administer care to patients**. It is not enough to volunteer in a hospital or clinic doing clerical work; experience must be “hands-on” and can include activities such as taking vitals, drawing blood, bathing, or helping transport patients, administering treatment, etc. It is common for students to get certified as medical assistants, nursing assistants, EMTs or phlebotomists to build up these hours. Certification is not always required, but it can be very helpful for finding a position and can also be included on the PA application. Students should always be appropriately trained when administering medical care.

Competitive applicants to PA school generally have **500-1000 hours of experience**. While programs will commonly list minimum hours that are lower, they do not normally matriculate students who only have the minimum. As a result, it is not unusual for pre-PA students to take a gap year to focus on direct patient care experience.

Shadowing vs. Direct Patient Care Experience

Shadowing is a **passive** activity which does not count towards direct patient care; it is the act of observing the interactions between PAs and patients. While PA programs do require significantly more direct patient care hours, shadowing is often still required or recommended. The value of shadowing a PA lies in gaining knowledge of the profession and building a rapport with a PA who can then write a **strong letter of recommendation**. While some schools may not specify the number of shadowing hours required, students should expect to have a little over 100 hours between at least two different settings.

Texas PA Program Application Information

Institution	Application Deadline (Start Term)	Application?	Patient Care/Shadowing Required?
Baylor College of Medicine	September 1 (May)	CASPA	No, but encouraged
Hardin-Simmons University	September 1 (August)	CASPA	No, but strongly recommended
Texas Tech University	August 1 (May)	CASPA/ Merlin	No, but encouraged
University of Mary Hardin Baylor	August 1 (January)	CASPA	100 hours of service oriented volunteerism
University of North Texas	October 1 (August)	CASPA	No, but encouraged
University of Texas -Rio Grande Valley	September 1 (August)	CASPA/UTRGV Graduate School Application	No, but strongly recommended
University of Texas Health -San Antonio	October 1 (June)	CASPA/PAS Supplemental Application	No, but strongly recommended
University of Texas -Southwestern	September 1 (May)	CASPA	Yes, but no stated minimum
UTMB-Galveston	September 1 (July)	CASPA	No, but encouraged

Physician Assistant Prerequisite Requirements

The chart below outlines prerequisite courses for Texas PA programs. Please note that each program may have additional requirements for admission, such as the GRE, PA-CAT, Altus suite, or direct patient care experience.

Please ensure that you meet all requirements for each program you are applying to by checking their website or contacting them directly. Hyperlinks below will direct you to the admissions page of each program.

Program	Anatomy & Physiology	Biology (for science majors)	Chemistry	English	Genetics	Immunology	Medical Terminology	Microbiology (for science majors)	Organic Chemistry	Psychology	Sociology	Statistics (must cover ANOVA)
Baylor College of Medicine School of Health Professions	8hrs		8hrs	3hrs	3hrs			4hrs	4hrs	3hrs	3hrs*	3hrs
Hardin-Simmons University	8hrs	8hrs	4hrs	3hrs				4hrs	4hrs	3hrs	3hrs*	3hrs
Texas Tech Health Sciences Center	8hrs				3hrs			4hrs	4hrs	3hrs		3hrs
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor	8hrs		8hrs		3hrs			4hrs	4hrs	3hrs		3hrs
University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth	8hrs				3hrs			4hrs	4hrs	3hrs		3hrs
UT Health San Antonio	8hrs		8hrs		3hrs			4hrs	4hrs	3hrs		3hrs
University of Texas Medical Branch	8hrs	8hrs	8hrs		3hrs	3hrs	2-3hrs	3-4hrs	3-4hrs	3hrs	3hrs*	3hrs
UT Southwestern Medical Center	8hrs		8hrs		3hrs			4hrs	4hrs	3hrs		3hrs
University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley	6hrs		6hrs					3hrs	3hrs	3hrs		3hrs

*May accept additional Psychology coursework

Visit www.uh.edu/pre-health for more information

Additional Information:

Baylor College of Medicine School of Health Professions – GPA minimum: 3.2 | C or higher on all pre-requisite coursework | Courses must be designated for science majors and be within the last 7 years | No AP credit accepted

Hardin-Simmons University – GPA minimum: 3.0 | Courses must be designated for science majors | No expiration date on coursework but recent science academic work is encouraged | GRE required | Altus Suite required | AP credit accepted if on transcript

Texas Tech Health Sciences Center – GPA minimum: 3.0 | Courses must be designated for science majors, and it is preferred that courses be within the last 7 years | GRE required | No AP credit accepted

University of Mary Hardin-Baylor – GPA minimum: 3.0 | Coursework preferred to be within the last 7 years | GRE, Casper, PA-CAT not required | No AP accepted

UNTHSC – C or higher on all pre-requisite coursework | Courses must be designated for science majors | No expiration date on coursework | GRE not required | Altus Suite required | AP credit accepted if on transcript

UT Health San Antonio – C or higher on all pre-requisite coursework | Courses must be designated for science majors and be within the last 10 years | GRE required | Altus Suite required | No online courses accepted | No AP credit accepted

UTMB – GPA minimum: 3.0 | C or higher on all pre-requisite coursework | Courses must be designated for science majors and completed within the last 10 years | GRE required | Altus Suite required | PA-CAT recommended

UT Southwestern – GPA minimum 3.0 | C or higher on all pre-requisite coursework | Courses must have been taken within the last 10 years | GRE required | P/F not accepted

UTRGV – GPA minimum 3.0 | Courses must be designated for science majors and taken within the last 10 years | GRE required | Pass or Credit not accepted | Accepts online courses as long as they are from an accredited institution

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Pre-Physician Assistant Course Plan

Freshman Year			
✓	Fall	✓	Spring
	BIOL 1306: Biology for Science Majors I		BIOL 1307: Biology for Science Majors II
	BIOL 1106: Biology for Science Majors Lab I		BIOL 1107: Biology for Science Majors Lab II
	MATH 2320: Pre-Calculus		CHEM 1311: Chemistry I
	ENGL 1301: First Year Writing I		CHEM 1111: Chemistry I Lab
			ENGL 1302: First Year Writing II
Sophomore Year			
✓	Fall	✓	Spring
	CHEM 1312: Chemistry II		BIOL 2301: Anatomy & Physiology I**
	CHEM 1112: Chemistry II Lab		BIOL 2101: Anatomy & Physiology I Lab**
	Core: Social & Behavioral Sciences (<i>PSYC 2301</i>)		Core: Creative Arts
Junior Year			
✓	Fall	✓	Spring
	BIOL 2302: Anatomy & Physiology II**		CHEM 2323: Organic Chemistry I
	BIOL 2102: Anatomy & Physiology II Lab**		CHEM 2123: Organic Chemistry I Lab
	BIOL 3339 or PSYC 3301: Statistics		BIOL 3301: Genetics
	HLT 3323: Medical Terminology		Core: HIST 1378-US History since 1877
	Core: HIST 1377-US History to 1877		GRE or PA-CAT Preparation (<i>2-3 months</i>)
	Core: GOVT 2306-US & TX Constitutions		GRE or PA-CAT Testing (<i>recommend no later than May</i>)
Senior Year			
✓	Fall	✓	Spring
	SOC 1301: Introduction to Sociology		BIOL 4323: Immunology (<i>for UTMB only</i>)
	BIOL 2321: Microbiology		Core: Language, Philosophy, & Culture
	BIOL 2121: Microbiology lab		Additional courses to complete major
	Core: GOVT 2305 – US Government		Additional courses required by specific PA school
	Additional courses to complete major		Additional courses to strengthen application
	Additional courses required by specific PA school		

- This plan is a suggested timeline for students who wish to apply to PA school after their Junior Year and begin following graduation. Your schedule may differ depending on your personal goals, major, AP/IB and transfer credit, and use of Winter/Summer sessions. It is important you work closely with your major advisor to outline your specific degree plan.
- Certain PA schools may have additional requirements—please review the admissions requirements and policies of each program in which you are interested in applying.
- **NOTE: If you encounter issues with your application to a Texas PA program due to the Anatomy & Physiology requirements, please contact our office: prehealth@uh.edu.