



Physician assistants, also known as PAs, practice medicine under the direction and supervision of physicians and surgeons. They are formally trained to examine patients, diagnose injuries and illnesses, and provide treatment. Physician assistants typically do the following:

- Work under the supervision of a physician or surgeon
- Review patients' medical histories
- Do physical exams to check patients' health
- Order and interpret diagnostic tests, such as x rays or blood tests
- Make preliminary diagnoses concerning a patient's injury or illness
- Provide treatment, such as setting broken bones and giving immunizations
- Counsel patients and their families; for example, answering questions about how to care for a child with asthma
- Prescribe medicine, when needed
- Record a patient's progress
- Complete insurance paperwork

Physician assistants are different from medical assistants. A physician assistant's specific duties and the extent to which he or she must be supervised by physicians and surgeons differ from state to state. Physician assistants work in all areas of medicine, including primary care and family medicine, emergency medicine, and psychiatry. The work of physician assistants depends in large part on their specialty and what their supervising physician needs them to do. For example, a physician assistant working in surgery may close incisions and provide care before and after the operation. A physician assistant working in pediatrics may examine a child or give routine vaccinations.

In rural areas and inner cities, physician assistants may be the primary care providers at clinics where a physician is present only 1 or 2 days per week. In these locations, physician assistants confer with the physician and other healthcare workers as needed and as required by law. Some physician assistants make house calls or visit nursing homes to treat patients, reporting back to the physician afterward. Some physician assistants supervise medical technicians and medical assistants. (*Occupational Outlook Handbook*)

A candidate for admission to the Physician Assistant Program at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Union College in Lincoln, NE, Creighton University or College of Saint Mary's in Omaha, NE must have successfully completed a Bachelor's Degree and the following required courses. Students should check with other schools to which they intend to apply to ensure that all requirements are fulfilled.

Students pursuing a pre-physician assistant curriculum are expected to choose a major so that they can be working towards a baccalaureate degree concurrently with the pre-physician assistant program. This requires a major/minor combination or a comprehensive major as well as completion of the UNK general studies requirements and other degree requirements as set forth in the college catalog. Physician assistant programs do not specify which major a student should pursue in conjunction with his/her pre-physician assistant studies. **Gaining acceptance into a physician assistant school is a very competitive process. Completion of the pre-requisite courses does not automatically guarantee admission.**

Required Courses:

Take all of the following:

BIOL 106	Biology II	4
BIOL 211	Human Microbiology	4
BIOL 225	Anatomy and Physiology	4
BIOL 226	Anatomy and Physiology	4
BIOL 325	Medical Terminology	1
CHEM 160	General Chemistry	4
CHEM 161	General Chemistry	4
CHEM 250	Elementary Organic Chemistry	5
CHEM 351	Biochemistry	4
MATH 102	College Algebra	3
ENG 101	Introduction to Academic Writing	3
ENG 102	Academic Writing and Research	3
PSY 203	General Psychology	3
PSY 230	Human Development	3
PSY 231	Abnormal Behavior and Society	3

Take one of the following:

STAT 241	Elementary Statistics	3
PSY 250	Behavioral Statistics	3

Recommended Courses:

BIOL 360	Genetics	4
BIOL 401	Principles of Immunology	4

Academic Guidelines

An overall GPA of 3.5 or above (on a 4.0 scale) is preferred and will result in the student being a more competitive applicant. Each required course must be passed with a grade of "C" or better. A grade of "C-" will not be accepted. **Some physician assistant programs do not require a bachelor's degree for admissions.** Students searching for electives outside their major requirements should consider courses from the following areas: biology, chemistry, mathematics, sociology, psychology, business administration, healthcare management, and healthcare economics. See your advisor for suggestions. Students should be aware of prerequisites on all courses and plan their coursework accordingly. *Other electives, including Genetics, and other upper division biology and chemistry courses, are also recommended. BIOL 401, Principles of Immunology, is highly recommended by the Physician Assistant program at UNMC. See your advisor for other suggestions.*

Non-Academic Guidelines

There is no magic formula for acceptance in to professional school. Admission is based on GPA, test scores, shadowing and medical experiences, community involvement and volunteerism, leadership qualities, the interview, the essay, and letters of recommendation. Shadowing and medical experiences are of utmost importance. Students should plan to shadow a minimum of 40 hours and/or participate in other activities that help them investigate the profession. Health Sciences offers opportunities to meet these non-academic guidelines through the Shadowing Program, the Health Science Club, and volunteer experiences. Research experience is not required, but will be looked upon favorably. Students should plan to be involved in these types of activities and experiences throughout their undergraduate career. Other important non-academic factors include good moral character, excellent interpersonal skills, a deep commitment to healthcare, evidence of leadership potential and service to others. **Some PA schools have specific requirements regarding the hours of patient care experience required. Students should check with the schools to which they intend to apply for details.**

The Application Process

Students will make application to physician assistant programs through the Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA): <https://portal.caspaonline.org/>. The centralized application service allows students to fill out one application to apply to multiple schools. The application

becomes open for students. Early application is strongly encouraged. Students should make application in the summer or early fall of the calendar year preceding the year in which they hope to enroll in professional school. Applicants should not wait for GRE scores, transcripts, or other application materials before applying through CASPA. Check with the schools to which you are applying to verify their policies and procedures regarding supplemental applications.

Entrance Examination Requirement: (GRE – Graduate Record Exam)

UNMC does not require the GRE, but many other PA programs do require it as an entrance exam. It is preferred that the GRE is taken no later than August of the calendar year preceding the year in which the applicant wishes to enroll in a physician assistant. Students register online at www.gre.org. The test consists of three sections: verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and analytical writing.

Letters of Evaluation/Recommendation

Letters of evaluation will be required of applicants. Letters from a faculty member, physician assistant, academic advisor, or employer would be appropriate. Information about the non-academic character of a student would be most useful as academic information is already in the application. Students should have their evaluation letters submitted directly through CASPA.

Interviews

Most schools screen applicants with some form of personal interview. The format of the interview may vary depending on the schools to which students are applying.

Criminal Background Checks

Prerequisite for enrollment into any health science professional program is consent for an external background check. This check includes, but is not limited to, past criminal offenses and registry information. If there is evidence of arrest for a crime(s), conviction for a crime(s), presence on an abuse registry, or other information which reasonably suggests that patient safety might be compromised, the student will be asked to provide additional information.

Citizenship/International Students

Professional schools in the health sciences vary as to whether they accept non-U.S. citizens. Some schools that do accept non-citizens require a substantial financial commitment up front. Since not all schools accept non-citizens and since the financial commitment of those that do may be substantial, students should thoroughly research and carefully consider such a decision and discuss it with their pre-health advisors early in their undergraduate years.

Websites

American Academy of Physician Assistants	www.aapa.org
Physician Assistant Education Association	www.paeaonline.org
UNK Health Sciences	www.unk.edu/healthsciences

Suggested Sequence of Key Courses

	Fall	Spring
Year 1	CHEM 160 Biology Course: See your advisor for suggestions. Math: See your advisor for appropriate course placement.	CHEM 161 Biology Course: See your advisor for suggestions. Statistics: See advisor for appropriate selection.
Year 2	CHEM 250 OR CHEM 360 (see advisor) BIOL 225 (recommended)	CHEM 351 OR CHEM 361 BIOL 226 (recommended)
Year 3	CHEM 351 (if not previously completed)	<i>Register to take the GRE in late spring or summer. Complete PA school application in the summer.</i>
Year 4	Complete final major courses.	Complete final major courses.

- A minimum of 8 hours of biology is required, but additional advance biology is highly recommended, especially a course dealing with cell structure and function. Additional courses in anatomy and physiology are also recommended.
- A MATH ACT score of 22 or prior completion of College Algebra (MATH 102) or higher is a pre-requisite for CHEM 160.
- Completion of one semester of chemistry is a pre-requisite for BIOL 225.
- It is not recommended to take any of the above science courses during a summer session.

Students who are accepted into physician assistant school prior to completing a baccalaureate degree at UNK may be eligible to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Health Sciences if they have completed all general studies requirements and other graduation requirements as set forth in the UNK catalog and have at least 85 semester hours completed in pre-physician assistant studies.