

Master of Science in Physician Assistant

Introduction

Physician assistants (PAs) are healthcare professionals licensed (or when employed by the federal government, credentialed) to practice medicine with physician supervision. As part of their comprehensive responsibilities, PAs conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, counsel on preventive health care, assist in surgery, and write prescriptions. Within the physician-PA relationship, physician assistants exercise autonomy in medical decision making and provide a broad range of diagnostic and therapeutic services. A PA's practice may also include education, research, and administrative services. PAs increase patient access to primary care, promote cost savings, and improve practice efficiency and productivity.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Jefferson College of Health Sciences Physician Assistant Program is to graduate competent and compassionate physician assistants who are well versed in the art and science of medicine and are prepared to effectively function as members of the healthcare team.

Program Accreditation, Approval and Memberships

The Physician Assistant Program is accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA), the recognized accrediting agency that protects the interests of the public and PA profession by defining the standards for PA education and evaluating PA educational programs within the territorial United States to ensure their compliance with those standards.

Program Outcomes

Graduates of the Master of Science in Physician Assistant program will be able to

1. demonstrate the application of current, evidence-based medical knowledge to provide the most appropriate patient-centered care (Medical Knowledge),
2. communicate effectively with patients, physicians, and other members of the healthcare team to foster interprofessional collaboration (Communication),

3. demonstrate patient-centered care that is effective, timely, efficient, and equitable for the treatment of health problems and promotes wellness across the lifespan, regardless of individual characteristics (Patient Care),
4. model the use of bioethical and legal principles pertaining to the delivery of healthcare (Professionalism),
5. positively impact and advocate for the appropriate provision of healthcare for patients, their families, and communities (Professionalism),
6. exemplify a commitment to personal growth and development as well as growth and development of the physician assistant profession (Professionalism),
7. demonstrate scholarship and commitment to lifelong learning through critical analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of current medical research and literature to enhance the delivery of health care (Practice-Based Learning and Improvement), and
8. demonstrate an ability to provide optimal medical care within a complex medical system (Systems Based Practice).

Minimum Performance Standards

In addition to the Academic Standards described in “Program Progression” all students in the Jefferson College of Health Sciences Physician Assistant Program must possess the intellectual ability to learn, integrate, analyze, and synthesize data. They must have functional use of the senses of vision, hearing, equilibrium, and smell, with or without reasonable accommodations. Their exteroceptive (touch, pain, temperature) and proprioceptive (position, pressure, movement, stereognosis, and vibratory) senses must be sufficiently intact to enable them to carry out all activities required for completion of the physician assistant curriculum. These standards for admission establish the expectations and abilities considered essential for students to complete and graduate from our Program. These technical standards will be necessary for successful clinical practice.

The student must possess and be able to demonstrate the following abilities and skills:

1. **Intellectual:** A student must have the mental capacity to assimilate and learn a large amount of complex and technical information; be able to conceptualize and solve clinical problems and to synthesize and apply concepts and detailed information from various disciplines in order to formulate diagnostic and therapeutic plans. Students must be able to learn to read and comprehend technical materials, medication and laboratory reports.

2. **Observation:** The ability to observe well is required for demonstrations and visual presentations, laboratory evidence, and microscopic studies of microorganisms and tissues in normal and pathologic states. A student must be able to observe patients accurately and completely, at a distance and closely. This requires functional vision and somatic sensation, enhanced by a sense of smell.
3. **Communication:** student must be able to speak with, hear, and observe patients in order to elicit information, perceive nonverbal communication, and describe changes in mood, activity, and posture. The student must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively in English with patients from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Students must be able to develop professional rapport, and efficiently and effectively communicate with the health-care team, orally and in writing.
4. **Motor:** student must have motor function to elicit information from patients by palpation, auscultation, and percussion, and to carry out diagnostic maneuvers. He or she must be able to execute movements required to provide general care and emergency treatment. Such skills require coordination of gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, and sensation. Students must have sufficient postural control, neuromuscular control and eye-to-hand coordination to use standard medical/surgical instruments and possess sufficient control of the upper extremities to meet the physical requirements for training and performing a safe physical examination procedure.
5. **Emotional:** student must have the emotional health to use fully his or her intellectual ability, exercise good judgment, and carry out all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients. The Physician Assistant Program at JCHS is demanding both intellectually and emotionally. Students must display sufficient emotional health to withstand stress, uncertainties and changing circumstances that characterize the rigors of our Program and the reality of life as a dependent practitioner. Physician assistant students must be able to work cooperatively with other students, staff, faculty, and patients. These qualities will be assessed during the course of study.
6. **Interpersonal:** a student must be able to develop mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients and colleagues. The ability to tolerate physical and emotional stress and continue to function effectively is a must. Students must be adaptable, flexible, and able to function in the face of uncertainty during the course of study and with patients. He or she must have integrity, the motivation to serve, a high level of compassion, and a consciousness of social values. Students need the interpersonal skills to interact positively with people from all levels of society, ethnic backgrounds, and beliefs. These skills will be assessed on an ongoing basis during the Program.

Academic Policies

In addition to those policies published in the JCHS Catalog and JCHS Student Handbook, students are expected to follow the program policies as published in the PA Program Student Handbook. This handbook is available electronically on the program blackboard site and may be requested from the department secretary.

Program Progression

In addition to the “Minimum Performance Standards” listed above, PA students must adhere to the following to remain in good academic standing:

- A. Maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 and make a minimal grade of C minus in all courses.
- B. If a student fall below a cumulative GPA of 3.0, they will be placed on Academic Probation. The policy governing Academic Probation for PA students can be found in the PA Student Handbook.
- C. PA students are allowed one failing course grade (less than a C minus) during the program. In the event that a failing grade is earned, students will be required to enroll in and successfully pass PHA 575 before the start of the next semester. The student will also be placed on academic probation, and will be required to follow policy governing Academic Probation for PA students, which can be found in the PA Student Handbook.
- D. In the event that a student earns a second failing course grade, he/she will be dismissed from the program.
- E. PA students will exhibit satisfactory evidence of professional behaviors and interpersonal skills as outlined in the JCHS Student Handbook and the PA Student Handbook.
- F. Earn a passing grade on all proficiency exams (clinical check sheets, Observed Structured Clinical Exams, etc.)

Licensing Information

To be licensed, physician assistants must first complete a course of study approved and accredited by the ARC-PA. The PANCE is the entry-level exam PAs must pass in order to become nationally certified. Prior to PA licensure in Virginia, the physician defines, with approval from the Virginia Board of Medicine, a PA’s scope of practice based on that individual’s competencies, education, experience and the state law. Although licensure regulations and procedures vary by state, physician assistants perform medical tasks delegated to them by the supervising physician.

**Master of Science in Physician Assistant
Program of Study (101 credits)**

Courses must be taken sequentially in the order presented.

PREFIX	COURSE TITLE	CREDITS
Semester 1		
BIO 509	Clinical Anatomy I	2
IPE 501	Foundations of Interprofessional Leadership I	2
PHA 506	Clinical Medicine I	4
PHA 514/514L	Clinical Pathophysiology I	2
PHA 525	Clinical Skills I	4
PHA 533	Behavioral Medicine	2
PHA 541	Clinical Pharmacotherapeutics I	2
Total Credits:		18
Semester 2		
BIO 510	Clinical Anatomy II	2
IPE 502	Foundations of Interprofessional Leadership II	2
IPE 509	Research & Evidence-Based Practice	3
PHA 507	Clinical Medicine II	4
PHA 515/515L	Clinical Pathophysiology II	2
PHA 526	Clinical Skills II	4
PHA 542	Clinical Pharmacotherapeutics II	2
Total Credits:		19
Semester 3		
BIO 511	Clinical Anatomy III	2
PHA 508	Clinical Medicine III	4
PHA 516	Clinical Pathophysiology III	2
PHA 527	Clinical Skills III	2
PHA 545	Clinical Pharmacotherapeutics III	1
PHA 551	Introduction to Masters Project I	1
Total Credits:		12
Semester 4		
IPE 507	Ethical & Legal Practice in Healthcare	3
PHA 509	Clinical Medicine IV	2
PHA 529	Clinical Skills IV	4
PHA 552	Introduction to Masters Project II	1
PHA 601	Internal Medicine I Clinical Rotation	3
PHA 602	Internal Medicine II Clinical Rotation	3
Total Credits:		16

PREFIX	COURSE TITLE	CREDITS
Semester 5		
PHA 553	Introduction to Masters Project III	1
PHA 603	Primary Care I Clinical Rotation	3
PHA 604	Primary Care II Clinical Rotation	3
PHA 605	Pediatric Medicine Clinical Rotation	3
PHA 606	Women's Health Clinical Rotation	3
PHA 607	General Orthopedics Clinical Rotation	3
	Total Credits:	16
Semester 6		
PHA 554	Introduction to Masters Project IV	1
PHA 608	General Surgery Clinical Rotation	3
PHA 609	Psychiatry/Behavioral Medicine Clinical Rotation	3
PHA 611	Emergency Medicine Clinical Rotation	3
	Total Credits:	10
Semester 7		
PHA 612	Elective Clinical Rotation I	3
PHA 613	Elective Clinical Rotation II	3
PHA 621	Masters Capstone	4
	Total Credits:	10
	Total Credits:	101
	Credits from Non-PA Courses:	6
	Credit from Interprofessional Education Courses:	10
	Credits from PA Courses:	85