

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES, MSPAS

The University of South Carolina School of Medicine (USCSOM)-Columbia is the academic home of the Master's degree program for Physician Assistant (PA) education. Students will earn a **Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies**, and graduates are prepared to become practicing Physician Assistants, once they successfully graduate and pass the national board certification exam (PANCE). Physician Assistants (PAs) are needed to address the growing needs for primary care in South Carolina and throughout the nation, especially in rural and underserved areas. In addition, PAs are able to assist with medical and surgical procedures in a cost-effective manner. The role of PAs is expanding as the population ages, and there is an increased need for additional healthcare providers. PA Programs are accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA).

The Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies program is a collaboration with USCSOM's clinical partners at Palmetto Health (PH) and the Dorn VA Medical Center (Dorn VAMC) in addition to numerous other healthcare organizations throughout the state. These clinical partners will be providing training in both eight core medical disciplines as well as providing several elective clinical rotation options in medical subspecialties.

UofSC PA Program Competency List

Knowledge

1. Possess medical knowledge to evaluate and manage medical and surgical conditions of patients of all ages.
2. Possess pharmacology knowledge to prescribe medications appropriately bearing in mind patient safety, cost, and potential for abuse.

Interpersonal Skills

1. Elicit an accurate and appropriate problem-focused or comprehensive medical history using appropriate patient-centered interpersonal communication (verbal and non-verbal).
2. Utilizing the clinical presentation and diagnostic testing results, provide clear, concise oral presentations to other healthcare professionals and document accurate patient notes and orders.
3. Professionally exhibit interprofessional teamwork to improve patient care.
4. Provide relevant education to patients and families including treatment, compliance, available resources, and activity/lifestyle modification.

Clinical and Technical Skills

1. Perform a problem-focused or comprehensive physical exam directly related to the medical history and be able to recognize normal and abnormal health states.
2. Practice strategies to improve patient safety and decrease medical errors in patient care.
3. Demonstrate entry-level proficiency for technical skills and clinical procedures common to primary care practice.

Professional Behaviors

1. Reflect cultural awareness through exposure to diverse patient populations.
2. Develop life-long learning skills by using evidence-based medicine strategies and staying current with clinical practice guidelines.
3. Demonstrate the attributes of professional and ethical behavior to include resiliency, flexibility, adaptability, altruism, and ability to overcome adversity when evaluating and managing patients.

Clinical Reasoning and Problem Solving

1. Order and interpret appropriate, cost-effective laboratory or diagnostic studies to determine the differential diagnosis.
2. Demonstrate clinical reasoning, critical thinking, and problem-solving to develop differential diagnoses and select the most likely diagnosis.

Program Goals

1. Enroll diverse and highly-qualified students who reflect the dynamic population of South Carolina and the nation.
2. Encourage life-long professional involvement, scholarly activity, leadership and service.
3. Maintain a level of first-time PANCE pass rates that meets or exceeds the national average.
4. Maintain an overall graduation rate of 94 percent (current Physician Assistant Education Association national average) or better for entering University of South Carolina Physician Assistant students.
5. Maintain an accredited program with an innovative curriculum that prepares entry-level graduates for the contemporary practice of medicine.

View and download the full version of the Physician Assistant Program Goals and Outcomes [pdf] (https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/medicine/education/graduate_programs/physician_assistant/documents/pa_program_goals_2020_2.pdf).

Admission Standards

An applicant must have a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university located within the United States. Undergraduate coursework should include:

Course	Title	Credits
Human Anatomy and Physiology - Lecture		6
Human Anatomy and Physiology - Lab		2
Genetics		3
General Chemistry - Lecture		6
General Chemistry - Lab		2
Organic Chemistry - Lecture and Lab		4
Biochemistry		3
Microbiology		3
Introductory Psychology or higher		3
Statistics		3
Medical Terminology		1

Admission is determined by the PA Program Admissions Committee which consists of the PA Program Director, Medical Director and program faculty. Criteria examined include an appraisal of courses taken, grades achieved, letters of recommendation, research experience, scores on the

GRE and the applicant's personal narrative. Preference in admittance is given to SC residents, USC alumni and US veterans.

An overall GPA average and an overall science GPA of 3.00 or better is required for consideration of admittance. GRE scores of 300 or higher are considered competitive for program admittance.

Application Information

Inquiries concerning admission and requests for printed program information should be directed to:

University of South Carolina School of Medicine
Columbia Physician Assistant Program
Columbia, SC 29208
Telephone: 803-216-3950
email: paprogram@uscmed.sc.edu

Curriculum (114 Hours)

The Masters Degree Program for Physician Assistants is a 27-month medical model curricular plan (7 semesters) with 114 total credit hours. The 27-month curricular plan includes a strong basic science foundation in physiology, human gross anatomy and genetics with a systems-based instructional approach to clinical medicine which includes instruction in the pathophysiology of diseases, ordering and interpretation and of diagnostic studies, as well as pharmacological and nonpharmacological treatment options. The final 12 months of the program consists of clinical training under experienced preceptors. The required practicums are derived from those used for training medical students in these venues, with a strong focus on primary care training. There are also many elements associated with professional development for PAs and interprofessional interactions, as well as understanding population health, quality care, and using evidenced-based practices. Some of the foundational content will be taught with other health professional (graduate or medical) students to forge interprofessional team concepts. Many of the courses involve hands-on preparation for clinical practice, including clinical skills training and training in new technologies using the USC/SOM Simulation Center and Ultrasound Institute.

PA Program Core Courses

Include the following:

Course	Title	Credits
PHPH 701	Physiology for Health Sciences	6
BMSC 740	Human Anatomy for Health Sciences	6
BMSC 742	Summative Experience for Physician Assistants	1
BMSC 743	Clinical Immersion for PAs	2
BMSC 744	Interprofessional Seminar for Health Professionals	1
BMSC 745	Medical Interviewing	2
BMSC 746	Physical Diagnosis	6
BMSC 747	Diagnostic Testing	2
BMSC 748	Surgery and Emergency Medicine	2
BMSC 749	Clinical Medicine-Across the Lifespan	2
BMSC 751	Behavioral Health	2
BMSC 752	Medical Law and Ethics	2
BMSC 753	Physician Assistant Professional Practice	1
BMSC 755	Medical Genetics and Laboratory Diagnostics	2
BMSC 756	Advancing Medical Practice through Research	3
BMSC 758	Internal Medicine	4

BMSC 759	Women's Health	4
BMSC 760	Pediatrics	4
BMSC 761	Behavioral Medicine	4
BMSC 762	General Surgery	4
BMSC 763	Emergency Medicine	4
BMSC 764	Orthopedics	4
BMSC 765	Practicum Elective	4
BMSC 766	PA Clinical Medicine and Therapeutics I	7
BMSC 767	PA Clinical Medicine and Therapeutics II	6
BMSC 768	PA Clinical Medicine and Therapeutics III	6
BMSC 769	PA Clinical Medicine and Therapeutics IV	7
BMSC 781	Family Medicine PA Program Practicum	4
BMSC 782	Family Medicine PA Program Practicum 2	4
BMSC 783	Physician Assistant Capstone Portfolio	1
Total Credit Hours		107