

## Physician Assistant Framework

### *What is a Physician Assistant?*

A physician assistant is also known as a PA. PAs are medical professionals who diagnose illness, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medications, and often serve as a patient's principal healthcare provider. The role of the PA is to practice medicine under the direction and supervision of a licensed physician. A PA works interdependently with physicians, PAs provide diagnostic and therapeutic care in virtually all medical specialties and settings. They take patient histories, perform physical examinations, order laboratory and diagnostic studies, prescribe medications, and develop patient treatment plans. Their job descriptions are as diverse as those of their supervising physicians, and include clinical practice, patient education, team leadership, medical education, health administration, and research.

<b>Programs and Professions in General Medicine</b>			
<b>What certification can the student get in the general medical field?</b>			
<b>9th</b>	<b>10th</b>	<b>11th</b>	<b>12th</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce students to physician assistant information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Types of local schools to obtain certificate/degree at</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Job opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Job responsibilities</li> <li>● Job statistics                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pay</li> <li>○ Growth</li> </ul> </li> <li>● License Renewal</li> <li>● Continuing Education</li> </ul>

- **Ninth Grade**
  - **General Medicine Introduction**
    - There are many different levels of professionals available in the general medicine field. You can start off as a medical assistant then build your way up. The other two levels within the general medicine field that are covered in this framework are Physician Assistant and a Physician (a doctor). Each one of these levels all take different amounts of time to obtain and have very different job opportunities that one can expand on with different responsibilities.
  
- **Tenth Grade**
  - **What types of schools can the student attend?**
    - Depending on the type of career one chooses within the medical field, it will depend on where you can go to school. If you are looking at getting a Medical Assistant certification, you can attend a technical school that is also known as “vocational schools”. These vocational schools offer targeted and shorter instruction and at a lower tuition and cost that can

lead to one obtaining a certification or even an associate, depending on where the students decide to attend. There are many schools within the state of Texas that offer dual enrollment credits to students while in high schools that can earn the credits of a medical assistant certification.

- Community College
  - A community often offers short term certifications where a student can obtain a certification or a two year degree, known as an associate degree. An associate degree can then be transferred later into a four year degree from a university.
- College
  - A university is a four year (or more) that offers many different degrees through multiple “colleges” that are located on the same campus. Typically a university may have a “College of Education” or a “College of Health Sciences”.
- University
  - A university is a four year institution. Universities usually offer graduate programs (Master’s or Doctorates) and professional certifications. Typically, universities have stricter admission requirements that include grades, placements tests and admission tests like the SAT and ACT.
- **Eleventh Grade**
  - **Where can a student with a Physician’s Assistant degree work?**
    - Physician assistants practice medicine on teams with physicians, surgeons, and other healthcare workers. Physician assistants work in physicians’ offices, hospitals, outpatient clinics, and other healthcare settings.
      - <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physician-assistants.htm>
- **Twelfth Grade**
  - **What are the job responsibilities of a Physician assistant?**
    - Take or review patients’ medical histories
    - Examine patients
    - Order and interpret diagnostic tests, such as x rays or blood tests
    - Diagnose a patient’s injury or illness
    - Give treatment, such as setting broken bones and immunizing patients
    - Educate and counsel patients and their families—for example, answering questions about how to care for a child with asthma
    - Prescribe medicine
    - Assess and record a patient’s progress
    - Research the latest treatments to ensure the quality of patient care
    - Conduct or participate in outreach programs, talking to groups about managing diseases and promoting wellness
      - <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physician-assistants.htm#tab-2>

- **What is the expected pay and growth of the Physician Assistant career?**
  - According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the job outlook for the Physician Assistant field is projected to grow at the rate of 30% over the next decade.
    - <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physician-assistants.htm#tab-6>
  - According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the hourly pay for physician assistants is \$55.48, and the annual salary is \$115,390.
    - <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physician-assistants.htm#tab-1>
  
- **How often does a Physician Assistant need to renew their license? And do they need to take any Continuing Education courses?**
  - A PA should renew their license every two years.
    - <https://www.tmb.state.tx.us/page/renewal-physician-assistant>
  - A PA must complete at least 40 hours of CE courses in order to maintain their license every 2 years.
    - <https://www.tmb.state.tx.us/page/resources-cmd-pa>

<b>Academic Pathway</b>			
<b>What coursework should be taken to become a Physician Assistant?</b>			
<b>9th</b>	<b>10th</b>	<b>11th</b>	<b>12th</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dual Enrollment</li> <li>● GPA Relevancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Relevant Coursework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dual Enrollment vs. AP Classes and Exams</li> <li>● Coursework Transferability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Required GPA</li> </ul>

- **Ninth Grade**
  - **What is dual enrollment?**
    - The term dual enrollment refers to students being enrolled--concurrently--in two academic programs or institutions. The term is used in reference to high school students taking college courses while they are still enrolled in high school (i.e., *a dual enrollment student*), or to the programs that allow high school students to take college-level courses (i.e., *dual enrollment program*). For this reason, the term *early college* is a common synonym for dual enrollment.
    - The student needs to be aware that the grades they receive in any dual or concurrent enrollment courses will stay with them throughout their college career. These grades will be averaged into their overall GPA.
  - **Is high school coursework relevant to becoming a Physician Assistant?**



- Academic dual credit can be applied toward the core curriculum or to other specific degree program requirements of an academic associate degree or a baccalaureate degree. Students who want more information about the transferability of their dual credit courses should seek guidance from an advisor at the institution offering the dual credits (for example: most RGV high schools are partnered with South Texas College (STC), so a student can speak to someone at STC to get the accurate answers they are looking for.)
- If the student has course credit from South Texas College, they may check if a course will transfer to a college or university in Texas at [www.tccns.org](http://www.tccns.org). For information regarding transferability of courses to institutions outside of Texas, students should check with the institution receiving the credit.
  - <https://southtexascollege.edu/dual/faqs.html>

- **Twelfth Grade**

- **What GPA does a student need in order to apply?**

- In order to become a physician assistant, the student must earn a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 based on their undergraduate studies. (Based on UTRGV PA program)
  - <https://www.utrgv.edu/pa/admissions/admission-criteria-mpas/index.htm>

<b>Admissions</b>			
<b>What does the student need in order to apply to a Physician Assistant Program?</b>			
<b>9th</b>	<b>10th</b>	<b>11th</b>	<b>12th</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce Physician Assistant (program)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Program Description</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Admission Requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CE Courses</li> <li>● License Renewal</li> </ul>

- **Ninth Grade**

- **What is a Physician Assistant?**

- PAs are medical professionals who diagnose illness, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medications, and often serve as a patient's principal healthcare provider. With thousands of hours of medical training, PAs are versatile and collaborative. PAs practice in every state and in every medical setting and specialty, improving healthcare access and quality.
  - <https://www.aapa.org/what-is-a-pa/>

- **Tenth Grade**

- **What is the Physician Assistant program at UTRGV?**

- The Master in Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) prepares graduates with intelligence, sound judgment, intellectual honesty, appropriate interpersonal skills, and critical thinking skills. The graduate will be capable of medical patient assessment and developing a plan of action for addressing health concerns. The professional curriculum for PA education includes basic medical, behavioral, and social sciences, introduction to clinical medicine, supervised clinical practice, and health policy and professional practice issues.

- <https://www.utrgv.edu/pa/graduate-programs/master-physician-assistant-studies/index.htm>

- **What is the Physician Assistant program at Texas Tech?**

- The TTUHSC Master of Physician Assistant Studies Program is committed to educating PAs to meet the challenge of increasing access to and providing high-quality, patient-centered health care for communities in West Texas and beyond.

- <https://www.ttuhs.edu/health-professions/master-physician-assistant-studies/default.aspx>

- **What is the Physician Assistant program at UT Health San Antonio?**

- The Master of Physician Assistant Studies program at UT Health San Antonio prepares physician assistants for their roles within the health care setting. Our classroom, laboratory and supervised clinical practice experiences emphasize quality care and clinical skills in the primary care setting.

- <https://www.uthscsa.edu/academics/health-professions/programs/physician-assistant-studies-ms/coursework>

- **Eleventh Grade**

- **What are the admission requirements for the Physician Assistant program at UTRGV?**

- Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution in the United States or a recognized international equivalent.
- Undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0.
- Minimum of 15 U.S. Semester hours completed within the past 10 years.
- The following items are required and can be submitted through CASPA:
  - Official transcripts from each institution attended.
  - Personal statement.
  - Three letters of reference from professional or academic sources.
  - Volunteer/community service and health care experience.
  - The UTRGV Graduate College waived the 2020 – 2021 GRE test score requirement in response to restrictions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. The Graduate College has revoked the

waiver and now requires applicants to submit their GRE test scores for the 2021 – 2022 application cycle.

- Completion of the following prerequisite coursework (a GPA of 3.0 or better will be more competitive):
  - General Biology I and General Biology II
  - Genetics
  - Anatomy & Physiology I, and Anatomy & Physiology II
  - Microbiology
  - General Chemistry I and General Chemistry II
  - Organic Chemistry or Biochemistry
  - General Psychology or Abnormal Psychology
  - Statistics
- **What are the admission requirements for the Physician Assistant program at Texas Tech?**
  - Official Transcripts - All official transcripts need to be submitted to CASPA
  - Official GRE Scores - Official GRE scores are required for admission. If your GRE scores are more than 5 years old, they are not considered valid.
  - Bachelor's Degree - A Bachelor's Degree is required for admission in addition to the specific prerequisite courses
  - Minimum GPA - A minimum cumulative GPA and science GPA of a 3.0 as calculated by CASPA is required
  - Prerequisite Coursework - All prerequisite courses must be completed prior to matriculation. These courses include:
    - Genetics
    - Microbiology
    - Anatomy and Physiology
    - Organic Chemistry
    - Psychology
    - Statistics
- **What are the admission requirements for the Physician Assistant program at UT Health San Antonio?**
  - Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university
  - Graduate Record Examination (GRE) official scores up to five years old (no minimum score requirement)
  - Shadow hours (PA, MD, DO, and NP), hands-on patient care experience, and community service hours are strongly recommended and may enhance the application, but not required.
  - Two reference letters
  - A grade of C or better in the individual prerequisite classes
    - Anatomy and Physiology
    - General Chemistry
    - Microbiology
    - Organic Chemistry

- Genetics
  - Psychology
  - Statistics
  - GPA - Overall GPA of 3.0
- **Twelfth Grade**
  - **How often does a Physician Assistant need to renew their license?**
    - A PA should renew their license every two years in order to maintain their licensure.
      - <https://www.tmb.state.tx.us/page/renewal-physician-assistant>
  - **Do Physician Assistants need to take Continuing Education courses in order to keep their license?**
    - A PA must complete at least 40 hours of CE courses in order to maintain their license every 2 years.
      - <https://www.tmb.state.tx.us/page/resources-cmd-pa>

<b>Admissions</b>			
<b>What exam does the student need to take for the profession they're interested in?</b>			
<b>9th</b>	<b>10th</b>	<b>11th</b>	<b>12th</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce Exam to be taken</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exam Test description</li> <li>● Outline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exam Registration and Preparation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exam Score and Retesting</li> </ul>

- **Ninth Grade**
  - **What exam does the student need to take in order to become a Physician Assistant?**
    - Once the student has graduated from an accredited PA program, they're eligible to take the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE) administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA).
      - <https://www.aapa.org/career-central/become-a-pa/>
- **Tenth Grade**
  - **What is the PANCE Exam?**
    - The PANCE Exam is administered to students who have completed a PA program accredited by the ARC-PA. The multiple-choice exam assesses basic medical and surgical knowledge.
      - <https://www.nccpa.net/become-certified/>
  - **What is the Test Outline for the PANCE Exam?**
    - The five-hour PANCE exam includes 300 multiple-choice questions administered in five blocks of 60 questions with 60 minutes to complete



each block. There is a total of 45 minutes allotted for breaks between blocks and you will be responsible for managing your break time. You will have 15 minutes to complete the PANCE tutorial. The test involves knowledge of the diseases and disorders physician assistants encounter; and knowledge and skills related to tasks physician assistants perform when treating patients.

- <https://www.nccpa.net/become-certified/pance-blueprint/>
- <https://www.nccpa.net/become-certified/test-day/#:~:text=The%20five%2Dhour%20PANCE%20exam,minutes%20to%20complete%20each%20block.&text=The%20two%2Dhour%20CAQ%20exams,minutes%20to%20complete%20each%20block.>

- **Eleventh Grade**

- **How does the student register for the PANCE Exam in order to become a Physician Assistant?**
  - You must submit an application and \$550 payment in advance to take PANCE. You may schedule your exam anytime (depending on testing center availability) within the 180 day timeframe established for you based on your expected graduation date and the successful submission of all required materials to NCCPA.
    - <https://www.nccpa.net/become-certified/#pance-registration>
- **How can the student prepare for the PANCE Exam?**
  - The website listed below offers multiple resources that can aid the student in their study for the PANCE Exam.
    - <https://www.aapa.org/cme-central/pance-panre-review-resources/>

- **Twelfth Grade**

- **What score does the student need in order to pass the PANCE Exam?**
  - To pass the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE), an examinee must reach or exceed the passing score of 350, which is determined via a process called standard setting. Standard setting requires a panel of Physician Assistant content experts with experience about the knowledge, skills, and abilities an entry-level PA should possess for safe and effective practice.
    - <https://www.nccpa.net/pance-performance-guide/#:~:text=To%20pass%20the%20Physician%20Assistant,a%20process%20called%20standard%20setting.>
- **Can the student retake the PANCE Exam if they fail?**
  - Individuals who graduated from an ARC-PA accredited PA program on or after January 1, 2003, are eligible to take PANCE for up to six years after completing the requirements for graduation from that program. The examination may be taken a maximum of six times.
    - <https://www.nccpa.net/become-certified/#1601111962551-1d87d8d4-6bcc>