Physician Assistant School Admission

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

The following courses meet admission requirements for most PA schools, though individual school requirements vary considerably. We recommend consulting with schools that interest you regarding additional requirements. Take all required courses during the fall and/or spring semesters at URI (not summer or on-line).

CHEMISTRY
General Chemistry, two semesters with lab:
- CHM 101 & 102 Lab (3+1 credits)
- CHM 112 & 114 Lab (3+1 credits)

Organic Chemistry, at least one semester:
- CHM 124 & 126 Lab (3+1 credits) or CHM 227 (3 credits)

BIOLOGY
Three semesters are required. Additional upper-level coursework in biology is often required. The minimum recommendation is:
- BIO 101 Principles of Biology I & 103 Lab (3+1 credits)
- BIO 102 Principles of Biology II & 104 Lab (3+1 credits)

STATISTICS & MATH
One semester of statistics is required. Some schools also require one semester of calculus:
- STA 307, 308, 409, or 411
  And
- MTH 103 or higher

SOCIAL SCIENCES
6 credits—one from each group below is recommended:
- PSY 113, 232, 254, or 255
  And
- SOC 100 or 224

ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY
- BIO 121 Human Anatomy & Lab (4 credits)
  And
- BIO 242 Introductory Human Physiology & 244 Lab (3+1 credits)
  
  Note: Priority registration for these courses is given to certain majors.

BIOCHEMISTRY AND MICROBIOLOGY
- CMB 311 Introductory Biochemistry or CMB 311H Honors Section of Introductory Biochemistry (3 credits)
  Pre-req: CHM 124 or equivalent
- CMB 201 Introduction to Medical Microbiology (4 credits) or CMB 211 Microbiology & Lab (4 credits)
  Pre-reqs: one semester of biology & one year of chemistry.

Other Academic Considerations

Major. “Pre-Health/Pre-PA” is not a major at URI, and PA schools do not require or prefer any particular major. Students from any major can pursue the pre-PA curriculum in conjunction with their major and general education requirements.

Test scores. About half of PA programs require the GRE, many of which prefer scores in the 50th percentile or better.

Course Load. Take a reasonable course schedule each semester that you can successfully manage.

Grades. Schools will expect a minimum GPA of around 3.0 with all required courses completed with a C or better. Admitted student average GPAs are often around 3.5.
EXPERIENTIAL EXPECTATIONS

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Amount of Experience
PA schools require hands-on clinical experience in health care prior to application. Schools vary in the minimum number of hours of experience they expect of applicants, but it can range from the hundreds to thousands. 2015 matriculating students reported having a median 70 weeks (or approximately 2,800 hours) of direct patient care experience before PA school.

Types of Experience
Programs also vary in the kinds of direct patient care experience they accept in fulfillment of their clinical requirement. We recommend that you consult with Pre-Health Advising and PA programs about accepted forms of experience as well as required number of hours.

According to the PAEA 2015 Matriculating Student Survey, new PA students most frequently reported having the following work experiences prior to PA school (percent reporting experience is in parenthesis):

- Nursing assistant (30.2%)
- Medical assistant (21.3%)
- Emergency medical technician/paramedic (19.8%)
- Medical Scribe (14.0%)
- Home health aide (8.8%)
- Emergency room technician (8.3%)
- Phlebotomist (7.7%)

PA Shadowing
To learn about the PA profession, you should plan to spend additional time beyond your clinical work shadowing PAs.

When to get experience
We recommend starting as early as possible to gain patient care experience and PA shadowing. However, to be a competitive applicant, you should plan to take 1-2 years to gain experience after college before applying for admission to PA school.

In 2015, according the PAEA Matriculating Student Survey, approximately 71% of new PA students started PA school 1 or more years after completing their most recent degree. The median age of new PA students in 2015 was 24.

SERVICE
Because health care is fundamentally a service profession, PA schools look for applicants who have demonstrated commitment to serving people. Common activities include (but are not limited to):

- Military service
- Community service projects, clubs, and organizations.
- Volunteer teaching or tutoring on campus or in the community.
- Assisting individuals with disabilities.
- Volunteering or working for a nonprofit organization domestically or abroad.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE
As the population of the United States becomes increasingly diverse, medical professionals must be able to interact with patients with varied cultural norms as well as a broad range of experiences. Common activities include (but are not limited to):

- Courses or research that focus on minority groups, cross-cultural issues, or social equity/inequality
- Learning a language other than English
- Studying, working, or volunteering abroad
- Participation in intercultural clubs or organizations
- Courses or research on cross-cultural issues in health care or health care inequality

More information: