Physician assistants (PA’s) provide health care services under the supervision of doctors. They perform a range of medical duties working in all areas of medicine including primary care, family medicine, and emergency medicine. Specific duties and how much they need to be supervised by a physician vary by state.

Physician Assistants may gather information from patients, perform physical exams, and order lab tests. They explain test results and review treatment options with patients and their families. If more than one treatment is available, they help patients decide which option to choose. PAs can also do more complex tasks, such as: set simple fractures, run electrocardiograms (EKGs), sew up wounds, close incisions after surgery, etc.

Some PAs manage doctors' offices and order supplies and equipment. PAs also may supervise technicians and other medical office assistants. In areas where doctors are in short supply, PAs may be the only health care providers available on a regular basis. In this case they are required by state law to consult with physicians.

Physician Assistant programs around the country have two basic requirements, academic coursework and experience in the medical field. These requirements vary widely. The PA MEDEX program in Washington State requires 4000 hours of paid experience in a medical setting and a minimum of only 4 lab sciences, while some programs require little experience (many allow volunteer or work), but the academics are similar to a pre-medical curriculum. There are other programs that fall between the two extremes, requiring fewer hours of experience than the MEDEX program, but more lab sciences. Check with each program to determine how they define patient care experience.

It is the student’s responsibility to verify prerequisite courses and application requirements with the school you are planning to attend. Contact each school directly for information, as information is subject to change without notice.

We recommend that all students begin with CHEM& 121/140 as a foundation, or see advisor if you did very well in a rigorous high school chemistry course.

**Washington State** has two Physician Assistant programs.

**MEDEX Northwest** through the University of Washington. Their mission is to prepare physician assistants to work in rural communities. At the present time MEDEX offers 3 bachelor’s degree programs in Spokane, Tacoma, and Anchorage, AK. Master’s programs are available in Seattle and Spokane. All programs are highly competitive. They offer information sessions throughout the spring and summer which are highly recommended. Tuition for the bachelors is $6,280.50 per quarter for total of 8 quarters plus additional fees. Tuition for the masters is $7,588.33 per quarter for total of 9 quarters plus additional fees. All prerequisites must be completed by the application deadline, Oct. 1.

The prerequisites for the bachelor’s program are:
1. Minimum 4000-hours paid, direct, hands-on clinical patient care
2. BIOL& 241 & 242 (prerequisite BIOL& 160, recommended prerequisite CHEM& 121) – time limit 5-7 yrs.
3. Minimum 3 additional science classes in chemistry, biology, microbiology, pathophysiology, etc.
4. 2 college level English courses
5. An AA degree; AAS-DTA or Science Track or 90 credits and all CADR’s. It is highly recommended that students complete all general graduation requirements before beginning the MEDEX program. See UW web site or advisor for details.

The prerequisites for the master’s program are the same, with the addition of a bachelor’s degree. Competitive MEDEX candidates have more than the minimum 4000 hours (averaging a total of 6.5 years) of paid experience, usually in a primary care or emergency care setting. Competitive candidates will have more than the required science courses.

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Heritage University in Toppenish, WA, near Yakima. Heritage University is a new PA program, and has been awarded provisional accreditation through the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant. They offer a master’s degree only in a 24 month program. Tuition is $35,500 per year for 2 years (2014) – abt. $71,000, plus additional fees. They interviewed 96 students and accepted 32 in 2014. Cum GPA 3.3, Science GPA 3.42

Prerequisites for master’s program – all prerequisites must be completed by the application date, Nov. 1. No time limit.
1. Bachelor’s degree
2. Requires 1000 hrs hands on patient care experience
3. BIOL& 241, 242
4. BIOL& 260
5. 2 additional science courses – biology, chemistry, or biochemistry
6. MATH& 141 or MATH 130 or BA 240

Oregon has two Physician Assistant programs.

Oregon Health & Science University in Eugene, Oregon. OHSU offers a master’s program. Tuition is $8,280 per qtr for 9 quarters for a total of $74,520 (2013), plus additional fees Tuition is the same for non-residents and residents. Graduate Records Examination (GRE) is required. The average GPA of accepted students was 3.51. They accept 42-45 students.

Prerequisites: The requirements indicate the MINIMUM required; competitive applicants will generally apply with more than the minimum. All must be completed by the end of fall quarter. Applications are due Oct. 1.
1. A minimum 2000 hours of health care experience. Preference is given to candidates with health care experience that involves direct, 'hands-on' patient care, working with more acutely sick or injured patients in a hospital or clinical setting. The experience can be obtained through paid positions, volunteer work, or community service.
   Bachelor’s degree – no specific major
   30 semester or 40 qtr credits of biology, chemistry, and/or physics including #4,5,&6
2. BIOL& 211,212,213
   BIOL& 260
   BIOL& 241 & 242 within 7 yrs
3. PSYC& 200 (prerequisite
4. MATH 130 (BA 240 NOT accepted)
Highly recommended: Organic Chemistry, Biochemistry, Genetics, Pathophysiology, Immunology

Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon. Pacific allows students to complete a bachelor’s degree while in the master’s PA program. It is a private university with tuition about $10,000 per semester for 7 semesters, plus additional fees.

Prerequisites must be completed by the end of winter quarter of the year of entry:
1. 1000 hrs of direct clinical patient care experience within a health-care setting.
2. BIOL& 211, 212, 213
   BIOL& 241 & 242
   BIOL& 260
3. Chemistry – 11 sem credits or 17 qtr credits
   CHEM& 161,162
   CHEM& 261 (prereq Chem 163)
4. MATH 130
5. PSYC& 100 or SOC& 101

The Admissions Committee will consider the total number of hours accumulated, "at the time" you submit your CASPA application. No consideration will be given to hours projected for the future. Pacific University received 900+ complete applications in 2013, interviewed 160, and accepted 48. Average GPA is 3.6-3.7. Application due Oct. 1.

Physician Assistant Education Program - http://www.paeaoonline.org/

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